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EVERYONE

by

KARISA KINARD

Presented to the Faculty of the Honors College of
The University of Texas at Arlington in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements
for the Degree of

HONORS BACHELOR OF FINE ART IN THEATRICAL
DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

THE UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS AT ARLINGTON

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I am thankful to both Anne Healy and Joe Pauli for embarking on this journey with me. I think one of the hardest aspects of being a teacher is knowing there is always a lasting impact. Whether a student might or might not remember your name several years later, the impact will always be there. This project taught me a lot about myself and about the field of theater as a whole. It forced me to look at works of theater in ways I had not before. I have always thought that theater has not been as inclusive as we often try to project it as being, and I hope this project proves to be a step in the right direction. I hope everyone can relate to this piece in a way that stays with them. Without guidance from amazing people, from both my past and from the present, this would not have been possible for me. For this, I am grateful.

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ABSTRACT

EVERYONE

Karisa Kinard, B.F.A. Theatre

The University of Texas at Arlington, 2021

Faculty Mentor: Anne Healy

Avant-garde is described as an experimental technique of art, whether it be fashion, painting, or theater. These methods have been effective in helping the audience connect to the script. This script, entitled Everyone, echoes the high emotional value placed on common human themes; depression, hatred, faith, isolation, self-consciousness, and education are aspects of life we have all experienced and have had adverse and inescapable influences on our health. Everyone is a way to describe the cycle of life revolving around us. The theater has always been a conduit for catharsis, evolving from stringent rituals to emerging contemporary works. Over time, boundaries have been traversed in ever emerging styles to help incite emotions from audiences. The recent societal shift of an inundation of opinions and choices, resulting in a state of emotional limbo, is the cause and foundation of my writing.

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CHARACTER BREAKDOWN

ACT ONE

The production is written in two acts, and while each act is not a continuation of the other, they complement each other thematically. The characters in the play are designed to be gender inclusive, except for the character FATHER. This character is used within the parameters of religious context.

Blake

Youthful but weary individual that embodies empathy. They are talented to a fault, mainly due to their indecisiveness. Others are often down to and are protective of their natural charisma.

Jody

Pious by nature and by fate alike, Jody is stoic in their demeanor. They are often narrow-minded in their approach to life but seek out others to help regardless. They are older than Blake and they have fostered a protective relationship with Blake.

Alex

Resilient in nature, Alex came from a distressed past. Their upbringing was restrictive of their physical and mental growth. Their compassion is one of their strongest assets, partly due to their own inadequacies. They are both a friend of Blake and someone who also idolizes their mental prowess.

Waitstaff

Rugged from the abuse of the career but resolute in practice, the waitstaff seen are compassionate workers that are taken by any cordial face.

Restaurant Patron

Only overheard as a brief audio clip, we can tell the person is hardened and bitter at the world. They are likely projecting their own cruel realities onto unsuspecting people.

Father

Whether heard or seen, they are friendly and inviting. Their being has seen all aspects of life but has remained welcoming. This is the only role with a set gender association.

CHARACTER BREAKDOWN

ACT TWO

Kerry

Is a bleary older single parent. Their intentions are always acted on in good faith, but their actions fall short of being awarded any prizes for parenting. Their own childhood upbringing left them unable to cope with many of their issues, and they rely on the use of substances.

Devin

Is a gifted high school student that is passionate about their abilities. They are the first in their family to actively question the generational cycles being perpetrated. While still young, they are often left having to care for their parent. Their determination to make it out of these cycles is tested by their environment.

Joey

Is a phlegmatic older friend of Kerry. They have known each other since high school, and their dynamic has not changed much. While they do not have children of their own, Joey acts as the guardian of those around them. They are practical in this approach and will not enable reckless behavior.

Devin (child)

A child in their early youth. They look up to their sibling Angel.

Angel (child)

A young, boastful, and confident child. The beloved sibling of Devin.

ACT 1

APARTMENT

1.1 Scene One

(Present day. It is late in the day, sometime in the late afternoon, like five o'clock- or a time that would work with someone scheduled for a nine to five job. The scene opens in BLAKE'S apartment that is neither extravagant, nor modest, but somewhere in between.

It's clean but somewhat disheveled. Around the apartment are moving boxes varying from empty to filled. The mood for the apartment is very still. BLAKE enters their apartment, places bags and a newspaper on a table close to the door. BLAKE crosses to a chair and sits down, they're showing signs of the day's exhaustion. It's obvious there is a lot on their mind. After a few moments pass, there is a knock at the door. Enters JODY. JODY notices the newspaper placed by the door and picks it up. BLAKE and JODY both exchange a sigh followed by a welcoming nod and forced smile. JODY remains standing throughout most of the conversation.)

JODY:

Everything that's going on, it's just so crazy.

BLAKE:

I don't know.

(Visibly trying to avoid the question, rolls eyes in a dismissing way and a half laugh comes out.)

(JODY Places the newspaper beside BLAKE. Tension immediately rises in the room)

(Beat)

BLAKE:

I just don't think I have to have an opinion on everything that happens. At least, I don't have to have one I share with the world. You and I have our own opinions about everything that's happened recently: fighting for equality, job security, and everything else, but neither of us are doing anything about that, so does offering my opinion really matter?

JODY:

I think when people care about it, it does.

BLAKE:

But at the end of the day opinions alone aren't changing anything, in the grand scheme of things. Sometimes just simply existing and getting by is okay.

(Beat)

(JODY scans the room.)

JODY:

You're taking the job?

BLAKE:

Yes.

(Large and more deliberate sigh from before.)

JODY:

Why?

BLAKE:

I . . . –

(Refuses to respond for a few moments but acknowledges there isn't a way to move forward without responding.)

JODY:

You're making a mistake.

(BLAKE remains silent and visually disinterested.)

(Delivered determinedly as a statement, almost like an open invitation to stay.)

JODY:

You don't have to quit and leave the city.

(What once was possibly said out of anger becomes a line delivered firmly but on deflated breathe.)

BLAKE:

You know it's only a promotion, I'm not quitting anything. This is a step I have to take. It is part of my responsibilities to myself. . . –

JODY:

Do you think it will make you happy? Do you really think you'll be satisfied by it?

(The tension starts to escalate quickly when Jody speaks their first line, but composure is regained before speaking the second line. The conversation is then carried out in an arid,

somber tone.)

BLAKE:

This is a guaranteed career, it pays well, really well, and I am good at it.

JODY:

I've told you, you can get a job here... They need you. And I think you'd be happy.

BLAKE:

But how guaranteed is that? How long will that last? (Beat) If I'm capable of helping other people, is it my obligation to do so?

JODY:

That's . . . –

BLAKE:

Even if I destroy myself in the process? Is it my obligation to be a leader for other people, even though that's something I never asked for- something I never wanted?

JODY:

Why not help someone you can? You can always go back to college and make a career out of this job. It will take time, but if it's what you want, it's what you'll do. (Beat) I just hope you don't look back and regret your decision.

BLAKE:

I can still regret not taking the promotion too. Just as much as you'd like for me to go back to school, so would they. They see success in me just as much as you do.

JODY:

But if you're as good as you think, the job will always be there. I don't see that you will lose much by staying here. (Beat) But you eventually have to go back to school, you know that. You're smart, don't waste that.

(Said out of disdain for the topic)

BLAKE:

Yeah.

(Beat)

JODY:

How happy will you be with nursing administration anyway? You're better than that.

BLAKE:

I'm on my third promotion this year, but that's not something you ever seem to recognize. I am great at what I'm currently doing- damn good at it- and maybe not needing a degree for this success is okay.

JODY:

You've been happy with the arts. I see you grow more passionate with every opportunity you get. You were made for this job. You were made for this- you can do everything- be everything. I just wish you could see the look in your eyes. When you're working a project, there's this look of total control. That everything is going to be ok. I wish you could witness it.

(Beat)

(JODY delivers the next line as a way to read the room. It's a way to ensure the conversation before did not have a residual impact on their friendship. It is also spoken as

JODY sits down at the table across from BLAKE)

JODY:

I think Alex said something about meeting at the diner later.

BLAKE:

Have the two of you ever had a serious conversation, aside from finding out the Tower has been stalking you?

JODY:

I just . . . I don't understand. We have no shared interests, nothing to talk about. I will also never go to a tarot card reading, even if it's just a courtesy gesture.

(Beat)

JODY:

I didn't know you believed in that?

(Gesturing vaguely in BLAKE'S direction)

BLAKE:

What? . . .

(The first line is delivered with a confused and unassuming delivery, while the second is a facetious tone.)

The news?

(Beat)

JODY:

(Said in a manner of arrogance)

The necklace. (Beat) That stuff- the crystals. What's that one supposed to do, promote relaxation?

(Said in a dry manner)

BLAKE:

I don't.

JODY:

Then . . . (Beat) why are you wearing it?

BLAKE:

Do I have to believe in it to wear it?

JODY:

(Also said in an arrogant manner.)

Tradition, yeah. (Beat) It's absurd that someone can believe a certain crystal contains energy, or properties, to help them. I mean, a rock's a rock. There's nothing special about them, just because they're a different color. It's a rock. A colored rock. (Beat) I mean, what are they supposed to do, vibrate?

BLAKE:

Someone gave it to me. (Beat) Alex gave it to me. Also, didn't you spend several months trying to learn String Theory only a short while ago? I also remember you spent a solid few weeks trying to get me invested in it as well.

(The line is expressed in a way that attempts to conceal the judgmental nature of the remark.)

JODY:

I didn't know that about them. (Beat) It's also different, String Theory is proven. It's a very tangible thing.

(Tension within the scene once again begins to rise)

BLAKE:

It's proven by which of your pillars of belief?

(Beat)

Alex is also doing really well for themselves, and they've come along way.

JODY:

I didn't. . –

BLAKE:

They didn't have the greatest childhood growing up. Their parents weren't always there for them, rarely actually. The only control they had for a really long time was over their eating habits, and it took a long time to overcome that. I am really happy for them. They have made the decisions that are best for them, and I am always going to support that. If that means them finding means of control in other healthier ways, then I am elated for them. (Beat) I think, whether we recognize it or not, control is important to all of us. A natural driving force.

JODY:

I didn't know. . .

(Beat)

(JODY makes very clear changes in their body language. They create a more approachable appearance.)

JODY:

How was work?

(The tension within the scene starts to dissolve again)

BLAKE:

It was good.

JODY:

You seem more tired than usual.

BLAKE:

Just have a lot going on, and then there's packing.

JODY:

I just don't want you to lose that spark. You're getting uninspired. You and I can both tell that.

(Beat)

(JODY stands as they're delivering the first portion of the line, and then starts to cross to the door as the second portion is spoken.)

JODY:

It's getting late, (Beat) I should go.

BLAKE:

Okay.

(BLAKE nods. There is a moment of unbreakable silence, everything is still and quiet.

JODY crosses to the door and exits slowly, but no lines are exchanged. BLAKE takes a few moments to remain seated, then stands while picking up the newspaper and crossing back to the table it was originally placed on. Holding the paper, BLAKE unfolds it for a brief moment and soon refolds it, tossing it back on the table. BLAKE crosses to exit.

upstage.)

ACT 1

DINER

1.2 Scene 2

(Later that same day in a diner. We see a red glow from a neon sign that would be hung over the windowpane in the small, homely diner. This occurs on the stage right portion of the theater. The scene unfolds around a simple setup, including a small table and chairs. The table can be adorned with whatever essentials are deemed necessary for the setup.

Lights fade upon a diner. JODY can either start the scene on stage, or they can enter shortly before BLAKE. JODY sits stage left of the table and waits for a few moments. During this time, the waitstaff can bring water to the table. If this is a choice made, two waters should be brought out, in anticipation for BLAKE'S arrival. BLAKE enters and slowly makes their way to the table, they sit stage right of the table, across from JODY.)

JODY:

I wasn't sure you'd come.

BLAKE:

(The first line is delivered with a light, humorous tone. The first section is a joke, while the second acknowledges the constant conflict between the two. JODY also, as stated before, does not relate to ALEX. This is the reason for the last portion of BLAKE'S dialogue.)

I only came for the booze. That's also not the first time we've ever had this conversation.

I also wasn't sure you'd be here so early.

JODY:

Fair enough.

(The waitstaff enters the scene and approaches the table.)

WAITSTAFF:

Hello, how are you?

BLAKE:

I am doing well. Yourself?

WAITSTAFF:

I'm good. Do you need a drinks or food menu?

BLAKE:

I'll just have a coffee, please.

WAITSTAFF:

I'll have that right out.

(WAITSTAFFES crosses to exit the scene)

BLAKE:

Thank you-

JODY:

Coffee?

(BLAKE shrugs and in a facetious manner. This ties into the previous comment, made
above.)

(Beat)

JODY:

I'm glad you came. (Beat) Thank you.

BLAKE:

(We start to notice a trend between BLAKE and humor as a defense for serious topics.)

Me too. (Beat) The diner is always warmer than my apartment. (Beat) I am glad I came, though. This is nice.

JODY:

I think we both deserve some time off from work and everything.

BLAKE:

Amen.

RESTAURANT PATRON:

(This portion of text can be prerecorded and can reuse talent already in the production, since the role is not seen on stage. The voice is overheard yelling at the WAITSTAFF.)

It's not that hard. Something is wrong every time I come here.

(JODY in reference to actions taking place off stage, they deliver the line in an obviously flustered state and start to rise when speaking to them. They stop midway and seat themselves again.)

JODY:

Can you believe that? Did you see what that person just did? That's ridiculous.

(Gestures aggressively to BLAKE)

JODY:

I can't believe people don't respect blue-collar staff. Some people have no respect for others anymore. (Beat) Just because someone doesn't have a degree, doesn't mean anything.

(Delivered on deflated breathe. This is delivered this way due to the conversation had in the previous scene.)

BLAKE:

Yeah.

(The room is silent for a while, almost mirroring the energy from the previous scene. The silence is finally cut by JODY.)

JODY:

Hey, would you happen to have change for a fifty? (Beat) It's the smallest bill I have on me?

BLAKE:

I'll have to check; I usually use card.

(BLAKE rummages through their wallet and finds a way to break the fifty.)

BLAKE:

Yeah, I have some ones and a few larger bills.

JODY:

'Mind swapping with me? I want to leave a tip.

BLAKE:

Yeah, no problem. This will make it easier for someone to rob me anyway. (Beat) I'm joking.

JODY:

(Sighs) I'll leave them ten; they deserve it. (Beat) You think that's enough?

BLAKE:

If you think that's enough, sure. I don't real...-

JODY:

I just think they deserve it. Tonight, of all nights.

BLAKE:

I'm not arguing with you, I'm just not sure how to judge you tipping. . .

Poor phrasing, (Beat) I'm just going to shut up.

JODY:

I think ten is enough.

BLAKE:

Okay.

JODY:

I think I'm going to head out pretty quickly.

(WAITSTAFF crosses over to refill the coffee cup)

WAITSTAFF:

Is everything alright over here. . . –

JODY:

Yes! Absolutely! (Beat) Thank you so much!

WAITSTAFF:

Just holler if you need anything.

BLAKE:

Thank you.

(JODY stands)

JODY:

I'm going to head out; it's been a long day. (Beat) Please be safe. (Beat) And call me if Alex doesn't show up, (Beat) ok?

BLAKE:

Yeah, (Beat) sure thing. Be safe!

(JODY crosses to the upstage exit, but before leaving turns and waves to the waitstaff.

There are a few moments on stage before ALEX enters. They enter from upstage and cross to stage left of the table. They sit down)

ALEX:

Sorry I'm running late. It's a little late for a cup of coffee, isn't it?

BLAKE:

One? No. Two? Maybe.

ALEX:

This is why you are the way you are. (Beat) You understand that, right?

BLAKE:

Maybe. (Beat) It could also be wine.

ALEX:

Wine is probably healthier for you, (Beat) at this point.

BLAKE:

Maybe.

(Beat)

BLAKE:

Where is Riley?

ALEX:

I left them at home. I figured they deserve time away from me.

(Both exchange a laugh)

ALEX:

They are really great- my rock.

BLAKE:

That is what you deserve.

ALEX:

And I'm glad I recognize it. I have made a lot of progress.

(Beat)

ALEX:

Remember where I was at five years ago?

BLAKE:

I'm really happy for you. (Beat) You really do deserve everything you've accomplished.

ALEX:

Thank you! You know, (Beat) you and Riley are a large part of that?

BLAKE:

I'm glad.

(Beat)

BLAKE:

When was the last time you spoke to your parents?

ALEX:

I honestly haven't truly spoken to them in years. They sent money for my birthday last year, but I've really just made my friends my support system. I don't really think any of us have matured enough for that conversation. I know they tried to do what they thought was right, but it took me years to get over the hyper-aggressive parenting. I didn't feel like I had control over anything when I was younger. Their marriage was also in shambles for years, but they worked past that.

BLAKE:

They're still together? I thought they separated.

ALEX:

They did, briefly. But I don't think anyone else would have them. It really hurts both of them that they can't accept depression as being an issue. One day I guess they'll recognize that they can't will their way out of every problem. (Beat) I remember one day I decided to cut my bangs- not that I was very attached to my hair, but I was bored and a kid. I think I was eight, maybe. They both flipped out. I was yelled at for hours. They thought that forcibly cutting my hair thereafter would discipline me in some way. That was one of the biggest sources of insecurities for me moving forward. It followed me for years. It really stunted my social growth. Some years later is when I started trying to regain control through eating. It felt like that was the only thing I could control. Plus, my body image was in shambles at that point. I thought by restricting my food intake, I could make myself feel better. Regain some lost part of myself. (Beat) I guess my parents also thought complimenting me would make me weak, too. I guess in a way, I still think that compliments make me weak. I don't know that I'll ever be able to accept them.

BLAKE:

I think that is something that all of us struggle with.

ALEX:

I have noticed something. (Beat) Why don't you ever say you are proud of anyone?

BLAKE:

I don't know. I guess, (Beat) by saying I am proud of you, I am saying you should value my opinion.

ALEX:

Okay, but your friends value your opinion.

BLAKE:

I didn't say that.

(WAITSTAFF crosses to the table)

WAITSTAFF:

Hello, would you like any of our menus?

ALEX:

No thank you, but may I have a glass of your cheapest wine?

WAITSTAFF:

Of course! Be right back.

(BLAKE glares at ALEX)

ALEX:

I promised Riley I'd cook for them tonight. (Beat) I'll eat later.

BLAKE:

Good!

ALEX:

I'm just thankful they think warming food up qualifies as cooking it. (Beat) I am doing really good, though.

(Beat. ALEX notices the ten dollars placed on the table.)

ALEX:

Jody already left? They didn't order anything?

BLAKE:

(Shrugs) Yeah, they left a bit before you got here.

ALEX:

(Sharply exhales) They really don't like me, do they?

BLAKE:

It's not that, they are just going through a lot.

ALEX:

They are married?

BLAKE:

(Sighs) Not exactly.

(Beat)

BLAKE:

They were widowed about seven years ago.

ALEX:

I'm sorr... I didn't know. They still wear a wedding ring.

BLAKE:

(Nods in agreement) Going through a lot.

ALEX:

It (Beat) makes sense now.

BLAKE:

They've made improvements. (Beat) Still growing, though.

(WAITSTAFF crosses to the table and brings a glass of wine. Both the WAITSTAFF and ALEX notice the tip sitting on the table. A few moments pass and neither of them make a move for the money. The WAITSTAFF moves toward the money and finally picks it up.

WAITSTAFF crosses to an exit offstage.)

ALEX:

Thank you!

(Beat)

I didn't want them to think it was my money. It wasn't mine.

BLAKE:

It's fine, drink your wine.

(Beat)

ALEX:

Whatever happened with the person that gave you their number here last week?

BLAKE:

Well, I'm pretty sure they aren't still here. (Beat) I'm not sure. I never texted them.

ALEX:

Why? (Beat) You should have, they were sweet.

BLAKE:

I'm not particularly looking, (Beat) and I'm also moving.

ALEX:

That's what online dating sites are for.

BLAKE:

Is that what they're for?

(Beat)

ALEX:

You know, (Beat) you don't have to go?

BLAKE:

I wish it were that simple.

ALEX:

What if it can be? (Beat) Three hours is a long way away.

(Beat)

ALEX:

And you hate driving.

(Beat)

BLAKE:

We will always have online dating. (Beat) The only reason you laughed at that, is because you're almost done with your wine.

ALEX:

Yeah, it is getting late. (Beat) I should go back home. (Beat) Plus, if we stay any longer, you'll end up drinking another cup of coffee.

BLAKE:

You're right. (Beat) I'll go pay our tabs.

(As BLAKE stands to cross off stage, ALEX delivers their lines)

ALEX:

You don't have to do that...-

BLAKE:

(Delivered offstage) You can grab the tip.

(After a few moments, BLAKE crosses back to the table and finishes the last bit of
coffee.)

(Beat)

ALEX:

You ready?

BLAKE:

Yeah.

(Both BLAKE and ALEX cross to exit upstage, ALEX trailing behind BLAKE. BLAKE
holds the door open for ALEX as they leave.)

Act 1

APARTMENT

1.3 Scene Three

(It is the next day. The lights fade up on the apartment. We see BLAKE packing things
away, while sitting on the floor. This continues for a few moments before JODY knocks
at the door)

BLAKE:

Come in.

(JODY enters and crosses behind the table. JODY remains standing)

JODY:

Hi. (Beat) How'd everything go with Alex and Riley?

BLAKE:

It was only Alex, Riley stayed home.

JODY:

Oh.

(BLAKE shrugs)

JODY:

Riley doesn't talk much- the opposite of Alex. They just seem to . . . –

BLAKE:

Listen? (Beat) Maybe, sometimes, we are given what we need.

JODY:

I'm glad they're both doing well.

BLAKE:

Me too.

JODY:

How are you? Tired from packing, I'd imagine.

BLAKE:

Yeah, I'm okay, though. I'm just (Beat) still adjusting.

JODY:

Someone I know asked about you today, for job placement. I know you're set on the promotion, but it's something you should consider. (Beat) I'm going to leave their number for you, in case you change your mind. (Beat) It's something to think about. (Beat) At least. (JODY finds a pen and writes the number down on yesterday's paper. The paper is then placed back on the center table)

BLAKE:

Okay.

(JODY crosses closer to BLAKE, who is still sitting on the floor.)

JODY:

(sighs) Do you need help with anything?

BLAKE:

No, I'm fine. I actually have plenty of time to do it.

(JODY cross to BLAKE and kneels down)

JODY:

If you ever need help with anything, call me?

(JODY stands and crosses to the door. BLAKE remains seated until JODY exits. After JODY exits, BLAKE stands and crosses to the center table. BLAKE sits in the stage right chair and picks up the newspaper.)

BLAKE:

Maybe I'm afraid of success.

(The set transitions to a bathroom. The only important piece of scenery in this scene is a lavatory mirror. BLAKE crosses to the mirror and stands in front of it. No lines are

spoken here. The focus of this scene is self-awareness and dissociation. As BLAKE looks into the mirror, the lights dim and focus on BLAKE. A projector can be used to execute this scene. As BLAKE looks into the mirror, we see their reflection start to distort into someone unrecognizable. During this scene, BLAKE should be hyperaware of what is happening and connect to it by touching their face and making other connections. Making use of the properties associated with strobing lights might help add dimensions to the scene visually. It can help add definition to the actions taking place and visually alter the speed of which these actions are taking place on scene. Experimenting with the timing can help heighten the emotional qualities of the scene. Different speeds will have a different visual impact on stage. It is important to understand how this technique interacts with the audience. Appropriate precautions for susceptible patrons should be taken if this technique is used. The scene ends with BLAKE walking away from the mirror, but the lights should remain up on the area for a few moments more.)

ACT 1

SACRAMENT OF PENANCE

1.4 Scene Four

(Lights fade up on a confessional, in an otherwise empty room. We see JODY kneeling on one side of the confessional. The FATHER can be visible on stage, or if the confessional allows, audio can be played in place of having someone on stage)

FATHER and JODY:

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

JODY:

Bless me Father, for I have sinned. It has been eight months since my last confession, and these are my sins: five counts of taking the Lord's name in vain, ten counts of lust, and two counts of adultery. I am a spouse. I am sorry for all these sins and the sins of my past life

FATHER:

Have you told this person?

JODY:

N. . . no

FATHER:

God, the Father of mercies, through the death and resurrection of his Son has reconciled the world to himself and sent the Holy Spirit among us for the forgiveness of sins; through the ministry of the Church may God give you pardon and peace, and I absolve you from your sins in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.

JODY:

O my God, I am heartily sorry for having offended Thee, and I detest all my sins because I dread the loss of Heaven and the pains of Hell. But, most of all, because they have offended Thee, my God, who art all good, and deserving of all my love. I firmly resolve, with the help of Thy Grace, to confess my sins, to do penance, and to amend my life. Amen.
(The lights fade and the scene ends.)

ACT 1

APARTMENT

1.5 Scene Five

(The scene opens in the apartment. BLAKE is sitting in the chair stage left of the center table. There is a knock at the door. BLAKE crosses to the door and answers it. Enter

ALEX.)

ALEX:

It has been a long day.

BLAKE:

Everything o. . .-

ALEX:

You know that person I always complain about at work, Jordon?

BLAKE:

Sure...-

ALEX:

They made my life a living hell day. I'm not sure why they don't like me. I mind my own business and keep to myself. (Beat) I really do try to be good to other people.

BLAKE:

Maybe that's why. (Beat) Because you are unapologetically you.

(In the next section of dialogue, the genders can be swapped between women and men)

ALEX:

Because the world hates strong women!

BLAKE:

Not exactly.

(Both ALEX and BLAKE cross to the center table and sit. BLAKE returns to their typical chair, and ALEX sits in the other.)

ALEX:

I hate that they always have small witty things to say.

BLAKE:

(Delivered as a direct critique of themselves.)

Never trust anyone that only has witty one-liners.

ALEX:

I guess, after all this time, no matter how much I've worked on myself, I cannot change the people around me.

BLAKE:

And it isn't your job to sacrifice the progress you've made for them either.

ALEX:

I thought you were always for helping people.

BLAKE:

Unfortunately, helping someone is always conditional.

ALEX:

You can't help someone that doesn't want to be helped?

BLAKE:

I think that is a lie, actually. (Beat) You can help someone that doesn't want to be helped, but you still have the same number of broken people in the end. And you have to hope you

have someone as compassionate as you are around in the end- (facetiously spoken) hurt people hurt people.

ALEX:

I am very lucky to have you and Riley. (Beat) I know you will be successful in whatever you do, but you should think about going back to school. (Beat) I think you'd enjoy it.

BLAKE:

Maybe. I just don't think it's that simple.

ALEX:

You're always there for everyone around you, I just wish you saw what everyone else does.

BLAKE:

That's the problem. I don't think the statement has to be conditional. Ultimately, I am the same person with or without a degree. Why does the paper mean so much, in your mind? I'm successful now. I have made close to eight thousand this year in promotions alone. I just don't get why the praise is so conditional for me? You and Jody both. You can't hinge so much on me going back to school then promote things like 'essential workers' in the same breath. It doesn't work that way. I value you, but it doesn't always feel like that is reciprocated without strings attached.

ALEX:

It's not about you being enough, it never was. It's just . . . we see a large amount of potential in you. (Beat) I believe in you. I think, maybe . . . in a way I look up to you. If you can't do something, I'm not sure what hope that leaves for me. You have always been like an older sibling to me. You've been someone to look up to. I never feel like you are judging me, only like you always have my best interest at heart. If you don't find happiness in life,

where does that leave me? (Beat) You have been such a pivotal part of my own self-worth, and if you can't find your own contentment, I'm not sure what hope there is for me.

BLAKE:

That's not . . . You found your self-worth because that's what you deserve. You are the one that put years' worth of effort into self-improvement not me. I was only there helping you. It's you. (Beat) I just, for once, want to be responsible for myself. To have no expectations to live up to. To just be able to exist. I never asked to be anyone's mentor. I just want to live. I don't want people constantly marking my actions, I just want to be. To be me, without having to worry if someone is constantly watching me. I want to be able to make mistakes and live- my god I just want to live. I never asked for any of this. No one asked me what I wanted. (Beat) And this isn't what I wanted.

ALEX:

I never realized. (Beat) I never understood the responsibility we placed on you. I'm sorry.

BLAKE:

It's . . . it's not your fault. I'm just tired. I shouldn't have lashed out like that. I'm just tired. I haven't been sleeping the best.

ALEX:

What happened was good. It was healthy to let it out. You have a lot of responsibilities.

BLAKE:

We all do.

ALEX:

I'm glad we had this talk, though. I think it was necessary for both of us.

BLAKE:

Thank you. I appreciate you.

ALEX:

I am proud of you. I always have been. I'm sorry it doesn't seem like that sometimes. But I have always been proud of you. You have always been something special. And I know, no matter what you chose to do, you'll always do great things.

BLAKE:

Thank you. I think we've both come a long way the past several years. The truth is, I don't think I'd be who I am today without you, either.

ALEX:

Thank you. I'm always here if you need to talk. It's probably best if you hear that occasionally, instead of me.

BLAKE:

I've always known.

ALEX:

You know you helped me out of a very dark place, and I just want to be that person for you too. In the end, I guess, expecting too much from someone mentally is just as abusive as physical abuse.

BLAKE:

You aren't abusing me.

ALEX:

No, but it was an important talk to have. You've helped me so much; I was trying to force my help on you.

BLAKE:

You have accomplished a lot of your growth by yourself too. I was only there to support you, but I can't make you change.

ALEX:

Maybe so, but you helped me understand my parents weren't looking out for my best interests. Not a lot of people realize that. (Beat) I'm glad I don't support them without question anymore. That's a struggle for so many.

BLAKE:

It's hard to rationalize and come to terms with instances like those. When the people who are supposed to protect us, no longer do. The thought alone is hard for a lot of people to emotionally work through.

ALEX:

I wonder who I'd be today if I never made that change? I wonder if they're proud of the person I've become? I wonder if they take credit for that person, if they're proud?

BLAKE:

I don't think a lot of parents understand that their children often grow up in spite of them.

ALEX:

I guess we all grow up in spite of ourselves. (Beat) If you go, (Beat) what if I get bad again? What if I'm not strong enough alone. . .-

BLAKE:

Don't. (Beat) You know you are.

ALEX:

But sometimes I just think I'm not. Sometimes I think all the effort and energy is in vain. Like things are inescapable, you know? Like I wasn't meant to be happy.

BLAKE:

How much of that is you talking and how much it is the anxiety your coworker causes? They're the reason you're here, of course.

ALEX:

I guess healing is always an active process. It just sometimes doesn't seem fair. (Beat) I remember how astonished I was when I learned scars are an ongoing process. The body has to constantly produce collagen, and if it doesn't, they just reopen. It's just unfair that happens with mental health too. I just want to heal. Be done with it all, but it's just so time consuming.

BLAKE:

You need energy to feel good, but you need energy to heal. It's a constant cycle of exhaustion.

ALEX:

(Said in a dismissing manner.)

I guess I'm lucky to have the people around me I do.

BLAKE:

It doesn't matter what some else has went through or what they've experienced. Nothing can invalidate your personal struggle. (Beat) You're still too hard on yourself.

ALEX:

Do you believe in karma?

BLAKE:

I'm not sure. I think I believe in coincidences less and less. I think things have been good lately- truly good.

ALEX:

Sometimes I'm not sure what I believe in anymore. I just know you and Riley keep my head above water.

(Beat)

ALEX:

I think I'm going to head home.

(ALEX stands and crosses to the door. There is a moment of sorrow shared between the two. ALEX stops before fully leaving.)

ALEX:

(Jokingly) You know, I feel safe with you.

BLAKE:

Ugh- maybe I should write a self-help book. The reason we don't accept our success, is because it doesn't look like what we envisioned in our mind.

(BLAKE stands (Beat) cross to the door, hugging as ALEX exits. BLAKE crosses to the stage right seats, again, and sits down. BLAKE emits a large sigh.)

BLAKE:

(While cradling their face) I wonder if my future will be worth it all in the end. (Beat)

(BLAKE begins to open their body language for the audience.) Stevie Nicks' mother told her that her life had been too good, and that she should anticipate that everything would

eventually fall apart- (Beat) right before it did. It was something she never recovered from. (Beat) The problem is, I'm not sure whether my life has been good or bad

END OF ACT ONE

ACT 2

HOME

2.1 Scene One

(It is present day. The time is early morning. The scene and act largely take place in KERRY'S kitchen. The kitchen is useable but showing signs of obvious wear. The house is old and falling apart. KERRY stands in their kitchen. From the surroundings, we can tell the family is not well off. KERRY stands off to the side of the kitchen where a sink might be. KERRY is frantically trying to multitask washing dishes and making a very modest breakfast. Devin walks into the kitchen with a dissimilar demeanor.)

KERRY:

You're gonna be late for school. We're both gonna be late.

DEVIN:

Please just calm down. It's really not that serious. I'll make it to school.

KERRY:

Neither of us can afford this right now. Give me a minute, I'll be ready to drive you.

DEVIN:

Calm down, I just really hate dealing with you when you are like this. I'll get a friend to drive me if I have to.

KERRY:

They're at school already, probably.

DEVIN:

It's okay. I will find a way; I just need you to calm down.

(KERRY carries a bowl of cereal over to the table and places it in front of DEVIN.

KERRY is still very frantic and is moderately disoriented from the rush. KERRY brushes

DEVIN'S shoulder in a failed attempt of emotional support.)

DEVIN:

Calm down! I am not hungry. I just want to leave.

(DEVIN forces KERRY away from them. KERRY blocks the way to the door.)

KERRY:

You need to eat. Just sit down. Please, eat.

(DEVIN sits down and begins to pick up small spoonfuls of cereal.)

KERRY:

Thank you. I'm gonna start the car. Warm it up.

(KERRY crosses to the outside exit and leaves)

DEVIN:

You're no different than Grandma. (Beat) I hoped this would end one day, but I don't think it ever will.

(KERRY enters the kitchen again and smiles fondly at DEVIN. DEVIN forces a smile as they stand.)

KERRY:

Ready!

DEVIN:

Yeah.

(When exiting, they quickly walk to the sink and toss the bowl in. The scene fades out as they exit the kitchen)

ACT 2

HOME

2.2 Scene Two

(Later the same day. KERRY and JOEY are seen sitting at the table in the kitchen. There are a few empty beer cans scattered around the table. KERRY is seen drinking, but JOEY is not.)

JOEY:

You look like shit.

KERRY:

Just been a long day.

JOEY:

Devin?

KERRY:

Still at school or out with friends. Not sure which.

JOEY:

Have you talked about what happened?

KERRY:

We're going to the funeral.

JOEY:

But have you talked about it. The funeral isn't 'til next week.

KERRY:

There isn't anything to talk about. We all knew it was gonna happen. The disease was inevitable.

JOEY:

This isn't something you can just ignore and wish away. If you don't talk about it, it's never gonna get better. How did this morning go?

KERRY

We didn't speak, barely, if you think what happened was talking. Constantly at each other's throats again.

JOEY:

And if you don't confront it, it isn't gonna get better. You know how you felt when you were that age.

KERRY:

You remember back then? It was hell. The yelling matches we had. The shoves and slaps.

It was hell.

JOEY:

Can you say you're any better, right now?

KERRY:

Maybe it is bad. But it ain't that bad. (Beat) You remember how miserable I was. Couldn't stand to be around them. All of the yelling and fighting. You know, sometimes I had hoped I'd be taken away-for someone to rescue me. If only CPS was as serious back then. Maybe I wouldn't have went looking for the attention I needed. At least I didn't

have Devin younger in life. (Beat) God it was bad. And it only got worse, but God was it
bad.

JOEY:

And what if that happens here?

KERRY:

Here? How could that happen? We still talk, (Beat) sometimes. I haven't raised my hand
against them. Against my child. My children. (Beat) I'm still sound.

JOEY

You blame the dementia for everything?

KERRY:

Not everything but a lot.

JOEY:

The both of you stopped really talking long before that started setting in. You can't blame
that on everything. (Beat) You know it's wrong. Your relationship with your mother was
gone before the disease.

KERRY:

It's not wrong, it's the truth. Me and Devin are good. We'll make it.

JOEY:

Are they still at school or are they with friends?

KERRY:

What?

JOEY:

Is Devin still at school, or are they with friends?

KERRY:

They're growing up, and they deserve responsibilities.

JOEY:

The same responsibilities you were under at that age?

KERRY:

I'll fix it; I'll make it right. I still got time. They're still living here, ain't they?

JOEY:

How often did you say that with your own mother? How many times did you lie and say it was okay because there was time? How many times were you forced to move back there when things got rough, until everything happened?

KERRY:

You can talk shit about me, my house, everything I own, but don't mention that- ever!

JOEY:

There wasn't anything you could of done, but you've gotta move past it.

KERRY:

How do you move past something like that? How do you forget what happened? How do I get the images of the hospital out of my head? How do I forget how much losing somethin' so special could cost so damn much?

JOEY:

Look, I didn't mean it like that, you know that. But the house is going to you, you're the only one it can. You gotta learn to process it, or whatever shit Dr. Phil says. I just know, you can't keep going like this. It'll end up the same. You gotta do better for Devin.

They're all you got.

(Beat)

KERRY:

God, I hope my body goes before my mind. (Beat) I can't live like that.

JOEY:

And you can't live like this either.

KERRY:

I'm just tired Joey, no one ever taught me how to go any of this shit. What role model did

I ever have? God, am I tired.

JOEY:

Then rest. You can't fight your way outta of everything, not like high school. You've gotta finish this one. (Beat) If you don't care about doing it enough for you, then do it for

Devin. For fuck's sake, you owe that to them. Stop holding on to the past.

(Beat)

(JOEY stands up to leave, but stops behind the chair)

Talk to Devin. The first step is to learn where the hell they actually are. (Beat) Might be a good time to talk about the birds and the bees, too, and pray it's not too late.

KERRY:

How much have I changed from high school, Joey?

JOEY:

What'da mean?

KERRY:

How much have I changed since high school, for the good or bad?

JOEY:

You 'member that time you busted that jock's nose for breaking that kid's glasses?

KERRY:

Oh God, yeah. Except, they weren't no kid, they were our age.

JOEY:

Physically maybe, (Beat) but not mentality. You and I, we've seen some stuff. Lived through a lot.

KERRY:

Where'd the time go? We're both so old now. So tired.

JOEY:

Seems like yesterday I was helping Jackie smuggle cigs into the restrooms. We made a killing off that scheme. Even sold a few packs to that Biology teacher everyone hated.

KERRY:

You thought they were a creep.

JOEY:

Yeah, that's why.

KERRY:

I'm glad we both gave up smokes, though.

JOEY:

So you can spend more time with your kid.

KERRY:

Hell, I wouldn't be able to afford them now anyway. Too damn expensive. It's over a hundred a carton now.

JOEY:

You'd find a way, just like high school.

KERRY:

And you, what'd you stop for?

JOEY:

So I could keep pulling you outta trouble. God, we been friends for ages.

KERRY:

How much have I changed?

JOEY:

You're an adult now, of course you've changed.

KERRY:

Any good?

JOEY:

Yeah. Some bad too.

KERRY:

Where'd I go wrong? I feel like I haven't had much choice in life. Everythin' was just decided for me. How was I ever going to be successful? How was I ever going to get my act together and make somethin' of myself? Hell, everyone around me was surprised I was still in school. Everyone thought I'd have kids sooner too. (Beat) I did break some hearts back then, though, didn't I?

JOEY:

How much of it all was just your own? (Beat) In school you always talked about standing up for everyone, but where'd that go?

KERRY:

I still do.

JOEY:

You've gotta be real with yourself. You lost yourself along the way, that's okay to admit.

KERRY:

For Christ's sakes, Joey, I'm working 60 hours a week here. And I'm raising a kid by myself. I'm old and tired, Joey. What the hell am I supposed to do?

JOEY:

Don't become the thing you said you'd never be like.

KERRY:

I am nothing like that fucking monster. (KERRY starts to rise.)

JOEY:

Why? Just cus' you don't hit Devin? Cus' you never hit one of your kids? (Beat)

Parenting just ain't that simple, Kerry. You have to provide for them mentally too. You know that.

KERRY:

You keep saying what happened wasn't my fault, but I sure feel like you throw it in my face whatever chance you get.

JOEY:

You know I'm not talking about that. Kerry, you know what I mean. Stop getting so defensive. That's part of all this, you have to live for what's happenin' now. Just cus' Devin doesn't have bruises like you did, don't mean anythin'. You know that. (Beat) How

many times did you have black eyes growing up? How many times did you ‘fall in the shower’?

KERRY:

You don’t know how many times I had to fight for my life in that house. How many locked doors were almost kicked in. What was I supposed to do, Joey? Huh? What was I supposed to do when it was my own mother, Joey? (Beat) I never knew anything else,

Joey. What was I supposed to do?

JOEY:

Learn and grow from it, not become it.

KERRY:

Screw you.

JOEY:

You know I’d do anything for you, hell I always have. But I can’t help you lie to yourself,

Kerry. I’ve got too much love for you and Devin to do that.

KERRY:

Now wasn’t the time for that. I’m going through a lot. And you know that.

JOEY:

I’ll stop by sometime later. Rest, Kerry. Heal.

(JOEY cross to the exit and leaves.)

KERRY:

I’m just tired, (exhales) and God am I scared.

(KERRY finishes their beer and starts cleaning up the mess on the table as the lights fade.)

ACT 2

HOME

2.3 Scene Three

(The kitchen is cleaner than we last saw it. The cans are gone from the table. DEVIN enters into the kitchen and notices the small changes. Shortly following DEVIN, KERRY enters the kitchen from a different access.)

KERRY:

You're home late.

DEVIN:

It was just a busy day.

KERRY:

Got a letter in the mail for you today. (Beat) It looks like it's from a college. I didn't know you were looking. I thought you said you weren't?

DEVIN:

Letters are sent out to most graduating seniors, that doesn't mean anything.

KERRY:

Ok. (Beat) Who were you with today?

DEVIN:

What?

KERRY:

Were you at school or with friends today?

DEVIN:

Are you micromanaging me?

KERRY:

You know it's my right as a parent.

DEVIN:

Yeah, just like your spouse?

KERRY:

Devin, where were you?

DEVIN:

Kerry, how many beers have you had today?

KEERY:

What were you doing today?

DEVIN:

Does it matter?

KERRY:

Were you having sex?

DEVIN:

Really? This is what everything is about? We can't seem to even have an argument without it being about you, can we?

KERRY:

Ok. Let's make it 'bout me then. Let's switch roles. You can work my job. You can work in what's essentially a warehouse for 60 hours a week. You get three breaks a day, cus' that's what the government says you're worth. You also don't have to worry about what day a holiday falls on, you won't get it off anyway. Your sick days also aren't for you- you can never use them. In this scenario, they're for me. You can only take sick days when

your kid's sick. But thankfully you can take 'em to the doctor now, since you have to have insurance. You have that going for you, at least. (Beat) Do you feel special yet? You got a new special title everyone cares about- you're an essential worker.

DEVIN:

STOP.

KERRY:

You can't, you've used all your sick days.

(The scene starts to reach an emotional peak when KERRY begins to mock DEVIN and fully crests during the comment made about Angel. During this time tension continuously builds. KERRY begins to talk over DEVIN after the first portion of dialogue. KERRY'S dialogue is used from the earlier conversation they had that morning.)

DEVIN:

You're such a fucking child. . .(KERRY begins to speak) . . .What do you want from me? Do you want me to apologize for being born? Do you want me to apologize for being the one that survived? Are you angry you think I'm stupid and I'm the one still here? WHAT?

KERRY:

"Please just calm down. It's really not that serious."

KERRY:

ANGEL, sto . . .

DEVIN:

So, it's not about you, it's about them. They were always your favorite, weren't they? God, sometimes I wish it would have been me. Hell, maybe it was, and this truly is hell. Either way, I'm sure we are both miserable enough for the whole damn world, aren't we?

I guess the apple doesn't fall too far from the tree, does it? Or did we already prove that
one?

(KERRY knows they have done the unspeakable by mentioning Angel. Their body
language becomes frantic.)

KERRY:

DEVIN! I'm sorry. You know I didn't mean to. I'm sorry. I'm just under a lot of stress
lately. I'm sorry.

DEVIN:

(Although they would like for things to be different, this is the world they have accepted.

DEVIN has largely become numb to the reckless parenting style of KERRY.)

And I'm somehow not under stress? Not while I have to parent both of us. (Beat) And
especially when I have to baby your hangovers, clean the vomit, hide all of the cans in
the trash so at least our neighbors think we are a normal family. But you're right, maybe

Angel would have made everything better.

(DEVIN crosses to the outside exit)

And if you still want to know what I've been doing after school, I've been studying for
the SAT. That's the only way I'll make it out of this hellhole.

(DEVIN exits the kitchen)

KERRY:

But we talked about the loans, always the loans, always money. (Beat) Money.

(Beat)

KERRY:

(KERRY begins to bang on whatever surface is closest to them and try to conceal the anger and tears, unable to process the emotions they are currently feeling- almost shutting down initially.)

I lost them. I lost both of 'em.

(KERRY to the refrigerator and pulls out a beer as the lights fade.)

ACT 2

HOME

2.4 Scene Four

(The scene starts in the kitchen, but no one is seen on stage. The area is a mess, with beer cans and other things strewn about. JOEY enters the kitchen notices the large mess onstage and immediately crosses offstage to where the bathroom would be located in the house. The beginning dialogue can be heard offstage)

JOEY:

How the hell did you let this happen! Your house is a mess, you're a mess, and you're gonna get fired. Get us both fired. Fuck.

(Beat)

Get up. We're moving to the fucking kitchen.

(JOEY is seen dragging KERRY to the kitchen table. KERRY is placed in a chair, while

JOEY stays standing.)

JOEY:

How did you let this happen!

KERRY:

It doesn't matter.

JOEY:

And why doesn't it matter exactly, cus' I'm pretty sure it fucking does.

(Goes to turn on all lights in the kitchen that are available. KERRY winces in pain caused
from a hangover)

Does it hurt? Cus' it should.

KERRY:

They ran out. It doesn't matter.

JOEY:

And why, . . why did they run out?

KERRY:

They're an adult, I can't stop them.

JOEY:

What did you say to make them leave?

KERRY:

Why does it always have to be me? Why can't it be someone else's fault?

JOEY:

Cus' it usually is. When are you gonna see you cause most of your own damn problems?

You've never dealt with anything without running away and getting plastered.

KERRY:

Yeah, well, that's all anybody's ever showed me. I didn't have shit to look up to. That's
just the way it was.

JOEY:

And Devin? They're just super-human for not turning out like you? They're dear 'ole pal?

KERRY:

Fuck you. If you're just going to kick me when I'm down, just leave-(Beat) leave!

JOEY:

What did you tell Devin before they left?

KERRY:

They didn't tell me where they were going.

JOEY:

No, I wouldn't tell you either. Now answer the question.

KERRY:

We had a fight.

JOEY:

About?

KERRY:

Where they were, where they've been.

JOEY:

And how does that lead to them running away?

KERRY:

I asked . . . I asked them what you told me to ask them.

JOEY:

What did you ask them!

KERRY:

About sex.

JOEY:

You asked them if they were sleeping around? Cus' you thought that was a good idea? You thought asking your emotionally distanced child about sleeping around, and thought that was a good idea?

KERRY:

They weren't- (Beat) ain't.

JOEY:

At least someone has common sense. Much more than you, I might add.

KERRY:

They said they're going to pull out loans, but we've talked about it. We talked about borrowed money. They're gonna ruin their life.

JOEY:

What school did you graduate from? What school loans do you have? What school loans do you have!

KERRY:

Shut up. You know the answer!

JOEY:

Then why aren't you happy? Why aren't you successful? Why weren't you able to look your own mother in the eyes? Why can't you go to her house? Your house!

KERRY:

You know I can never go back there. (Beat) It's just too hard. It's too painful. (Beat) I just want something to be easy, just one thing. I just want one memory to be happy. I fucking deserve that.

JOEY:

Then sell the damn house. It's been over ten years. You have to grow up sometime. You can't keep making your kid take care of you. You've gotta be the adult. You've gotta want to live.

KERRY:

I can't sell it, it's not just a house. (Beat) I lost a child there (Beat)- my baby.

JOEY:

You still have a child- a baby. And they've waited a long time for you.

KERRY:

Devin knows I love them.

JOEY:

Do they? When's the last time you said it, hell, when's the last time you showed it?

KERRY:

They know.

JOEY:

Why! Cus' you're their parent and parents should love their child? Cus' you're a single parent that loves their child? Cus' you're the only parent your child knows?

KERRY:

Why would I work a miserable job in a miserable existence if I didn't love them? Why would I wear myself raw working for someone that couldn't care less if I died on the job floor, if I didn't love them?

JOEY:

But do you love Devin or Angel more? Or do you just love punishing yourself for what happened?

(Beat)

Do you love punishing yourself for something you could never control?

KERRY:

I was at work when it happened. Their grandmother was supposed to be watching them.

JOEY:

Your mother was watching them. She was with them, while they were in that tree.

KERRY:

She let them go too high. Too high. She knew better.

JOEY:

No higher than what you let them do.

KERRY:

But, I shoulda' been there. I could of stopped it.

JOEY:

There was nothing you or your mother could of done. You gotta stop beating yourself up over this. It's been over ten years.

KERRY:

They're my baby. Always my baby.

JOEY:

They can still be your baby, but Devin's gotta be your baby too.

KERRY:

I called them . . (Beat) last night. . (Beat) last night. . I called them . . Angel.

JOEY:

For fuck's sake, Kerry.

(Beat)

No wonder they ran away.

(JOEY crosses to the outside exit and waits a moment. They look about at KERRY and sigh. They then cross to the refrigerator and grab all the beers from the fridge. They proceed to open all of them and pour them into the sink.)

JOEY:

Where are your keys?

KERRY:

Why?

JOEY:

I'm taking them.

KERRY:

Why? I'm not a child.

JOEY:

Maybe you're an adult, but I'm not letting you make more mistakes today.

KERRY:

I'm just tired, Joey. I'm so fucking tired.

JOEY:

Then stay here, I'm getting Devin.

KERRY:

You don't know where they are. You think you know my child better than me?

JOEY:

You know exactly where they're at, Kerry. Stop lying to yourself, you're just too scared to go.

(Beat)

(JOEY crosses closer to KERRY. In the chaos that unfolds JOEY shows signs of frustration. This comes out in the form of hand gestures while talking. JOEY gestures to KERRY, KERRY flinches.)

JOEY:

You don't want to be a parent right now, that's fine. But don't act like you're more than you are. . . Kerry. . . Kerry. You've gotta heal. You've forgotten so much about who you are, but you've held onto too much of the bad.

KERRY:

I'm tired. I'm just tired. I'll sleep and everything will be ok.

JOEY:

In high school you used to talk so much about the future. We used to talk down on all the kids that got pregnant. You especially were gonna do things different. You were gonna

raise a kid in a good home. Support them with a good job. Have a happy family and a happy life. (Beat) You've forgotten all of that.

KERRY:

The cards were always stacked against me. How the hell was I ever gonna have any of that?

JOEY:

You have a great family. A great kid that's all but begging you to be a part of their life. A kid that's a hell of a lot smarter than the pricks we knew in high school. (Beat) You have a way out now, Kerry. All you gotta do is take it. (Beat) Take it for Devin. Take the way out for Devin.

KERRY:

It's just hard. No one ever showed me how to be good. No one thought I was worth anything.

JOEY:

And you use to look down on the young ones, the ones that never tried for a way out. The ones that had kids to cope. The ones that were told they didn't have no future, and the ones that didn't try for a way out. You used to say they laid down that day and died.

(Beat)

You've got a way out now. You've gotta take it. Kerry. You've gotta fucking take it.

(JOEY exits the kitchen through the outside door. KERRY sinks further into their chair.

The lights fade.)

ACT 2

HOME

2.5 Scene Five

(The scene starts with an empty kitchen. The mess from before is still there. JOEY and DEVIN enter from outside.)

JOEY:

I'm not sure where Kerry's at. I left them on the chair. (Beat) Probably in bed or passed out in the bathroom. (Beat) I'm gonna clean everything up, just relax. Try to, at least. Sorry this all happened on a school night, I know it means a lot to ya. (Beat) I'll help you clear that up later. Just focus on relaxing now, ok?

(JOEY places their hand on DEVIN'S shoulder in an attempt to reassure them.)

DEVIN:

I don't want to be stuck.

JOEY:

Don't . . .-

DEVIN:

I've never loved someone and hated someone so much.

JOEY:

They're trying. . .-

DEVIN:

I've always had these expectations set for me, - always about who I was supposed to be, what I was supposed to do. And the thing about it all is, they were never for me. I've always had this ghost following me around. This image of who I was supposed to become, and it

was never me. This unrealistic expectation that I was supposed to be someone I couldn't become. Someone I could never be. And this ghost has dictated every step of my life. Every time something good happens, there is this ghost to make sure I can't enjoy it for long. No matter how good I do- if I'm accepted into a good university- or how much I try to appease this ghost, it's just never enough.

(Beat)

(JOEY embraces DEVIN and the silence lingers across the stage.)

JOEY:

Things are gonna get better, I promise. (Beat) If you wanna to stay with me tonight- if you ever wanna stay with me- you can. (Beat) Hell, I'm basically your parent now. (Beat) You're a good kid. (Beat) Kerry just has some growing up to do. They had to do that too quick, ya know. It's hard for them to admit their problems. Things are gonna change, though. (Beat) They just have to move on. (Beat) You gonna go to school tomorrow, kid?

DEVIN:

What's the point? If I'm not going to college, if I can't get out of this hellhole, then what's the point. (Beat) You know, they actually started yelling at me because I have been studying. Studying to get out of here. Get out of this- all this. (Beat) Maybe that's why they're so angry about it. I'll be out of this- away from all this, and they won't have anyone to be miserable with. They won't have anyone to bear their guilt. This ghost won't have anyone to follow anymore. (Beat) Life will move on, and it will be good. (Beat) I bet it's nice to sleep fully throughout the night. (Beat) The future seems so quaint, just existing, without holding onto the past.

(Beat)

JOEY:

I know it seems impossible, but it'll get better. (Beat) It's gonna get better.

DEVIN:

How do you know that? How do you know it has to get better? It has been like this my entire life and nothing has changed. How does it get better now?

(Beat)

JOEY:

Cus' it has to.

(Beat)

JOEY:

Sit down, please, Devin. I'm gonna to go check on Kerry. Make sure they're still . . . Wait here, please? I'll be back in a minute. Just sit down for now, relax, ok?

(DEVIN sits down and JOEY is seen exiting the kitchen, going further into the house.

They're gone for some time.)

DEVIN:

Maybe drinking lessens the madness. Does it make it easier to be miserable?

(JOEY reenters the room in an obvious haste.)

JOEY:

They're gone.

DEVIN:

I thought you took the keys?

JOEY:

The car's out front anyways.

DEVIN:

You checked everywhere?

JOEY:

There's nowhere else they could be. They're probably drunk, but I poured out the beers. .

DEVIN:

I don't understand . . .-

JOEY:

(A moment of self-realization.)

Addicts always have a hiding spot.

DEVIN:

Are they going to be okay?

JOEY:

Yeah, of course, kid. We will find them. (Beat) Go get in the car.

(DEVIN crosses to the exit)

JOEY:

Promise

(DEVIN leaves.)

JOEY:

For Christ's sake, Kerry. Why now?

(The light fade)

ACT 2

TREE

2.6 Scene Six

(The scene begins with KERRY on stage. The kitchen is not present, instead the scene takes place under the tree spoken about before. The mood of the scene is somber and drastically different from any other scene. The lighting is hazy and should depict a scene that's a mix of reality and a memory.)

KERRY:

I've spent every day of my life thinking about what I could have done differently.

(In the background we can hear a lullaby being sung. It was something that Kerry once sung to Angel and Devin. We can also see two young children, Angel(child) and Devin(child), playing on stage, as if they were playing tag, enjoying themselves, and laughing. KERRY acknowledges the children but does not interact with them outwardly.)

KERRY:

Hell, I don't think I've had a full night of sleep since. (Beat) I'm so tired- God, I'm just tired. I wasn't supposed to have kids, not me. I wasn't meant to have important responsibilities. You and Devin were wasted on me. Your future could have been so bright. (Beat) I think about it every day- everyday something always brings me back to it. I just don't have any tears left to cry. They're all gone. Now, you and Devin are all gone, too.

(The two children stop on stage, and do not acknowledge KERRY sitting there)

DEVIN (child):

You're so much better at everything than I am. I'm never gonna catch you.

ANGEL (child):

You've gotta try.

(The kids start to play again, until DEVIN is unable to catch ANGEL)

DEVIN (child):

You'll always be the favorite.

(KERRY breaks down. This is their inciting moment.)

KERRY:

God no. This is never what I wanted. This is never what I meant.

(We see the two children continuously play. During KERRY'S breakdown, we see DEVIN (adult) walk onto the stage. KERRY and DEIVN acknowledge each other. As they do, the lullaby starts to fade. The light slowly dims.)

END OF ACT TWO

APPENDIX A
ACT ONE IN REVIEW

Both acts follow unique timelines. The first act focuses on the life of Blake and their struggle to find meaning in their ever-evolving environment. A lot of the inspiration for this storyline was drawn from my own life. I graduated with my associate's degree some years ago and when it was revealed I had no plans to immediately transfer to a four-year university, I received a great deal of backlash. The act itself focuses on the life of someone who has experienced great success without a degree and their struggle to make sense of it all. Two beliefs confronted within the act are the support of essential workers, or those that might be considered low skilled jobs to the outside world, and the idea that parents and mentors pressure their intelligent adolescents into a college-tracked curriculum. I question whether these two ideologies can coexist. The themes within this act are very allegorical and represent a culture holding onto ideals that have kept themselves in our culture past their use. Another theme confronted within the act is based off personal convictions. Although we all likely hold differing faiths, we all have similar reasons to believe in what we do. This will always be a fundamental aspect of life for us.

APPENDIX B
ACT TWO IN REVIEW

The second act is far different than the first, even the style of writing differs greatly. One aspect to the act is the fact it's almost a self-critique of my own beliefs. I acknowledge how often I'm drawn to the past and how daunting progression can be. Far too often our comfort levels keep us from becoming better versions of ourselves. Generational cycles are also another heavy topic analyzed within this section. As many have recently experienced, it is hard to embark on a path your family and friends might not support, but it's likely something that is very necessary. The growth we can reap from this often outweighs all consequences. This act forced me to look at my life in a way I hadn't before. It was difficult to look at the growth my high school classmates and I have experienced. While many individuals are doing very well for themselves, there are a number of classmates that fell into the cycles of their parents. I hope for nothing more than their wellbeing and success in life. I, too, know that I have many shortcomings that I will continue working on daily. I hope we can all break away from the negative cycles that bind us to the past.

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BIOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION

Karisa started her career at Howard Community College. It was this school that propelled her fondness of learning and interest in theatre. She often thinks back to her time here and wonders how significantly different her life would be without this foundation. Her first theatrical performances were staged here, and it is this college that granted her an associate degree in both science and art. Her interest and focus in theater is stage management. After graduating from Howard, she transferred to the University of Texas at Arlington (UTA). The warmth of the campus and staff attracted the developing student. *Harvey* by Mary Chase was the first production Karisa worked on in both institutions. The script, *Everyone*, was Karisa's first attempt at writing, and she attributes it to expanding her perspective of theatre. Karisa is currently uncertain of her future plans but is grateful to all her past experiences at both Howard and UTA.