

# The Suicide Table

by Kris Thompson

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### Cast of Characters

There are six primary suicide characters on stage during most of the performance and a moderator that comes and goes. Other characters are featured in memory scenes, interacting with specific suicide characters. If double/triple cast as indicated below, a minimum of 11 actors could suffice.

### Suicide Characters

- KELVIN:** 50s, black, homeless Vietnam vet suffering from PTSD. He plans on stepping in front of a city bus/train. *TECH NOTE: When Kelvin enters/exits elevated stage, lights are short bursts or throbs, symbolizing the bombing of war and the throbbing of the internal war of PTSD.*
- KATIE:** Ten-year-old girl with an apathetic, drunk, drugged-out mother and her mother's sexually abusive live-in boyfriend. She plans to use her Mother's illegal drugs to kill herself. *TECH NOTE: When Katie enters/is on the elevated stage, the lights are a soft pink symbolizing innocence.*
- LAURA:** Late 30s mentally ill mother suffering from very severe postpartum depression/psychosis after the birth of her fifth child. She has no support from a controlling husband, has just ended the life of her baby, and plans to end her own as well. *TECH NOTE: When Laura exits and enters/exits elevated stage lights flicker symbolizing misfiring brain synapsis.*
- DECKEN:** Gay teen boy from loving family who has been sent by his parents to a reconditioning camp to "cure" his sexual orientation. He is planning on jumping off the roof of his dormitory. *TECH NOTE: When Decken enters and is on elevated stage, lights are soft blue symbolizing extreme sadness.*
- LINDSAY:** Early 30s woman with terminal brain cancer who plans to legally end her life via the death with dignity act. She now possesses the doctor prescribed pills to end her life. *TECH NOTE: When Lindsay enters and is on elevated stage, lights are soft yellow symbolizing illness.*
- STEWART:** 50s, selfish accountant who plans to shoot himself to avoid the humiliation of being arrested for financial crimes. *TECH NOTE: When Stewart enters elevated stage, lights are green, symbolizing his greedy/mean personality.*

### Other Characters

(ok to multiple cast to as few actors as five as shown below, or as director sees fit.)

- CHRIS:** Adult male or female keeper of the cosmic balance of life and death. (can also be cast as David and Dr. Buckley)

LOUISE: Late 20s black fiancé and later wife of Kelvin (can also “age up” and be cast as Nana.)

NANA: 50s Grandmother of Katie. (can also be cast as Louise if aged up to Nana)

MEGAN: 30s druggie Mom of Katie. (can also be cast as Claire, Cambria, and Lisa)

RON: 30s abusive live-in boy-friend of Megan and sexual abuser of Katie. (can also be cast as Paul)

DAVID: Controlling husband to Laura. (can also be cast as Chris and Dr. Buckley)

KID: Teen street boy. (Can also be cast as female Amanda)

CLAIRE: 30s embezzling girlfriend-on-the-side of Stewart. (can also be cast as Megan, Cambria and Lisa)

CAMBRIA: 30s Mom to Decken. (can also be cast as Claire, Megan, and Lisa)

AMANDA: Teen girl, childhood best friend to Decken. (can also be cast as male Kid)

LISA: Sister to Laura (can also be cast as Cambria, Claire, and Megan)

DR. BUCKLEY 50s Oncologist to Lindsay (can also be cast as David and Chris)

PAUL: Supportive, loving husband to Lindsay (can also be cast as Ron)

**Synopsis:**

Six people from different walks of life have made the decision to kill themselves on this day. However, the forces of cosmic balance bring it to their attention that the suicide quota is nearly full and only one of them can go through with suicide. They must, amongst themselves, determine which of them will be allowed to do so. Each may share memory scenes to show what brought them to this decision. After much debate, they have all decided that none of them are going to commit suicide. At this point the forces of cosmic balance indicate that they did not understand...the quota is nearly full and must be fulfilled which means that one of the six must commit suicide. (During this play, suicide characters sit on or close to the edge of the stage, leaving the elevated part of the stage, behind them, open for various memory scenes.)

Time

Early 2000s

Place

The Forces of Nature and Cosmic Balance, U.S. Suicide Division

ACT I  
Scene 1

SETTING: Elevated Stage behind main stage features simple bed, nightstand, and desk with a telephone and one chair on one side and two chairs on the other to be used for memory scenes so very non-descript. *TECH NOTE: When Elevated Stage is used, use specific lighting requirements related to each suicide character. When not in use its lights are down. In front of the Elevated Stage and behind the front of the stage and the suicide characters there is a prominent pedestal with a shallow bowl on top.*

AT RISE: Spotlights rise on all six suicide characters, some of which are looking around and at the others, confused. They are lining the front of the stage, posed as they are in their real life.

Kelvin: Dressed in soiled, old army jacket with several metals pinned to the front. Has a nearly empty pack of cigarettes and a lighter. Sits on box or milk crate as if on a dirty street corner.

Katie: Dressed in a t-shirt and leggings. Lies in the fetal position, clutching her extremely tattered toy rabbit.

Laura: Dressed in non-descript skirt and blouse. Sits in rocking chair, clutching a pink baby blanket to her chest. She rocks herself and weeps quietly.

Decken: Dressed in jeans and t-shirt. Sits on edge of stage, peering over it occasionally as if he is on the ledge of a building, hugging his pulled-up knees.

Lindsay: Dressed in very pretty, silky pajama pants and top, fancy slippers and a headwrap. She sits on stage on a big floor pillow as though meditating. She holds a prescription bottle.

Stewart: Dressed in mused business suite, with tie pulled loose. He sits in an office chair holding a revolver.

(CHRIS enters holding a clipboard and flyers.)

CHRIS

Hello everyone. (pause) Well, I see we have a small group today. I'd like to welcome you and introduce myself. My name is Chris and I'll be your guide for the evening. Some of you have worked out why you're here, but I can tell that some still can't quite make it out. Questions?

(EVERYONE, except CHRIS, look questioningly at each other.)

CHRIS (Cont.)

Anyone? As Sister Mary Margaret used to say...there are no stupid questions.

KELVIN

(Pulls out a cigarette and puts between his teeth.)

Got a light?

CHRIS

I'm sorry Kelvin. This is a smoke-free facility. Let me rephrase...Does anyone have a question about why you're here today.

(KATIE looks around and hesitantly raises her hand.)

CHRIS

Yes Katie?

KATIE

Because we want to go to heaven?

KELVIN

Ain't no heaven girl.

CHRIS

Actually, Kelvin, you're not entirely right on that matter. Katie, sweetheart, you're about as close as you can be without being quite right. Anyone else?

DECKEN

We're here to die. Right?

CHRIS

Very insightful, Decken. You're all here because each of you has decided to commit suicide today. Although each of you have had serious doubts about taking your own life, today you each have a plan, are prepared to carry it out, and would have succeeded. However-

LINDSAY

Excuse me. Lindsay Smith here. I wouldn't classify my situation as suicide. It's not my choice to end my life. It's ending. I'm just choosing to go on my own terms.

CHRIS

Semantics my dear Lindsay. Now, where was I? Oh yes...

(CHRIS starts handing out printed flyers to EVERYONE that describe the agency and have instructions. During following dialogue EVERYONE reviews, some put down, others hold.)

CHRIS (Cont.)

...however, you're all here with me, well here with me in spirit anyway, at the FNCB.

STEWART

FNCB?

CHRIS

The Forces of Nature and Cosmic Balance. I run the U.S. Suicide Division and have since 1998, so for the past...12 years. (pause) Now, I'm sure you all believe that the decision to commit suicide is yours and yours alone, however-

KELVIN

You gotta be kiddin. Another government agency? Can't even kill myself without permission.  
(Balls up flyer and throws on ground.)

LINDSAY

Everyone should have the right and freedom to die with dignity, in peace, and without suffering.

CHRIS

Right you are, Lindsay. However, there is balance to all things. Good and bad. Rich and Poor. Democrat and Republican.

LINDSAY

I'm Libertarian.

STEWART

I'll bet.

CHRIS

Even Life and Death.

DECKEN

Like Yin and Yang?

CHRIS

Exactly like that Decken. Such a smart boy.

STEWART

What exactly are you saying?

CHRIS

I'm saying that there are six of you who would have successfully committed suicide today. However, we have only one opening left.

KELVIN

Opening?

CHRIS

One opening. (pause) One spot? (long pause) There is, cosmically speaking, only one seat left at the suicide table.

LINDSAY

Meaning?

DECKEN

I think it means only one of us can die.

CHRIS

Precisely! Cosmic balance must be adhered to. One of you will take your life, but only one.

DECKEN

So...the rest of us have to wait until tomorrow or next week or something?

CHRIS

Doesn't work like that. You've chosen your path and today is your only day. The Cosmos will have balance. Whomever does not go today, will never go by way of suicide.

LINDSAY

That can't be right.

CHRIS

If not today, I'm afraid any future attempts will be unsuccessful. It's all there in the handout.

(KATIE hesitantly raises her hand.)

CHRIS (Con't)

Go ahead Katie.

KATIE

Are you going to pick one of us?

CHRIS

No, no, no. It's not in my mandate to choose. I'm just in charge of facilitating this meeting. You are going to pick. (pause) All of you. As a group, you must come to a consensus before we can (beat) move ahead. This is why you're here. (long pause) OK. We should get started with introductions. Let's see...

(Picks up his clipboard and flips through a few sheets and stops.)

CHRIS (Cont.)

Ahh...here we are. So, there are six of you. Please stand when I call your name and introduce yourself. Name and reason for suicide.

(Looks around at group, eyes stopping on KATIE.)

OK...Katie. Can you start us off sweetheart?

KATIE

(Stands hesitantly clutching her rabbit tightly.)

Um...My name is Katie.

CHRIS

Can you tell everyone why you've chosen this path? (pause) Go ahead, sweetheart.

STEWART

Little kids don't commit suicide.

CHRIS

Not true Stewart. Go ahead Katie...

KATIE

Um...Well, I need to go live with my Nana. (long pause) She's in heaven.

LINDSAY

I'm so sorry you lost your Nana sweetie. (to group) However, I believe my situation is much more pressing.

(KATIE hesitantly sits.)

STEWART

What makes you so special?

LINDSAY

I don't believe I should have to justify my-

CHRIS

Perhaps we should skip to Lindsay at this time. Your name and reason for suicide?

LINDSAY

You already said my name.

CHRIS

And your reason for-

LINDSAY

My personal choice is mine alone to make and I don't see why-

STEWART

Just tell the man what he wants to know, or I'll kill you myself.

LINDSAY (offended)

Excuse me?

CHRIS (exasperated)

So...it's going to be one of those days. (beat) Stewart, please try to refrain from aggressive language. Everyone, this is Lindsay and she has terminal brain cancer.

STEWART

There. The cat's out of the bag.

LINDSAY

It's not a secret. In fact, there's a documentary being made. I've been preparing for my end of life since my diagnosis. My application has been approved, doctors have signed off, and I've received the prescription that will allow me to pass peacefully. For God's sake, I moved to Oregon so that I would have the legal right to do this! The story of my journey will help get similar legislation passed in other states. I will be following through today.

KELVIN

You don't look that sick.

LINDSAY

I have good days and bad days. But it's about to get worse. Much worse.

STEWART

And it's fatal, right?

LINDSAY

It is.

STEWART

Alright...so perhaps you should step aside. You're going to die anyhow, right?

KELVIN

Everybody gonna die.

LINDSAY

(to STEWART) I don't know who you think you are but-

CHRIS

Folks, please! We're getting off topic. Right now, we're just in the introduction phase. It will be time for debate soon enough. (pause) Tell you what, I'll just do the rundown myself and then let you get on with it. Sound good? Great. So, let's see...

(Consults clipboard list.)

We've heard from Katie and Lindsay. (pause) How about you next, Kelvin?

(KELVIN nods his head in acknowledgement.)

CHRIS (Cont.)

Everyone this is Kelvin. He's a war vet, alcoholic, got some PTSD in there too, right Kelvin?

KELVIN

Maybe.

CHRIS

Right. So, Kelvin is living on the street. Lost everything important to him and now he's lost hope.

DECKEN

Thank you for your service, sir.

KELVIN (suspicious)

You making fun, boy?

DECKEN

No sir!

(KELVIN stares at DECKEN for a moment to see if he can identify sarcasm. He realizes DECKEN is being serious and nods his head in acknowledgement.)

CHRIS

All right...moving on.

(Consults list.)

OK. We haven't heard a peep from Laura. Everyone, this is Laura. She suffers from severe postpartum depression and postpartum psychosis. She recently had baby number five and-

LAURA

And now there are four. (long pause) I...I don't know...I just couldn't...

LINDSAY

Oh no. Did you lose the baby?

(LAURA begins quietly sobbing to herself, face in her hands. CHRIS exits and returns with a box of tissues which he gives to LAURA and pats her on the back.)

CHRIS

Alright. I'm sure Laura will share her story with you when the time comes. (pause) Now, to get back to the introductions.

(Consults list.)

OK, we've got Decken.

DECKEN (stands)

I'm committing suicide because everything I do, how I feel, and who I am, causes my family and friends pain. My parents fight all the time. I tried to change, but it's too hard. I just want to be done. It would be better for everyone. Even my best friend wants me to do it.

(Peers over edge of stage as though he is on top of a tall building.)

I'm going to jump.

LINDSAY

But Decken, you're just a boy. You've got your whole life ahead of you. I'm sure whatever it is-

CHRIS

Leave it for the debate phase please. So, that's five. Our last candidate is Stewart. Stewart has made some (pause) questionable life and business choices which have cost him dearly. He's between a rock and a hard place and feels there is no other way out.

STEWART

Well, that's simplifying things a bit.

CHRIS

Keeping it simple. Keeping it real. So, now that you know each other, here are the rules. You will all have time to plead your case to the others. If you wish, you can share memories here.

(Gestures to the Elevated Stage.)

You may ask questions of others, comment, etc...but keep judgmental commentary to a minimum or we'll never get through this within the mandated time.

STEWART

And how much time do we have, exactly.

CHRIS

(Consults his watch.)

Less than two hours now.

(CHRIS goes to the bowl and, during following dialogue, begins removing papers of different size, shape, and condition. Looking at each one to see to whom it belongs he begins to pass them out to characters.)

CHRIS (Cont.)

If and when you determine you are willing to forgo suicide in favor of one of the others, please deposit your declaration-

STEWART

Declaration?

CHRIS

Yes. Of suicide. (long pause) Suicide note?

LINDSAY (with distain)

I certainly did not write a suicide note.

CHRIS

Your goodbye letter. A poem I believe. You titled it, "Remember Me".

(Pulls out a pink envelope and smells it.)

Scented. Nice.

(Hands LINDSAY her declaration.)

LINDSAY

Oh. Right. It's not really a suicide-

STEWART

Suicide poem? Lame.

LINDSAY (offended)

Excuse me?

KATIE

I think writing a poem is nice.

DECKEN

Me too.

(During the following dialogue CHRIS passes out remaining declarations and, as he does so, some characters open and skim, tuck them away, etc...)

CHRIS

If and when you determine you are willing to forgo suicide in favor of one of the others, please

CHRIS (Cont.)

deposit your declaration into the bowl and you may exit through the door over here, or you can stay and continue to influence the proceedings. Your choice.

LINDSAY

How do we know when we're done?

CHRIS

When five of you have relinquished your declarations, you'll be done, and a red light will activate signaling the end of the selection process. I'll come in and verify the selection. The person still in possession of their declaration will return to their realm and immediately follow through with suicide. Everyone else will then be returned to their respective realms and will experience an unexplained change of heart. I urge you all to go into this with an open mind rather than being determined to be (makes air quotes) the one. (pause) OK, well, that's it. I'll leave you to it.

(Heads toward exit.)

LINDSAY

That's it? How do we know who starts? What if we have questions? How do we call you if-

CHRIS

You're a smart bunch. You'll figure it out.

(CHRIS exits.)

LINDSAY

Well this is ridiculous.

(Consults flyer.)

It doesn't even say who goes first!

(There is a hush in the room while everyone, except LAURA, looks at each other. Then they all start speaking (improv ok) at once except LAURA.)

EVERYONE except LAURA

Well I know I/Don't you think we/I don't understand/How long do we/The instructions say

KELVIN (commanding)

(Stands abruptly and cuts off everyone.)

Stop. You heard the man. We only got a couple hours. I say we get on with it. I'll start.

STEWART

Who put you in charge?

KELVIN (threateningly)

(to STEWART) I said, I'll start.

STEWART

Alright already. Don't get all bent out of shape Kevin.

KATIE

I think it's Kelvin. With an L in the middle.

KELVIN

(Looks at KATIE.)

Thanks. Katie, right? (pause)

(KATIE nods affirmative and gives a quirky thumbs-up which makes KELVIN forget himself and smile briefly and then quickly catch himself and continue with serious expression.)

KELVIN (Cont.)

Was doin ok. Grew up poor, but so what. Lot of folks do.

STEWART (sarcastic)

Oh great. His life story.

LINDSAY

(to STEWART) Will you please be quiet!

STEWART (sarcastic)

Touchy.

KELVIN

Like I was sayin, life was ok. Lost my folks when I was a kid but Mama B, my granny, raised me up just fine. When I was 18, I joined the army and went to Vietnam.

STEWART

Drafted no doubt.

KELVIN (angry)

I've had about enough of your mouth, son.

LINDSAY

Stewart! Stop it. (pause) Go on Kelvin.

KELVIN

Wanted to serve my country. Mama B was so proud. Never seen her cry till the day I left.

KELVIN (Cont.)

(Stands and pulls a crisp army hat out of his pocket and puts it on.)

If it matters,

(Give's STEWART the stink eye.)

which it don't, I enlisted.

(While speaking he removes tattered army jacket, under which he has a crisp army dress shirt and tie. He puts jacket down where he was sitting.)

One way or the other, it didn't matter a bit over there. Enlisted. Drafted. Charlie didn't know the difference.

(All lights down.)

KATIE

Who's Charlie?

EVERYONE except KATIE (whispering loudly)

The enemy.

(LOUISE enters Front Stage. Soft spotlight up on LOUISE who is wearing a modest Sunday dress and a simple wedding ring and holds a small bouquet of simple flowers tied with a ribbon. She enters demurely, looking around for KELVIN. Soft lights up on front of stage. LOUISE and KELVIN see each other, and both smile with love. During the following dialogue KELVIN walks to LOUISE, then faces her and holds her hands.)

KELVIN

After basic, I married my girl, Louise Marie Parker. Day before I shipped out. Justice of the Peace. Together two years and had only that one sweet night before Nam. (pause)

(KELVIN and LOUISE kiss and then reluctantly part, LOUISE reaching for KELVIN as he heads for the Elevated Stage.

LOUISE (worried)

Keep your head down Kelvin. (pause) And...come back to me.

(All lights down. LOUISE exits. Lights up on Elevated Stage as KELVIN enters Elevated Stage. While KELVIN speaks, he takes off his hat, tie, and dress shirt, under which he has a dirty white tank undershirt. He casually tosses all in laundry hamper.)

KELVIN (while undressing)

Served two long tours. (long pause) Ain't nobody should see the things we saw, do the things we

KELVIN (Cont.)

done. (long pause) I came back to Louise. (long pause) Came back myself but (long pause) came back somebody different too,

(Sits on edge of bed.)

you know?

(Phone begins ringing. Looks at phone as it rings several times and stops. Lies down. Phone begins ringing and he turns on his side, away from the phone which continues to ring. Phone stops ringing briefly and then starts ringing again. He covers his head with a pillow, moaning softly.)

(Brief blackout to signify the passage of time. LOUISE enters in dark and stands next to bed, looking down at KELVIN who has changed positions but is still sleeping. She is in a waitress uniform and is visibly very pregnant. Lights up on Elevated Stage.)

LOUISE

Kelvin. (pause) Kelvin.

(Shakes him.)

EVERYONE except LOUISE and KELVIN

(Begins chanting in unison, a whisper progressively getting louder/urgent.)

Kelvin. Kelvin. Kelvin. Kelvin. (shouting) Wake up!

EVERYONE except KELVIN

(Claps hands once, hard, immediately after the wake-up chant. LOUISE'S clap is near KELVIN'S EAR which startles KELVIN awake and he immediately grabs LOUISE'S arm aggressively.)

LOUISE

Ow! Kelvin, let go! Let me go!

KELVIN

(Realizes it's her and releases her arm.)

Sorry.

(Shakes his head as if clearing it.)

Sorry.

LOUISE

(Rubs her arm where grabbed.)

Why didn't you answer?

KELVIN

Answer?

LOUISE

Answer? Answer the phone! God, I thought somethins wrong!

KELVIN

Nothin wrong.

LOUISE (annoyed)

Nothin wrong? Nothin wrong!?! Two o'clock in the afternoon and you sleepin? Why you not at work? Daren called me. Called me at the diner! I can't be taking no phone calls at work. He say you didn't show up for your shift and you not answerin the phone. (pause) Well? (long pause) Well?

KELVIN

Guess time got away from me.

LOUISE (incredulous)

Time got away from you. (pause) Time got away from you!?! Kelvin, this be the third time this month. We can't be goin on like this. I be lucky if I still got a job when I get back. Stacy coverin my section again but...(worried) I don't know. (pause) And you? Prolly Daren gonna fire your ass and then what we gona do?

KELVIN

I'm sorry.

LOUISE (angry)

You sorry. You sorry?!? You always-

(KELVIN explodes out of the bed, aggressively grabbing LOUISE'S arms just below her shoulders. LOUISE is frozen with disbelief and begins crying during the following dialogue.)

KELVIN (out of control)

Damnit woman! Stop repeatin everthin I say. Maybe I don't wanna get up! Maybe I don't wanna answer the phone! Maybe I just don't wanna hear your goddamn voice no more.

EVERYONE except KELVIN and LOUISE (loud whisper)

Maybe.

KELVIN (threateningly)

(Shaking LOUISA.)

You talk and talk and talk and sometimes I really just want to wrap my fingers around your-

LOUISE (crying)  
(Begins struggling to free herself.)  
Stop it! Let go! Leme go! You're hurting me!

(KELVIN becomes aware, loosens his grip on LOUISE and she jerks away from him, backing away slowly, rubbing her arms where grabbed.)

LOUISE (crying)  
What's wrong with you?

KELVIN (realizing)  
(Looking at his hands, in shock/despair that his hands hurt LOUISE.)  
I...Louise I...

LOUISE  
(During following dialogue, grabs old suitcase from under bed, starts and continues to throw clothes in it.)  
No. (beat) No. Can't live like this no more. You changed. Since you been back, somethin wrong with you. I...I'm a go stay with Mama.

KELVIN  
No. Wait! I'll be better. I swear it. (long pause) I'll go see Daren...fix it with the job. (long pause) Please, Louise. Please don't go. I'm sorry.

(LOUISE continues to throw things in the suit case as KELVIN gets on his knees, pleading.)

KELVIN (Cont.)  
Louise, please. (trying to suppress cracking voice) You the only good thing I got. Please. (pause) I love you.

(LOUISE closes suitcase and, after a long pause, turns around, facing KELVIN and looks at him for a beat. Then she approaches, stands in front of him, still on his knees, and takes his face in her hands lovingly.)

LOUISE  
I love you too. To the moon I love you. (long pause) But...I be worried all the time. I be scared. And that ain't good for the baby.

(LOUISE puts both of KELVIN'S hands on her swollen belly.)

LOUISE (Cont., hopeful)  
Baby be here soon. Maybe you be doin better by then. Maybe we can try again, the three of us.

KELVIN

Maybe.

(Lights down.)

EVERYONE (loud whisper)

Maybe.

(LOUISE exits. Lights up on Front Stage. During following dialogue  
KELVIN returns to his seat and puts back on his tattered army jacket.)

LINDSAY

Post-traumatic stress disorder.

KELVIN

Maybe.

STEWART

Oh, boohoo. I'm so sick of all that mental disorder bull shit. Maybe you're just an asshole.

LINDSAY

Post-traumatic stress disorder is a real thing, Stewart.

STEWART (sarcastic)

Yea. Ok. Whatever.

LAURA (almost a whisper)

The baby.

(EVERYONE looks at LAURA, surprised that she has spoken.)

LAURA (Cont.)

Did Louise have the baby?

KELVIN

Why, yes mam, she did.

KATIE

Was it a boy or a girl?

KELVIN (wistfully)

Girl. A baby girl. Named her Mavis after Louise's sister. She was just as pretty as her Mama.  
And smart too.

(LAURA begins to weep quietly.)

LINDSAY

Did you and Louise stay together?

KELVIN

On and off. Over the years things just sort of unraveled 'till we couldn't put 'em back together no more. I wasn't the man she married. Wasn't the man she needed, the father little Mavis needed.

DECKEN

If I stick around, my parents will eventually get a divorce too. It will be my fault. They're always fighting. (pause) Always about me. What to do about Decken. What's wrong with Decken.

STEWART

Look, it doesn't matter what disease any of you has, what your sob story is, I will never, and I mean never, vote, or whatever it is we're supposed to do, for one of you to take my opportunity to end it. Seriously. It's over for me. I have no other choice.

KATIE

Nana always said we all have choices.

STEWART

Your Nana doesn't know everything.

DECKEN

(to STEWART) You're being a bully.

LINDSAY

Yea, Stewart. Just stop it why don't you.

KATIE

(To STEWART) Didn't.

STEWART

What?

KATIE

Well, you said my Grandma doesn't know everything. But she died, so you should say she didn't know everything.

STEWART

Grammar lessons from an eight-year-old.

KATIE

I'm ten. My birthday-

STEWART

Look kid, I don't mean to be unsympathetic, but everyone here has had grandparents die. You're just a kid. Kids don't commit suicide. You've got your whole life ahead of you. Missing your Nana is no reason to commit suicide.

KATIE

But she protected me. (pause) Now I have nobody.

LAURA (worried)

Protected you from what, baby?

KATIE (distressed)

(Points toward Elevated Stage.)

He's coming.

(Lights slowly up on Elevated Stage and slowly down on Front Stage as KATIE leaves her seat and walks to Elevated Stage, taking her tattered rabbit with her. A bottle of vodka, an empty glass, and a small plastic bag of pills are on nightstand. MEGAN is in bed under the covers, holding a children's book. Although intoxicated, MEGAN smiles and motions to KATIE who crawls in bed next to MEGAN and they begin reading the book together. There is obvious affection between the two.)

(Brief lights down to indicate the passing of time, then lights up on Elevated Stage. KATIE and MEGAN are asleep with the children's book on MEGAN'S chest as though they fell asleep reading. OS door slams, waking KATIE who sits up, fearful, knowing RON is home. MEGAN remains asleep.)

KATIE (desperate whisper)

(Shakes MEGAN.)

Mommy. Mommy, wake up.

(OS more noises in the house.)

KATIE (Cont.)

(Continues to shake MEGAN.)

Mommy, wake up. Please Mommy, please!

(OS more the sound of a door opening down the hall.)

RON (singsong voice)

(OS) Katie?

EVERYONE except KATIE, RON, and MEGAN (loud whisper)

Hide Katie, hide!

(KATIE quickly hides under bed (or behind curtain etc...) but, in her haste, leaves her rabbit in the bed under the covers. RON enters and looks around. Not seeing KATIE, RON takes off his shirt, shoes, and pants, and throws them in laundry basket. About to get in bed, RON throws back the covers, knocking the children's book on the floor, walks over, picks it up, looks under covers, finds rabbit and visibly realizes KATIE is likely in room. He smiles widely, tosses book and rabbit on the bed and walks around the room looking for her.)

RON (singsong voice)

Katie? Kit Kat? Where are you? Come, let Daddy read you a story. (long pause) (pretending) Oh well, guess my Kitty Kat isn't here after-all. I'll just go to sleep.

(RON lies on the bed, pulls the book and the rabbit on the bed to within his reach, closes his eyes, and pretends to snore. After a few moments, KATIE peeks out from under the bed. Not seeing any movement and still hearing snoring, she scoots out from under the bed and tip toes to the exit, looks back, sees her rabbit on the bed, hesitates, then tip toes to the bed, reaches for it. RON grabs KATIE'S arm, LINDSAY and LAURA stand as they speak which may reveal their silhouettes to audience. KATIE squeals and struggles to free herself.)

LAURA  
No!

LINDSAY  
Let her go!

RON

Whoa there, little Kitty.

(Grabs book.)

Come on Kit Kat. Let's go to your room and read the book.

LINDSAY and LAURA

No!

MEGAN (Starts to wake up.)

Ron?

KATIE

I don't want to read the book. Mommy already read it to me, so I already know it.

(KATIE breaks away from RON and runs to MEGAN. LINDSAY and LAURA sit back down.)

KATIE (Cont.)

Mommy! Mommy tell Ron you already read me the story. Mommy please!

MEGAN (groggy)

(familiar with situation) Come on Ron, leave her be.

RON (threatening)

Go back to sleep Megan.

MEGAN

(Still groggy/drunken, gets out of bed, pushes KATIE aside and tries to be seductive, stroking RON'S chest.)

Ron, she's just a girl. Come to bed with me and I'll do all the things you-

RON (disgusted)

Get off me.

(RON pushes MEGAN back on bed.)

MEGAN (offended)

(Stands back up and gets in RON'S face.)

She's a little kid, Ron. I'm a woman.

RON

You're a drunk.

(MEGAN slaps RON hard. RON grabs MEGAN and violently pushes her back on the bed. During dialogue, KATIE quietly makes her way to exit, planning to escape.)

MEGAN

Fine. Go! You're not a real man anyway.

(Starts drunk laughing.)

Can't even get it up for your woman. You need a kid to get-

(RON jumps on top of MEGAN, choking her. KATIE turns back, returns to the bed, starts yelling, pulling at RON'S arms, and hitting him with her fists and bunny.)

KATIE (screaming)

Stop. Stop it! Stop it! Please! You're hurting her! Please! Stop it!

(RON easily shoves KATIE away and continues to choke MEGAN.)

KATIE (crying)

(Grabs rabbit and hugs fiercely.)

I'll read the book with you!

EVERYONE except KATIE, RON, and MEGAN (loud whisper)

No, Katie, no!

(RON stops choking MEGAN who is gasping, choking, and crying.  
During following dialogue RON grabs book, grabs KATIE'S hand as she  
clutches her rabbit with the other hand, and starts pulling her to exit.)

RON

Well then, I think Katie wants her Daddy.

KATIE

You're not my Daddy.

RON

I am tonight.

(RON exits pulling KATIE with him. Lights down on Elevated Stage.  
Lights up on Front Stage as KATIE returns to her seat, still carrying her  
rabbit. LAURA and LINDSAY go to KATIE, kneel next to her, and stroke  
her hair, comfort her. KELVIN has his fists balled up and looks like he's  
ready to punch someone. He is obviously angry. Even STEWART appears  
disturbed.)

LAURA

Oh baby. I'm so sorry. The world is full of evil.

LINDSAY

You can say that again.

KATIE

Nana protected me.

LINDSAY (understanding)

And now your Nana's gone.

STEWART

What the hell kind of mother is that? Jesus Christ. (pause) So...she goes to live with her father.

KATIE

Nana was the only one. Daddy died when I was little.

STEWART

So...how about adoption?

LINDSAY

(Returns to her seat.)

You're joking, right? You are totally out of touch Stewart. Kids her age have little to no chance of being adopted.

KATIE

I'm back with Mama. She picked me up this morning.

DECKEN

Is he still there? That man?

KATIE

He's at work. Mamma said he'll be home soon.

LAURA (panic/rant)

Oh my God. Baby, you can't stay there. We have to tell someone.

(LAURA stands and goes to EVERYONE individually, pleading action and receiving only confused looks or helpless gestures.)

LAURA (Cont.)

(to EVERYONE except KATIE) Did you hear that? Did you? We can't let her stay there with that...that man. We have to save her. Don't you see that?

(Gives up on EVERYONE. Starts and keeps pacing along the front of the stage, looking at the audience, sometimes pointing at audience members.)

(To audience) Did you hear that? Are you even listening? What about you? Or you?

(EVERYONE except LAURA is looking at each other, confused as to who LAURA is talking to. During following dialogue, LINDSAY stands and slowly goes to LAURA.)

LAURA (Cont., in panic)

(To audience) You don't have room in your house? In your heart? Not even for one little girl? What's wrong with you people?

KATIE

Who's she talking to?

DECKEN

I don't know.

LINDSAY (gently)

Laura, honey. (pause) It's ok. Come on.

LAURA (resisting)

(to LINDSAY) What? No. What's wrong with them?

(Gestures to audience.)

Don't they understand? Why don't they do something? Anything?

STEWART

Bat shit crazy.

(During dialogue LINDSAY gently guides LAURA back to her seat.)

LAURA (resisting)

Wait. No! She's just a baby! Somebody has to do something!

LINDSAY

I know. I know. We will.

(LINDSAY helps LAURA sit. LAURA begins rocking herself in distress and ad-lib mumbling. LINDSAY returns to her seat, picks up her declaration in contemplation.)

STEWART

Geeze. OK then, foster care.

KELVIN

Ain't no better. Foster kids get that and worse. Damned government programs.

STEWART

I know your type. Wining about everything. You want to blame the government? Get a job and pay taxes. Then I'll listen.

KELVIN

You gonna gimie a job?

(Phone rings on darkened Elevated Stage, distracting STEWART.)

KELVIN

Well? (pause) Well?

STEWART (annoyed)

Well what?

KELVIN

You gonna gimie a job?

STEWART (snarkey)

What? I'm an accountant.

KELVIN

So, that'd be a no. And what could be so all-fired bad about your life you wanna check out? You got a nice suit, a good job.

(Phone rings again on Elevated Stage. STEWART looks at Elevated Stage, stands, puts his gun down on his chair, walks toward the Elevated Stage as Front Stage lights go down and Elevated Stage lights go up. He answers the phone and sits behind his desk.)

STEWART

(Answers ringing phone.)

Yes? (pause) No, it's ok. You can send her in.

(STEWART hangs up phone as CLAIRE enters. She is agitated.)

STEWART (flirting)

A little early for lunch. Couldn't wait hmmm?

CLAIRE

I'm not here for that. I've got a problem.

STEWART

What's wrong? (long pause) Claire...what is it? Oh God. You're not pregnant are you?

CLAIRE

Don't be ridiculous. You know I'm on the pill.

STEWART

What. What is it then?

CLAIRE

My department is having an unscheduled audit.

STEWART

Oh shit. When? When did you find out?

CLAIRE (pacing)

Just now. The audit's tomorrow. (pause) Tomorrow! I could be in trouble here Stew.

STEWART

(Picks up phone, pushes a button, and speaks into phone.)

Hold my calls.

(Hangs up phone and locks the door.)

Did you cover your tracks like I showed you?

CLAIRE

I don't know. I don't know! I had to rush it. I was so nervous and then Frank came back from Chicago a day early. (pause) Did you know? Did you know about the audit? Tell me the truth.

STEWART

What? Of course not! Why would you think that?

CLAIRE

Maybe trying to get rid of me.

STEWART

Get rid of you?

CLAIRE

I've seen the way you look at that new girl in mergers. What's her name? Trish?

STEWART

What? No! You're being paranoid.

CLAIRE

I'll admit she is pretty...in a slutty kind of way.

STEWART

Oh my God, Claire. You're so insecure. You know I love you. Only you.

CLAIRE

Right. Tell that to your wife.

EVERYONE except CLAIRE and STEWART (loud whisper)  
Cheater.

STEWART  
Hey...that's not fair.

CLAIRE  
Sorry. I'm just...I'm freaking out here Stew. What am I going to do? I can't go to jail.

STEWART  
You're getting way ahead of yourself.

CLAIRE  
You could change the asset allocations for mergers and acquisitions. You have access.

STEWART  
Claire!

CLAIRE  
Please. Stew, please.

STEWART  
You know I can't. It's too risky.

CLAIRE  
I thought you loved me.

STEWART  
I could lose my license, my livelihood, face jail myself. I can't believe you would even ask me.

CLAIRE (crying)  
You have to help me. There's no other way. I can't handle this. Please, Stew, please!

STEWART  
(Looks toward exit.)  
Keep your voice down! You're getting hysterical.  
(Takes CLAIRE by the shoulders from behind, starting to give her a shoulder massage to relax her.)

Take a deep breath.

(As STEWART rubs CLAIRE'S shoulders, CLAIRE takes a deep breath, lets it out and relaxes a bit. STEWART starts unzipping the back of CLAIRE'S dress.)

STEWART (Cont.)

I know how to make you feel better.

(STEWART pulls CLAIRE'S dress away from her shoulders and starts kissing CLAIRE'S exposed shoulders as he slides her bra straps off her shoulders, still from behind.)

CLAIRE

(long pause) I did it for you.

STEWART

(Still kissing her shoulders.)

Hmmm?

CLAIRE

(Turns around, faces STEWART, starts to loosen his tie/unbutton shirt.)

I did it for us...so we could be together.

(CLAIRE and STEWART kiss passionately. Then STEWART starts to kiss CLAIRE'S neck.)

CLAIRE (Cont.)

You told me how easily it could be done. You told me all those stories about Lewis Hastings and Ron Mendrel getting away with millions and living on a beach in Morocco.

(CLAIRE and STEWART kiss passionately.)

CLAIRE (Cont.)

And you told me you would never leave your wife unless you had a million dollars and could retire on a beach somewhere. I did it for you. You must help me!

STEWART

(Pulls away.)

Wait. Are you saying this is somehow my fault?

CLAIRE (pleading)

You know it is Stew. You think I would have done any of this without you? You practically pushed me into it.

STEWART

Oh my God, grow up Claire! You knew what you were getting yourself into. You knew the risks.

CLAIRE

(Starts straightening her clothes up.)

CLAIRE (Cont.)

Fine. Then I'll tell her. I'll tell your wife about us. Everything about us.

STEWART

What the hell does that have to do with anything? (long pause) Claire. Look at me.

(CLAIRE turns around and looks at STEWART.)

CLAIRE

I'll tell her everything. I swear it. Every lurid detail.

STEWART

So, now you're blackmailing me? (long pause) You're not serious!?!

CLAIRE

I'm desperate Stew.

STEWART

Don't call me that.

CLAIRE

I'm desperate Stewart.

STEWART

She'd divorce me, Claire.

EVERYONE except CLAIRE and STEWART (loud whisper)

Cheater.

STEWART

You know how she is...She'd come after me. Her father would make sure she took me to the cleaners. (long pause) I thought you loved me.

CLAIRE

I thought you loved me.

STEWART

I do.

CLAIRE

But not enough to help me. (long pause) Alright then, I'll tell her.

(CLAIRE and STEWART stare at each other. CLAIRE breaks the moment, heads for exit, pausing at door without turning around.)

CLAIRE (Cont.)

I do love you Stew. I just-

STEWART

You're a selfish bitch Claire. And, by the way...I already slept with Trish.

EVERYONE except STEWART and CLAIRE (loud whisper)

Cheater.

CLAIRE

(long pause) Change the numbers. Today, Stewart. Tell me when it's done. (pause) And break it off with Trish if you ever want to see me again.

(CLAIRE exits. Lights down on Elevated Stage. Lights up Front Stage as STEWART returns, picks up his gun, and sits.)

LINDSAY

Let me guess. You cooked the books.

KATIE (confused)

Cooked (pause) the books?

LINDSAY

(to KATIE) It means he fixed it to look like his girlfriend didn't steal any money.

DECKEN

(to KATIE) It means he cheated.

STEWART

I didn't cheat.

LINDSAY

You cheated on your wife!

KELVIN

And your girlfriend.

STEWART

Yes. I covered up for her. But she kept doing it. She wouldn't stop. How is that my fault?

KATIE

And you got caught?

LINDSAY

Let's hope so.

STEWART

All you high and mighty people...you never did anything wrong?

LINDSAY (sarcastic)

Oh yes. You sound so ashamed, so remorseful. Please. The only thing you regret is getting caught.

STEWART (sarcastic)

Please. Shame? Regret? Remorse? No thanks. It's pointless to live in the past.

LINDSAY

You're unbelievable.

DECKEN

No. He's right. It is pointless to live in the past. But if you can't see a future for yourself, what else do you have?

KELVIN

You're awfully young to think you got no living left in you. I'm sure if you talk to your folks-

DECKEN

My folks don't understand. They gave me the perfect childhood.

LAURA

There is no perfect.

DECKEN

Maybe not, but my parents come as close to perfect as you can get. They set wonderful examples for me. They're giving and caring. Always ready and willing to help others. They want to help me. God knows they've tried. I've tried. Tried to push the feelings away. To live like I should. To be (beat) normal.

LAURA

There is no normal.

DECKEN

No really. We had a completely normal life until I was 12. Probably before, but 12 is when I



CAMBRIA (Cont.)

(long pause) Why are you (long pause) Decken, why are you looking at this? It's all men.  
(pause) Answer me!

EVERYONE except CAMBRIA and DECKEN (loud whisper)

Homo

DECKEN

I don't know.

EVERYONE except CAMBRIA and DECKEN (loud whisper)

Sexual

CAMBRIA (worried)

Is this what you like?

EVERYONE except CAMBRIA and DECKEN (loud whisper)

Homo

DECKEN

I...I don't know. I just wanted to see...

EVERYONE except CAMBRIA and DECKEN (loud whisper)

Sexual

CAMBRIA

Where did you get this? Did that boy George give it to you? Did he?

DECKEN

Please, don't tell Dad. I won't do it again. I promise!

CAMBRIA

You know I can't lie to your father.

DECKEN

But-

CAMBRIA

He'll know how to handle this. (pause) We'll get you some help if we need to.

DECKEN

Help?

CAMBRIA

Bishop Olsen could-

DECKEN

No! I'll never get a mission. If the Bishop knows, I'll never be assigned. Please, Mom. Please!

CAMBRIA

Ok. Ok. (long pause) Your mission is years away yet. I'm sure we can...fix this...before then.

EVERYONE except CAMBRIA and DECKEN (loud whisper)

Fix him. Fix him. Fix him.

CAMBRIA

Let's talk to your father. He'll know what to do.

DECKEN (pleading)

Mom-

CAMBRIA

Decken...It's going to be ok.

(CAMBRIA gives DECKEN a long hug, then pulls back holding his shoulders at arm's length.)

CAMBRIA (Cont.)

God wouldn't give you this challenge if it were hopeless, now would he?

(Lights down on Elevated Stage. CAMBRIA exits. Lights up on Front Stage as DECKEN returns and sits on edge of stage, looking over it.)

DECKEN

Hopeless...

KELVIN

So, you a little light in the loafers are ya? Didn't see that one comin.

KATIE (confused)

What?

LINDSAY

Loafers are a type of shoe.

KATIE (confused)

I know what loafers are, but-

STEWART

It means he's gay.

KATIE

Oh. (pause) Well, I don't think you should kill yourself because you're gay. At Nana's we had some neighbors that were gay, and they seemed nice and they didn't care who knew they were gay, and they even kissed each other in front of their house and everything. Nana said public displays of affection are showy, but she said that about everybody, not just gay people. Plus, they always won yard of the month at Christmastime which made Nana crazy 'cause she said being gay was a...um...(trying to remember the wording and then remembering) unfair decorating advantage.

DECKEN

It's not ok for me. It goes against our beliefs.

LINDSAY

Homosexuality is not a choice and it's certainly not a sin, Decken.

DECKEN

I prayed so many nights. Praying for healing. Praying to make these feelings go away, to make me (pause) normal.

LAURA

There is no normal.

DECKEN

Nothing ever changes. I try so hard to think how I should think. I fight to ignore the feelings but (long pause) it's just too hard. I'm so tired. Tired of the shame. Tired of (pause) fighting it.

KELVIN

Bein God fearin, don't think your folks would be too happy with you committin suicide. One of those unforgiveable sins you can't come back from.

LINDSAY

I don't believe that.

STEWART

Well I guess you think everything is ok!

LAURA

Some of us are not meant to be part of a family.

STEWART

Speak for yourself.

LAURA

I am. I do. (pause) I tried to.

(LAURA rises and heads toward Elevated Stage. Lights down on Front Stage. Lights up on the Elevated Stage as LAURA sitting on the bed while DAVID is dressing for work.)

DAVID

What's wrong with you? You look terrible.

LAURA

I'm sick to my stomach. I can't believe I'm pregnant. Again.

DAVID

Well, it is the one thing you do well.

LAURA

I can't handle it again. I told you before...I can't do this again.

DAVID

I hope it's a boy. With the five of you girls at home, I'm feeling a little outnumbered. Besides, we need a boy to carry on the family name.

LAURA

David. I can't. I'm just...I can't have another baby.

DAVID

You're pregnant. Not much choice now.

LINDSAY

(Stands so that perhaps silhouette is revealed to audience.)

She has a choice!

(Sits.)

(LISA knocks on bedroom door.)

LISA

(OS) Laura honey? You in there?

DAVID (angry)

Your sister? You called her already? I haven't even told my Mother yet.

LAURA

Come in.

(LISA enters and shoots DAVID a look of distain.)

DAVID (distain)

Lisa.

LISA (distain)

David.

DAVID (sarcastic)

Here to congratulate us?

LISA (confused)

On?

LAURA

I'm pregnant.

LISA

Oh God.

DAVID

Wow, Lisa. Way to support your sister.

(LAURA starts crying quietly, face in hands. Lisa rushes to sit beside her and puts her arms around her.)

LISA

Laura honey? What's wrong?

DAVID

She probably didn't eat again. Laura, did you skip breakfast again? God. You really need to take better care of yourself. It's not just you anymore. Think of the baby.

LISA

Maybe you could do something useful, like get her some juice?

DAVID

You don't need to be ordering me around. This is my house and I-

LAURA

Please, David. I'm sorry. Could you get me some juice?

(DAVID exits in a huff.)

LISA

I thought you were on the pill?

LAURA

David found them and threw them away months ago.

LISA

He threw away your prescription? What a dick! Why didn't you tell me?

LAURA

I was embarrassed. I...I just...Oh God, Lisa. I can't have another baby.

EVERYONE except LAURA and LISA (loud whisper)

Choice. Choice.

LISA

You know, you could have an abortion.

LAURA

David would never agree.

LISA

It's not up to David. He doesn't even have to know.

EVERYONE except LAURA and LISA (loud whisper)

Choice. Choice.

LISA

You look tired. Getting any sleep.

LAURA

Yes. Probably too much. All I want to do is sleep. (pause) Everything feels so (pause) heavy. Like I'm drowning. Like I'm tied down under a wet blanket. Suffocating. (long pause) I'm useless to the girls. They see me. They know. They know how disgusting and weak and useless I am. I don't want them to grow up with that.

LISA

Your girls are crazy about you.

LAURA

And David. I can't possibly please David.

LISA

David's an asshole and a control freak. A robot couldn't please him.

LAURA

I can't do anything right. I don't think I was meant to be a mother or a wife. (pause) And I'm so tired. I'm tired of fighting it. I wish I was just (pause) not here.

LISA

Don't say that.

LAURA

It's the only thing that makes me feel...better...lighter, somehow. (Closes her eyes.) I imagine opening my wrists and letting all the ugliness and heaviness drain out.

LISA

Jesus, Laura.

LAURA

And then (pause) then I'm light. Free. Weightless. And I just...float away until I'm nothing. I-

LISA

Laura stop. Please. You're talking suicide again. Honey, you've got to see someone. A psychiatrist or therapist or something. This is serious.

LAURA (robotic)

David won't allow it. He thinks I'm being dramatic. That I'm trying to start a fight. That I'm trying to bring out the worst in him, so I can look good. (pause) I can't have another baby.

LISA

You don't have to.

EVERYONE except LAURA and LISA

Choice. Choice.

(DAVID enters with a cup of juice, hands to LAURA and starts to finish getting ready for work.)

DAVID

Darla is whining about her ponytail and Leslie can't find her lunchbox.

LISA

I'll get them.

DAVID

No. Laura's their mother. You want kids so bad, go have a few of your own.

LISA

What the hell are you-

LAURA

Stop. It's ok. I've got it.

(LAURA exits with juice.)

LISA (trying to be calm)

David. I don't think a cup of juice is going to fix this.

DAVID

Don't be so dramatic. She's fine. She's just weak. Maybe delicate is a better word. The hormones affect her that way. She's always like this when she's expecting. You were in California during the last two pregnancies, but I assure you this is nothing new.

LISA

She's depressed.

DAVID (sarcastic)

Oh. Depressed. Let's see...She's depressed because she has a devoted husband and beautiful children? Or perhaps because she has to live in this awesome house and doesn't want for anything. Or is it because she doesn't have to work and gets to stay home and raise her children. (pause) I do everything for her. She's got it pretty damn good.

LISA

(sarcastic) OK you're the best thing since sliced bread. (serious) She's depressed. Seriously depressed. And the hormones are just going to make it worse.

DAVID

Oh, you're a doctor now? And here I thought you were just a lowly part-time clerk at Montgomery Wards.

LISA

Why do you think she started taking birth control pills?

DAVID

I never agreed to that. You girls go behind my back with that nonsense. And our sex life is none of your goddamn business.

LAURA

David please, listen! Laura needs to see a doctor! A psychiatrist. She's-

DAVID

No, you listen. I know all about Laura's problems when she 16. She saw a psychiatrist then and her mother, your mother, said he put her on anti-depressants that caused her to attempt suicide! In fact, I believe that she struggles with

(LAURA enters with juice.)

DAVID (Cont.)

occasional (pause) melancholy now and then, because of all the things that quack did.

LISA

Melancholy. You're calling this melancholy? She's talking about suicide!

DAVID

No, Laura just needs to-

LAURA (looking down)

I need to have an abortion.

DAVID (angry)

What? What did you say? (long pause) I can't believe you said that. (long pause) You're weak Laura. You're letting yourself be manipulated. Again. Another of your sister's brilliant ideas?

LISA

I am not manipulating. Abortion is an option that-

DAVID (angry)

(Gets in LISA'S face.)

You know what? I find it oh-so curious that Laura never talked about contraception, much less abortion, until you moved back to town. Now she has you whispering in her ear, filling her head with ridiculous, dangerous notions. There will be no abortion.

LISA

If Laura wants to terminate her pregnancy-

DAVID (angry)

Terminate? Call it what it really is. You want her to murder my baby.

EVERYONE except DAVID, LAURA, and LISA (loud whisper)

Choice. Choice.

LISA

You have no idea what she's going through. If you would just listen-

DAVID (angry)

You think you know my wife better than I do?

LISA

She's my sister! She's having suicidal thoughts!

DAVID

You think Laura would leave her kids? She would never commit suicide. She lives for those girls. She's just tired and hormonal.

LISA

In her mental condition-

DAVID

Laura's only real condition is being pregnant. But since you're so insistent on help for Laura, I'll have my Mother move in for the duration of the pregnancy.

LAURA

No. David, no. Please.

DAVID

So, you can forget about any unapproved field trips.

LISA

God, what is wrong with you?

DAVID

I think the question is what's wrong with Laura? And apparently, it's you! You should have stayed in California. Where all the fruits and nuts belong.

(DAVID exits. Elevated Stage lights down. Front Stage lights up as LAURA returns to her seat.)

KELVIN

Man. No wonder you're lookin for a way out.

LINDSAY

Laura...you can't let that misogynistic asshole treat you that way!

STEWART

(to LINDSAY) Oh, I suppose you don't think the father has any rights? What are you, a lesbian?

LINDSAY

Are you blind? Anyone can see she needed help. He put his egomaniacal need to father yet another child over his wife's life! It's outrageous. And for your information, I'm a feminist.

STEWART

And you're being dramatic.

LINDSAY

Did you have the abortion?

LAURA

No. David's mother moved in. She's worse than he is. But eventually, it didn't matter. Once I could feel the baby moving inside of me

(Puts her hands on her flat belly.)

I wouldn't have done it anyway.

LINDSAY

I don't know what I would have done if I didn't have such a loving, supportive husband.

STEWART

Wait...I thought you were a lesbian.

DECKEN

She never said that.

KELVIN

She said she's a feminist.

STEWART

Same thing, right?

LINDSAY

You're an idiot Stewart. (pause) Laura, you don't have to end your life to end your misery. You just need to get out. Divorce that bastard.

STEWART

Great. Relationship advice from the lesbian.

EVERYONE except STEWART and LAURA  
She's not a lesbian!

LINDSAY  
I'm not a lesbian!

KELVIN

Lindsay is right. Your husband is not what a husband should be.

STEWART

Even better. Relationship advise from the man that abandoned his family.

KELVIN

(Explodes from his seat and gets in STEWART'S face.)

I'm just about done with you son. One more-

LINDSAY

Kelvin! He's not worth it!

STEWART

Come on old man. Give me your best shot.

KATIE

Please. Please don't fight. Nana always said words are always better than fists.

DECKEN

My parents always said that too.

KELVIN

Yea...ok.

(Goes back to sit in his spot.)

Mama B used to say the same thing. Kept my out of trouble in my younger years.

STEWART

Well isn't this just a regular kumbaya moment.

LAURA

(to STEWART) You just don't stop do you?

(EVERYONE is visibly shocked that she's spoken up so strongly.)

LAURA (Cont.)

Men like you are what's wrong with this world. (to LINDSAY) Your husband. He's a good man?

LINDSAY

God yes. No way I could have made it this far without Paul. We were still newlyweds when I started having the headaches. I had my first MRI on our nine-month anniversary. Days after my diagnoses, I had brain surgery. The rest of our first year was filled with endless treatment and testing, drugs and doctor visits. And then, just as we were hoping for good news...

(Lights dim on Front Stage as PAUL enters Front Stage and lovingly helps LINDSAY from her seat to Elevated Stage. Lights down on Front Stage and Lights up on Elevated Stage where DR. BUCKLEY sits poring over a medical file as LINDSAY and PAUL approach.)

DR. BUCKLEY

Lindsay. Paul. Please, take a seat.

(LINDSAY and PAUL sit and PAUL grabs LINDSAY'S hand tightly.)

DR. BUCKLEY

I was hoping to have better news for you. Unfortunately, your post-op MRI shows residual tumors increasing at an alarming rate. Your tumors are exponentially more aggressive than we suspected.

PAUL

But surely the chemo...

DR. BUCKLEY

During your last round of chemo-

LINDSAY

Which were the most brutal weeks of my life.

DR. BUCKLEY

Yes, and the chemo was basically ineffective. Nothing until after week

(Looks at paperwork.)

three and very little thereafter.

(Looks up.)

Lindsay, (long pause) we've determined you are chemo-resistant.

PAUL

Oh God.

LINDSAY

Chemo-resistant? I've never heard of that.

DR. BUCKLEY

We're just starting to understand the mechanisms of chemo-resistance.

PAUL

OK, so what's next? What do we do now? Are there drugs used to combat chemo-resistance?

DR. BUCKLEY (hesitant)

There is clinical research being conducted to develop effective strategies to overcome resistance, but it will be years before-

LINDSAY

How long? (pause) How long do I have?

DR. BUCKLEY

(pause) Eight, maybe nine months.

PAUL (devastated)

No...

DR. BUCKLEY

I'm so sorry.

PAUL

Radiation?

DR. BUCKLEY (hesitantly)

We could attempt additional treatment. It might give you (pause) another few months. Maybe.

PAUL

How soon can she start?

LINDSAY

No, Paul. No more.

PAUL

Lindsay!

LINDSAY

Dr. Buckley, how long before I...before I'm not myself.

DR. BUCKLEY

The rest of your body is young and healthy. We can continue managing the headaches. There's no reason to think you couldn't have four, possibly five fairly good months ahead of you before the onset of serious cognitive issues and loss of motor function.

PAUL

You can't just stop treatment-

LINDSAY

I'm not going to spend my last months sick from treatment just so I can get another month or two, which would likely be horrible anyway.

DR. BUCKLEY

I do agree that quality of life would suffer should you choose to continue treatment. If there was a possible cure as an end game, we would be having a different discussion.

PAUL

But-

LINDSAY

Paul, I don't want to fight a losing battle. I want to spend as much time as I have left...living. Spending quality time with you and Mom and Bill and Sarah.

PAUL

Lindsay, I-

DR. BUCKLEY

This is not something you need to decide today, but I'm going to give you two a little privacy.

(DR. BUCKLEY exits.)

PAUL

Honey, I know you're scared. I'm scared too, but you can't just give up. You can't. You have to try-

LINDSAY

I'm not giving up. I'm facing reality. And there are still things I want to do with the time I have left. I haven't seen the Grand Canyon yet.

PAUL

You...Yea, wait. You went there as a kid. I've seen the picture of you guys in front of the Grand Canyon National Park sign.

LINDSAY

Yes. We went alright. Wait. Haven't I told you this story before?

(PAUL shakes his head no.)

LINDSAY (Cont.)

So, we went, the four of us. I was (pause) maybe seven? I think? Anyway, day-one, having literally just stepped out of the car mind you, I tripped over a hole and fell while running to beat Sarah to the cabin. I broke my ankle.

PAUL (chuckling)

Are you kidding me? Oh my God.

LINDSAY

Didn't even unpack the car. Twelve hours in the station wagon, 'cause you know Bill-

PAUL

-wanted to drive straight through?

LINDSAY

Exactly. So, twelve hours in the car with two little girls, two dogs, and a cooler full of bologna sandwiches and we had to turn right around and drive home.

PAUL (chuckling)

Oh boy. I'll bet Bill was pissed.

LINDSAY

Actually, no. He was sweet about it. Checked out my ankle. Calmed me down. Carried me back to the car. It was Sarah that was freaking out. Crying that she didn't get to see the Grand Canyon. Bill just kept telling her, "It's just a big hole in the ground".

PAUL

Sounds like Bill.

LINDSAY

She whined so much that when we stopped at the camp store to get ice for my ankle, Bill gave her some money to buy souvenirs for both of us. And he never bought souvenirs.

PAUL

And...

LINDSAY

Yea, so for herself Sarah got this cool book with trail maps and pictures of animals and birds in the park. And for me- (starts laughing)

PAUL

What? What'd she pick out for you?

LINDSAY (laughing)

For me she selected an ever so lovely porcelain piece featuring a picture of...the big hole.

PAUL

So? That sounds nice.

LINDSAY (laughing)

An ashtray. She picked out an ashtray for me. Rotten sister.

PAUL

Maybe she didn't know-

LINDSAY (laughing)

Oh, she knew. It was my punishment for ruining the trip. (pause) An ashtray.

PAUL (laughing)

So, you went to see a big hold in the ground, stepped in a small hole in the ground, and ended up with nothing but an ashtray which you never got to use because you (stops laughing) never smoked.

LINDSAY

No. I never did. (long pause) Yet here I am, with cancer anyway.

PAUL

Lindsay-

LINDSAY

Paul. I'm dying. I know I'm too young. I know it's not fair and I know you didn't sign up for any of this. But the fact is, I'm going to die. (long pause) I don't want to spend the time I have left just...dying. I want to see the Grand Canyon while I can. I will see the Grand Canyon.

(Lights dim on Elevated Stage and up to dim on Front Stage as PAUL helps LINDSAY back to her seat on Front Stage. Elevated Stage lights go

out as soon as they leave Elevated Stage. PAUL exits and dimmed Front Stage lights go down.)

ACT II  
Scene 1

SETTING: Both Front and Elevated Stages remain unchanged.

AT RISE: All suicide characters are on Front Stage. Lights on both stages are down. Lights up on Front Stage.

DECKEN

Did you make it back to the Grand Canyon?

KELVIN

The big hole. (chuckling) I like that.

LINDSAY

Yes. Just this past March Sarah and I spent the better part of a week exploring. Paul, Mom, and Bill brought Penny up for the weekend at the end of our trip. It was amazing.

KATIE

Is Penny your little girl?

LINDSAY

No. Penny is my niece. Sarah's daughter. Boy oh boy, I did want kids with Paul. We both did. We were going to start trying after our first anniversary, but we got the news and... Well, we were warned to avoid pregnancy. You know, the chemo and all.

LAURA

Avoid pregnancy. (long pause) Avoid pregnancy.

(Uncomfortable silence as EVERYONE except LAURA and KATIE, looks at each other, worried about saying the wrong thing and setting off LAURA again.)

KATIE

Miss Laura, did you have your baby?

LAURA

Yes.

KATIE

Was it a boy or a girl?

LAURA

Another girl. Bethany. She came early. A month early. She was so tiny. So fragile. Too fragile for this world.

KATIE

Did you protect her?

LAURA

I protected her from everything. Her struggle is over.

STEWART

What does that mean?

LAURA

I protected her from the pain of this world. From the evils of this world.

(Stands and heads, with the pink baby blanket over her shoulder, toward Elevated Stage. Lights down on Front Stage. Lights up on Elevated Stage where there is a bassinet next to the bed. LAURA walks to the bassinet and peeks in.)

Hello sweet baby. Sweet and perfect Bethany. We're gonna have a baptism today, aren't we?

(LAURA exits to bathroom. Sound of water running OS begins and is audible during following dialogue. LAURA enters and looks into bassinet.)

LAURA (Cont.)

We didn't get you a baptismal gown yet. But that's ok. God won't care.

(Puts pink blanket in bassinet and wraps baby, then picking up wrapped baby and starts to pace, patting baby, talking sweet gentle baby-talk.)

Mommy loves you Bethany. So, so much. (long pause) This world is full of evil and hate and and pain. But not you. No, you're sweet and perfect and lovely and pure.

(Hums "hush little baby" to baby while pacing.)

Mamma's gonna baptize you now so Jesus will love you and accept you into his open arms.

(With sound of water still running OS, LAURA exits with baby. Sound of running water stops.)

LAURA (Cont.)

(OS) I love you sweet Bethany.

EVERYONE EXCEPT LAURA (loud whisper)

For Heaven's sake-

LAURA

(OS) I baptize you Bethany in the name of God the Father.

EVERYONE EXCEPT LAURA (loud whisper)

-what's happening?

LAURA

(OS) I baptize you Bethany in the name of Jesus the Son.

EVERYONE EXCEPT LAURA (loud whisper)

For Heaven's sake-

LAURA

(OS) I baptize you Bethany in the name of the Holy Spirit.

EVERYONE EXCEPT LAURA (loud whisper)

-what's happening?

LAURA

You are saved. Bethany, you are saved.

(LAURA enters without baby but is holding the same baby blanket the baby was wrapped in, but it is now dripping wet. She stands motionless as if transfixed.)

(Lights flicker on Elevated Stage and on Front Stage, like something is "stuck". Nothing happens for an uncomfortable minute as LAURA continues stand motionless with the dripping baby blanket. Lights flicker on both stages again and come up low light on both stages. LINDSAY stands for a moment and then rushes to the Elevated Stage quickly exiting to the bathroom. LINDSAY does not react to her presence. EVERYONE on the Front Stage is staring in anticipation of LINDSAY'S discovery, some standing, others intently peering. After a long moment, LINDSAY enters, looks at EVERYONE the Front Stage, and slowly shakes her head no, indicating that the baby has died. EVERYONE reacts physically to this except KATIE who doesn't understand. LINDSAY approaches LAURA and puts her arm around LAURA'S shoulders.)

LINDSAY

Come on Laura.

(LINDSAY starts to guide LAURA away when LAURA turns back.)

LAURA

Bethany?

LINDSAY

She's...you can leave her be now. Come on. Come with me.

(LAURA holds the dripping baby blanket to her chest. Lights down on Elevated Stage and up on Front Stage as LINDSAY guides LAURA back to her rocker. LINDSAY wipes the hair out of LAURA'S eyes, gives her a small hug, and takes her declaration out, looks at it, goes to the bowl, looks back at LAURA, and deposits her declaration into the bowl and sits. The room is silent for a bit to the point of discomfort.)

KATIE

(not understanding that the baby died) My Nana got me baptized at her Church, but I was older. But all the others were babies like Bethany. Mama didn't come. (To LAURA) My mama wasn't like you, she didn't even care if I was baptized.

LINDSAY

Katie, I don't think-

KATIE

I think she wanted to protect me but... (long pause) Sometimes she did but mostly she didn't. (long pause) But Nana, she was different. She always said she's the lion, I'm the cub.

(Lights up slowly on Elevated stage and down slowly on Front Stage as KATIE leaves her seat, clutching her rabbit, heading for Elevated Stage. There are several bottles of drugs and a bag of white powder next to a bottle of vodka on the nightstand. MEGAN and RON are passed out, heavily sleeping in the bed. KATIE approaches standing next to MEGAN'S side of the bed, trying to quietly shake MEGAN awake, being careful not to wake RON.)

KATIE (loud whisper)

Momma. (pause) Momma wake up. There's somebody knocking on the door.

(RON stirs. KATIE quiets and stiffens. RON starts to snore again. KATIE shakes MEGAN again but MEGAN is like a limp rag. KATIE notices the plastic bag with white powder on her mom's night stand, picks it up and smells it, starts to open and put her fingers in the bag when NANA enters. RON and MEGAN may stir but do not waken during scene.)

NANA

Put that down. (pause) Put it down now Katherine.

(KATIE puts the bag down and looks curiously but unafraid at NANA.)

NANA (Cont.)

Some drugs are medicine and are good for you. Like when you have a cough you take cough medicine.

KATIE

Mama gives me tea with lemon and honey.

NANA

Right. And I have a bad heart, so I have medicines that help my heart work right. But those drugs there...

(Points to night stand.)

...they're very dangerous. (long pause) You know how those drugs make your Momma sleep and you can't wake her up?

(KATIE nods her head in acknowledgement.)

NANA (Cont.)

They make her sleep because she's big. But if a small person like you were to take those drugs they would probably kill you. You would never wake up. Do you understand?

(KATIE nods her head slowly in acknowledgement.)

NANA (Cont.)

Do you want to die? (long pause) Katherine, you don't want to die, do you?

(After hesitation, KATIE shakes her head no.)

KATIE

Was that you at the door?

NANA

No answer. It was unlocked. (pause) I see you still have Roger Rabbit.

(KATIE clutches rabbit closely and looks confused.)

NANA (Cont.)

You don't remember me, do you?

(KATIE shakes her head no.)

NANA (Cont.)

I'm your Grandma on your Daddy's side. I gave you that rabbit on your fourth birthday. (pause)  
You remember your Daddy?

(KATIE shakes her head no.)

NANA (Cont.)

Well, that's too bad. He was real sweet on you. When you were real little, your Daddy would bring you to my house to visit. But then your Daddy died, and your Momma moved you far away and I couldn't find you. (pause) You used to call me Nana.

KATIE

Nana.

NANA

That's right. (pause) Come here child.

(KATIE hesitates a moment and then comes close and NANA puts her hand to KATIE'S face and touches KATIE'S upper cheek near her eye with her thumb. KATIE winces.)

NANA (Cont.)

Your Momma do that to you?

(KATIE shakes her head no.)

NANA (Cont.)

Him?

(KATIE nods yes.)

NANA (Cont.)

He hurt you...anywhere else?

(KATIE looks down in shame and with her free hand subconsciously tugs her t-shirt down over her crotch.)

NANA (Cont.)

Bastard.

(Looks long and hard at RON.)

You want to come live with your Nana? (pause) Katherine, look at me.

NANA (Cont.)

(Pulls KATIE'S chin up.)

You want to come live with Nana?

(KATIE looks at MEGAN and RON and then back at NANA, nods her head yes. NANA holds her hand out, KATIE takes her hand, and they head toward exit. Lights down on Elevated Stage. NANA exits. Lights up on Front Stage as KATIE returns, with her rabbit and sits.)

LINDSAY

Did your Nana get custody of you? (pause) Did she adopt you?

KATIE

I don't know. I don't think so. Nana said Momma wouldn't make a fuss about me. She talked to Ron on the phone once, and that was all. But Nana said she was ready to fight for me.

KELVIN

You be glad you had someone fightin for you sweetie. You be glad, and you always remember your Nana that way. My Mama B was like that too. Don't ever forget you had somebody fightin for you.

KATIE

I won't forget Mr. Kelvin.

KELVIN

And you do the same one day when you grow up. You fight for somebody who needs it. Always somebody needs fightin for.

(Lights down. KELVIN, with jacket and medal of honor and other awards pinned on, enters Elevated Stage and slumps on floor against a wall representing a street corner, clutching an empty bottle of cheap alcohol. His hair is messed up, he's homeless. Lights up on Elevated Stage. KID enters and walks past KELVIN, barely noticing him.)

KELVIN

Hey kid.

KID

What? You talking to me?

KELVIN

You got a smoke?

KID

Yea right. Why would I give you a smoke?

KELVIN

Come on kid. Gimme a smoke.

KID

What'd you ever do for me?

KELVIN

I fought for you.

KID

Nobody ever fought for me. Hell, my Dad didn't even show up for family court.

KELVIN

I fought for you.

KID

What, like in a war or something?

KELVIN

Yea, like that. Now how 'bout that smoke.

KID

What, you a vet or somethin'?

KELVIN

Yea man, I'm a vet. (pause) You got a smoke or what?

KID

Ok, old man...here ya go.

(Lights a cigarette and hands to KELVIN.)

Now we're even.

(Starts to continue on his way.)

KELVIN

We ain't even. Not by a long shot.

(Takes a drag of cigarette.)

KID

(Turns back.)

Oh yea...you do somethin' else for me old man?

KELVIN

Yea man.

(Points out metals as he speaks.)

I bled for you. See my purple heart? I watched my brothers die for you. See my silver star? I lost my wife and kid for you. See me livin in the gutter?

KID

Oh yea?

KELVIN

Yea.

KID

Well what you want me to do about it? You want a parade?

KELVIN

Give me the rest of the pack, kid.

KID (thinking)

(long pause) I tell you what, give me those medals and I'll give you the pack and the lighter.

KELVIN

No, man. I ain't givin you shit.

KID

(Takes a fifth of vodka out of his own jacket.)

And this.

(KID taunts KELVIN with bottle. KELVIN hesitates, looks at his own bottle which is empty, discards it, licks his lips, and after a long pause, takes off his jacket, looks at the medals, nostalgically touching them briefly, and then hands it to KID who gives him the smokes, lighter, and bottle.)

KID (chuckling)

Cool. (sarcastic) Thanks for your service, old man.

(KID exits with jacket, trying to unpin the metals irreverently, as KELVIN looks after him, anguished. Disgusted with himself, KELVIN takes a long drink from the bottle. Lights out on Elevated stage and up on Front Stage as KELVIN returns with bottle and cigarettes but no jacket and sits.)

LINDSAY

Oh Kelvin.

STEWART

You know what? I'm out. I'm never going to get the sympathetic vote with all these bleeding-heart sob stories.

LINDSAY (sarcastic)

Hard to compete with real misery versus self-imposed misery, isn't it Stew?

STEWART

Don't call me that.

LINDSAY

Stewart.

STEWART

Lindsay, you are so completely full of yourself. I hope you have a long, painful relationship with your inflated ego.

LINDSAY

Why don't you just dump your kids and wife, grab your girlfriend and all your ill-gotten gains and head to that beach.

STEWART

That's exactly the new plan. You're not as dumb as you look.

(STEWART gets up, throws his declaration in the bowl, and quickly heads for exit, leaving his gun in his chair. STEWART turns back.)

STEWART (Cont.)

My bet...that hubby of yours is counting the days.

(STEWART exits.)

LINDSAY

So glad he's gone.

DECKEN

He was a bully.

KATIE

Yea...he was pretty mean. But Nana used to say that mean people are mean because they don't

KATIE (Cont.)

have any friends.

LINDSAY

I think you're Nana was a pretty smart lady.

DECKEN

Somehow, bullies find out exactly what will hurt the most and then they don't let up until you break.

KATIE

Do kids at school bully you because you're gay?

DECKEN

No one at school knows. They just know there's something...something's different about me.

KELVIN

So only your folks know? Boy that's tough. Somethin big like that and no one to talk to about it.

DECKEN

I have someone. (pause) Had someone. Amanda...but she finally gave up on me. That's how I know for sure it's time for me to go.

(Peeks over edge of stage, visibly thinking about jumping.)

KATIE

Who's Amanda?

DECKEN

My friend. Only one, really. Best friends since we were little. We go to church together. Or, I should say, we went to church together.

(DECKEN gets up and looks toward Elevated Stage where lights come up to reveal AMANDA, laying on the bed, reading a fashion magazine, chewing gum. DECKEN heads to Elevated Stage. He stands next to bed looking down at AMANDA who does not react to his presence. Lights down on Front Stage.)

DECKEN (Cont.)

In a perfect world, she'd have been my girlfriend.

EVERYONE except DECKEN and AMANDA (loud whisper)

There is no perfect.

(DECKEN plops down on bed and starts reading the magazine with AMANDA. AMANDA snuggles in closer to DECKEN and he smiles. They are very comfortable together.)

AMANDA

(Points to something in magazine.)

You like that one?

DECKEN (offended)

Ummm...No. That color is hideous.

AMANDA

Hmmm...How 'bout that one?

DECKEN

Yea. You'd look cute in that.

AMANDA

Oh yea? How cute?

DECKEN (teasing)

Um...Marginally cute?

AMANDA

Oh yea? Just marginally?

(AMANDA begins tickling DECKEN who is laughing and starts tickling her back. They're rolling around tickling when AMANDA kisses DECKEN. He kisses back briefly and then gently pushes her away.)

DECKEN

Stop.

AMANDA

What? It felt good, didn't it?

DECKEN

Amanda, please. Don't.

AMANDA (frustrated)

I don't know why you won't even try.

DECKEN

You know I don't feel that way.

AMANDA (hurt)

Right. You mean you don't feel that way about me.

DECKEN

That's not fair. You know I don't feel that way about any...girl.

AMANDA

I think if we just, you know...had sex...you would see what it's all about and you would feel differently. You'd like it. I know you would.

DECKEN

No. I...I can't.

AMANDA

I'll put my hair up in a cap and you can close your eyes and, like, pretend I'm not a girl at first. From behind it will-

DECKEN

God, Amanda. Stop it. Just...stop.

AMANDA

(Gets up and starts pacing.)

What? You say you're miserable. You say you're tired of causing your parents so much pain. And you say you are tired of not being right with God. Your parents are going to send you off to that stupid reconditioning camp on Monday and I might never see you again!

DECKEN

Don't be dramatic. It's a three-month camp.

AMANDA

(Sits down next to DECKEN.)

Last time it was a month and I nearly died of boredom! Do you want to be gone for three months?

DECKEN

You know I don't.

AMANDA

Then stay. (pause) Be with me.

DECKEN

I have to at least give this one a shot. Aversion therapy. Supposed to be different.

AMANDA

And what if it isn't? What if it doesn't work either?

(Stands, walks a few paces away, her back to DECKEN.)

Then they'll ship you off again. And again. And again.

DECKEN

(Stands, walks up behind AMANDA.)

I don't know what you want me to say.

AMANDA

(Turns around to face DECKEN.)

Tell me why you won't do something about it? You won't even try!

(Puts her arms around DECKEN'S neck.)

You and me. Us being together would solve all your problems. Plus...I love you Decken.

DECKEN

I love you too Amanda.

(Removes AMANDA'S arms from his neck and holds her hands.)

But not like that.

AMANDA (hurt)

(Yanks her hands away, stomps a few paces away and stops, facing away from DECKEN.)

I give up. You're hopeless.

DECKEN (regretful)

I know. I'm sorry. The last thing I want to do is hurt you. You're the most important thing in my life.

AMANDA

Well you're doing a pretty shitty job of showing it.

DECKEN

I know. (long pause) Maybe I should just kill myself.

AMANDA (incredulous)

(Turns on DECKEN.)

Oh! Oh, that's great! You'd rather be dead than have me for a girlfriend!

DECKEN

That's not what I'm saying. I just-

AMANDA (angry)

You know what? I'm tired of trying to help. You just go ahead. Go to Montana. Or go kill yourself. Or both. See if I care.

(AMANDA exits. Lights up on Front Stage and down on Elevated Stage as DECKEN returns to Front Stage and sits with legs over the edge, looking over.)

LINDSAY

She didn't mean it you know.

DECKEN

Doesn't mean she wasn't right.

KATIE

Did you go to the camp?

DECKEN

Yes. I'm there now. On the roof. It's where I go to think.

(Pulls out declaration and skims.)

It's where I came to write this. (long pause) It's where I'm going to jump.

(Looks over edge of stage.)

I've never felt so alone.

KATIE

(Goes and sits next to DECKEN.)

But you're not alone. Not really.

(Looks over edge of stage. Then takes DECKEN'S declaration and skims.)

You have a Mom, a Dad, and a sister and they love you and they try to protect you. Maybe they don't understand you...but that's not the same as being alone. I think you're lucky. If I had a family that loved me I wouldn't kill myself. No way.

DECKEN

But I'm sad all the time and I know I make them sad too.

KATIE (thinking)

Well...Maybe you're sad all the time because you spend all your time thinking about how to change instead of, you know, just having fun and stuff. Maybe if you stopped trying to change then you'd be happy and then they'd be happy too.

(KATIE hands declaration back to DECKEN. During the following conversation, DECKEN re-reads his declaration to himself, looks at KATIE talking to KELVIN, looks at the bowl, and finally gets up and unceremoniously deposits his declaration in the bowl. Then he smiles and sits cross-legged rather than legs hanging over edge of stage. He no longer looks over edge of stage.)

KELVIN

From the mouths of babes.

LINDSAY

She makes some good points, Decken.

KATIE

(Goes and sits next to KELVIN.)

And Mr. Kelvin I don't think you should kill yourself either.

KELVIN (amused/charmed)

Oh no?

KATIE

No. I think you should go find your little girl and tell her you love her.

KELVIN (wistfully)

Mavis? She'd be grown now. Even have kids of her own. Bet she don't even remember me.

KATIE

I don't remember my Daddy, 'cause I was too little when he died, but boy do I wish he was alive. I think your little girl would be sad if she found out you could have come and seen her and didn't. I know I would.

KELVIN (thinking)

You think so, do you?

KATIE

Oh yes. She's probably lonely without you. After Nana came and got me I never felt alone, but now...

(NANA enters Elevated Stage and lies on floor. KATIE stands and skips toward the Elevated Stage with her backpack on and waiving her spelling test around, but without her rabbit. Lights slowly down on Front Stage and slowly up on Elevated Stage as KATIE approaches. NANA is lying on the floor dead from a heart attack.)

KATIE

Nana! Nana! I made a 95 on my spelling quiz! Thirsty. T-H-I-R-S-T-Y. Thirsty. Nana! Where are you?

(KATIE, happy enters Elevated Stage. She sees NANA on the floor by the bed, stops, and drops her backpack and test, runs to her, kneeling next to NANA.)

KATIE (Cont.)

Nana! Nana! Wake up Nana! (crying) Your heart pills. I'll get your heart pills.

(Gets up and grabs heart pills from the nightstand, tries frantically to open the bottle, finally gets it open, takes one out, returns to kneel beside NANA, and puts it in NANA'S mouth.)

Under the tong, Nana. (begins crying) Under the tong. (long pause). Nana please wake up.

(Drapes herself over NANA, crying.)

Please Nana. Please don't leave me. Please. Take me with you to heaven. Please, Nanna, please!

(Lights slightly up on Front Stage. KELVIN and LAURA both stand. KELVIN enters Elevated Stage. He kneels down next to KATIE who turns and buries her head in KELVIN'S shoulder who holds her and pats her back while she cries. LAURA stands watching with sorrow, pulls her suicide declaration out of her pocket, looks at it, holds it to her heart, looks back at the Elevated Stage, and then places it in the bowl and sits down.)

KELVIN (gently)

You gonna be ok sweetie. You not alone. Everythin gonna be ok.

KELVIN (Cont.)

Listen here, little one. You gonna be ok and I am too. You and me, we're gonna both put our notes in that bowl. I'm gonna come find you and make sure that good-for-nothin Ron never lays another finger on your pretty little head.

KATIE

(Sniffing, wiping her nose.)

Really? You'd do that for me?

KELVIN

(Stands and holds out a hand to KATIE.)

In a heartbeat. What's your address sweetie.

(During the following dialogue KELVIN helps KATIE up.)

KATIE

5224 University in Chicago. We're in apartment 12 but parking is only for people who live there so you have to park on the street if you're visiting.

KELVIN

I'll remember that.

(KATIE and KELVIN go together to the bowl and simultaneously deposit their declarations. The stage lights turn red and CHRIS enters, carrying his clipboard.)

CHRIS

Alrightie! So, you're finished and ahead of schedule! Nicely done.

(Goes to the bowl, pulls out the declarations one by one, notating each on his clipboard. When done, he looks confused, consults his clipboard, and counts the declarations again.)

Well this isn't right. All the declarations are here. All six declarations. How did this happen?

KELVIN

I guess nobody wanted to checkout after all. Now, how soon can we get back? I've got some business to take care of.

(KELVIN looks at KATIE and smiles widely. KATIE smiles back.)

KATIE

Mr. Kelvin is going to come save me.

CHRIS

He's what? No. No, Katie. Kelvin is not going to come save you.

KELVIN

The hell I'm not. Also, gonna go find my Mavis.

CHRIS

Finding Mavis...that's fine. Great! Glad you found something worth living for. But the rules expressly forbid interference in each other's lives.

(DECKEN, with a confused look on his face, pulls flyer out of his pocket and skims.)

KATIE

Oh.

KELVIN

Don't worry Katie. Never been much of a rules guy.

CHRIS

Except for the notion that you no longer wish to commit suicide and perhaps some reasons for living, you'll have no memory of what's transpired here today. You won't remember Katie, or Laura, or Decken, or any of the others.

DECKEN (still reading)

That can't be right. It doesn't say anything about that on the flyer.

CHRIS

Oh, my dear boy, but it does.

(Flips to flyer on clipboard and skims, looking for info.)

Two hours...declarations...light turns red...

DECKEN

Here it is. I missed it. It says, "You will be returned to your realm with no knowledge of the FNCB or its proceedings."

KATIE

So...so I will be alone.

KELVIN

Katie. We'll figure something out. (to CHRIS) How long do we have? How long before we go back?

CHRIS

No one can go back. You haven't accomplished your mission here.

LINDSAY

I don't understand.

KELVIN

Me neither.

DECKEN (reading flyer)

Wait. It says, "The cosmic balance of life and death must not be disturbed by too many or"

LINDSAY

But if none of us are going to commit suicide, then there aren't too many. So why...

DECKEN

-“or too few.” (pause) Oh...right. Balance. Not too many. Not too few.

CHRIS

Again, such a smart boy.

KELVIN

So, what you're sayin is-

(STEWART enters, dressed in casual but smart travel clothes, carrying a travel bag, looking confused.)

CHRIS

It's wonderful if you've found reasons to live, but one of you still must choose suicide.

STEWART

Holy Crap. I'm back here? (pause) Oh hell no.

CHRIS

(Passes out declarations to EVERYONE during dialogue.)

You'll have to begin again. The rules are a bit different than before since we need only one of you to make a decision.

STEWART

What the hell happened?

CHRIS

This time, if you wish to proceed with suicide, please deposit your declaration in the bowl. Only one of you needs to deposit your declaration and the decision will be made, red lights, etc...Does everyone understand?

LAURA

Only one can escape the chaos.

CHRIS

Well, that is one way of putting it. I suggest you get started.

(Looks at watch.)

You're nearly out of time.

(CHRIS exits.)

STEWART

Jesus Christ! You idiots couldn't wrap this up on your own?

EVERYONE (except Stewart)

Shut up Stewart!

STEWART

Can we please get on with it?

LINDSAY

I agree. Stewart, you said you had no other option, so why don't you deposit your declaration so the rest of us will move on with our lives.

STEWART

Sorry. Have plane to catch. Besides, you're the one with the pending documentary hinging on your suicide.

LINDSAY

I would sacrifice that to see the world rid of the likes of you.

KELVIN

Stop it you two. We got an important decision to make.

STEWART (sarcastic)

Fantastic. Look who's in charge again. How'd that turn out last time?

KELVIN

Enough! We're all tired-to-death of your lip. (pause) Now, I'm gonna take my name out of the runnin. Gonna go find my Mavis. Thank you, Katie, for remindin me what's important.

KATIE

I bet you'll find her Mr. Kelvin. Mavis is gonna be so happy to see you.

KELVIN

I'm gonna try to remember. Remember this. Remember you. Come find you.

DECKIN

But Chris said we wouldn't remember anything.

KELVIN

But I'll try real hard.

KATIE

I know you will. Don't worry. (pause) And Amanda is going to be so happy to see you after camp. You'll see.

LINDSAY

She's right, you know. I remember being quite impulsive as a teenager. I'm sure she's been regretting her words and missing you like crazy. Maybe she'll write to you.

DECKEN

We aren't allowed any contact...not even mail. But I'm sure you're both right. (long pause) I guess I'm going to have to find a way to be ok with myself the way I am. You know, I've never seriously considered that as an option. (long pause) I feel hopeful for the first time since...well...the first time ever.

LAURA

I'm the one. I'll be the one to go. I'm no good to anyone.

KATIE

But your girls. Your baby. They need you.

(At the mention of the baby, EVERYONE except LAURA and KATIE look worriedly and/or sadly at each other.)

KELVIN

Katie, hunny-

KATIE

Really. You may not know it, but they do. I'm sure they love you too and I know you're sad, but they'll be sad too if you go. And if you're not there, maybe their Daddy will be mean to them like he was to you and you won't be there to protect them. That's what Moms are supposed to do.

LINDSAY

No. I'll be the one.

STEWART

Finally! The voice of reason. One less sanctimonious skank in this world.

(KELVIN explodes from sitting and gets in STEWART'S face.)

KELVIN

One more word from you and I swear I'll take that declaration and shove it so far up your-

LINDSAY

Kelvin, it's ok. Don't listen-

STEWART

Get real old man. You're gonna kick my ass? You're pathetic.

KATIE

Stop it!

STEWART

Don't go looking for Mavis. She's better off thinking you're dead.

KELVIN

Don't you dare speak my daughter's name you lying, cheating, worthless piece of corporate crap!

STEWART

Back off, street scum.

(STEWART shoves KELVIN who in turn tackles STEWART to the ground. They roll around, grunting, slinging insults (ad lib ok), fighting during the following dialogue.)

KATIE (starting to cry)

Please don't fight!

LINDSAY

Stop it both of you!

LAURA

Chaos. It always comes to chaos.

KATIE (crying)

Stop! Please Stop!

LINDSAY

Decken! Go get Chris! Hurry!

DECKEN

(shouting to CHRIS) Chris! Chris!

(DECKEN runs off stage calling for Chris. STEWART rolls on top of KELVIN and starts punching him in the face.)

LINDSAY

Stewart get off of him!

(LINDSAY tries to pull off STEWART who easily shoves her away. She rolls to the ground and stays for a moment, shaken.)

KATIE (screaming)

Stop! Stop it! You're hurting him!

(KATIE jumps on top of STEWART, hitting him with fists and rabbit. STEWART thoughtlessly throws off KATIE much the same as RON did in her previous memory scene. LAURA helps KATIE stand up. LAURA touches KATIE'S face gently. The fight continues through the following.)

LAURA

(to KATIE but watching fight) Chaos always comes, child.

(As fight continues, KATIE, crying, walks unnoticed to the bowl and stares into it, takes out her declaration and looks at it. Then LAURA takes her own declaration out of her pocket and looks at it.)

LAURA (Cont.)

(with volume, but to herself) There is only one way out of chaos.

(KATIE, responding to LAURA'S words, turns to look at LAURA and then holds her declaration over the bowl. At the same time LAURA turns toward bowl and is surprised to see KATIE holding her declaration over the bowl. At the same time DECKEN and CHRIS hurry onstage to see fight in progress.)

LAURA

Katie, wait child.

(LAURA'S words draw attention of DECKEN, CHRIS, and LINDSAY who turn to LAURA and then follow her gaze to see KATIE holding her declaration above the bowl.)

DECKEN  
No Katie no!

LINDSAY  
Katie No! Get away from the bowl!

(DECKEN tries to rush to stop KATIE but CHRIS, with a sad look on his face, stops him. Simultaneously KELVIN and STEWART stop fighting and look at KATIE with her declaration held above the bowl.)

STEWART

Wait, no! Kid, I'll go! Really, I'll go!

KELVIN (commanding boom)

Stop!

(EVERYONE except KATIE freezes, most while reaching out for KATIE, CHRIS, while in the midst of holding back DECKEN, all anguished looks on their faces, all eyes on KATIE, etc...KATIE, still holding declaration above the bowl, looks at each face, landing finally on KELVIN'S face.)

KATIE

Don't worry Mr. Kelvin. I won't need protecting any more.

(KATIE drops her declaration in bowl. Lights immediately go red and then immediately go down.)

CURTAIN