

A Necropsy

A 10 Minute Play

By Stephanie Heathcock

CAST

DR. ROSE

Mid-thirty or older. A medical examiner at just another day of work.

May be portrayed by any sex or gender. Script will use they/them pronouns.

MARIA

A perception of a deceased sixteen year old girl, Maria's, body.

CONTENT DISCLOSURE

Discussion of death, abortion, suicide, rape, abuse

Suicide of a minor

Live portrayal of an autopsy

Language

A medical examiner's office- in the autopsy suite.

A body lies on an examination table, still in the body bag.

We sit alone with the body for a few long moments.

Heavy doors open with a thud, and DR. ROSE enters. They wear a wireless headset for dictation, and are glancing through papers on their clipboard.

DR. ROSE

Female period. Sixteen years of age at time of death, period. Body was discovered June twentieth twenty-three at nine o'clock AM period. Time of death June twentieth twenty-three estimated somewhere between two o'clock AM and seven o'clock AM period. Maybe we can figure that out.

They set down the clipboard and unceremoniously rip the bag open. They peer inside.

DR. ROSE (CONT'D)

Body arrived in black transport bag period. Body dressed in black yoga pants comma, pink Hello Kitty pajama shirt comma, no shoes period.

(under their breath)

Cute.

DR. ROSE opens the bag further, and begins to move it down and around the body.

DR. ROSE (CONT'D)

Autopsy being performed by Dr. Sydney Rose at the Missouri Parks County Medical Examiners office on July twenty-first at twelve o'clock AM midnight period.

DR. ROSE lifts the body on its side and slides the body bag underneath. They maneuver the body and bag until the body lies by itself on the table.

DR. ROSE haphazardly folds the bag and tucks it away, and returns to the body.

DR. ROSE (CONT'D)

Paragraph. Title: Initial physical examination. Paragraph.

DR. ROSE searches their clipboard, then sets it to the side. They look into the eyes of the body.

DR. ROSE (CONT'D)

Hello Maria.

MARIA enters from the opposite side Dr. Rose entered from. She is wearing the same Hello Kitty pajamas the body is wearing. She stands to the side, watching the action and speaking to Dr. Rose.

DR. ROSE never looks at MARIA directly. They speak to the body.

MARIA

Hello.

DR. ROSE

Ligature marks around the neck. They run around the neck to create a V-shape across the upper neck and head. Consistent with hanging. No signs of self-defense wounds around arms or hands. In my opinion she-

MARIA

-I killed myself.

DR. ROSE

What a waste.

DR. ROSE retrieves a metal tray holding medical supplies necessary for evidence gathering. A syringe, blood vials, baggies, etc.

They take a few blood, hair, and fingernail samples.

DR. ROSE (CONT'D)

Retrieving blood samples.

MARIA

You think I was on drugs?

DR. ROSE

Maybe alcohol?

MARIA

People don't kill themselves because they're drunk or high.

DR. ROSE

You were sixteen. What reason could you possibly have for killing yourself?

MARIA

You wouldn't understand.

DR. ROSE

I was sixteen once too.

When DR. ROSE reaches the nails, which are painted a bright pink. They stop and examine them.

MARIA

Pink was probably my favorite color.

DR. ROSE

Pink's my favorite too. But that's not what I'm looking at. Your nails were freshly painted.

MARIA

I painted them a few hours before I hung myself, I think.

DR. ROSE

Why would you paint your nails?

MARIA

Why does anyone do anything?

DR. ROSE

What happened? Did you decide to kill yourself before or after you painted your nails?

MARIA

(impatiently)

You're missing the point.

DR. ROSE

(this is affecting them more
than it should)

I'm getting off track.

DR. ROSE puts away the samples, gets the scissors, and cuts away the Hello Kitty shirt.

MARIA

Hey!

DR. ROSE

Sorry, but I can't take this off over your head.

MARIA

At least cut it down the seam!

DR. ROSE pulls away the shirt and places it in an evidence bag.

MARIA (CONT'D)

(petrified)

You can see my boobs.

DR. ROSE

It's strange. You have no idea who I am, but by the end of this, I will know you better than your friends, your parents, maybe even you ever did.

DR. ROSE picks up the scalpel. They begin the process of making a Y-shaped incision- shoulder to shoulder, under the breasts, and down to the pubic bone.

MARIA

Holy shit.

DR. ROSE

In the end, we're all meat.

MARIA

We're more than that.

DR. ROSE

I wish. We are a mess on the inside. Everything just squished together like a sack of spaghetti.

Blood leaves the body, moving down the slightly sloped table and into the drain.

DR. ROSE (CONT'D)

And there it goes.

MARIA

Holy shit!

DR. ROSE

Spaghetti sauce. That's all we are.

Pause.

MARIA

That's sad.

DR. ROSE

It really is. You were so young... it's a waste. Jesus Christ, I'll be lying up there someday too.

MARIA

No. You're sad.

DR. ROSE

It's an objective truth.

MARIA

Fuck off. I was not a waste. My years alive meant something.

DR. ROSE

In the grand scheme of things we're just one body among billions.

MARIA

But I thought things only I could have thought. Felt things only I could have felt. Same with you.

DR. ROSE

And one day they'll all be gone. Your memories are going down the drain, into the sewage system.

MARIA

You're glad to be alive.

Pause.

DR. ROSE

The blood is sufficiently drained. I'm going to begin the process of opening the chest cavity.

They do so.

MARIA

You're glad to be alive.

DR. ROSE

I am... I really am... But that doesn't change facts. We are electricity and meat.

MARIA

How can you-!

DR. ROSE

What's wrong with being meat? What else are we supposed to be? Light, clouds, and sparkles?

When the skin comes in contact with a needle, it sends a signal to the brain, and the brain translates that feeling into pain.

What a lot of people don't understand is that, as much as we don't like pain, it is essential for life. Pain is the brain talking to us, letting us know that, "hey, there's something sharp on your skin, maybe you should check that out." Pretty amazing for a piece of meat.

There's a loud, sickening crack as DR. ROSE pulls the chest open wider.

DR. ROSE (CONT'D)

You had people who loved, and people who loved you.

Pause.

DR. ROSE (CONT'D)

But... I guess...

Pause.

DR. ROSE (CONT'D)

Dammit. I'm getting jaded. I guess... I'm sorry, but what a waste. You were destined for so much more.

You could have given comfort and inspiration to hundreds, maybe thousands who need it. You could have been someone's favorite Elementary School teacher, or basketball coach. You could have been a moth-

DR. ROSE pulls the stomach cavity open a little wider.

DR. ROSE (CONT'D)

Holy shit.

MARIA

I told you.

DR. ROSE reaches further into the lower stomach.

DR. ROSE

Holy shit.

MARIA

You have no idea.

DR. ROSE backs away.

MARIA (CONT'D)

How... patronizing. I know what I am! Do you think because you cut open bodies for a living that you "get it?" I felt my body every damn day! I know what pain does. I don't need a fancy degree and grotesque job to understand that we are nothing but skeletons and blood.

Pause.

DR. ROSE

You knew. You had to have known.

DR. ROSE checks the body's mouth.

MARIA

I started throwing up a week ago. It was bad. I bet I had to run out of class a few times. My parents probably noticed.

DR. ROSE sighs. This one is really getting to them.

MARIA (CONT'D)

Do you know what it's like as a teenager in a state like Missouri? I didn't choose to be born here. I didn't choose parents who vote the way they do. I didn't choose to get pregnant.

MARIA laughs.

MARIA (CONT'D)

Well, I guess in some ways I did. I might have.

DR. ROSE

It's not your fault. Condoms break, teenagers make mistakes.

MARIA

Girls get raped.

DR. ROSE's gaze moves down the body, to the crotch.

DR. ROSE

Were you-?

MARIA

Maybe. You don't know yet. I guess you'll find out.

DR. ROSE

You could have had the baby. It happens every day, even to teenagers. It's unfortunate, but living is better than dying.

MARIA

I had my reasons. I must have, right?
 Imagine how it feels to slip a noose around your neck. To realize in an instant, while your heart is pounding and you feel the blood pulsing in your ears, that you'll never see prom, or graduation, or the next Star Wars movie. The despair. An urge so transcendental, it overrides an evolutionary power so necessary for life, it's present in all single-celled organisms: self-preservation. To do *that* to myself. I bet I had a pretty good fucking reason.

DR. ROSE

You could have had an ab-

MARIA

Had a what, Dr. Rose?

Pause.

DR. ROSE takes off their gloves and gets their phone. They're on it for a few long moments, searching. Then they find it. They deflate.

DR. ROSE

It's still illegal to have an abortion. Oh god.

MARIA

Maybe my parents are abusive as shit, and I would rather die than raise a baby who would be treated like I was. Maybe being forced to have my rapist's baby was too much.

Beat.

MARIA (CONT'D)

Or maybe I was young and stupid. Slept with a boy I liked. Maybe he didn't have a condom and we said "eh, fuck it! Life is short!" Then, just few weeks later, I realized that my life was over. The stigma, and the disappointment, and the rejection... upset the most basic of human instincts.

Beat

MARIA (CONT'D)

Does the reason really matter. At this point, I mean?

Beat.

DR. ROSE

I am so sorry.

MARIA

You should be.

Long pause.

DR. ROSE puts on another pair of gloves. They return to the body.

DR. ROSE

Okay. Umm...

They awkwardly realize that all of this is being recorded. They decide to let themselves feel; for just ten seconds. Then they are a professional again.

DR. ROSE (CONT'D)

New paragraph...

Subject appears to be pregnant period. My initial guess is somewhere between nine and twelve weeks period. I will begin the removal of the fetus after organ removal... period.

DR. ROSE continues the autopsy, MARIA watches. We hear a loud, wet crack from Maria's body.

END OF PLAY.