

Fall from Grace
and
Dying Light

Two One-Act Plays

By

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Fall From Grace

By
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CHARACTERS:

Brian Foster:

A thirty year old climber hanging off the side of a mountain, freezing, seeing ghosts, and hallucinating.

Chris:

Brian's dead climbing partner.

Lisa Foster:

Brian's wife, and Becky's mother.

Becky:

Brian's five year old daughter. Should be played by a teenager or young woman.

Cass:

An assistant at Brian's office.

Spirits:

The ghosts of Mt. Grace. Four or more figures whose faces cannot be seen that move around the stage with a choreographed grace. These characters may be doubled as Chris, Lisa, Becky and Cass. It is perfectly acceptable to add more spirits to this mix. These characters speak only in whispers.

SETTING:

The steep face of Mt. Grace, a remote and dangerous mountain in Alaska and in Brian's memory; a remote and dangerous place.

NOTES:

See the specific production notes at the end of the script.

*In the desert
I saw a creature, naked, bestial,
Who, squatting upon the ground,
Held his heart in his hands,
And ate of it.
I said, "Is it good, friend?"
"It is bitter – bitter," he answered;
"But I like it
Because it is bitter,
And because it is my heart."*

Stephen Crane

Fall from Grace

By

Jason D. Martin

Draft Nine

(At rise, discovered hanging center stage is a single mountain climber suspended three feet above the floor by a rope. The climber, Brian, is unconscious. In the background the audience can hear the roar of the mountain wind. Four to five characters dressed in black with faces covered in white masks enter the stage and run around the unconscious man with a choreographed grace. They are the Spirits. They begin to spin the helpless climber on his rope as each gust of wind bellows more loudly in the background. One of the Spirits runs a hand up his spine. Suddenly Brian shudders. The spirits back away and melt into the darkness. He looks down and reacts to his predicament. He is utterly terrified.)

BRIAN:

Oh my... Oh... Shit. *(Pause.)* Shit! Shit! Shit! *(Talking to himself.)* Good one Bri. Nice fuckin' move! *(He touches his forehead and discovers it's covered with dry frozen blood.)* Oh this is just fantastic. Fucking fantastic. *(He looks up.)* I hope you're in better shape than I am bud. *(Yells.)* Chris! Hey, Chris! Goddamn it. Chris are you up there? Hey man, answer me. Help! Chris! Hey! Help! Oh man, don't be dead. Chris! Come on man, this is no time to play games. You better be up there puttin' a Z-pully together! Shit. Chris!

(There is a long pause.)

BRIAN:

Chris? Chris! Quit fuckin' around up there... Come on, man!

(One of the spirits steps forward. Brian is suddenly able to see him.)

BRIAN:

Oh my God! Oh my God! What the hell man! What the hell!

(The spirit approaches Brian who hangs helpless to escape from him.)

BRIAN:

Jesus! Get away from me! Get away from me!

(The spirit takes off his mask to reveal that he is Chris.)

BRIAN:

Chris! Chris! You're alive! Goddamn Me! You're fucking alive! What happened?

(Chris begins to laugh at Brian.)

BRIAN:

What? What? What the fuck man? What's so goddamn funny?

CHRIS:

Fuckin' Volkswagon. *(It is important for the actor playing Chris to know that he was killed by a block of ice the size of a Volkswagon.)*

BRIAN:

What are you talking about? Jesus, get me outta' here? Chris? It's seriously cold here man...

CHRIS:

Thing fell. Stop shivering. Start ta' see things man. Don't.

BRIAN:

Why are you just standing there? What are you standing on?

CHRIS:

Buried by avalanche ya' get a mask of ice bro. A mask of fucking ice...

SPIRITS:

Ice Mask.

BRIAN:

Chris? What's this about? Are you alive? Jesus? Chris? Are you alive? My God...

CHRIS:

Block of ice size of Volkswagon.

BRIAN:

What the hell man? What the hell?

(Chris puts the white mask back on and disappears from Brian's view. Chris once again becomes one of the spirits.)

BRIAN:

Chris? Jesus man? What the hell? Chris are you dead? You're fucking dead aren't you! You're dead! I'm dead... CHRIS! Please don't be fucking dead! Don't be dead! Please!

(He slaps himself in the face once or twice in an attempt to stay with reality.)

BRIAN:

Come on! Come on! You're okay... You're okay Bri. Oh boy. This isn't happening... I'm not seeing things; my partner's not dead. Shit! Come on Bri, keep it together. Stay awake. Stay warm. Stay alive. Maybe you could get your ass outta' this. Gotta' get the hell outta' here.

(Brian makes an attempt to swing into the wall. Each time he gets close to it he swings his ice tool wildly in an attempt to find purchase. The spirits, playing the wind, taunt him. Finally after several attempts the blade sticks, for a moment he is sure he will be able to climb the wall. Suddenly he loses grip on the tool. One of the spirits takes it from him. The illusion should be that he has dropped the tool. The spirits laugh.)

No! Goddamn it, No! *(He swings back to his original position. The spirits steady him.)*

BECKY:

(A single spot rises on Becky. She is a five-year old girl that should be played by a teenager or a young woman.) Daddy?

BRIAN:

Bec?

BECKY:

Teach me to tie my shoes Daddy?

(Becky dissolves.)

BRIAN:

Bec? Jesus... Becky? Oh my God. Oh my God! Becky! What's happening to me? Bec?

CASS'S VOICE:

Come with me Brian! Come with me!

BRIAN:

Cass?

CASS'S VOICE:

You don't love her.

BRIAN:

Jesus, Cass?

CHRIS'S VOICE:

Fuckin'-A Dude!

BRIAN:

Chris! Are you okay? Chris!

CHRIS'S VOICE:

What do ya' want bro? I'm buyin'.

BRIAN:

Chris! (*Tears well up in Brian's eyes.*) Chris! Goddamn it! Be alive. Please be alive.

(Suddenly Brian begins to shiver. He starts to go in and out of consciousness. He stops shivering just before the dream world takes over. Brian is lowered to the floor to play the scene on the stage. Chris enters from the spirits. He takes off his spirit mask to reveal himself for the scenes he plays. At times Chris will add a line that is an indication of the present on the mountain. There should be a different tone to his voice when he says these lines, as with any character that says these types of lines throughout the play. The spirits are patrons of the bar where the following scene takes place.)

BRIAN:

What? What? How did I get here?

CHRIS:

What do ya' want bro? I'm buyin'.

BRIAN:

What?

CHRIS:

What do ya' want bro? I'm buyin'.

BRIAN:

I was on the mountain... How? How'd I get here? What the hell?

CHRIS:

What do ya' want bro? I'm buyin'.

BRIAN:

We... Avalanche. I fell off the cliff... You... You... Wouldn't answer me. I saw a ghost.

CHRIS:

What do ya' want bro? I'm buyin'.

BRIAN:

Stop saying that!

CHRIS:

What do ya' want bro? I'm buyin'.

BRIAN:

Fuckin' stop! Don't you understand... You got buried! That's why I didn't fall. Jesus Chris... I think... I think you died.

CHRIS:

What do ya' want bro? I'm buyin'.

BRIAN:

How'd I get in this bar? What's going on?

CHRIS:

What do ya' want bro? I'm buyin'.

BRIAN:

Fuckin'... Fine. Just give me a Henry's!

CHRIS:

Alright bud... Two Henrys. That was a wicked lead you did today... Mother fucking wicked.

BRIAN:

Jesus, we're... We're in Squamish. This happened. (*Pronounced sqwa-mish.*)

CHRIS:

Fuckin' Volkswagon.

SPIRITS WHISPER:

Volkswagon.

BRIAN:

What? What?

CHRIS:

That was a wicked lead you did today... Mother fucking wicked.

BRIAN:

What'd you just say? Before that?

CHRIS:

That was a wicked lead you did today... Mother fucking wicked.

BRIAN:

What? Do I have ta' play along? Is that it? Repeat what happened?

CHRIS:

That was a wicked lead you did today... Mother fucking wicked.

BRIAN:

Thanks man. I... You know...

CHRIS:

So when we gonna' do a big trip?

BRIAN:

Fuck this, man.

CHRIS:

Ice mask.

SPIRITS:

Ice mask.

BRIAN:

What? What'd you say?

CHRIS:

So when we gonna' do a big trip?

BRIAN:

Why ya' got some cash to burn?

CHRIS:

Fuck yeah... We gotta' do a big peak! A big expedition route.

BRIAN:

No! No! We can't do that Chris! You'll die if we do!

CHRIS:

We gotta' do a big peak! A big expedition route.

BRIAN:

Jesus... Okay... Okay... God help me. How about the North Face of Mt. Grace?

CHRIS:

That might be a bit too hard. Avalanche.

SPIRITS:

Avalanche.

BRIAN:

Avalanche? What?

CHRIS:

That might be a bit too hard.

BRIAN:

Jesus... I have to talk you into this again. God help me...

CHRIS:

That might be a bit too hard.

BRIAN:

You know what's gonna' happen don't you? Don't you?

CHRIS:

That might be a bit too hard. Breath! Freeze! Ice mask...

SPIRITS:

Ice mask.

BRIAN:

What?

CHRIS:

That might be a bit too hard.

BRIAN:

Okay... Okay... Just like the first time huh... Okay. Ah come on man... Don't be a puss. Think about it. Five thousand feet of rock and ice! We'd be in all the journals. Think about it... Fame and fortune for a route like that. Fame and fortune.

CHRIS:

You don't care about fame and fortune.

BRIAN:

But you do.

CHRIS:

Maybe in a couple of years. Shivering! Don't stop!

BRIAN:

Shivering?

CHRIS:

Maybe in a couple of years.

BRIAN:

Jesus.

CHRIS:

Well, I've got obligations right now. I've got a dog you know. And... And Ice block. Fucking Volkswagon.

BRIAN:

Volkswagon?

SPIRITS WHISPER:

Death.

CHRIS:

I've got a dog you know.

BRIAN:

You said something else.

CHRIS:

I've got a dog you know.

BRIAN:

Man... Okay. This is crazy.

CHRIS:

I've got a dog you know.

BRIAN:

Okay. Fine. You want to do the West Butt on Denali don't you? You fuckin' puss. Damn wheelchair route.

CHRIS:

Give it a couple more seasons. Too many people have died on Grace Bro... Fuckin' mountain is supposed to be haunted. Too many people for me. Besides, what the hell is up with you and Lisa?

BRIAN:

Christ Man.

CHRIS:

What?

BRIAN:

I don't know... She's all pullin' the "we should get married" shit. That commitment crap.

CHRIS:

Oh screw that! Your climbing days would be over man! Fuckin' over! Next thing you'll tell me she wants kids.

BRIAN:

She wants kids.

CHRIS:

Ah shit man. So what are ya' gonna' do?

BRIAN:

I don't know. It just hasn't been the same since she quit her river job. It's... You know... Different.

CHRIS:

Well, do ya' love her?

BRIAN:

What?

CHRIS:

Do ya' love her?

BRIAN:

Think about it man... Five thousand feet of perfection. We gotta' do that route. We gotta' man.

CHRIS:

Maybe in a couple more seasons... Gotta' let my nut sack drop before I commit to something like that. Shit takes some serious balls bro.

BRIAN:

No doubt man. No fucking doubt.

(Chris fades back into the spirits and becomes one once again. Brian begins a bout with intense shivering. He is jerked violently off the floor and back to his position hanging.)

BRIAN:

What the hell? What the hell? Jesus Christ! Fuckin' mountain? Chris! Chris!

(Brian continues to shiver violently. The Spirits approach him and begin to spin him on the rope.)

BRIAN:

Goddamn that wind is cold. So damn cold.

(The Spirits climb onto blocks around Brian. One begins to hug his feet. Another begins to hug his torso, yet another hugs his legs. One stands behind him and runs its fingers up and down his spine. He shivers violently.)

BRIAN:

Oh my God. Oh Jesus Christ it's cold. Oh God...

BECKY:

(A light rises on Becky.) Daddy?

BRIAN:

Oh Bec... I'm sorry. I'm sorry for everything. Please forgive me... Please.

BECKY:

Teach me to tie my shoes Daddy. Please Daddy.

BRIAN:

(Almost a whisper.) Oh Becky, I wish I could... I wish I could.

BECKY:

Please Daddy, don't go away. Teach me to tie my shoes. Don't stop shivering Daddy.

BRIAN:

I'm tryin' baby... I'm tryin' kid.

(The light on Becky fades and she disappears. Brian sluggishly starts to push the spirits off of him. They flutter around him for a moment then retreat.)

God... It hurts to shiver. It hurts.

LISA:

(Voice from offstage.) Brian?

BRIAN:

What? Oh God!

LISA:

Brian...

BRIAN:

Lisa? Oh my God, Lisa?

(Stage lights should come up illuminating a portion of the stage. One of the spirits removes her mask and becomes Lisa. She is a beautiful young woman)

with a picnic basket. She carefully begins to unpack the basket, laying out all the items one might have on a romantic picnic. The spirits watch from behind.)

Lisa... It can't be. Lisa? God...

LISA:

Brian? Brian, are you coming? *(She looks up at him.)*

BRIAN:

I did something bad Lis. I did something bad and I'm not sure if it's gonna' work out for us. I'm dyin' Lis. Cass and I... Jesus.

LISA:

Brian, are you coming?

BRIAN:

I don't know if you're... I fucked up Lis... I fucked up! Don't you see I'm dying here?

LISA:

Brian, are you coming?

BRIAN:

Jesus.

LISA:

Brian, are you coming?

BRIAN:

Ummm... I don't think so.

LISA:

Brian, are you coming?

BRIAN:

I ah... Sorry Babe, doesn't look like it.

LISA:

Brian, are you coming?

BRIAN:

Ah... Sure. I ah, I'll be there in a second.

(Brian shivers for a moment then stops. He is suddenly lowered to the ground.)

LISA:

Well, what do you think?

BRIAN:
I... I'm freezing.

LISA:
Well, what do you think?

BRIAN:
Hanging and picnic and... What's going on? *(To a spirit.)* Like before?

LISA:
Well, what do you think?

BRIAN:
Okay... Okay. Oh, this is beautiful. The water... Wow.

LISA:
I'm not about to bring any guy of mine to an ugly place for a picnic. That bitch.

SPIRITS:
Bitch.

BRIAN:
What?

LISA:
I'm not about to bring any guy of mine to an ugly place for a picnic.

BRIAN:
No, I can't imagine you would. *(They sit down beside one another on the picnic blanket. There is a pause and both take in the view.)*

LISA:
Look, Champaign? *(She pulls a bottle and two glasses from her picnic basket.)*

BRIAN:
Yeah, I guess... *(She pours it.)* Lisa, there's something... I... I've got something... I'm thinking about doing another big... *(If she doesn't cut him off in time: "I'm thinking about doing another big expedition to Alaska.")*

LISA:
It's nice here. I don't want to argue.

BRIAN:
No, it's just that I was thinking about what you said...

LISA:

I said I don't want to argue.

BRIAN:

It's been hard to talk lately, ya' know. Now I want to talk Lisa.

LISA:

It's so nice out... There's something that I want to...

BRIAN:

It's just that I don't want to be so cooped up. It was different before we were married... I mean you were doing the raft trips all the time... I was climbing... But now...

LISA:

I brought the champagne to celebrate. No leave. (*The intention is, "Don't leave me."*)

BRIAN:

Leave you... What?

LISA:

I brought the champagne to celebrate.

BRIAN:

What did you just say?

LISA:

I brought the champagne to celebrate.

BRIAN:

You have to understand that I need to get away sometimes. Like you used too...

LISA:

I understand. I want to tell you something though...

BRIAN:

It's not you, it's me. I have to go and climb mountains with Chris. I just have to. Sometimes I feel like I'm just falling you know? I mean just falling and... I have to...

LISA:

Sometimes all you can do is fall... (*She leans her head in, their foreheads touching as they talk.*) Bri.

(*Brian pulls his head away. For a moment there is a hurt look on Lisa's face.*)

LISA:

Let's play like we used to. Come on Bri... Like before we were married. We were so warm together. Come on let's do it. Like before you were my sweet angel.

BRIAN:

Sometimes not so sweet.

LISA:

But today's a good day. You're my sweet angel today.

BRIAN:

It was different then Lis. You were a river guide... I was always in the mountains... We were perfect. The perfect couple.

LISA:

We're still the perfect couple.

(She rests her forehead against Brian's.)

BRIAN:

Lis.

LISA:

Bri.

BRIAN:

Lis.

LISA:

Bri. *(They kiss. Brian pulls away first.)*

BRIAN:

Now where did you learn to kiss like that?

LISA:

First kiss at sixteen... Jason Holt.

BRIAN:

Ah the infamous Jason Holt. I guess we'll have to thank him.

LISA:

There were others... A lot of others.

BRIAN:

Oh really... *(He kisses her.)*

LISA:

Yeah, you can thank my dog for that. (*She kisses him.*)

BRIAN:

Oh... Well you can thank my goldfish for that. (*He kisses her.*)

LISA:

Ah... Well, you can thank my brother for that. (*She kisses him.*)

BRIAN:

Well you can thank my mother for that...

LISA:

(*She pulls away.*) Ewww... Okay, you win.

BRIAN:

I'm sorry.

LISA:

About what?

BRIAN:

Just apologizing in advance.

LISA:

Why?

BRIAN:

Because right now it's like it used to be – warm. I'm sorry if I'm the one that screws that up again.

LISA:

Then I'm sorry if I'm the one...

BRIAN:

So what's the good news?

LISA:

Oh... That... I, uh... (*She smiles a fake smile.*) I'm pregnant.

BRIAN:

What?

LISA:

That's what the champagne is for.

BRIAN:

I ah... Jesus Christ. Shit. I... When did this happen?

LISA:

You were there, you figure it out.

BRIAN:

I can't... We can't...

LISA:

Come on Brian, it'll be great. You'll stay home more, help me with the baby... We'll have more good times...

BRIAN:

What? What? Are you stupid?

LISA:

Don't call me stupid Brian.

BRIAN:

That's how white trash chicks get their boyfriends to marry 'em.

LISA:

I can't believe this. Why are you being such an ass?

BRIAN:

I'm not being an ass! We can't have this baby.

LISA:

Why?

BRIAN:

We can't afford it.

LISA:

We can afford it just fine.

BRIAN:

You got pregnant on purpose.

LISA:

What? How dare you...

BRIAN:

We can't... There's just not enough time to...

LISA:

I'm not getting rid of it.

BRIAN:

Do you know how much responsibility that is? Do you? We won't be able to do anything. Ever.

LISA:

We talked about this when I quit the river job and got married. We were gonna' be adults remember?

BRIAN:

No this is no good.

LISA:

Either you're going to support me or you're not...

BRIAN:

Jesus Christ Lis!

LISA:

Either you're going to support me or you're not... Which one is it Brian?

BRIAN:

It isn't right.

LISA:

Which one is it Brian?

BRIAN:

Can't we wait a little longer?

LISA:

Which one?

BRIAN:

I feel cornered.

LISA:

Which?

BRIAN:

I guess... Christ. I guess I'll support you.

LISA:

I'm glad you apologized ahead of time.

BRIAN:

Yeah, I'm glad you did too.

(Lisa exits the stage to once again become a spirit. Brian starts to shiver. Suddenly he is jerked off his feet by the rope, which drags him back to his original spot. The lights on the Lisa scene fade to black. Hanging, Brian is moaning.)

BRIAN:

Lisa... Lisa.... Lisa! Jesus Lisa!

BECKY:

(A spot comes up to reveal Becky.) Teach me how to tie my shoes Daddy.

BRIAN:

Becky? Bec?

BECKY:

Show me how to tie the knot Daddy... Can you tie my shoes for me?

BRIAN:

Becky?

BECKY:

I love you Daddy. You're going to come home to me and Mommy right?

BRIAN:

I'll come to you Bec...

BECKY:

I love you Daddy.

BRIAN:

I love you Bec. I love you kid.

BECKY:

Teach me. Don't put on an ice mask.

BRIAN:

I'm here Bec. I'm here.

BECKY:

Daddy?

BRIAN:

Yeah? Becky?

BECKY:

Please teach me Daddy? Please?

(Becky fades back into the spirits.)

BRIAN:

I will... I will...*(Pause.)* Becky? *(Pause.)* Becky? Bec? Where are ya' kid? Where are ya'? I'm sorry Lisa. I'm sorry Bec. I'm sorry Chris. Oh God... Cass. *(He laughs, but that turns to a sob. He starts to chant.)* First comes love, then comes marriage, then comes a baby in a baby carriage.

BECKY'S VOICE:

(P.A. Sing-song voice. She continues to repeat the phrase over and over again in her singsong voice over the next few lines. Becky should get through the sing-song at least once before Brian is lowered. Perhaps Becky comes out onto the stage with the spirits and dances "ring around the rosy" while chanting for a few verses before disappearing into the spirits.) First comes love, then comes marriage, then comes a baby in a baby carriage.

(Becky continues to chant as the next sequence begins. Brian is lowered back to the floor as the lights on the supplemental stage rise. He sits down on an acting block/desk and begins working on something. One of the spirits removes her mask and becomes Cass. She enters. She is a beautiful woman that is flirty by nature. Brian looks up. He is struck by her beauty.)

CASS:

Hi...

BRIAN:

Becky?

CASS:

Hi...

BRIAN:

Damn it! Cass.

CASS:

Hi.

BRIAN:

Where are you Bec? Hon?

CASS:

Hi.

BRIAN:

Please, I don't want to do this anymore.

CASS:

Hi.

BRIAN:

Bec? Please...

CASS:

Hi.

BRIAN:

Fuck it... Oh hi there...

(The moment Brian responds, Becky's sing-song is cut off in the middle.)

Becky?

CASS:

You... You're Brian Foster right?

BRIAN:

Why'd you stop Bec?

CASS:

You... You're Brian Foster right? Shivering.

BRIAN:

What?

SPIRITS:

Shivering.

CASS:

You're Brian Foster right?

BRIAN:

Ye... Yeah, that's me.

CASS:

I was told to come up here and go over some figures with you...

BRIAN:

Oh... Oh, you're from the ad agency.

CASS:

That's me... Guess we're gonna' be working some late nights together for the next couple weeks...

BRIAN:

Yeah... I guess we are...

CASS:

You look really familiar...

BRIAN:

Well, you know...

CASS:

Are you?

BRIAN:

What?

CASS:

This is stupid...

BRIAN:

What?

CASS:

Did you go to Garfield High School?

BRIAN:

Yeah... I did actually. Did you...

CASS:

Me too! I knew it! I was a...

BRIAN:

What was your name?

CASS:

Cass Miller. They used to call me Cassy.

BRIAN:

Cassy?

CASS:

Cass now. It sounds more grown up.

BRIAN:
Yeah... Cass... What year did you graduate?

CASS:
A year behind you...

BRIAN:
I don't remember...

CASS:
You were on the Gymnastics team...

BRIAN:
Were you?

CASS:
I was on the women's team.

BRIAN:
That's amazing.

CASS:
Small world...

BRIAN:
Yeah it is...

CASS:
All the girls had a crush on you in high school.

BRIAN:
Did you? I mean... Did you?

CASS:
High school's a crazy time.

BRIAN:
Yeah.

CASS:
So, what are you doing here? What's been happening these last few years?

BRIAN:
This and that...

CASS:

This and that huh?

BRIAN:

Yeah. How about you?

CASS:

Well, this is my first real job... I was a river guide for awhile.

BRIAN:

Really?

CASS:

Yeah, I still hit the rapids as much as possible.

BRIAN:

That's really great...

CASS:

Yeah it's fun.

BRIAN:

Yeah, I used to know a river guide.

CASS:

Oh yeah... Who?

BRIAN:

Oh nobody...

CASS:

Hmmm... Brian Foster. I never thought I'd see you again.

BRIAN:

We should really get started...

(She freezes. Suddenly the spirits rush Brian. They hit him hard and he falls to the ground. They begin to hug and hold him for just a moment. They attempt to pick him up during the next beat. He does not go back to his hanging position during this attack.)

BRIAN:

Jesus! Jesus! Let go. So fucking cold! Get off of me! Suffocating.

CHRIS' VOICE:

Fucking Volkswagon man.

BECKY'S VOICE:

Don't stop shivering Daddy!

LISA'S VOICE:

Avalanche!

BECKY'S VOICE:

Teach me to tie my shoes Daddy!

BRIAN:

Goddamn it!

(He pushes the spirits away and falls back to the ground. Each one comes back and attempts to get him again, but he fights furiously.)

BRIAN:

Get away from me Goddamn it! Get away from me!

(The spirits come at him again, but he acts as if he is going to fight and they slowly back away. As Brian regains his composure, Cass unfreezes.)

CASS:

Boy, you're sure in a rush to get out of this place every night. For the last month I don't think you've been here more than thirty seconds past five o'clock.

BRIAN:

Jesus Christ. What are those things?

CASS:

I don't think you've been here more that thirty seconds past five o'clock.

BRIAN:

This is just fuckin' great! Huh! Fuckin' great...

CASS:

Ice mask.

SPIRITS:

Ice Mask.

BRIAN:

What? What?

CASS:

I don't think...

BRIAN:

I know! I know! I fuckin' know! Thirty seconds past five o'clock. Blah! Blah! Blah!
You think I don't think this shit is just a fuckin' replay! I get it! I get it goddamn it!

CASS:

I don't think you've been here more than thirty seconds past five o'clock.

BRIAN:

Fine! Fine! (*Sarcastic smile.*) And as soon as I'm out of here you straighten my desk
and sharpen my pencils.

CASS:

I can't stand a messy desk.

BRIAN:

Well I appreciate it, I guess.

CASS:

Oh it's no problem.

BRIAN:

You really go out of your way for me.

CASS:

Well, you know I... Someday I'd like to get you out on the river. We'd have a blast.

BRIAN:

That could be fun.

CASS:

So what's the rush?

BRIAN:

Yeah... You know, gotta' get home to the wife and kid.

CASS:

Yeah...

BRIAN:

Or at least the kid.

CASS:

Oh.

BRIAN:

Lis and I... You know.

CASS:

Yeah.

BRIAN and CASS:

Listen, I ...

So do you?

BRIAN:

You first.

CASS:

So do you want to get a drink after work or something?

BRIAN:

Oh, I don't know... I have to be going. You know the kid and the gym and stuff.

CASS:

Oh, you work out?

BRIAN:

Uh yeah. Sometimes.

CASS:

I would of thought you did it more than sometimes.

BRIAN:

Well, pretty much every day.

CASS:

That's what I thought.

BRIAN:

Well, you know I do stuff on the weekends that takes a lot of stamina.

CASS:

So you have a lot of stamina?

BRIAN:

Well, yeah sometimes I go for hours and hours without stopping.

CASS:

I like it when men go for hours without stopping.

(Long pause. There is an awkward moment. There is an accidental kiss. Or at least it feels accidental at first, then it becomes passionate for a moment. Cass

freezes. Brian pulls away. The Spirit that becomes Chris will play the Priest. Lisa and the Priest appear in a spot. Lisa holds a bouquet of wedding flowers/)

PRIEST:

Do you take this man to be your husband? To have and to hold... To make him a responsible member of society. To keep him home. To break him as if he were a wild horse. To force a nine to five job on him. To create mortgage payments and domestic duties for him. Do you do all this until death do you part?

LISA:

I do.

BRIAN:

What?

PRIEST:

Do you love this man?

LISA:

I do.

PRIEST:

Do you wish to spend the rest of your life with this man?

LISA:

I do.

PRIEST:

Do you take this man to be your husband? To have and to hold until death do you part?

LISA:

I do.

(The spot on the Priest and Lisa disappears and they dissolve back into the spirits. Brian backs away and tries to find an escape. He begins to move around the stage quickly.)

BRIAN:

There's got to be a way out of this! There's got to be a way out of this.

(Cass unfreezes and approaches Brian.)

CASS:

We can be together. I mean it's not as if you love your wife...

BRIAN:

Okay... I'm on Mt. Grace... I'm not really here.

CASS:

I mean it's not as if you love your wife...

BRIAN:

Wake up! Goddamn it! Wake up!

CASS:

I mean it's not as if you love your wife...

BRIAN:

Stop saying that! Wake up!

CASS:

You stopped shivering.

SPIRITS:

Shivering

BRIAN:

There! There! You didn't say what you were supposed to. Why?

CASS:

I mean it's not as if you love your wife...

BRIAN:

Goddamn it! Fine!

CASS:

I mean it's not as if you loved your wife...

BRIAN:

I didn't say I don't love her.

CASS:

Do you? Do you love her?

BRIAN:

We need to get back to work on the Stevens account.

(Cass exits to once again become a spirit.)

BECKY'S VOICE:

Daddy?

Oh my God Bec...
BRIAN:

(Becky enters. For every moment Brian spends with his daughter, the audience should be able to see the delight on his face.)

Daddy!
BECKY:

Bec?
BRIAN:

Whatcha' doin'?
BECKY:

Becky! Oh God, Bec!
BRIAN:

Watcha' doin'?
BECKY:

Oh Bec...
BRIAN:

Watcha' doin'?
BECKY:

(The spirits bring in a backpack and gear for him to pack.)

I'm... I'm packing for a climb.
BRIAN:

(He begins packing for a climb.)

Can I help? Shiver Daddy.
BECKY:

What?
BRIAN:

Can I help?
BECKY:

Yeah! Yeah... Hey Pumpkin can you hand Daddy those biners. *(Pronounced "Beans")*
BRIAN:

BECKY:
Daddy is the mountain you're gonna' climb big?

BRIAN:
Not that big?

BECKY:
But what if you fall off?

BRIAN:
I won't fall off.

BECKY:
But you could...

BRIAN:
Well, then I'd just fly down with the wings I've got hidden under my coat.

BECKY:
You don't have wings Daddy. Only angels and birds have wings.

BRIAN:
And flies and bees and some types of chipmunks...

BECKY:
Chipmunks are cute Daddy...

BRIAN:
So I'm not cute.

BECKY:
No, you're too stubbly.

BRIAN:
Stubbly?

BECKY:
Does that keep you warm on the mountain?

BRIAN:
No, it just makes me look cool.

BECKY:
You don't look cool Daddy.

BRIAN:
Okay, I'll shave... Then I'll look cute and cool.

BECKY:
You're funny.

BRIAN:
Looking?

BECKY:
Uh huh... Daddy... I don't want you to fall off the mountain. Get ice mask.

BRIAN:
Ice mask?

BECKY:
I don't want you to fall off the mountain.

BRIAN:
(Brian stops packing. He responds to her very seriously.) Okay kid... Are you really worried? What are you worried about? You know your Daddy's always careful.

BECKY:
Holes in the snow.

BRIAN:
Holes in the snow? What do you mean?

BECKY:
In your picture book...

BRIAN:
You mean my mountain pictures?

BECKY:
Yeah... In your picture book there are holes in the snow. I don't want you to fall in one and get cold.

BRIAN:
Oh... Those are called crevasses Bec. *(Pronounced krev-ass-es.)*

BECKY:
I don't want you to fall in crevasses.

BRIAN:

Crevasses aren't a big deal if you're prepared for them... I've fallen in one before and I got out.

BECKY:

But what if you don't get out?

BRIAN:

I'll get out... I have special gear to get out. Do you want to see?

BECKY:

Uh huh.

(He pulls some gear from his bag. As he is explaining, Brian will tie a prusik knot on the rope with a piece of slung cord. Prusik is pronounced "Pruh-sick")

BRIAN:

Okay hon, this is what happens. I'm tied to a rope with Uncle Chris...

BECKY:

You mean Uncle Chris who says the F word I'm not supposed to say?

BRIAN:

Yeah that...

BECKY:

He says naughty words a lot... Especially the F word.

BRIAN:

Yes he does. Anyway, I'm tied to a rope with Uncle Chris, and if I fall in a crevasse he stops me from falling all the way to the bottom.

BECKY:

How does he do that?

BRIAN:

He pushes his ice axe in the ground and holds me...

BECKY:

I bet he says the F word when that happens.

BRIAN:

So now I'm hanging in the hole. And I have to figure out a way to get up.

BECKY:

How do you get up Daddy?

BRIAN:

Well, I tie a special knot on the rope... A prusik knot. Like this one here. I can slide the knot up the rope, but when I pull down it gets tight and won't go anywhere.

BECKY:

How does a prusik knot save you Daddy?

BRIAN:

Well I tie two of them... I tie one to my harness and one to my foot. Then when I stand up, I move the one up the rope that's attached to my harness. I put my weight on that one then move my foot up... I keep doing that until I'm at the top.

BECKY:

And then Daddy's saved.

BRIAN:

And then Daddy's saved...

BECKY:

And Uncle Chris says the F word...

BRIAN:

Uh yeah...

BECKY:

Now can you teach me to tie my shoes Daddy?

(Suddenly Brian is jerked back to the mountain. Becky remains on stage watching him hang. He shivers violently for a second, then continues to shiver a little bit during the following beat.)

BRIAN:

That's it! That's fucking it! Where is your brain Bri?

(With great effort he reaches over his shoulder. Spirits stand behind him and hand him two pieces of slung cord. He starts to tie the cords into the rope using a prusik knot. Suddenly the wind begins to blow violently. The spirits attack Brian. They laugh and steal the cord from him. He tries to hold on but cannot. The cords get away. Once again the illusion should be that he has dropped them into space.)

BRIAN:

No! No! God no! Stupid Brian. Stupid!

(Brian shivers violently again, then stops. He falls unconscious and once again enters the dream world. The doorbell begins to ring. Brian stands quietly and

stares into space for a long time. It continues to ring. Finally Brian opens a mimed door. He stands for a moment his face turning white as a sheet. Cass enters.)

BECKY:

Daddy? Are you going to show me how to tie my shoes?

BRIAN:

Go to your room Bec.

(Cass emerges from the spirits and stands in Brian's view.)

BECKY:

But Daddy? I want you to be alive with Mommy.

BRIAN:

What was that?

BECKY:

But Daddy.

BRIAN:

Go to your room now...

BECKY:

But my shoes.

BRIAN:

Now!

BECKY:

Alright. *(Becky exits to once again become a spirit.)*

BRIAN:

(He smiles, then frowns.) What are you doing here?

CASS:

I had to come. I couldn't stay away Brian... Is your wife...

LISA:

(Entering.) Who's that Bri?

(The spirits begin a simultaneous whispered chant: "Ice Ice Mask Cold.")

BRIAN:

Just someone I work with.

CASS:

I just had to bring over some documents from work.

LISA:

Why didn't you give them to him at work?

CASS:

I just... Here you are. *(Cass hands him a bag with something in it.)*

BRIAN:

I think you better go.

CASS:

Yeah.

LISA:

Just a minute here...

BRIAN:

Thank you very much Cass... I appreciate.

LISA:

Give me that bag. *(Lisa snatches the bag away from him.)*

BRIAN:

No.

LISA:

(Looking in the bag.) Why are you bringing my husband wine?

CASS:

I just thought he might like...

LISA:

What's going on here? Brian?

BRIAN:

Yeah, we'll go over those figures on Monday Cass. On Monday.

CASS:

Yeah.

LISA:

Oh my God.

BRIAN:

Lis! It's not what you think.

LISA:

What do I think Brian? What the hell do you think I think?

CASS:

She knows now Bri.

LISA:

You have no right to call him Bri!

BRIAN:

Lisa!

LISA:

Stay away from me! Stay away from me!

CASS:

I'm sorry Brian.

BRIAN:

Cass! Leave! Please!

LISA:

Don't touch me! Don't you dare touch me! Get out! Get away!

CASS:

It's not... Brian? Mrs. Foster I...

(Lisa charges Cass. Brian pulls her away before she hits her. Brian attempts to hold her but she is trying to hit him and she is crying. He holds her. Cass stands uncomfortably.)

BRIAN:

Cass Go! We'll talk about this later.

LISA:

You will not! You will not talk about this later! You will not! You bastard!

(Lisa knocks Brian off of her and stands up. She is sobbing. She walks over to the backpack that Brian was packing and grabs it. She throws it at him.)

LISA:

Get out! Both of you! Get the fuck out of my house! I hate you! I hate you! Get out!

BRIAN:
Lisa?

LISA:
Get out! You cold bastard! Get out!

CASS:
Let's go.

BRIAN:
I can't! I can't deal with this! No!

(The spirits stop chanting. All lights on stage blackout, except the single light on Brian. He is violently jerked back into his position hanging above the stage.)

BRIAN:
God Lis... I didn't mean to... I...

(A spot suddenly rises on Lisa, she stands alone with only the sound of the wind and perhaps ominous music. She shivers and holds herself. This is the attack on Lisa. See Note#5 at the end of the play. Lisa shivers. Suddenly the Spirits begin to move around her like a pack of animals. They begin to chant: "Ice Wind Cold Ice." Each carries a piece of black material that is translucent and billowing behind as they circle her. There is an element of violence in the movement of the spirits. She doesn't really see them, but she can feel their presence. She cannot move. She cries softly. Suddenly one of the translucent pieces of black material catches and then each of the others. Slowly she is being wrapped in the material. She is nearly covered in material. Just before being completely covered she says:)

LISA:
I don't want to lose you Bri. I don't want to lose you.

(Suddenly she is completely covered with material. Her cries are cut short as the material covers her face and there is silence. The Spirits continue chanting and step back. The spot light on Lisa's wrapped body slowly fades.)

BRIAN:
(Reaching for her, impotent to help.) Lisa! *(His arms collapse at his sides, he is sobbing. All is darkness except a single light illuminating the hanging figure as his body is wracked with emotion. This moment should last for a time.)* God? Will you ever forgive me? Lis? LISA! I want to come back to you! Oh God! I want to come back to you... *(Softly.)* I want to come back to you. God... I want to come back. I'll do whatever. I'll be responsible. I'm sorry. I'll... God. I fucked up so bad. Oh God Chris... I'm sorry. I'm so fucking sorry...

BECKY:

(A spot rises on Becky.) Daddy, teach me to tie my shoes. Please Daddy... Show me how...

(Becky's voice continues to plead for help tying her shoes. The sound of the wind begins to whip in the background and the spirits dance around Brian as he hangs. As the spirits dance they continue chanting. Brian looks down at his mountain boots for a moment then gets an idea. Perhaps a spirit touches him to help him remember. He begins to unlace his boots. The spirits may help him if need be. He takes the shoelaces and ties them into loops. He ties these loops on the rope using a prusik knot. He clips one knot to his harness and lets one dangle for his foot. He begins to ascend the rope using the prusiks. The background noise should continue while he says the following lines.)

BRIAN:

Yes! Yes Goddamn it... Daddy's coming Bec... Daddy's coming... Lis! I'm coming! I'll show you how to tie your shoes... I'm gonna' get my ass off this fucking mountain! I'm coming honey... I'm coming home... I'm coming home to stay...

(As he ascends above the proscenium arch, the voices fade out. The lights begin to slowly fade. All that remains is the blowing of the wind as the stage fades to black.)

The Play is Finished

NOTES:

The following notes exist to help with production concerns. They are merely suggestions and do not provide a definition of the “correct” way to produce the show.

Note #1:

The character of Brian can be done in one of two ways. The actor may be hung on the rope and dropped onto the stage to play each scene. In this case, at the end of the scene the actor will be pulled back into his space in the air. The second way that this may be done – and the less technical way – is to have the actor on a tall acting block. The spirits will then pull him in and out of the scene with a stylized dance or perhaps even a sound. Whichever way this is done, it is important to have a rope on stage. Brian need not be attached to it; while standing on the acting block he can simply hold the rope and act like he is hanging.

Note #2:

The spirits exist as stage-hands to set and remove items from the stage. They also function as helpers for Brian. As Brian will not be able to control his swinging and spinning on the rope, they should be there to keep him facing whatever direction he needs to be facing at any given time. If possible their movement should be choreographed, dance-like, and graceful. They may also be used to raise and lower Brian’s rope if need be.

Note #3:

In the original production there were six additional spirits added to the stage action. The principal players did not double as spirits. This is acceptable if a production is able to accommodate this. However, there is something particularly eerie about the principals doubling as spirits.

Note #4:

By no means does Brian have to ascend the rope at the end of the play. It may be easier for him to wrap the prusiks around the rope, push one up high on the rope as if he is about to climb, then have the lights fade. One can find Technical information about the specific climbing terms and knots talked about in the play in The Freedom of the Hills by the Mountaineers.

Note#5:

The attack on Lisa can be done in many different ways. It can be a dance where the spirits attack her, or even a moment where the spirits hug her. However it should be clear that this is an assault on Lisa that makes her cold to the core.

Note #6:

Following are a few important terms for the director and cast to understand in any production of this play:

- 1) Z-Pully: This is a hauling system one might use to pull a person up from a position wherein he is hanging.
- 2) West Butt of Denali: The West Buttress of Mt. McKinley. This is considered the easiest route on North America’s tallest mountain. Many accomplished climbers scorn those who do this route.
- 3) Biners: Carabiners, a metal clip that mountain climbers use.
- 4) Hypothermia: A state of extreme cold. When one stops shivering in this state, it is very difficult to revive them and impossible on a remote mountain.
- 5) Squamish: A popular rock-climbing destination about an hour north of Vancouver British Columbia.
- 6) Mt. Grace: This is a fictional Alaskan mountain.
- 7) Ice Mask: Many victims of avalanches are killed by blocks of ice and snow which hit them. However, there is a percentage of those that die from asphyxiation after being buried alive. When these avalanche victims are recovered, it is common to find a mask of ice covering the victim’s faces. This ice mask is created by the victim’s breath.

Dying Light
By
Jason D. Martin

Characters:

Tom:

A twenty-year old college student who just found out that he has terminal brain cancer.

Jenny:

A nineteen year old girl who has been fighting terminal brain cancer for years.

Doctor's Voice:

A mature male voice that comes from the P.A. system.

Dying Light

By

Jason D. Martin

Scene One:

Prologue

(At rise, a single white light shines down on a young man's face. This young man is TOM, a twenty year old terminal cancer patient. The rest of the stage should be saturated in blue light. The scene should have the aura of a dream sequence.)

DOCTOR'S VOICE:

Cancer!

TOM:

What?

DOCTOR'S VOICE:

Cancer.

TOM:

Come on, please... Don't skip around the question anymore.

DOCTOR'S VOICE:

(This should seem to come from above. It is a knowledgeable male voice which TOM has a hard time understanding.)

Many people that discover they have an illness such as yours find ways to live happier lives. Cancer may make one more aware of the fact that every minute counts.

TOM:

Would you please tell me how much time I have left?

DOCTOR'S VOICE:

I've already informed your parents about the nature of an anaplastic astrocytoma...

TOM:

I want to hear it from you.

DOCTOR'S VOICE:

Let's just put it this way, you and I are going to become best friends over the next few years.

TOM:

What the hell does that mean? Tell me!

DOCTOR'S VOICE:

I'm going to have you treated with aggressive radiation. This is a program wherein we focus a radioactive beam on the area from which we extracted the tumor. Over the course of six weeks it should kill any remaining cancer cells.

TOM:

How will this... This radiation affect me?

DOCTOR'S VOICE:

You will lose hair in the area being treated and you may feel sick at times. However, if the radiation works you will live a long and happy life.

TOM:

And if it doesn't?

DOCTOR'S VOICE:

An astrocytoma can be a very aggressive brain tumor...

TOM:

How much time?

DOCTOR'S VOICE:

If it reoccurs the maximum amount of time would be seven years.

TOM:

Well, what are the chances of the radiation working?

DOCTOR'S VOICE:

In your case there is a ten percent chance that the radiation will be completely effective.

TOM:

If it does come back is there anything you can do?

DOCTOR'S VOICE:

If it comes back in the same place we'll operate again. We cannot repeat the standard radiation. We can only do radiation once. We'll have to put you in chemotherapy.

TOM:

What'll happen then?

DOCTOR'S VOICE:

Well chemotherapy is pretty serious business. One drawback to it is that there is a possibility of sterility. A percentage of patients also risk developing leukemia.

TOM:

Woah! Wait a minute! You mean after radiation I'll be sterile?

DOCTOR'S VOICE:

No, only after chemotherapy. Radiation will only affect the area where the tumor was.

TOM:

So this standard, aggressive radiation isn't gonna' make my nuts shrink or anything like that?

DOCTOR'S VOICE:

No.

TOM:

Will it help?

DOCTOR'S VOICE:

You want the truth?

TOM:

I think I'm entitled to it.

DOCTOR'S VOICE:

If it comes back the chances of survival are not high. But listen, new things are being developed every day. We'll go all over the country if we have to.

TOM:

(Unenthusiastically.) Great.

DOCTOR'S VOICE:

I understand it's difficult, but you must continue your life. Do not concern yourself with how you're going to die, but rather how you're going to live.

(The Doctor Light fades out.)

TOM:

(The following monologue should be a direct address to the audience as the character.)

Most people are fortunate enough not to know when they are going to die. *(Laughs.)* The Grim Reaper just pops in one day to say hey, and the next thing ya' know, your hearts exploded inside your chest. Bang! Didn't even see it coming. Man, that would be

cool. None a this you've got seven years to live shit. As soon as some asshole tells ya' somethin' like that, you immediately begin to count down backwards. Seven years, six years, five years, four, three, two, one! Bang! Next thing ya' know you're getting' horny over a coupla' naked angels. Christ! People my age don't understand what I'm feeling. Most twenty year olds feel like they're gonna' live forever. You think you have your whole life planned out. School, work, marriage, kids, two cars, a house and a dog. Things don't always work out that way. So much for the American fuckin' dream.

(Blackout.)

Scene Two:
The Waiting Room

(As the lights come up, TOM is discovered sitting in a hospital waiting room. He is very uncomfortable in this surrounding and tries to hide his discomfort by burying his nose in a magazine. A young woman, JENNY, enters. He looks up from his magazine for a moment and their eyes lock. TOM quickly glances away and tries to pretend he is engrossed in his magazine. JENNY sits down near TOM, studying him.)

JENNY:

Hey. You're new here aren't you?

TOM:

Yes. *(Long pause.)*

JENNY:

Do you mind if I ask what you've got?

TOM:

Yeah.

JENNY:

Sorry, I... I didn't mean to pry. It's just that you don't see very many people our age hanging around waiting rooms for radiation therapy.

TOM:

That's okay. Look, I'm the one who's sorry. I've never done this before.

JENNY:

Radiation?

TOM:

Well, yeah.

JENNY:

It's no big deal. It's not like your gonna' glow or anything.

TOM:

How long have you been in...?

JENNY:

What? Radiation? About two weeks. I haven't lost a single strand of hair yet. But I'm sure that wonderful little adventure is right around the corner. It's not that big a deal, I've been bald before. I've had a few surgeries and it was shaved off. So this'll be the first time I lose it because of radiation.

TOM:

Well, what do you have?

JENNY:

A glioblastoma. Actually a cluster of them... This stuff doesn't bother me as much as you'd think though. I get dizzy sometimes and I forget things. Every once in a while I have a seizure... Those can be... Well, they're not much fun.

TOM:

It can't be as bad as it sounds, you don't look half bad.

JENNY:

(Check him out.) You're not so bad yourself. I'm Jenny.

TOM:

Tom.

(They shake hands.)

JENNY:

Tom, that's a nice name. So what's your story Tom?

TOM:

Ya' mean, why am I here?

JENNY:

Sure.

TOM:

I had surgery two month ago. They said it was an anaplastic astro... *(He can't pronounce it.)*

JENNY:

Astrocytoma, yeah... Almost the same as me, a glioblastoma's like an astrocytoma with PMS. *(He smiles.)* So it was malignant. Did they get it all?

TOM:

Most of it. I guess if it's gonna' come back, it's gonna' come back pretty quick. They said if it does it'll be worse. It was on the right frontal lobe. (*Points to his head where it was.*) They said it was a good spot for a brain tumor... Accessible. But, it's such and aggressive tumor... Well it's gonna'... It'll eventually...

JENNY:

Hey! Hey! Never say that. If you think it'll do that to you, then what's gonna' stop it? You always have to believe your going to get better. If you don't think that, then what's there to believe in? Now cheer up... You know what I do when I get down thinking about this stuff?

TOM:

What?

JENNY:

I watch bad science fiction.

TOM:

Really.

JENNY:

Yeah, you know anything that will get me out of this world.

TOM:

Yeah, me too.

JENNY:

Fighting aliens or being haunted by ghosts seems a lot worse than all this.

TOM:

And the good guys always win.

JENNY:

(*Laughs.*) There you go. The good guys always win.

TOM:

You know, I'm a sci fi fan too...

JENNY:

No way. Really?

TOM:

Absolutely. Star Wars was the best movie ever made.

JENNY:

That used to be my favorite movie. Han Solo is really hot.

TOM:

Ya' know, some people say I look like...

JENNY:

Han Solo? (*Pause.*) I don't see it. (*They both laugh.*)

TOM:

So Star Wars used to be your favorite movie... What's your favorite now?

JENNY:

I don't know. I like Alien a lot.

TOM:

Haven't seen it.

JENNY:

Hold on partner. You haven't seen Alien?

TOM:

Nope.

JENNY:

Well, it's really good. It's about these aliens that can live inside you. It's pretty scary when they show how these things impregnate this guy. This little crab thing comes out of an egg and plants a baby alien in his stomach. Then the thing sits inside, growing until it's ready to escape. It just sits there, getting bigger and bigger until it rips outta' the guys chest and starts trying ta' get the rest of the people on the space ship.

TOM:

That's pretty disgusting.

JENNY:

You'd like it.

TOM:

Probably.

JENNY:

I mean it's not that bad compared to some of the stuff you see around here.

TOM:

What do you mean?

JENNY:
Nothing.

TOM:
What kind of stuff?

JENNY:
Well... A lot of the patients. Some of the stories they tell...

TOM:
What about them?

JENNY:
I could easily write a book from all the hospital stories I've heard. Most of them are pretty funny too. (*Pause.*) Oh, you're smiling, you have one don't you? Come on, tell me.

TOM:
Something funny?

JENNY:
Yes, hospitals are... They're funny places.

TOM:
Well there is one thing, but it's kind of embarrassing.

JENNY:
Hey, hospitals are embarrassing places too. Tell me.

TOM:
I dunno'.

JENNY:
Come on Tom.

TOM:
I can't tell a perfect stranger this story.

JENNY:
I'm not a stranger... You know my name. You even know my disease.

TOM:
Well...

JENNY:
What else do you want to know?

Well, um... I...

TOM:

You got to tell your story then.

JENNY:

Family?

TOM:

Huh?

JENNY:

Do you have a big family? Small family? A pet gerbil?

TOM:

No pets. Two parents, divorced... I'm an only child. I don't talk to my Dad. Right now I'm living at home with my Mom. We don't get along so well.

JENNY:

Sorry. I live with my parents too... Bummer huh?

TOM:

Yeah.

JENNY:

So what do you want to do?

TOM:

What do you mean?

JENNY:

I mean after this?

TOM:

You mean, what do I want to be when I grow up?

JENNY:

Yeah.

TOM:

(*Sad smile.*) Well, I think I'd like to be a screenwriter.

JENNY:

Really?

TOM:

JENNY:

Yeah, bad science fiction.

TOM:

Hey, that would be pretty damn cool. Livin' behind the scenes in Hollywood...

JENNY:

Yeah... Well, what do you want to do... After all this?

TOM:

I don't know. I'm taking classes at the University right now... But eventually I'll probably take over the family business with my little brother.

JENNY:

What's that?

TOM:

Hardware.

JENNY:

You mean like screwdrivers and nail guns?

TOM:

Um, yeah. My Dad owns a couple stores... Well five or six. It's suppose to be a pretty good business. It's kinda' cool 'cause I always got a job.

JENNY:

I guess people always need hardware.

TOM:

I guess. So who's your doctor?

JENNY:

Which one?

TOM:

Who's your Oncologist?

JENNY:

I don't call my doctors by their real names.

TOM:

What?

JENNY:

My Oncologist is Dr. Lump.

TOM:

Huh?

JENNY:

My Oncologist is Dr. Lump, my Radiologist is Dr. Zapp, and my Gynecologist is Dr. Probe.

TOM:

I see.

JENNY:

So what's your funny story?

TOM:

What?

JENNY:

You're not getting off that easy. You still have to tell me your funny story.

TOM:

I don't know if I should tell it.

JENNY:

Come on.

TOM:

No... No, my story's a little different.

JENNY:

How so?

TOM:

It's not the kind of story a person should tell to somebody they just met.

JENNY:

Don't worry, you won't shock me.

TOM:

(Slightly embarrassed.) Well, when I woke up after surgery, there was this tube sticking out of... Well there were tubes sticking out of everywhere, my nose, my arms, the top of my head; there were wires attached to my chest and... Well, there was this tube sticking out of my, my... *(He just can't say it.)*

JENNY:

Penis?

TOM:

Uh, yeah... My, uh...

JENNY:

Penis...

TOM:

My dick. It was a cathader, the tube led to a bag on the floor. I couldn't believe it; there was a huge goddamn bag on the floor fulla' my piss. Not ta' mention the fact that this tube was stickin' out the end of my dick. Let me tell you, it was not a comfortable moment. Well I was layin' there awhile when I started to wonder...

JENNY:

What?

TOM:

It's just kinda' embarrassing to tell a girl.

JENNY:

Go ahead, let it out. Hospitals stories can be hilarious. Besides, we've known each other for five minutes and we've already discussed your penis. What else could there be?

TOM:

(Nervous laugh.) Okay, you asked for it. Well I started to wonder what it would feel like if I had a... If I had a boner with that fuckin' tube in there.

JENNY:

Now I know way too much.

TOM:

After thinking something like that there was no stopping it. It was like a goddamn rocket ready for launch. I swear my thing had mind of its own... It's not like I was even thinking about sex or anything. One minute he was just hanging there, the next he was up and around. Man that was painful! I had this raging boner with this thing stuck up my dick. Jesus, and I thought the surgery would hurt. It was harder than a steel pipe... Until the nurse, an older heavy-set woman with a mustache, came in. She took one look and started cracking jokes. "So do you have a tube in your penis or are you just happy to see me?" Then she did it. She yanked it out. Christ! I thought there was only an inch or two in there. I'll be damned if there wasn't two feet of plastic tubing stuck up the end of my dick.

JENNY:

(Laughing.) Do you have a girlfriend?

TOM:

What? There's a question from left field... Didn't that gross you out even a little?

JENNY:

Does it happen to all guys.

TOM:

I'm pretty sure all guys get boners... Otherwise I don't think there'd be a human race.

JENNY:

No the cathader erection thing.

TOM:

How the hell am I supposed to know. Maybe I'm just perverted or something.

JENNY:

Well, do you have a girlfriend?

TOM:

No.

JENNY:

Hmmm.

TOM:

What?

JENNY:

You're sure you don't have a girlfriend?

TOM:

I'm pretty sure... Let me think. Yeah, I'm sure.

JENNY:

Well, well, well...

TOM:

Are you making fun of me?

JENNY:

No, I'm just wondering.

TOM:

Wondering what?

NURSE VOICE:

(Like the doctor, this voice comes from the P.A every time it is heard. This voice, however, is a female voice.)

Tom to the treatment room. Tom.

TOM:

(Looks up, mildly annoyed.) Wondering what?

JENNY:

Do I have to spell it out for you?

TOM:

I don't know. I'm not sure what you're going to spell out.

JENNY:

(Sighs. A beat.) I'm wondering if you want ta' get to know me better.

NURSE VOICE:

Tom, please report to the treatment room.

TOM:

Better?

JENNY:

(Blurts out.) I'm wondering if you're going to ask me out.

TOM:

I hardly know you.

JENNY:

That excuse doesn't cut it anymore.

TOM:

Oh... Well, yeah. Sure. Jenny, would you like to go see some bad science fiction or something?

JENNY:

Why yes Tom, I would like that. I would like that very much. *(Sarcastic, but not mean.)* You really pick up on those hints quickly, I'm impressed.

NURSE VOICE:

Tom, to the treatment room. Tom.

TOM:

Well, you know...

JENNY:

Don't worry about it. After ya' have a chunk of your brain removed sometimes you're not as quick as you once were. A little labotomy will do that to a guy.

(Blackout.)

Scene Three:
Jenny's Monologue

(The stage is flooded with blue light. It should be apparent that the following scene is going on inside JENNY's head. The monologue is to be played to the audience. JENNY's speech should not be tearful; she must tell her story with the air of a person who has been dealing with her death for years. If she can make the audience laugh, the goal of the actress will be achieved. For the only way one can deal with such pain is through laughter. The set remains the same. JENNY is discovered center stage.)

JENNY:

Glioblastoma. That's what they say I have... Glioblastoma. Sounds like some kind of science fiction laser. My Glioblastoma is set for kill. Just give the word Captain and I will vaporize the alien beast. 'Course it's not from Star Trek or Star Wars or Star Blazers. It's from real life. But like one of those types of movies it seems like some kind of alien. It snuck inside my head and began eating my brain. It's no like that it's set for kill either. A Glioblastoma is probably the worst type of tumor you can get. Nope, I wasn't lucky enough to only get one little tumor. Instead I had a cluster of the damn things. Every time I had an MRI – that's like a cat scan, but better – they managed to find a new one. So three operations and a ride on the radiation roller coaster later, I'm still here. It's strange the way people treat you when you're dying. My Mom try's to pretend nothings wrong... Maybe that's for the best. Recently a doctor told me I should consider putting my estate in order. Estate in order! What's that? Some clothing, make-up, and a beat up bicycle. I'm not going to be leaving a whole lot behind to prove I was here. Cancer! Brain surgeries! You wouldn't believe how hard it was in high school to deal with all that crap. You wouldn't believe how hard it was for a girl with no hair to find a date to the prom. Nobody asked me. Nope... Nobody wanted to take the bald chick out. No big deal. Ended up having to hire someone to go with me... Just kidding. Actually, I ended up asking Henry Schlatman. The guy had glasses that were about a foot thick and he still couldn't see. On the night of the prom he complimented me on my hair. I didn't have the heart to tell him I didn't have any. Well at least for the time being I have hair again.

(She brushes her fingers through her hair and pulls out a number of strands. She looks at the hair for a moment, then laughs.)

Well, I'm still alive.

(She pulls out a scarf and begins to tie it over her hair. See note at the end of monologue.)

And I have Tom. He took me out again last night and we had a blast. He's actually very funny when he's not thinking with his head... I mean about his head. *(Laughs.)* We've been going out every night for a week now. It wouldn't surprise me if this becomes very serious, very fast. Last night we rented a really stupid Shwartznegger sequel. Usually I would have been annoyed to have wasted my time with such a lame flick; but Tom made it funny. He kept talking back to the screen. When the hero said "I'll be back;" Tom responded by saying, *(Imitates accent.)* "Don't bother, we won't be here." *(She laughs. If the audience does not laugh add the following line: Well it was funny at the time.)* When he brought me home last night... He gave me a kiss I'll never forget. It was so strange, while he kissed me I knew deep down that everything's going to be okay. The whole night was so... God, I hate to say it... It was so romantic. I've never felt this way about a guy before. Oh, there I go again with that junior high cheesy love sick lingo. Well, when you're nineteen years old, and you know you're going to... There's no time to waste. And Tom is such a good guy. I think I might be... God, this sounds so mushy! I think I might be falling in love.

(Blackout.)

(Note: The director may choose to have JENNY remove a scarf or hat and cover her hair with it in silence as opposed to doing so during the monologue.)

Scene Four: Religion for Sale

(As the lights rise, TOM and JENNY are discovered sitting on a couch together in the waiting room. This is JENNY's fifth week of radiation and TOM's third. JENNY has lost most of her hair. To imply this, the actor may simply wear a scarf that completely covers her hair. TOM suddenly jumps to his feet and rips out a large clump or hair.)

TOM:

I can't stand to wait for my turn anymore!

(Pretends to be insane. Rips another clump of hair out. Imitates Gollum from Lord of the Rings.)

I have a gift for you my precious. Here take it. *(She takes the hair.)* In kind of a weird way it's fun to lose your hair. I had a test in Psych today. I was feeling sick when I was supposed to be studying, tests 'll do that to ya'. So I'm sitting there staring at a question about Freud that I couldn't have answered if my life depended on it. So I decide screw it. I don't wanna' take a test on the same day my hair started to fall out. So I stood up, ripped a huge chunk of hair outta' my head and screamed, the...stress...is...to...much!

JENNY:

You didn't.

TOM:

No, but I thought about it. I did scare quite a few people today, walking around campus and ripping out hair. Sometimes I'd even babble to myself at the same time.

(Walks back and forth pretending to be insane, babbling, pulling hair out of his head.)

Man! People wouldn't come within' a hundred yards of me. *(Laughs.)* They really thought I was psychotic.

(Rips another chunk of hair out and hands it to her.)

JENNY:

What am I suppose to do with this?

TOM:

I dunno'. Maybe you could glue it to your head or something.

JENNY:

You should see how much hair is in the drain after I take a shower. Christ, you wouldn't believe how much hair a person has.

JENNY:

I would.

TOM:

Well, most people wouldn't. You're kind of quiet today. What's up?

JENNY:

Just feelin' a little sick. Oh... I ah, I got this for you.

(She gives him a baseball hat, which he promptly puts on backwards.)

TOM:

Thanks. So whatcha' thinkin' about?

JENNY:

Nothing.

TOM:

Nothing huh? How much of you're brain did they take out with the tumors?

(He waits a moment for a response, then realizes that she is not listening.)

Jenny?

JENNY:

I'm sorry, I'm not feeling too good... I...

TOM:

Is it your Mom again?

JENNY:

I don't want to talk about her. Not everyone's family is as tight as yours.

TOM:

Okay, it's not your Mom. What is it?

JENNY:

It's nothing.

TOM:

It's something. Tell me.

JENNY:

No, I'm alright...

TOM:

Sometimes talking helps.

JENNY:

Sometimes it doesn't.

TOM:

Jenny?

JENNY:

I'm fine.

TOM:

Okay your fine, but you don't look fine. What are you thinking about?

JENNY:

I don't know. I guess I'm just thinking about all the other patients. You know, that lady that always comes in when we leave, the one with lung cancer. Her husband said she only has six months. Sometimes I wonder about people who just stop coming to therapy. Are they done? Are they cured? Or are they gone?

TOM:

I don't know.

JENNY:

I've been thinking about someone that I saw here when I first started radiation.

TOM:

Jenny?

JENNY:

There was a woman sitting over there. I said hello to her but I don't think she even knew I was in the room. She looked like she hadn't washed her hair in days. It was very limp, hanging around her pale white face. Her eyes were sunken. They looked like black marbles incapable of any emotion except pain.

TOM:

Was she a patient?

JENNY:

No, that's the horrible part. She was waiting for someone and when I saw who...

(Tears begin to stream down her cheeks.)

TOM:

Was it someone you knew?

JENNY:

No. They brought a little boy out of the treatment room in a wheelchair. He couldn't have been more than five years old. My God, he was so small. So pale. The woman stood up and put a tiny baseball hat on his bald head. His little skull was red from radiation burns. His eyes were half shut, and I could tell that it wasn't because he was sleepy. That little boy... That little boy wasn't sleepy at all. He was dying. While he should have been outside playing on the swings. While he should have been watching cartoons or riding his bike. While he should have been living the life of a five year old, his body was dying. Cancer was eating him up, just like us, but he was just a little kid! I could see his little chest rising and falling as his mother pushed his wheelchair out. It hurt so much to think that his heart wasn't going to beat much longer. I couldn't handle the thought of him no longer breathing. I prayed for that boy. Now, this morning... He... This morning he wasn't around for treatment. The nurse... She didn't have to tell me what happened.

(JENNY is crying. TOM tries to comfort her by hugging her tightly. She holds onto him for a moment as if he is her only anchor to sanity.)

TOM:

Oh God, it's alright. Jenny, it's alright.

(They break from their embrace.)

JENNY:

Why does this have to happen? Why? *(She begins to pull herself together.)* How could something like this happen?

TOM:

I don't know.

JENNY:

I don't know what to think anymore. I just... That kid died, just like that. He's gone. Never had a chance to make his mark on the world. *(Long pause.)* Tom, do you believe in God?

TOM:

I don't know.

JENNY:

I did, but I don' anymore. At least I don't believe all that bullshit about a gentle loving God. *(Angry.)* How could a kind God allow something like this to happen? How? That little boy is dead! You and I are both dying!

TOM:

Don't say that!

JENNY:

We are dying! Chances are we'll be dead before either of us reaches our twenty-first birthday! How could anybody believe in a God that would allow us to die like this? I don't know if I can believe in anything anymore.

TOM:

Don't say that. You have to believe in something.

JENNY:

There is nothing left to believe in. My body has betrayed me and my religion is gone. There's nothing left... Life... Life has this way of really screwing us over. You're born one day to live and dream, and the next you're a five year old rotting in a casket... There's nothing left.

TOM:

Yes there is. *(He pulls her to him.)* Believe this. *(He kisses her gently.)* I love you.

JENNY:

You love me? *(Half laugh, half sob.)* I'm bald.

TOM:

Don't worry about that, it kind of turns me on.

(She hugs him tightly, tears again streaming down her cheeks.)

JENNY:

I love you too. *(She is smiling.)*

(Blackout.)

(The following lines should be read over the P.A. system in the dark.)

DOCTOR'S VOICE:

Well Tom, I'm afraid that's it for your radiation therapy. We won't know the actual results of the treatment for a while yet. I don't want to promise anything. Best case scenario, the cancer is gone and you are free and clear. Worst case scenario, you're going to have to come back for chemotherapy and perhaps a second surgery. Once again I want to remind you that we are developing new techniques all the time. Perhaps your sickness will not return until we develop a better way to combat it. Unfortunately, however... We cannot predict anything about it at this point. We'll just have to keep our fingers crossed, wait, and see what happens. Best guess? You'll probably have to do chemotherapy.

Scene Five:
Would You?

(At rise we discover TOM and JENNY finishing a board game. The setting has changed to a comfortable living room. They are having a we're done with radiation therapy party.)

TOM:

Monopoly sucks!

JENNY:

I don't know what you're talking about... Monopoly is a great game.

TOM:

It sucks!

JENNY:

Nope, it's great!

TOM:

Sucks!

JENNY:

Great!

Sucks! TOM:

Great! JENNY:

TOM:

(Jumps from his seat and tickles JENNY. He says the following lines quickly while tickling JENNY.)

Sucks! Sucks! Sucks! Sucks! Sucks! Sucks! Sucks! Sucks! Sucks! Sucks!

JENNY:
(Laughing.) Okay. Stop. Okay, monopoly sucks. You were right. Stop!

(She kisses him on the forehead, then gets up to put away the board game.)

TOM:
What a way to spend my “I’m done with radiation party.”

JENNY:
We have something else to celebrate too.

TOM:
What’s that?

JENNY:
Well, this is our six week anniversary. We’ve been going out exactly six weeks on the button today.

TOM:
I could think of a better way of spending it than playing monopoly. *(He looks at her slyly.)*

JENNY:
I bet you can.

TOM:

(Moves over next to her and kisses her softly.)

When’s your mother getting home?

JENNY:

I don't know.

(Kisses him back. For a moment they kiss passionately, then suddenly TOM pulls away.)

What? What is it?

TOM:

I ah... I've got to ask you something.

JENNY:

What?

TOM:

Look, I've been thinking about this a lot.

JENNY:

About what?

TOM:

Um... Would you... I mean do you... Ah... I mean, you really love me?

JENNY:

Yes... I really do. Is that really what you were going to ask?

TOM:

No.

JENNY:

What then?

TOM:

I'm having some trouble putting it into words. *(TOM smiles trying to think.)* Alright, I've got it.

(TOM puts up two fingers.)

JENNY:

What's this?

TOM:

Charades.

JENNY:

Charades?

TOM:

Yeah, just play along.

JENNY:

Whatever... This is weird.

(TOM puts up two fingers.)

Two words.

(TOM raises two fingers again.)

Second word. Wait a minute. Is it a movie, book, or play?

(TOM scowls. He raises two fingers again.)

Alright. Second word, I know.

(TOM begins pointing at himself. JENNY begins yelling out possibilities. To each of them TOM shakes his head "no." The entire time he is frantically pointing at himself.)

Boy? Man? Guy? I? Male? You? Tom? He? She? It? Shirt? Chest? Breast?
Heart? Lungs? Collar bone? Ribs? I give up... Oh wait, is it me?

(TOM begins touching his nose frantically and pointing at JENNY.)

It's me. This is sure better than monopoly. Okay, something me.

(TOM puts one finger up.)

First word. Something me.

(TOM pulls on his ear.)

Sounds like... Something me.

(TOM begins flapping around the room pretending he is a bird. He is trying to portray a fairy. He is not doing a very good job at it.)

Bird? Wings? Flying? Flying me? Where are you flying me?

(TOM shakes his head "no.")

Eagle? Flying? Running around waving your arms? Lunatic? Airplane? Something me... I don't know TOM. (*TOM is getting frustrated.*) Something me? Bird? Flapping? Feathers? Pigeon? Swallow? Owl? I don't know. Is it a bird?

(*TOM is shaking his head "no."*)

I'm not going to get it. Flying?

TOM:

No.

JENNY:

Spaceship? The Enterprise?

TOM:

(*Just can't keep going. He is very frustrated.*)

It's a fairy Jenny! A fucking fairy.

JENNY:

A fairy is not a bird.

TOM:

Well it has wings.

JENNY:

Lots of things have wings.

TOM:

You're not very good at that game.

JENNY:

(*Laughing.*) Oh and you're a pro. Nobody would have got that. Fairy me... (*Her smile drops.*) Sounds like fairy?

TOM:

Yeah... It sounds like fairy.

JENNY:

Marry?

TOM:

Yeah.

JENNY:

Marry me?

TOM:

Okay... That was a lot easier than I thought.

JENNY:

Oh Tom... I...

TOM:

It's alright, you can take some time to think about it. Well, don't take too much time. I mean, we're not getting any younger... Or healthier... Or smarter... Or taller... We might be getting fatter, but...

JENNY:

(She puts up her hands indicating that he should stop babbling.)

I want to marry you.

TOM:

I want to marry me too.

(They kiss passionately.)

JENNY:

What about my Mom?

TOM:

I definitely don't want to marry her.

(Blackout.)

Scene Six:
Tom's Monologue

(The lights drop on the last scene. The blue monologue light comes up. TOM is alone on the stage.)

TOM:

Yeah... I know. It all happened really fast. Six weeks... That's it. My father once told me he knew my mother was the one after taking her out once. *(Laughs.)* Once! Like father like son, huh? I remember in high school we read Romeo and Juliet... Now there's a love story for ya'. Romeo meets Juliet, they exchange something like seven lines before they kiss. Damn Romeo was a stud! Seven lines, then that whole balcony scene. Next thing ya' know, they're married the following day. 'Course they did end up dying a couple days after that... But that's not the point. The point is... The point is...

Well, when you look ahead and see your whole life before you and there ain't that much left... Well, you know. So I married her. Best decision I ever made. She drives all the pain and fear out of my life. Jenny... My wife is the one that keeps me from dreaming about death. When I'm with her all I think about is being alive.

(Blackout.)

Scene Seven:
We Need to Talk

(At rise, the audience discovers TOM and JENNY's apartment. TOM enters, JENNY is seated on the couch, reading.)

JENNY:

(Rubbing her eyes.) Hey...

TOM:

Hey... You were up early this morning.

JENNY:

Yeah, I hate those early morning appointments. The doctor had some interesting news.

TOM:

So did mine.

JENNY:

Really?

TOM:

We might need to celebrate.

JENNY:

Celebrate what?

TOM:

My good news.

JENNY:

What good news?

TOM:

This morning the doctor told me that I responded very well to the radiation. He said I might not have to do chemotherapy.

JENNY:

(She hugs him.) Tom!

TOM:

He said there's a chance... It's still slim, but he said there's a chance...

JENNY:

Of what?

TOM:

That I might recover. That I might make it out of this afterall.

JENNY:

I can't believe it.

TOM:

Neither can I. This is the last thing I expected... The absolute last thing.

JENNY:

I don't know what to say.

TOM:

Just say you love me.

JENNY:

That's easy. I love you.

TOM:

I love you too. I don't want you to worry. Pretty soon the doctor is going to tell you the same thing.

JENNY:

Maybe. *(Sad smile.)*

TOM:

(He sees the pain in her eyes and tries to cheer her up.) Ya' know, this isn't so bad. After all this radiation, you'd think everyone else we're around would lose their hair too.

JENNY:

(Laughs.) We aren't radioactive.

TOM:

But it would be cool if we were. Just think of what would happen if someone stuck a match too close to us. All I'm sayin' is nuclear explosion... Man, we could cause a mushroom cloud and fry a city.

JENNY:

Tom!

TOM:

That'd be the way to go. Boom! Disintegrated! They'd never know what hit 'em.

JENNY:

(Sarcastically.) How pleasant.

TOM:

Yup, either that or we could sit in the middle of a nuclear power plant and power the world! Just think of it... Every time I take a crap, it'd be like nuclear waste! I'll be damned if it wouldn't be cool to be radioactive. If I were radioactive I'd be like... Like...

JENNY:

Like what?

TOM:

Like a radioactive superhero. Like... Like the Hulk. The big green guy. Whenever he gets mad he turns into a monster. "Don't make me angry, you wouldn't like me when I'm angry." That'd be really cool if all the radioactive shit we went through turned us into incredible Hulks.

JENNY:

(There is a pause and the tone changes.)

Tom?

TOM:

Yes?

JENNY:

There's something I need to talk to you about.

TOM:

(Sarcastically.) Don't tell me you have cancer, I just couldn't handle that.

JENNY:

Seriously.

TOM:

What is it?

JENNY:

This is really hard to say now.

TOM:
(*More serious.*) Jenny, tell me.

JENNY:
You know I went to the doctor this morning too.

TOM:
What?

JENNY:
I'm...

TOM:
What is it?

JENNY:
I'm... Pregnant.

TOM:
Pregnant?

JENNY:
Yes.

TOM:
You mean you're pregnant.

JENNY:
That's what I just said.

TOM:
Oh my God.

JENNY:
I didn't know how to tell you.

TOM:
Oh my God. It's... Um... Is that possible? I mean the radiation and cancer and...

JENNY:
It's possible. All the radiation affected was my head.

TOM:
Oh...

JENNY:

Tom? Are you all right?

TOM:

We used protection.

JENNY:

It... It didn't work.

TOM:

How could it not work?

JENNY:

That's not the point.

TOM:

Then what is the point?

JENNY:

The point is that I'm pregnant.

TOM:

Jenny?

JENNY:

It's okay; I think it's a good thing.

TOM:

You mean you want to have this baby?

JENNY:

Yes... I... I think that I want to be a mother.

TOM:

Oh man.

JENNY:

I may not get another chance at this. Listen, I really...

TOM:

I won't have another chance either.

JENNY:

What?

TOM:

I still might have too... If I go to chemo... I'll be sterile.

JENNY:

(A small smile is playing on the corner of her mouth.) Wait. Are you telling me what I think you are?

TOM:

Don't jump to conclusions. I took care of my little brother a lot when I was younger. It's not as much fun as it looks. I mean, a kid is more responsibility than I can imagine.

JENNY:

But a baby...

TOM:

So soon after we're married... People will talk Jenny. What's your mother going to say? I mean it's not like we had a long engagement...

JENNY:

I don't care what she says.

TOM:

My parents aren't going to be too thrilled either.

JENNY:

Try, just try to imagine what it would be like. Close your eyes.

(She covers his eyes with her hands.)

There, now imagine a little baby girl...

TOM:

Boy.

JENNY:

Okay, boy. Imagine teaching him to ride a bike; showing him how to throw a football; going camping with him.

TOM:

Bringing him fishing and going hiking.

JENNY:

Singing lullabies to him.

TOM:

I don't know about singing...

JENNY:

You'll sing...

(He pushes her hands down.)

TOM:

Maybe. There's a lot more to it than that.

JENNY:

I know. I know it's not all fun. I know there's a lot of work too... But think about it...

TOM:

(To himself.) I'd need to put in some more hours at the hardware store.

JENNY:

Tom?

TOM:

I want to have a baby.

JENNY:

(Big smile.) You don't have the right equipment buddy.

TOM:

But you do.

(They hug one another tightly.)

We've got a lot to think about.

JENNY:

I know, but doesn't it feel good.

TOM:

Yeah.

JENNY:

Yeah?

TOM:

Yeah.

(Blackout.)

Scene Eight:
A Visit to the Doctor

(The following scene should be done in a similar fashion to the opening scene with TOM. However, this scene will include both TOM and JENNY standing beneath the bright white light. The DOCTOR'S VOICE should continue to have a cold scientific feel for the couple. It will still come from the P.A. as it did in the first scene. TOM and JENNY are holding hands.)

DOCTOR'S VOICE:

What I'm about to tell you is privy to doctor/patient confidentiality.

TOM:

I... I can go...

JENNY:

No. My husband is staying. I want him to hear whatever you're gonna' say.

DOCTOR'S VOICE:

I've already informed your mother...

JENNY:

So much for confidentiality.

DOCTOR'S VOICE:

I understand your condition has changed. Dr. Whitehurst has informed me of the onset of a pregnancy.

TOM:

(Quietly to JENNY.) Who?

JENNY:

(To TOM.) Dr. Probe. *(To the DOCTOR.)* Yeah, I'm pregnant.

DOCTOR'S VOICE:

I see.

JENNY:

There's a bun in the oven... I guess it'd be more like a microwave for me.

DOCTOR'S VOICE:

This is a very serious matter.

TOM:

We should listen.

DOCTOR'S VOICE:

In the last MRI another tumor was discovered. It is deep in the basal hindbrain... And from these pictures it appears that it would be a very difficult and dangerous operation.

JENNY:

So what... What are we going to do?

DOCTOR'S VOICE:

Long ago when we first began to discuss your options I told you that you would probably have to have chemotherapy at some point. It would appear that we have reached that point.

JENNY:

Chemotherapy?

DOCTOR'S VOICE:

Yes. Unfortunately, I am afraid that even chemotherapy may not have the desired effect on the tumor.

TOM:

Wait! Just wait a minute! What are you saying here?

JENNY:

He's saying that I don't have a lot of time left. Isn't that right Doctor?

DOCTOR'S VOICE:

I'm afraid so.

TOM:

How much time?

JENNY:

It doesn't matter Tom.

TOM:

It does matter. How can you say that? How much time?

DOCTOR'S VOICE:

Perhaps eighteen months. It depends on how the tumor responds. If it responds favorably, maybe a little more.

JENNY:

What about the baby?

DOCTOR'S VOICE:

I'm very sorry.

JENNY:

What's going to happen to our baby?

DOCTOR'S VOICE:

Once treatment begins the fetus will not survive the introduction of toxins required by chemotherapy.

JENNY:

And... And what if I don't do chemo?

TOM:

Jenny?

DOCTOR'S VOICE:

Well such a decision would seriously alter the amount of time you have remaining.

JENNY:

How much time would I have?

DOCTOR'S VOICE:

You would have a year at the most.

JENNY:

What about the baby? Would I be able to have it?

DOCTOR'S VOICE:

It is possible that you could carry the baby to term under those circumstances. However, it is highly inadvisable.

JENNY:

You can't operate at all?

DOCTOR'S VOICE:

At this point the skill and technology required to perform such an operation is not available.

JENNY:

(Looking at TOM. Her voice breaks when she speaks.) Tom? Oh Tom...

TOM:

(Takes her into his arms. Tears are shimmering in his eyes.)

Jenny... God... It's... It's going to be okay. It'll be okay.

(The doctor light slowly fades out. The two are left holding each other on stage for a moment longer. The lights should fade directly into the next scene.)

Scene Nine:
Decisions Decisions

(TOM and JENNY are discovered embracing one another.)

TOM:

If... If there were any way in the world that I could trade places with you. If somehow by some magic I could put myself in your shoes, I'd... I'd do it in a heartbeat.

JENNY:

No you wouldn't.

TOM:

Yeah I would. It's like in the movies... Ya' know? I mean, the guy is the hero... He always knows what to do. He always knows how to save the people in trouble. If I'm the hero in this drama, I don't have a clue how to save you.

JENNY:

Damn it Tom, would you open you're eyes! This isn't a movie. This isn't pretend. This is real and we have to deal with it.

TOM:

I just hate being so helpless...

JENNY:

I know. I do too.

TOM:

I want to do something. I wish I could see cancer... I wish it were some smug ass guy standing right here, smiling like some kind of dick head. I'd... I'd kick its ass

JENNY:

(Smiling.) You'd kick its ass?

TOM:

(Smiling and making a punching motion.)

I would... I'd... I'd beat the living shit outta' it.

(For a moment their eyes are locked, they are smiling at one another. Suddenly they both look away. Their smiles have fallen. There is a pause.)

JENNY:

Tom, we need to talk about the baby.

TOM:

Yeah... I know.

JENNY:

I... I really want to have it.

TOM:

Don't. Don't do that to yourself.

JENNY:

I can't help it.

TOM:

We should try and forget about this... We should just worry about taking advantage of what we've got left.

JENNY:

Forget?

TOM:

Not forget... That's the wrong word.

JENNY:

You are way ahead there Tom... I... I didn't say I was going to do chemo.

TOM:

What?

JENNY:

I said that I was thinking about not doing chemo.

TOM:

But... But you have to do it. I mean, to stay alive the doctors said...

JENNY:

What do doctors know? Nothing! What they know about tumors and cancer, it's like a drop in the bucket. They don't know what's best for me.

TOM:

Jenny...

JENNY:

I just... I'm only nineteen years old Tom... Nineteen, pregnant, and dying... I just...

TOM:

It'll be okay.

JENNY:

No it's not. I... I can't stop thinking about that little boy... The one that died. I keep thinking about his mother and how horrible it must be to lose a child. How... How death just can't be cheated. People don't think about it... They don't see themselves like a... Like a fire that burns brightly for a short time, then it just burns out... It dies. *(Pause.)* I don't want to die Tom and I don't want our baby to die.

TOM:

But if you don't do chemo, you could both die. At least if you do this, at least you'll live longer.

JENNY:

Is it worth it? For a few months Tom? The chemo is hardly going to make a difference at all.

TOM:

It might be... It might be worth it.

JENNY:

I don't think so.

TOM:

Jenny, you're probably not going to be strong enough to do this. This baby could kill you.

JENNY:

You don't understand.

TOM:

No I don't. I just...

JENNY:

You just want me to give up our baby...

TOM:

No.

JENNY:

Then you're afraid of taking care of it...

TOM:

No. I'm afraid, but not of that. I'm afraid of losing you.

JENNY:

I can't do this without your help.

I just...

TOM:

Chemo won't save me.

JENNY:

I want you alive Jenny.

TOM:

I'm going to die whether I do treatment or not.

JENNY:

God, I just want you alive.

TOM:

I know... I know. It's not about that though. It's not about me staying alive. There's something growing inside me Tom, something important.

JENNY:

A cancer.

TOM:

A baby.

JENNY:

Jesus... I can't look forward to your death.

TOM:

I hardly got sick at all during radiation.

JENNY:

But...

TOM:

I think I want to have this baby even if it does kill me. This is the most important thing I've ever done. Who knows? The doctor might be wrong. I might not even need chemo.

JENNY:

You know you need it! Don't do this!

TOM:

I accepted a long time ago that I was going to die. You're not thinking about the baby... You're thinking about yourself.

TOM:

I'm thinking about you... I just want you alive and healthy.

JENNY:

Well, we both know that's not going to happen.

TOM:

Anything can happen.

JENNY:

Now you sound like one of those stupid doctors. Anything can happen. You know what that means. It means I could die tomorrow.

TOM:

Look, I... I may not live to see the kid's seventh birthday. Then who'd take care of him?

JENNY:

I'm not going to live to see his first birthday.

TOM:

Jenny...

JENNY:

You're in remission. You've probably got a lot more time left now.

TOM:

God... Just... Just listen. I'm saying this because I don't want to lose you.

JENNY:

No! I don't have that much time left. I can't believe you don't see!

TOM:

See what?

JENNY:

Don't you see how important life is? Can't you feel it? My God, every breath I take, I feel it fill my lungs. I taste the air! (*Tears begin to roll down her cheeks.*) Everything... Everything is so beautiful. I love it all so much... But you know what I love most, I love people! I love smiling, telling jokes, and hugging you. The reason I love all these things is because they tell me I'm alive. They show me how precious every moment is. Every person dreams, every person loves, and every person wants to live forever. I... I have an incredible power now. I can give you something of me...

TOM:

(*TOM is visibly shaken by her short monologue.*) I understand what you're trying to say, but I don't want you to die. I don't want to be alone.

JENNY:
I don't want to die either.

TOM:
Then your mind is made up?

JENNY:
Yes, I need to do this.

TOM:
My God... What if you die before the baby's born?

JENNY:
Then my life won't have mattered. You'll be alone. I'll be dead and only a memory...
In time that will fade...

TOM:
No, it'll...

JENNY:
But if I have a child, the baby will grow up and have children, then they'll have children.
Part of me... Part of what we have will always remain alive and you'll never be alone.

TOM:
My God, a baby. You're baby...

JENNY:
Our baby. It'll be our child.

TOM:
(Repeats to himself.) Our child.

JENNY:
Tom?

TOM:
I can't fight you. I love you too much.

JENNY:
Tom?

TOM:
If the baby lives... I mean... When you have the baby... I'll... I'll take care of him.

(He embraces her.)

JENNY:
(Laughing.) What makes you so sure it'll be a him?

(Blackout.)

Scene Ten:
Epilogue

(TOM and JENNY are discovered on stage. Each has a full head of hair. JENNY is seated in an isolated spot light upstage of TOM. TOM is also in an isolated spot light. He is sitting and holding a tiny baby wrapped in a blanket. See note following the description of the scene.)

TOM:
(Singing.) Hush little baby don't say a word,
 Momma's gonna' buy you a mocking bird,
 And if that mocking bird don't sing,
 Momma's gonna' buy you a diamond ring.

(He takes a long pause, looking into the baby's eyes.)

Don't cry little Jenny. It'll be alright. Daddy's here. Everything is going to be alright.

(JENNY's spot light fades slowly to black following TOM's last spoken line. He smiles at the baby and takes a long pause as JENNY's light begins to fade. Perhaps he looks over his shoulder and watches her disappear into the darkness, perhaps not. He begins to sing again. There is a slight alteration to the lullaby.)

TOM:
Hush little baby don't say a word,
Daddy's gonna' buy you a mockingbird,
And if that mockingbird don't sing,
Daddy's gonna' buy you a diamond ring.

(As he is singing the final two lines of the song, the lights begin to fade, reaching black a moment after he finishes the song.)

The Play is Finished.

Note: The director may choose to have TOM seated or standing on stage at the top of scene ten. JENNY may then enter in blue light with the baby. She hands the child to TOM. He does not take his eyes off her for the entire moment. TOM holds the baby in one arm and takes JENNY's hand with the other. There is a very long moment where they remain motionless looking at one another and holding hands. JENNY slowly pulls

her hand away and retreats to her seat. The blue light crossfades to the isolation lights and TOM begins the first verse of his song.

Though this play is written with blackouts finishing most of the scenes, innovative directors are urged to explore the possibility of using subtle crossfades between scenes to keep the action flowing.

In the original production, this play was produced on a thrust stage utilizing a series of acting blocks for the set. To indicate the different settings, these blocks were shifted between the scenes. Directors and designers may choose to be more elaborate than what is required, but they should not lose sight of the fact that this piece is about character, not spectacle.