

COME UNDONE

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## COME UNDONE

### Characters:

Kenny: college student, early twenties. Physical Education major. Football player (wide receiver). Only child. Cisgender male.

Karen: college student, early twenties. Social work major. Transfer student from UT-Austin. Confident, compassionate, playful.

Bryan: college student, early twenties. Graphic arts major. Kenny's best friend since elementary school.

Stephanie: college student, early twenties. Nursing major. The mom-friend to all her friends.

Tom: Kenny's father, mid-forties to fifties. ER doctor.

Janis (doubles as Police Officer): mid-twenties.

Billy (doubles as Police Officer): mid-twenties.

The Shape: the manifestation of trauma/sexual abuse. Any age or gender identity.

### Notes:

Ellipses (...) indicate a nonverbal response in dialogue.

Feel free to play with how the Shape is represented (i.e., a masked or shrouded individual). In any event, it can be physically intimidating at times, and the face should be obscured. Since Kenny and the Shape are linked, they should always be onstage together. If Kenny enters a scene, the Shape is already there, unless otherwise noted.

ACT ONE

PROLOGUE: CEMETERY

*Cemetery. Downstage, an old headstone off-kilter. Another block leans against it, forming a small cavity.*

*KENNY, a fifteen-year-old boy, runs onstage. He is fleeing a situation. He wanders the cemetery, grateful to be alone.*

TOM  
(offstage)

Kenny! Kenny, wait. Come back here!

*KENNY retreats from the voice. He crouches next to headstone and reaches into the cavity, retrieving a beer bottle. He opens it and drinks, which relaxes him.*

TOM  
(offstage)

Come on, Kenny. Don't be like this. Come back home.

*KENNY ignores the voice. He huddles against the headstone, pulls jacket over his head. Falls asleep.*

*LIGHTS SHIFT: passage of time. KENNY wakes. He hides the empty bottle in the cavity. He wanders the cemetery rather than going home.*

*A blue light begins to pulse: a police car. Muted chatter of a POLICE RADIO.*

*KENNY crosses through the blue light with increasing urgency. POLICE OFFICER gently intercepts him.*

POLICE OFFICER

Are you the son?

KENNY

What's happened? Where are my parents?

POLICE OFFICER

You're the son? Are you Kenneth?

KENNY

Where's my dad?

POLICE OFFICER

He's over there. He's been looking for you.

*POLICE OFFICER allows KENNY to cross to TOM, who is crouched on his haunches, his arms sheltering his head. POLICE OFFICER exits.*

*TOM sees KENNY, rises slowly, desperate to suppress his grief. Taking his son into a fierce embrace, TOM begins to sob.*

TOM

It's over. I promise you it's over.

*KENNY allows himself to be held. He cannot decide what he feels, so he feels nothing.*

*The SHAPE appears upstage. Only KENNY sees it. TOM departs.*

*KENNY transitions from 15-year-old to 20-year-old college student (e.g., change of clothes, puts on a sweatshirt and a ballcap).*

SCENE ONE: COLLEGE CAMPUS. Five years later

*KENNY and BRYAN are tossing a football on the green. A cooler of beer is nearby. The SHAPE remains upstage, watching.*

*BRYAN tosses the ball past KENNY, and it lands next to the SHAPE. When KENNY retrieves it, he barely acknowledges that the SHAPE is there. He goes back to tossing the football to BRYAN.*

*STEPHANIE enters with KAREN.*

STEPHANIE

Dorcaster University is totally cool. People like to call it the Harvard of the Shenandoah Valley, which makes it sound all super-elite and all, but really it's just a party school.

KAREN

The campus is beautiful. It's so different from Austin. I've never been to the ocean before.

STEPHANIE

Well, you're still about two hundred miles shy of it.

KAREN

Virginia's on the Atlantic, right?

STEPHANIE

The ocean is way, way over that way. And we've got the Blue Ridge Mountains over this way. And beyond that is West Virginia. We don't talk about them.

KAREN

Texans feel the same way about Oklahoma.

STEPHANIE

Just be careful about the partying. My sister practically bombed out.

KAREN

My parents will kill me if I flunk out. They didn't want me to transfer here.

*BRYAN and KENNY join them.*

BRYAN

My dad did some heavy-duty partying here. I've got to uphold the family honor. Screw classes.

STEPHANIE

Ugh! I don't know which is more pathetic: listening to my boyfriend pretend he's hardcore or knowing he gets weepy after one beer. Karen, this is Bryan.

BRYAN

Hey.

KAREN

Hi.

BRYAN

And this sorry piece of shit is Kenny. He shares our dorm suite. We adopted him from the Humane Society. He used to have fleas, but he's clean now.

KENNY

Don't listen to him. I've had all my shots.

KAREN

So, are you kind of their watchdog or something?

STEPHANIE

Kenny is supposed to keep Bryan out of trouble. I'm counting on him to be the mature one.

KENNY

Nope, not gonna to happen.

*KENNY opens the cooler and passes around beer to everyone. The SHAPE takes note.*

KENNY

(disregarding the SHAPE)

We've got a class together: Professor Sanchez's class, yeah?

KAREN

That's where I've seen you. You like to sit in the back.

KENNY

That way he won't notice me when I fall asleep. You transferred here from Austin?

KAREN

My parents thought I was crazy. "What's wrong with UT-Austin?" You've got to understand; they're very loyal Longhorns. Both of them work there. Mom's a professor in Psychology, and Dad's in grant administration. It would've been easy for me to stay, but I wanted to get out on my own.

KENNY

So, of course you pick Podunk Dorcaster, the armpit of the Blue Ridge Mountains.

KAREN

Come on, it's beautiful here!

KENNY

I'm still hoping for parole.

BRYAN

Kenny and I are lifers. Born and raised here. Just last year, we got a drive-through McDonald's. If you want a Big Box store, you've got to drive over to Charlottesville.

KAREN

I like small. Small is good.

BRYAN

In that case, you'll love Kenny.

*KENNY shoves BRYAN. BRYAN shoves him back. They wrestle.*

STEPHANIE

Ignore those two. So, you're interested in the social work program.

BRYAN

Shit! Don't start talking about classes. Can't we even get a break for a little bit? It's only the second week of the term.

KENNY

You thinking about social work?

KAREN

I want to work with kids, mostly. Maybe do some counseling. What are you majoring in?

KENNY

Technically, I'm majoring in Phys Ed, but that's mostly because I'm on the football team. Shit, I'm just trying to make it to graduation.

BRYAN

Kenny's a wide receiver. That is, if the coach ever lets him play. Actually, Kenny's majoring in beer.

KENNY

Not sure I can make any money at it, but here goes!

*KENNY displays his prowess by downing an entire bottle while BRYAN cheers him on. The SHAPE takes note.*

STEPHANIE

Come on, Kenny, we'll help you figure it out. After you graduate, I'm thinking Olympic decathlon or nuclear physics.

KENNY

Sounds good.

BRYAN

Nah. Garbage collector.

KENNY

The correct term is Waste Management.

KAREN

How about rodeo rider?

KENNY

I can fall back on that if the nuclear physics doesn't pan out.

KAREN

Really, what is it you want to do?

KENNY

I don't know. Maybe I'll be a porn star.

BRYAN

What's your porn name?

KENNY

I've got it: Angus Beef.

STEPHANIE

God, is that all guys think about: Sex?

BRYAN and KENNY  
(in unison)

Yes.



*KENNY turns on music from his phone. He grabs STEPHANIE's hands and starts dancing. All of them dance while KENNY snatches up another bottle of beer and drinks. He gets increasingly inebriated, until he staggers close to the SHAPE. He almost falls over. STEPHANIE catches him.*

STEPHANIE

Wow, that was quite an exhibition, Angus.

*Giddy with drinking, KENNY tries to kiss STEPHANIE, but she fends him off.*

STEPHANIE

We've talked about this. I'm never going to kiss you!

KENNY

Come on, Stephanie! I love you! You complete me! Let's sneak off and I can show you how I got my porn name.

BRYAN

Hey, that's my girlfriend you're talking to!

KENNY  
(laughing)

I'm screwed. You all have your lives figured out, and I don't have a fucking clue.

KAREN

Oh, Kenny, that's not true. You've got time to figure things out. There's no rush.

KENNY

In that case.

*KENNY pops another bottle and downs it.*

SCENE TWO: TOM'S APARTMENT

*TOM and KENNY sit at opposite ends of a table, eating dinner. Long silence.*

TOM

Your mother would have made this better.

KENNY

It's okay.

TOM

I'm not really much of a cook.

KENNY

Well, this way you won't have to worry about getting old and fat.

*TOM pours a glass of wine and drinks. Evidently this is not his first of the evening. KENNY watches.*

TOM

What do you think of the new apartment?

KENNY

You're fixing it up nice.

TOM

Yeah, I couldn't handle rattling around that old house by myself.

KENNY

Any offers yet?

TOM

Not yet.

KENNY

...

TOM

What?

KENNY

Who would want to buy it, after what happened in the bathroom?

TOM

Yeah. I don't know if "full disclosure" covers something like that. (Pause.) How are classes going? You like your professors?

KENNY

...

TOM

And how are Bryan and Stephanie? I haven't seen them in a long time.

KENNY

They're good.

TOM

I wish your mother was here. She would've been so proud of you. College graduate.

KENNY

Not yet. I've got two more years.

TOM

Right. Right. (Pause.) You seeing anyone?

KENNY

...

TOM

Come on, Kenny. Give me something to work with here. You know you can talk to me about anything.

KENNY

Look, I've got school work. Thanks for dinner.

*TOM gives KENNY a hug. They are both embarrassed by their relief that the evening is over.*

*KENNY exits. The SHAPE follows him off.*

SCENE THREE: STREET

*KENNY walks back to his dorm suite. The SHAPE follows.  
When KENNY stops, the SHAPE lays a hand on his  
shoulder. He endures the touch, until he can't.*

*KENNY changes directions, to no effect; the SHAPE is still  
there.*

*Weary, KENNY exits, with the SHAPE trailing.*

SCENE FOUR: LIBRARY

*KENNY is wrangling with a book; he can't make heads or tails of it. He notices KAREN, who is industriously working from the same book. The SHAPE is nearby.*

KENNY

Psst, Karen! Help! Drowning dude over here! Can you throw me a lifeline?

KAREN

What do you want to know?

KENNY

This is written in English, right? I'm not reading Martian or some other shit.

*KENNY holds up a copy of Lolita. KAREN holds up her own copy.*

KENNY

Am I getting this right? *Lolita* is about some old guy having sex with a little girl?

KAREN

Pretty much. They get married, and they travel around the country. Try thinking of it as satire.

KENNY  
(bewildered)

It's supposed to be funny?

KAREN

Well, not "ha-ha" funny, but like a dark comedy. You know, tongue-in-cheek. Humbert Humbert is super pretentious and uses a lot of puns and word-play. He's poking fun at his own infatuation. But he's also serious about it. He's what's called an unreliable narrator.

KENNY

Like, you're not supposed to believe what he says?

KAREN

Kind of. There's enough truth so you know what happens, but he's not completely upfront about it.

KENNY

Wow. Laugh-a-minute, huh?

KAREN  
(shrugging)

It's literature.

KENNY

I'll take your word on it. (Moves closer.) Can I read your notes?

*KAREN shares her computer. KENNY diligently reads, but it isn't long before he is lost again.*

KAREN  
(laughing)

I'll email you my notes. You can puzzle it out later.

KENNY

Great! How can I thank you?

*KAREN cannot ignore KENNY's flirtatious grin. She closes up her computer and collects her books.*

KAREN

You can take me out for a beer.

*KENNY and KAREN exit.*

SCENE FIVE: PIZZA PARLOR

*KENNY and KAREN eat pizza at a restaurant. The SHAPE is at its furthest distance from them.*

KAREN

Austin has a bit of hippie culture, which is why my parents love it there. Let's just say they're not your typical parents. Like, on my sixteenth birthday, they gave me my first joint.

KENNY

Shit. For my sixteenth birthday, my dad gave me a thesaurus.

KAREN

It was their way of saying that they "used" to do drugs, so if I wanted to try it, I was entitled to, but not like do anything stupid.

KENNY

So, did you do it? Get stoned?

*KAREN reaches into her backpack and takes out a baggy with a single joint in it.*

KENNY

Um, you might not want to be waving that around in here.

KAREN

Oh! Right. (She puts it back in her bag.) I think they expected me to sit up in my room all by myself and get high, and then I'd come downstairs and we'd "process" it. They're big on processing. I kind of like keeping it as a memento of how weird they are. Let's just say they're into alternative parenting techniques.

KENNY

What the hell does that mean?

KAREN

Like, every Thursday night was pizza and "laundry." And by "laundry," I don't mean dirty clothes. We'd sit around the table and air out our feelings. It wasn't until I got to junior high that I caught on other families don't do stuff like that.

KENNY

I kind of wish my parents had tried it out. Boy, the shit I could tell them!

KAREN

I know it was super weird, but I don't really mind. It showed me how much my parents cared about us. They were willing to be vulnerable and honest, and my sister and I could unload on

KAREN (cont'd)

them, and they never took it personally. And if they were concerned about me, they'd tell me, so it was no big deal.

KENNY

I could see Bryan's parents doing something like that. They always know how to be supportive.

KAREN

What about your parents?

KENNY

My parents are pretty boring, actually. Not much to tell.

KAREN

One time, I got really angry at my mom for being my mom, you know? So, she wanted to teach me a lesson about how tough it is to be a parent, so she gave me an egg, and –

KENNY

Hang on. An egg?

KAREN

Yeah, a hardboiled egg. I had to carry it around for a week and pretend it was my child. I had to keep it with me at all times. Like, I couldn't leave it at home or stick it in my backpack, because that'd be child endangerment. And if the egg broke, that was child abuse. One day, I was such a klutz, and I dropped my egg three times. Three times! I was so lucky it didn't break.

KENNY

Couldn't you replace it with another egg?

KAREN

No, Mom wrote her initials on it. She also made me spend time with the egg every day. You know, take it to the park or read it a story.

KENNY

You're joking.

KAREN

No, really. I did. A couple times. Okay, once. I felt like such an idiot! I sat in the park with my little baby in my lap. People gave me the strangest looks. One woman scowled at me, so I said, "Parenthood is a difficult yolk to bear."

*KENNY groans, and KAREN claps her hands in delight.*



KENNY

So, if your kid is kidnapped, that'd make it a poached egg.

*KAREN boos, and together they laugh. They end up holding hands across the table. For a moment, they are flustered by the intimate connection.*

KAREN

So, what about you? What about your family.

KENNY

My dad's a doctor. He works in the ER. And my mother ... Mama ... She's great.

KAREN

What does she do?

KENNY

She used to work at the pharmacy downtown. Really, I'm serious: they're boring. Not much else to tell. I'm a lifelong inmate of Dorchester. Only son. Well, I almost had a kid brother, but Mama had a miscarriage. I was six, so I don't remember too much about it.

*The SHAPE gets agitated. KENNY notes this.*

KENNY

I'm glad I was an only child. No little brothers or sisters to take care of. But it can be tough, too. You're under a spotlight all the time.

KAREN

My sister and I are pretty close, except when we're hating each other.

KENNY

I don't mean my parents were tough on me or anything, but it's like you can't get out from under their attention.

*The SHAPE is very agitated.*

KAREN

Yeah, I get it. Whenever my sister gets in trouble, I become my parents' favorite, which is nice.

KENNY

But really, my parents are good. They're good people.

*The SHAPE quiets down.*

KENNY

So, when the week was over, what'd you do with the egg?

KAREN

I ate it.

KENNY

Cannibalism. I like it. (He takes KAREN's hand.) You want to get out of here? Take a walk?

KAREN

Sure!

*They exit the restaurant. KENNY warns off the SHAPE with a look. The SHAPE follows at a respectful distance.*

*SOUND: Crickets, soft wind.*

KAREN

Dorcaster is so beautiful at night. You can actually hear crickets! Don't laugh. Austin isn't known for its wildlife.

KENNY

I've never thought of crickets as "wildlife."

KAREN

You know what I mean, country boy. You've got farmland and a river and trees. It's an entirely different world here.

KENNY

Don't you miss Austin?

KAREN

I like being on my own. Being far away from my parents. Being independent. What about you? Is it hard living near your parents?

KENNY

My dad likes me to come over once a week for dinner.

KAREN

What about your mom? I bet she loves having you so close to home.

*Beat.*

KENNY

My mom died. Five years ago.

KAREN

Oh, I'm so sorry! I didn't realize. You said ... I got the impression ...

KENNY

No, no. It's okay. I thought I'd told you.

KAREN

No, it's okay. I mean, it's not okay. I'm sorry. Oh god. Was she sick? Or was it unexpected?

KENNY

It was inevitable. (Long pause.) She killed herself.

*KENNY glances at the SHAPE, which has begun to approach.*

KENNY

I was fifteen, and I guess she was depressed or something, and ...

*KAREN squeezes KENNY's hand. He is puzzled by her compassionate silence.*

*The SHAPE halts, unable to interfere.*

KENNY

Huh. You know, people usually rush in, and try to make me feel better. "I'm so sorry about your loss. Oh, don't feel bad. It's okay."

KAREN

People can say really stupid things, even when they're trying to be helpful. I know there's nothing I can say that's going to change what happened. And you know what you're feeling better than I do.

KENNY

(laughs in surprise)

Wow. Huh. You're amazing.

KAREN

You okay?

KENNY

The weirdest part about it, after the funeral, Dad and I went back home. And it was like the house had changed size. All the rooms were the wrong proportion. We had to learn how to navigate the emptiness.

KAREN

Is it still weird going back home?

KENNY

My dad doesn't live there anymore. He moved out of the house and got an apartment. He's still trying to sell the house. No one really wants it, not after what happened there.

*They walk.*

KAREN

Here's my dorm. Thanks for the pizza. And the walk.

*They kiss. KAREN departs. KENNY is left alone with the SHAPE. He exits, with the SHAPE following.*

SCENE SIX: DORM SUITE

*Late night. KENNY can't sleep. He plays on his phone.*

*The SHAPE approaches. Lightly touches KENNY's shoulder, his neck, his hair. Each time, KENNY flinches away.*

*KENNY moves away. He distracts himself with his phone again. Standing behind him, the SHAPE lays both hands on his shoulders and squeezes hard.*

KENNY

Ow!

*The SHAPE lets go.*

*BRYAN enters.*

BRYAN

You okay?

KENNY

Sorry. I had a Charlie horse.

BRYAN

I thought you were out with Karen. What are you doing back here? I thought you'd be scoring tonight.

KENNY

Some of us have some decency. I'm taking it slow for once.

BRYAN

That sure as hell don't sound like you. You bone everything.

KENNY

Shut up.

BRYAN

You okay? You look ... I don't know.

KENNY

Shit. Yeah. I'm just tired is all. (Pause.) After I walked Karen back to her dorm room, I went by the house.

BRYAN

Yeah?

KENNY

I wish Dad could unload it. Shit, he's not doing anything to make it sellable. There isn't even a for sale sign anymore. Five years, and it looks like some derelict, drug house now.

BRYAN

I thought he was going to sell it to the city.

KENNY

They don't even want it. So, he's stuck paying mortgage on a shithole house that nobody wants.

BRYAN

Maybe he's having a hard time letting it go.

KENNY

He should get over it. He should move on. As long as he holds onto that house, he's going to be haunted by what happened.

*The SHAPE approaches, and KENNY pointedly moves away from it.*

BRYAN

Maybe it gives him comfort, seeing it from time to time.

KENNY

Don't fucking rationalize it. (Beat.) Sorry. Don't mind me. Sometimes the memories get ... I keep trying to figure out why she did it. Why she would do something like that.

BRYAN

Yeah.

KENNY

It's like ... Mama was okay. She was a good person. She was happy. So, it doesn't make sense.

BRYAN

You know what I remember about your mom? I remember her making us those tie-dye t-shirts, and how every summer she'd make us lime Kool-Aid. And she always called me "kiddo." "Hey kiddo, you want some cookies?"

KENNY

....

BRYAN

And remember that time we were tossing around the football?

*BRYAN gets a football and tosses it to KENNY.*

BRYAN

We were playing in your front yard. And your mom comes running out of the house, and she does this fantastic interception.

*The SHAPE intercepts the football. BRYAN and KENNY play along with it.*

BRYAN

And she runs all the way to the end of the yard.

KENNY

And you and me chase her into the cemetery, and she's running around the headstones, laughing.

BRYAN

And we get her cornered, so she throws the football to me, and the two of you take off chasing me.

*KENNY and the SHAPE chase BRYAN around the room, until KENNY crashes into a chair.*

KENNY

And I would've caught you too if I hadn't tripped over that headstone and sprained my ankle. (Pause.) Yeah. That was fun.

BRYAN  
(laughing)

Your mom was the greatest. I wish my mom was that fun.

*KENNY observes the SHAPE watching the entire time.*

KENNY

Yeah, she was cool.

SCENE SEVEN: DORM PARTY

*Dance music. Students dancing, drinking. KENNY dances by himself. STEPHANIE and KAREN enter.*

STEPHANIE

Remember what I warned you: party school. If you don't feel safe, come find me right away. And never set your drink down. Some asshole might put something in it.

KAREN

I'll be careful, Mom!

STEPHANIE

And have fun! Just not too much fun. Hey, there's Kenny.

KENNY

I was hoping you'd show up.

STEPHANIE

Where's Bryan?

KENNY

The last I saw, he was playing beer pong in Carlos's room.

STEPHANIE

Oh shit.

KAREN

Come on, it can't be that bad.

STEPHANIE

Believe me, it's that bad. (Running off.) Out of my way!

*KAREN and KENNY get beer. Awkward sexual tension.*

KAREN

My parents called to see how I was doing. I told them I got a tattoo and I'm learning how to play the banjo, and I'm dating a guy with a gun rack on his truck and a prison record.

KENNY

Well, I don't have a gun or a prison record. Yet.



KAREN

You've got time. Jesus, my mom keeps asking me what sort of adolescent fantasy I'm acting out. I keep telling her I'm just getting an education, just like she did. I mean, she moved away from home to get her degree, so why can't I? I love my mom, but shit!

KENNY

My dad's the same way. He's always asking how I'm doing. Like, I'm okay, all right? Just give it up already.

KAREN

We're adults, right? We can make our own decisions.

KENNY

Sometimes I just want to get out of Dorchester. Get away from all the shit I grew up with. I'm so sick of this place.

KAREN

It must be hard.

KENNY

What?

KAREN

Being here. Surrounded by memories. Everywhere you go, you must be reminded of your mom.

KENNY

Yeah, I guess so.

KAREN

I'm sorry. That was insensitive. Hey, you want to dance?

*KENNY and KAREN dance. The SHAPE encroaches on their space. MUSIC shifts. KENNY and KAREN get another drink. More dancing.*

*Time passes. KENNY drinks some more. The MUSIC gets louder, discordant – at least, to KENNY.*

*The SHAPE starts interfering with the dancing. KENNY tries to move KAREN away from it. The SHAPE gets between them. KENNY desperately moves KAREN away from the SHAPE. By this time, KENNY is staggering drunk.*

*KAREN has had enough and tries to depart. KENNY prevents her, but eventually she convinces him it's time to leave.*

*They stagger back to KAREN's dorm room.*

KENNY

Come on, let's go back. Aren't you having a good time?

KAREN

I've got class at ten. I can't show up hungover.

KENNY

Shit, I can't go to class sober.

KAREN

You finished *Lolita* yet? Professor Sanchez always gives a quiz when the book is due.

KENNY

...

KAREN

Kenny! What's the matter with you? You can do better than this. Shoot. I'll let you cheat off me this one time, but you've got to be discreet.

*KENNY pretends to be discreetly peeking at her paper, but he uses it as a means to kiss her neck.*

KAREN  
(giggling)

You're tickling me!

*KENNY and KAREN kiss, more serious.*

*KENNY and KAREN make out. At first, the SHAPE is not visible in the dark. LIGHT rises on SHAPE until it is in white-hot LIGHT.*

*KENNY retrieves condom. KAREN removes KENNY's shirt. They lie in bed together, cover themselves in a blanket. The SHAPE stands over them in agitation. LIGHTS dim almost to black.*

*LIGHTS rise on KENNY seated on the edge of the bed, his head in his hands. KAREN wakes.*

What's wrong? You okay? KAREN

... KENNY

You're shivering. Are you cold? Let me warm you up. KAREN

... KENNY

Your eyes ... KAREN  
(concerned)

Fucking windows of the soul. KENNY

Kenny ... KAREN

*KENNY collects his discarded clothes and starts dressing hurriedly.*

You don't want to know me. I've done some terrible things. KENNY

What's going on? Are you okay? Talk to me. KAREN

Look, don't pay any attention to me. I'll see you tomorrow. KENNY

*KENNY kisses her like a person who is drowning, then he departs.*

SCENE EIGHT: PARKING LOT

*Outside a convenience store. KENNY sits with two six-packs. The SHAPE stands over him as he drinks. KENNY finishes one beer and starts another. The SHAPE touches his hair, touches his shoulder. KENNY endures it. He finishes another beer before JANIS and BILLY enter.*

BILLY

Whoa, this dude knows how to party. Dead soldiers all around.

JANIS

You need a trench coat to be drinking all alone in the parking lot. And you should pee on yourself too. That's how it's done.

KENNY

I'll work on that.

JANIS

You look down in the dumps. You want some company?

*KENNY hands them each a beer.*

BILLY

Damn! You're my new best friend. So, what's bugging you? Someone die on you? Your girlfriend dump you?

JANIS

You look familiar. Did we go to school together?

BILLY

Don't you remember? This is Kenny Reston.

KENNY

Shit. My reputation precedes me.

JANIS

That's right! You scored that touchdown against the Panthers our senior year.

BILLY

Oh man, that was a sweet move.

*BILLY reenacts a long, imaginary pass that sinks into his waiting arms to the cheering of a nonexistent crowd.*

JANIS

Every girl in school wanted to nail you after that one. I sure did.

KENNY

That was Felicity Marshall. She snuck into the locker room after the game.

BILLY

Felicity! That stuck-up bitch? She wouldn't give me the time of day.

JANIS

Like you had anything going for you like Kenny. You ever score any touchdowns? I don't think so.

BILLY

I didn't make the team, 'cuz I can't run ten feet without hacking up a lung.

JANIS

So, what are you doing drinking all on your lonesome? You look like you haven't got a friend in the world.

KENNY

Life sucks, you know.

BILLY

Oh man, you said it! Just the other day ...

*JANIS silences BILLY with a look.*

JANIS

We're helping Kenny right now. (to KENNY) Why does life suck?

KENNY

(thinks about it)

I cheated on my girlfriend.

BILLY

That was dumb, man!

JANIS

Billy's right. Who'd you cheat with?

KENNY

You.

*JANIS blushes. BILLY laughs.*

BILLY

Smooth, man. That is fucking smooth.

JANIS

So, what say we rewind to Homecoming Night, and you let me have a chance.

*BILLY and JANIS collect the six-packs and entice KENNY to follow them off-stage. The SHAPE steps in front of KENNY. Face-off. KENNY steps around the SHAPE and exits.*

SCENE NINE: DORM SUITE

*Morning. BRYAN is getting ready for class. KENNY staggers in. The SHAPE is waiting for him.*

BRYAN

Look what the cat dragged in. Man, you look like shit.

KENNY

I feel like shit.

BRYAN

No “feel like.” Dude, you *are* shit.

KENNY

I’m shit incarnate.

BRYAN

You think you’re hot shit, but you’re just a dumb shit.

KENNY

No shit, Sherlock.

BRYAN

You shitting me?

KENNY

Shiiiiiiit.

*BRYAN gathers his laptop and books into his backpack.  
KENNY collapses in a chair.*

BRYAN

Hey, no shit, your dad stopped by.

KENNY

Shit.

*BRYAN exits. KENNY calls on his cellphone.*

KENNY

Dad ... Yeah, yeah. Sure. No, just tired. No, I’m good. What? ... Dad, you really think ...?  
Yeah, okay. I’ll be there. (Hangs up phone.) Shit.

SCENE TEN: CEMETERY

*KENNY and TOM stand side by side, gazing at headstone.  
There are flowers laid on the grave site. As always, the  
SHAPE is nearby.*

TOM

The flowers you brought. They're lovely. She would've loved them.

KENNY

I tried to get daffodils. Yellow was her favorite. But they only had mums.

TOM

She loved mums, too.

KENNY

Oh. (Pause.) I didn't know that.

TOM

She loved flowers. But most important, she'd appreciate that you remembered her on her birthday.

KENNY

...

TOM

Don't be like that. It's good to be here. Look, I know it's hard. But we're getting through this.

*TOM puts his arm around KENNY's shoulders.*

KENNY

I'm sorry ... she died.

*TOM looks at KENNY for clarification.*

KENNY

I wish she'd hadn't done that. Cut her wrists.

TOM

Your mother had some problems. We both know that. But she did the best she could.

*KENNY looks at TOM for clarification.*



KENNY

Yeah, sure.

TOM

Don't speak ill of the dead.

KENNY

I'm not. (Pause.) Why was she like that?

*Long beat.*

TOM

Your mother wasn't well. (Pause.) Sometimes she needed a rest.

KENNY

Like when she'd go see Uncle Rob.

TOM

Yes, she always felt better when she saw her brother. Remember that one time she was gone for a month, and I took you to Florida?

KENNY

We stayed in a hotel, and I got to swim in the swimming pool.

TOM

So, it wasn't always bad when she went away for a rest.

KENNY

I guess so.

TOM

Just remember: She didn't mean any harm.

KENNY

But I didn't like it when – (stops abruptly. Pause.) Kids at school used to make fun of her. Tommy Giraldi called her a whack-job. (Pause.) I kicked him in the nuts.

*TOM unexpectedly chuckles.*

TOM

Don't take it out on guys like Tommy. They don't know any better.

*They depart.*

SCENE ELEVEN: DORM SUITE

*KENNY writes in his journal. He drains a bottle of beer, sets it on the floor next to the sofa where other bottles are lined up.*

*The SHAPE approaches the sofa, but the bottles are a blockade.*

*KENNY knows the SHAPE is there, but he pretends to be involved in writing in his journal.*

*Weary, KENNY throws aside the journal and disappears into his next beer. He barely finishes before he passes out.*

*Lights dim until only a faint wash remains on KENNY.*

*BRYAN approaches and stands beside the SHAPE. Together they each extend a hand toward KENNY until they lightly touch him.*

KENNY  
(bolting awake)

Holy fuck shit!

*LIGHTS UP. BRYAN jumps back. The SHAPE retreats.*

BRYAN  
Man, I'm sorry! I couldn't tell if you were asleep.

KENNY  
No, no, I'm good.

BRYAN  
Stephanie and Karen are here with some pizza.

*STEPHANIE and KAREN enter with pizza and two six-packs.*

KAREN  
Were you sleeping? Your eyes are all puffy.

KENNY  
Dreaming of you.

KAREN

Aw, isn't he sweet? I almost believe him.

STEPHANIE

(indicating the row of beer bottles)

It looks like the party started without us. You ready for another round?

KENNY

I was born ready.

*They all open beers and take healthy swigs. They eat pizza. KAREN snuggles up to KENNY. She picks up the discarded journal.*

KAREN

Ooh, a secret diary! What sort of sordid secrets does it contain?

*KENNY – not too gently – takes the journal.*

KENNY

Nothing to see here. It's all stupid shit.

KAREN

He's probably writing about his undying love for me. Write me a love poem, Kenny.

KENNY

There once was a girl from Nantucket ...

KAREN

Get off! Don't be gross! I was thinking something more along the lines of "Let me not to the marriage of true minds admit impediments."

KENNY

"Love is not love  
Which alters when it alteration finds,  
Or bends with the remover to remove:  
O no; it is an ever-fixed mark  
That looks on tempests, and is never shaken."

*Impressed, KAREN, STEPHANIE, and BRYAN applaud.*

BRYAN

Man, I never expected you to quote Shakespeare!

KENNY

Shit, I thought it was *The Simpsons*.

KAREN

I've been coaching Kenny on English Lit. He has some serious deficiencies in the classics. He definitely had some major trouble in Professor Sanchez's class: *Lolita*.

STEPHANIE

Oh god! I hate that book. Humbert Humbert is nothing but a pervert. I don't care how much he claims that *Lolita* seduced him. Believe me: no twelve-year-old is capable of seduction.

KENNY

But what about the way she crawled across his lap? It seemed like she wanted it. Maybe she liked all the attention he gave her.

KAREN

You can't believe everything Humbert Humbert says. That's what I was talking about: an unreliable narrator. He's the one telling the story, so he can tell you whatever he wants. Right?

STEPHANIE

Yeah. *Lolita* barely exists as a character in the story. You only see her through Humbert Humbert's eyes. You never hear her side of the story. And even if she did "lead him on" – which, by the way, is not possible – that will never condone his actions.

BRYAN

Uh-oh, watch out! Stephanie's on her soap-box!

STEPHANIE

Don't make me beat the crap out of you, sweetheart. This is serious. Millions of men use *Lolita* as an excuse to prey on little girls. They act like they're powerless over their own impulses. A twelve-year-old can never truly seduce anyone, because she doesn't really comprehend what it means to have sex. It's up to the adult to be the responsible one.

BRYAN

Oh, come on! Lots of kids are curious about sex.

STEPHANIE

That doesn't mean an adult should take them up on it! That's just disgusting! When you have a middle-aged man grooming a little girl to have sex, it's not about sex. It's about power. It's about the way men treat women like commodities. Guys like Humbert Humbert are willing to make that little girl feel like she's the one responsible, when they're the ones who can't keep their dick in their pants.

KENNY

What if the tables were turned? What if it's a young boy and an older woman? What do you call that?

BRYAN

I call that getting lucky! That's every guy's fantasy. You're always hearing about some kid doing it with some hot high school teacher. Shit, I wish that stuff had happened to me!

*BRYAN clinks a beer bottle to KENNY's.*

STEPHANIE

It's still abuse, no matter if it's a girl or a boy. The power dynamic. An adult is supposed to know better. Besides, when you're that young, you lack the capacity to make decisions like that. A predator is a predator.

KENNY

What if it isn't a teacher? What if it's with someone they know? Like a family member.

KAREN

Like an uncle or a parent? That's called incest.

STEPHANIE

There's a special place in Hell for them.

KENNY

...

STEPHANIE

What?

KENNY

Nothing.

SCENE TWELVE: TOM'S APARTMENT

*TOM and KENNY eat dinner. TOM finishes a glass of wine and retrieves another bottle. He pours a glass for KENNY and himself. There is a bottle of whiskey on the table. The SHAPE in the background.*

TOM

I haven't seen you in a couple weeks. Everything okay?

KENNY

Just busy with classes.

TOM

(not remembering)

What are you taking this semester?

KENNY

...

*SILENCE. They eat.*

KENNY

Any crazy shit in the ER today?

TOM

A guy put a nail through his hand. Thunk. He was putting up bookshelves. Why he needed a nail-gun, I have no idea.

*More silence. TOM drinks wine. KENNY sees this as his future.*

TOM

You're not eating your pot roast.

KENNY

Guess I'm not hungry.

*KENNY rises and takes his coat. TOM waits until KENNY is prepared to depart.*

TOM

(drunk, morose)

She loved you. You know that.

KENNY

...

TOM

(beginning to cry)

Don't you forget that. Don't let what she did make you forget who she was. She was your mother. She loved you. Please, Kenny. Please. I need you to remember that.

*TOM lays his head on the table, sobs, until he passes out.*

*KENNY stands over him. Empathy? Disinterest? Nothing?  
KENNY clears the table, dispenses with wine bottles. He  
avoids the SHAPE throughout cleaning up.*

*KENNY takes a whiskey bottle as he departs.*

SCENE THIRTEEN: CEMETERY

*Evening. KENNY enters, carrying the whiskey bottle. He crosses through the cemetery until he stands beside his mother's grave.*

*He drinks. At first, he faces the grave as a challenge. But then he can't bring himself to drink in front of it. Turning away, he drinks again.*

*KENNY weaves drunkenly about the area but keeps returning to the grave.*

KENNY

Dad's not doing good without you. He's pretty fucked, if you ask me. He's drinking way too much. (Toasts the headstone with the bottle.) Me too. But you taught me how to do it. You taught me everything I know about drinking. How old was I when I figured it out? I was six the first time I found the gin glass next to my bed. I was so confused. I thought I'd gone downstairs in the middle of the night and had a go at the Gordon's. The smell was so familiar. I always thought it was your perfume. You didn't always smell like it, but it was there. I hate how gin smells. I can't drink it. So, I drink beer. And whiskey. Fuck, whiskey tastes like cobwebs, but it's better than gin.

*KENNY gets some distance from the headstone, which gives him courage.*

KENNY

I'd hear you. I'd hear every one of your footsteps from your bedroom. The soft tread of your slippers down the hallway and into my room. The door would creak open. And you'd stand over my bed like a sentinel. Watching me. You'd chew on ice cubes. It sounded like a monster cracking bones.

...

I wasn't really asleep, you know. I'd hold my breath until you'd go back to your room and leave me alone.

...

Except you didn't always leave ...

*KENNY holds back tears.*



KENNY

I miss you. I didn't think I would. But I do... You weren't all bad. You weren't a monster. You were sweet to me. You told me you loved me.

...

Why do I still love you?

*KENNY groans in anguish.*

KENNY

They tell me there's a special place in Hell for people like you, but I don't believe them. Because if you were in Hell, you'd be here with me.

*KENNY wanders off. SOUND of car engine. DARKNESS.*

*SOUND: Car accident.*

*Country road. Flashing blue lights – a police car. KENNY is seated on the ground. Blood on his forehead, a broken whiskey bottle in his bleeding hand. POLICE OFFICER approaches.*

POLICE OFFICER

Sir, is that your car over there?

KENNY

Yes.

POLICE OFFICER

Did you hit that deer?

KENNY

He made the first move.

POLICE OFFICER

Sir, please get on your feet. May I see your license?

*KENNY struggles to stand. He hands POLICE OFFICER his license.*

POLICE OFFICER

Mr Reston, it looks like you were doing a little drinking while driving. Is that a beer bottle in your hand?

KENNY

No, ma'am.

POLICE OFFICER

No? Then what is it?

KENNY

Whiskey.

POLICE OFFICER

Uh-huh. Please step over here. Mr Reston, will you agree to take a breathalyzer test?

KENNY

Is that really necessary? Clearly, I've been drinking.

POLICE OFFICER

The test will determine blood alcohol level.

KENNY

Right now, I'd say it's about half-and-half.

POLICE OFFICER

I'm going to call an ambulance. I suggest you sit over there before you fall over.

*KENNY sits. The POLICE OFFICER writes a ticket.*

KENNY

(to the Police Officer)

You see, what happened was this: The deer leaped out of the trees, and I couldn't stop in time. I slammed on the brakes, but I hit it anyway. I couldn't even tell what it was at first. It smashed the hood of my car, like the fist of God. Wham! But I could see its eyes. It looked right at me through the windshield. Those eyes. It looked scared. It was probably as scared as I was. And it flipped over the roof of the car, and it landed over there. Splat. I guess that's when I swerved into that tree.

I could hear it crying. The deer. You don't expect deer to make noise. They're so silent. They creep up on you. But I could hear it. It sounded like a baby crying. I could see it lying there, its head flopping like a carp. It kept trying to stand up. Then its bleating got softer and softer and softer and ... And it just sort of ... died. (Silence.) I'm kind of envious.

*POLICE OFFICER retreats. The flashing blue light fades.  
KENNY gazes at his bleeding hand, like it is holding his heart.*

END OF ACT ONE

ACT TWO

SCENE FOURTEEN: TOM'S APARTMENT

*TOM is proudly serving up a meal. KENNY, BRYAN, and STEPHANIE are seated at the table. The SHAPE sits at the table with them.*

*Throughout the scene, KENNY engages in a caustic sense of humor, which keeps BRYAN and STEPHANIE off-balance. For the two of them, this is a side of their friend they have not witnessed before.*

KENNY

You don't have to cook every time I come over. We could just grab some takeout.

TOM

I'm not doing it for you. I'm doing it for Bryan and Stephanie. I haven't seen them in a long time.

STEPHANIE

Thanks for inviting us, Mr Reston.

KENNY

Sorry you have to suffer through Dad's cooking. It makes the cafeteria food taste palatable.

TOM

Hey, I'm getting better.

KENNY

Yeah, the burnt flavor is almost undetectable.

BRYAN

It tastes great to me.

KENNY

I was just joking. Yeah, it's perfect, Dad.

*TOM watches KENNY eating with his non-injured hand.*

TOM

How's your hand? You're getting pretty adept at eating left-handed.

KENNY  
(minimizing)

I'm good.

*TOM refills the water glasses. KENNY notes this.*

KENNY

No wine for you tonight?

TOM

I'm taking a little break. My stomach isn't too happy.

KENNY

...

TOM

What?

KENNY

Look, you don't have to not drink on my account.

TOM

Drunk driving is serious, Kenny. You could've been seriously hurt. I'm amazed they didn't suspend your license.

KENNY

The breathalyzer is the first test I've passed this semester.

TOM

I'm serious, Kenny. I'm worried about you. That was very reckless of you. You could have hurt somebody.

KENNY

I did hurt somebody. I killed that deer.

TOM

You know what I mean. All I'm saying is you know better than that.

KENNY

So, you've stopped drinking to teach me a lesson.

TOM

Yes, well. I've been setting a bad example. There's no shame in getting help if you need it.

KENNY

You thinking of joining AA?

*Long beat.*

TOM

(sighing)

No, I'm not joining.

BRYAN

(whispering)

Come on, lay off your dad.

KENNY

Wow. Huh. Given how many bottles of wine I've seen you put away, I figured you'd be the AA poster child. You sure you don't have a problem? 'Cuz it sure looks like a problem from where I'm sitting. But hey, I get you. You drink because you're lonesome. You don't know what to do with yourself, now that you don't have Mama around to take care of anymore. Shit, you know what would cure your loneliness? Maybe you should start dating again.

TOM

Dating? I'm not ready to date anyone.

KENNY

It's been five years, Dad. Maybe you should. Get back on the playing field. You're still young-ish. I bet there's a hot mama out there who'd fall for a guy like you.

TOM

Maybe you and I could double-date. Are you seeing anyone?

KENNY

No.

*STEPHANIE stares at KENNY in disbelief.*

TOM

Really? You always say you're busy on the weekends. I figured you were dating someone.

KENNY

...

*Failing with KENNY, TOM turns his attention to  
STEPHANIE and BRYAN.*

TOM

So, you two. We haven't talked in so long. You have to catch me up on everything. Bryan, how's the graphic design going?

BRYAN

This semester, I'm taking a course in brand design. We have to create a logo and marketing material for Boffo Dish Soap. I'm working on a cartoon character, the Boffinator, who takes on tough grease. It's silly.

TOM

No, no, it sounds very clever. I'd buy it! And you, Stephanie. How's the nursing program?

STEPHANIE

I'm interning at a pre-natal clinic. I think that's what I want to focus on.

TOM

That's great. But you know, we can always use qualified nurses in the ER. The nurses there, they're dynamite. I have never met such a dedicated set of professionals.

BRYAN

You thinking of asking one of them out?

TOM

Maybe I should. But it'd be hard to replace Kenny's mother. She was very special.

KENNY

Don't think of it as a replacement. Think of it as an upgrade.

TOM

(disbelief)

What did you say?

KENNY

Nothing, sir.

*Long beat.*

TOM

(defeated)

Please go home now.

*KENNY grabs his coat. BRYAN and STEPHANIE follow suit, though they are torn.*

BRYAN

Um, thanks for the dinner, Mr Reston.

STEPHANIE

Thanks.

*BRYAN, STEPHANIE, and KENNY exit.*

*TOM puts his head in his hands.*

SCENE FIFTEEN: DORM SUITE

*BRYAN, KENNY, and STEPHANIE enter dorm suite.  
KENNY gets a beer and drinks it quickly. The SHAPE is crowding KENNY.*

BRYAN

What the hell was that about? Why are you treating your dad like shit?

KENNY

We've got some issues. So what?

BRYAN

You two have always gotten along before. What's eating you?

KENNY

Apart from his pious sobriety? Like that's really going to stick. The man puts away three bottles of wine a night. That makes him the last person to lecture me on drinking.

BRYAN

You were drunk driving, Kenny! That's pretty serious. Of course, he's going to be concerned.

STEPHANIE

And why did you lie about seeing Karen?

KENNY

I don't want to talk about it.

BRYAN

You're being a major asshole.

KENNY

Stay the hell out of my business! If you think my dad's so perfect, you can be his son. I'm sick of him.

STEPHANIE

Kenny, it's perfectly natural to feel angry. Both you and your dad are still grieving, and that takes time ...

KENNY

Oh, please! Don't give me that shit. It's been five years. Mama killed herself. End of story. She didn't give a damn about ... about me or Dad. So, yeah, good riddance. And if my dad wants to drink himself to death out of loneliness, who the hell am I to stop him? Shit, maybe I should just kill myself and get it over with.



*KENNY is on the verge of nuclear rage. Instead, he stops dead. BRYAN and STEPHANIE are speechless. Dead silence.*

Dude. What's going on?  
BRYAN

Shit if I know.  
KENNY  
(dismissive)

*STEPHANIE and BRYAN exchange glances. KENNY retrieves another beer and downs it.*

I think you've had enough.  
BRYAN  
(disgusted)

Leave me alone.  
KENNY

Screw this. If you want to drink yourself to death, go ahead.  
BRYAN

Calm down. Let's talk about this.  
STEPHANIE

About what? What the hell can we talk about anymore? All he does is drink. I'm not his freaking keeper.  
BRYAN

No, you're not. Go live your perfect life and leave me alone.  
KENNY

Enough already! What the hell is going on? What's the matter with you? Why are you so angry?  
STEPHANIE

Stop feeling sorry for me. Just leave me alone.  
KENNY

Yeah, you're real good at taking care of yourself. Crashing your car. Drinking all the time. Treating your dad like shit.  
BRYAN

KENNY

Go fuck yourself.

*BRYAN shoves KENNY, who drunkenly falls over.*

BRYAN

Look at him. I don't need this.

*BRYAN storms off. STEPHANIE helps KENNY to his feet.*

STEPHANIE

This is ridiculous. What is your problem?

KENNY

Leave me alone.

STEPHANIE

No, I won't. We care about you.

KENNY

...

STEPHANIE

Damn it, you are a piece of shit.

*KENNY starts to walk away, but STEPHANIE catches his arm. The SHAPE circles KENNY, mirrors STEPHANIE's movements.*

STEPHANIE

Are you going to calm down and talk like an adult? What is this all about?

KENNY  
(to the SHAPE)

It's nothing. I'm okay.

STEPHANIE

Since when is drunkenness and hostility a sign of being okay? I thought you and Bryan were going to beat the crap out of each other.

KENNY

Maybe we should.

STEPHANIE

Maybe you could talk about it first. (Snatches beer bottle from KENNY) Maybe you could stop wallowing in self-pity and let us help you. You really don't want help? You really think nothing is wrong? Kenny, I'm going to keep pushing until you give me a direct answer.

KENNY

Then go ahead! Walk all over me! Get in line! All I am is crap. That's what you think anyway. So, do it! Tell me what a fuck-up I am. I know it!

*STEPHANIE touches KENNY's shoulder in a gesture of genuine concern. The SHAPE touches KENNY as well; he flinches as though it is crushing him.*

KENNY

Don't touch me!

*KENNY grabs the beer bottle from STEPHANIE, desperate to squeeze one last swallow from it, but it is agonizingly empty. He slams it on the table, and the bottle shatters.*

*Clutching the tail end of the bottle, KENNY slashes it across his wrist. Blood. STEPHANIE catches KENNY's arm. Only her interference keeps him from cutting himself again.*

STEPHANIE

Oh god! Drop it, Kenny, drop it! Bryan, get in here!

*The SHAPE becomes agitated. KENNY glares at it in challenge.*

BRYAN  
(rushing in)

What happened? Oh shit!

STEPHANIE

Kenny's cut his arm. Get a towel.

*BRYAN runs off and returns with a towel.*

KENNY  
(to the SHAPE)

Is this what you want? Huh? Is this what you want me to do?

BRYAN

Kenny, calm down, man. God, you're bleeding! Hold still.

KENNY

Stop touching me! Leave me alone!

STEPHANIE

We've got to stop the bleeding. Kenny, calm down.

BRYAN

Dude, chill out. We're trying to help.

*KENNY goes numb. STEPHANIE wraps KENNY'S arm.*

KENNY

Yeah.

STEPHANIE

We've got to get you to the hospital.

*STEPHANIE and BRYAN lead him to the ER.*

SCENE SIXTEEN: EMERGENCY ROOM

*KENNY sits on a gurney. His arm is bandaged. TOM enters.*

TOM

How did this happen?

KENNY

A bottle broke.

TOM

It looks like you got into a bar fight.

KENNY

Only with myself.

*TOM studies KENNY for a moment.*

TOM

The nurse said you did a tremendous job lacerating yourself. She was wondering if this was a serious attempt.

KENNY

What do you mean?

TOM

Kenny, people don't go around slicing their arms on beer bottles. What's going on? You reek of alcohol. And the nurse told me you didn't even flinch while you were getting stitched up. They didn't even bother with a local.

KENNY

It didn't hurt, anyway.

TOM

Kenny, if this was an ... attempt. Were you trying – ? Kenny, they're talking about putting you on a suicide watch. Is that what they need to do?

KENNY

I'm good.

TOM

I can get them to write a scrip for a painkiller. You want that?

KENNY

...

TOM

Yeah, I suspect you're not feeling much pain right now, are you?

KENNY

Not really.

TOM

You want me to drive you home?

KENNY

...

TOM

Bryan and Stephanie are waiting for you outside.

*TOM exits.*

SCENE SEVENTEEN: DORM SUITE

*A few days later. KENNY is trying to write in his journal with his non-injured hand. The SHAPE, seated next to him, takes his bandaged arm and begins to caress it. KENNY submits to the touch, even as it becomes more intimate and invasive: his cheek, chest, arm, leg.*

*Because KENNY remains unresponsive, the SHAPE places KENNY's hand on its chest. When that generates no response, the SHAPE moves the hand to its lap.*

*KENNY sharply pulls away. He escapes out of the dorm suite and into a dance party.*

*LIGHTS shift: A dance party. Flashing LIGHTS and the HEAVY BEAT of music. JANIS is dancing. KENNY enters the scene, desperate to disappear into the crowd.*

JANIS

Hey, stranger! Long time, no see. What rock have you been hiding under?

*JANIS draws KENNY onto the dance floor. As they dance, the SHAPE interferes until it supplants JANIS. The SHAPE places its arms around KENNY's shoulders and draws him in. They kiss ... almost.*

*KENNY pulls back. Turns to face JANIS. They begin dancing again. They make out while the SHAPE watches.*

*MUSIC cuts off sharply at the same instant the SHAPE shrieks.*

*KENNY snaps out of the embrace.*

JANIS

Hey, hey, what's wrong? You okay?

KENNY

Did you hear that?

JANIS

The music stopped. I don't hear nothing.

KENNY

No, the ... Did you hear someone scream?

JANIS

You're sweating and really pale. Are you sure you're okay? You want to sit down?

*KENNY staggers, and JANIS helps him to a chair.*

*BILLY enters.*

BILLY

Oh man, it's the football hero! (He mimes catching a pass.) Dude, you crashing this party too? Janis and me, we're pretending to be college students. Nobody gives a shit about it, though.

JANIS

Shut up. Can't you see he's sick?

KENNY

I'm not sick. I'm okay.

BILLY

Whoa, dude, you don't look good. You're shaking.

JANIS

You've got a fever. You're really sick. Let's get you home.

KENNY

No, I'm good. I need a beer.

*BILLY leaves and returns with three beers.*

BILLY

Man, you'd think they'd have better beer than this cheap shit. I thought college students were rich.

JANIS

You never called. I kept hoping you'd call. Why didn't you call?

KENNY

I guess I forgot.

*JANIS teasingly shoves KENNY.*



JANIS

That's the lamest excuse ever! It makes me not want to forgive you. And I really, really, really want to forgive you.

BILLY

Don't badger the guy. He's got his own life. He don't need no low-lifes like us messing with him. (To KENNY) Isn't that right?

JANIS

It's a good thing I'm the forgiving type. Kiss me.

*JANIS kisses KENNY.*

BILLY

Oh man, you lucky dog! She won't kiss me. What's she taste like? Come on, dude, you've got to tell me.

*KENNY suddenly runs to a garbage pail and vomits.*

JANIS

Thanks a lot!

BILLY

Oh man, that's disgusting! Janis, your kisses must be toxic. I mean, what would've happened if he'd spewed while you were kissing? (Mimes it and laughs.)

JANIS

Shut up. Don't be gross. (to KENNY) Hey, you sure you're okay? Really, my kisses have never made anyone throw up before.

KENNY

Much too ... Uh, too much to ... I guess I had too much to drink.

JANIS

That's an understatement.

*KENNY tries drinking his beer but can't.*

KENNY

Shit, why can't I just black out? The funny thing about downward spirals: You keep waiting to hit bottom, and you don't.

JANIS

Maybe you should go home.

KENNY

...

BILLY

You want to keep hanging out with him?

JANIS

He's no fun no more. Let's get out of here.

*JANIS and BILLY exit.*

*KENNY returns to the dance floor. Loud MUSIC.*

*The SHAPE is positioned opposite to KENNY.*

KENNY

(absolute drunkenness)

You. You! You know what you did to me? You really fucked me over, you know that? Get away from me! Get the hell away from me! I fucking hate you! Fuck you!

*The SHAPE screams at him, and KENNY screams back until they are both exhausted.*

*KENNY collects himself and exits.*

SCENE EIGHTEEN: DORM SUITE

*Several days later. Late night. STEPHANIE and BRYAN sit together, while KAREN paces. KENNY enters. KAREN runs to embrace him. The SHAPE is there, too.*

KAREN

Oh my god, Kenny! You're okay! We've been so worried about you. Where have you been? I kept calling and calling, and you didn't answer.

KENNY

What's going on?

STEPHANIE

You just disappeared. You didn't tell anyone where you were going.

BRYAN

I found your journal and ... Man, are you okay?

KENNY

I'm fine. Just tired. I'm going to shower and get to bed.

STEPHANIE

Kenny, where were you? You've been gone since Friday.

KENNY

What day is it?

KAREN

Wednesday. You've been missing almost a week.

BRYAN

You look terrible. What happened?

KENNY

I got a little drunk, I guess.

BRYAN

For a whole week?

KENNY

It looks that way.

KAREN

Kenny, we were really scared for you. We thought you were dead. I kept thinking I should call the police.

BRYAN

We've been talking, and we think ... We think you need help. We think, uh, I mean, I know all of us drink a lot, I mean we all get drunk sometimes, but we, uh, we think ...

KAREN

I can't believe you just disappeared like that. You called me once then hung up. I kept calling you back, but you wouldn't answer.

STEPHANIE

People don't go on week-long binges for nothing. What's happening to you? Where were you?

KENNY

Different places. A couple parties. A bar. The cemetery. I don't know.

KAREN

I'm really worried about you. Just tell me what's bothering you.

KENNY

Look, I'm okay. I'm alive. See? Now, just ... just stopping touching me.

*KAREN steps back.*

KENNY

I got a little drunk, that's all. No big deal. I get it. I drink too much sometimes. I guess I lost my head. Look, I'm beat. I really need to sleep.

KAREN

We're only trying to help.

KENNY

Yeah, I get it. Thanks. I'm good. Just ... just leave me alone, okay?

*KENNY sits on sofa.*

*BRYAN, KAREN, and STEPHANIE cross away from him to speak in private, but KENNY can overhear them.*

BRYAN

I can't take this anymore.

STEPHANIE

We'll get him through this.

BRYAN

(choking on a miserable laugh)

Shit. Why don't we bury him and get it over with?

*BRYAN and STEPHANIE exit. KAREN returns to KENNY.*

KAREN

You want some company?

KENNY

I just want to sleep.

KAREN

I can stay here with you, if you like.

KENNY

Just leave me alone.

*KAREN debates how much to push. She gives in and exits.*

*The SHAPE sits next to KENNY, pulls a blanket over him, while he lays his head in its lap.*

SCENE NINETEEN: KAREN'S DORM

*KAREN is smoking a joint. KENNY enters.*

KENNY

I came over to apologize. Look, I'm sorry, okay? It was stupid. I was stupid. I don't know what was happening. I got a little crazy, that's all. (Pause.) You're smoking a joint.

KAREN

Thanks to my parents. It's old. Not much pizzazz left to it. Still, I was hoping it would help me figure something out.

KENNY

What?

KAREN

You. You're an alcoholic, or at least you're on your way to becoming one.

KENNY

I can handle it.

KAREN

Yeah, right. Like you handle everything else. Like when you crashed your car. Like when you cut open your arm. Like when you lied to your father about me.

KENNY

Look ...

KAREN

Don't bother. Stephanie told me everything.

KENNY

My dad and me, we've got some issues.

KAREN

And is that why you drink? Is that your excuse? There's no other reason? Or is it genetics – your dad drinks so you do too? Or maybe it's something else. In any case, I think you know exactly why.

KENNY

...

KAREN

And there he is again, folks: the taciturn Kenny Reston. Who won't let me in. Who won't let anyone in. Who goes off by himself to drink. Who gets shit drunk. Who hooks up with other

KAREN (cont'd)

women. Who thinks I don't know. Who thinks I'm too naïve to notice the sneaking around, the disappearances, the god-awful wreak of booze that comes off him all the time. Who is dying inside and believes that no one notices. Who won't let me in. Who won't let me in! WHO WON'T LET ME IN!

*KENNY remains silent. KAREN smokes.*

KENNY

I don't let anybody in.

KAREN

No shit, Sherlock! Kenny, I can't hang around you anymore. I can't put my life on hold waiting for you to figure out yours. That sounds cold, but actually it isn't.

KENNY

No. It makes perfect sense.

*KAREN laughs in disgust.*

KAREN

I'm leaving, Kenny. After this semester, I'm transferring out of here. I thought I'd like it here, but I'm going back to Texas and enroll in college down there. But don't worry: it's not because of you. I thought I wanted to be on my own, but I really miss my family. I just didn't want to leave without you knowing why. I didn't want to disappear, the way you do.

KENNY

...

KAREN

I don't know where you are half the time, even when we're in the same room. I was kind of hoping that if I got high, I'd get some insight into you. But getting high isn't really the same as getting drunk or having sex with a bunch of women. And I hate myself that I tolerated it.

KENNY

...

KAREN

You're the one who taught me that I deserve better than you. And that breaks my heart.

Come Undone  
Louis Arata  
773.255.3764  
[llarata@gmail.com](mailto:llarata@gmail.com)

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*KENNY kisses KAREN on the cheek. They exchange glances. Long beat. Will KENNY speak? No, he departs.*



SCENE TWENTY: DORM SUITE

STEPHANIE

I'm sorry about you and Karen.

KENNY

Don't worry about me. She's better than this Podunk town.

STEPHANIE

Hey, why don't you head down to Austin this summer and surprise her? The two of you could spend some time together.

BRYAN

We'll all go. Road trip!

KENNY

You don't have to cheer me up. I'm good.

BRYAN

Come on, man! You and me, we're made for the road! Remember all those crazy times we hit the beach? We'd check out all those beach babes in their bikinis ...

STEPHANIE

Hello! Girlfriend here.

BRYAN

This was long before you, Steph. Kenny and I were, what? Thirteen, fourteen? We'd hitchhike to the lake and hang out all day and get jacked on Red Bull and do these amazing cannonballs off this old tire swing. Man, there was this one time I went sailing off and almost hit a guy fishing in his boat. You remember that, Kenny? Man, was he mad!

STEPHANIE

And don't forget the time you kidnapped me from my Biology class and took me to that Jagged Edges concert. Man, I loved that band! (Singing) "Minister of Mayhem, Patron of Sin, lend me your scimitar, I've got Heaven to win." I always wanted to get a tattoo of their logo.

BRYAN

You sang their songs all the way there and back.

STEPHANIE

That was the first time I met you, Kenny. Freshman year. Bryan wouldn't stop talking about you, how you've been best friends since second grade. And he told me that if we were to keep dating, I had to get your approval.

BRYAN

I was joking! After the concert, Kenny told me if you ever dumped me, he'd date you.

STEPHANIE

He told me the same thing.

KENNY

Look, you don't have to do this. I'm fine.

BRYAN

We just want you to know we're here for you.

STEPHANIE

Things are going to get better, I promise.

KENNY

Yeah, sure. Thanks.

STEPHANIE

If you need to talk ...

*BRYAN and STEPHANIE exit. KENNY is alone with the SHAPE.*

*KENNY lays his head in the SHAPE's lap. The SHAPE comforts him.*

*Lights shift. Later. KENNY wanders around the dorm suite as the SHAPE shadows him.*

KENNY

(distracted, to the SHAPE)

I know they're trying to help. But they don't know what it's like. You do. You know what it feels like. I think about it – the way your eyes looked, like you were staring at something really, really far away. Like nothing made sense anymore. Like you were hurting all the time, and you didn't even know it. Except you did.

*KENNY examines the stitches on his arm. He picks at the stitches. The SHAPE is watching.*

KENNY

The stitches keep itching. Sometimes I pick at them. What would happen if I pulled them out? Would I come undone?

*Lights shift. Later. KENNY writing.*

KENNY

Dear World.

...

That's how it's supposed to start.

Dear W---

...

...

Even the pen is heavy.

...

*The SHAPE moans and begins to cry. It builds into a wail.*

*Lights shift. Later. KENNY writing.*

Dear World,  
It's not like I'd really do it.

...

...

You wouldn't understand.

SCENE TWENTY-ONE: DORM SUITE

*Later. The SHAPE leads KENNY around the room. The SHAPE positions KENNY so that his back is to the audience. It hands him a razorblade.*

*BRYAN enters.*

BRYAN

Hey, Kenny, you here? (Concerned.) Kenny?

*As KENNY turns, BRYAN spots the razorblade and slaps it from his hand.*

BRYAN

God, Kenny, what are you doing? You're scaring me, man. What's the matter with you?

*KENNY keeps his distance from BRYAN and stays close to the SHAPE.*

KENNY

(monotone)

I wasn't doing anything ... wrong. I wasn't doing anything wrong.

BRYAN

Don't give me that. Don't give me that shit.

KENNY

I'm tired is all. Just tired. I can't ... I can't hold it in anymore. I want to sleep.

*KENNY begins to sag to the floor. Both the SHAPE and BRYAN catch him. They lead him to the sofa. KENNY is dead weight.*

BRYAN

You're coming with me. Come on, let's go.

KENNY

Why? I'm okay.

BRYAN

(beginning to cry)

You're not. You're not okay.

KENNY

(continues monotone)

It's weird. I don't get it. It doesn't make any sense. I do this to myself. (He holds up the arm with the stitches.) And everyone's concerned. I crash my car, and everyone's worried. But that's not the problem. That's not it.

BRYAN

Stephanie and me, we're trying to help.

KENNY

You don't see it, do you? You've never seen it. You just don't get it.

BRYAN

Kenny, it doesn't matter. Let's get you out of here. Come on.

KENNY

You used to say my mom was the greatest in the world, because she gave you cookies and Kool-Aid. You always said you wanted to be her son.

BRYAN

Kenny, listen ...

*The SHAPE starts pinching and slapping KENNY.*

KENNY

But you never knew all the shit she'd do. You never knew about the hitting. She used to beat me sometimes. She'd freak out about something, like if I wasn't paying enough attention to her, she'd hit me.

BRYAN

I didn't know ...

KENNY

I'm glad she's dead. I'm glad she's dead. When my dad told me she'd killed herself, I was so relieved.

BRYAN

You don't mean that.

KENNY

The hell I don't. Everyone acted so surprised when she killed herself. Everyone thought she was so perfect and sweet. They didn't know. They didn't know she was nuts. And no one ever asked why. Why she did it. Why she sliced her wrists. You never asked me.

BRYAN

No, I ... It doesn't matter. Let's go.

KENNY

Because of this.

*KENNY takes the SHAPE's hand and shoves it against his groin. The fact that BRYAN averts his eyes awakens KENNY's anger.*

KENNY

She'd come into my room, and she'd stand over my bed. And she'd be drinking that goddamn gin, and she'd put her hand here. And I let her. I liked it when she played with me. It felt so good.

BRYAN

Kenny.

KENNY

I'm sick, right? I'm fucking sick. Letting her do that. Pretending I'm asleep. Pretending it wasn't happening.

BRYAN

Come on, let's get out of here.

KENNY

She should've cut it off. I wish she had. And she let me touch her too. She'd say, "Kenny, come help me take off my bra." "Kenny, help me take off my panties." "Kenny, come take a bath with me." So, it makes sense, right? Why I get shit-faced drunk all the time.

BRYAN

...

KENNY

That's why I fuck everyone I can, because I want to cover it up. Feeling her all over my body. Getting off all the time, pretending I'm not thinking of her every single time!

*The SHAPE grabs hold of KENNY, clings to him. He wrestles to break free, but the SHAPE holds on.*

KENNY

So, why don't I off myself? Why don't I just slice my wrists and get it over with? Then she won't be in my head anymore. It won't be her. I can stop pretending I'm enjoying it. So, say it. I'm sick. I'm fucking sick.

BRYAN

Kenny. I know, man. I know.

KENNY

Say it! Tell me I'm sick!

BRYAN

I know. I guess I've always known. God, Kenny, I'm sorry. I'm sorry, man.

*It finally registers what BRYAN is saying. This isn't sympathy but an admission.*

KENNY

(disbelief rising into rage)

You knew? You knew? You think it's funny? Huh? Is that it? You think it's funny?

*KENNY starts throwing wild punches at BRYAN. They fight. BRYAN eventually defends himself by tripping KENNY and pinning him to the floor. The SHAPE starts screaming.*

BRYAN

Yes, I knew! God, Kenny, yes. I'm sorry, man. I'm sorry, but I didn't know what to do!

KENNY

You didn't do anything! Why? Why didn't you make her stop?

*The SHAPE tries to reach KENNY but BRYAN is in the way.*

BRYAN

I don't know! God, Kenny, I was scared. I didn't know what to do.

KENNY

Fuck you!

BRYAN

I didn't know how to stop it. You never told me about it, so I didn't want to believe it. What was I supposed to do? I was so scared for you.

*BRYAN steps away from KENNY. The SHAPE cradles KENNY, who is howling his rage, face-down into the floor.*

BRYAN

I know, I know, I know. I should've told my parents. I should've called the cops. I should've done something. But I was twelve years old. I didn't know what to do. I didn't know how to save you.

*KENNY is practically retching. He crawls away from the SHAPE and gets to his feet.*

BRYAN

I know it was wrong. I should have done something. Hit me. If it'll help, hit me. But I was twelve when I figured it out. I hate your parents. They fucked up. It never should've happened. It wasn't your fault. It wasn't your fault.

*KENNY moans in disgust. Before the SHAPE can touch KENNY again, BRYAN grabs him into a hug and refuses to let go. He holds him with a strength that won't shatter. KENNY allows himself to surrender, and the tears come. Wracking sobs.*

*The SHAPE retreats but does not exit.*

*BLACK OUT.*



SCENE TWENTY-TWO: DORM SUITE

*Later. STEPHANIE has joined them. She and BRYAN sit on the sofa. KENNY is restlessly pacing. The SHAPE is isolated away from them.*

KENNY  
(pacing)

I don't know. I don't know. I don't know ...

STEPHANIE

What?

KENNY

I don't know what to do. I've never told anyone before, and now ... Bryan, I shouldn't have told you. I should've ... And you, Stephanie, I wish Bryan hadn't told you ...

STEPHANIE

Don't do that. Don't second-guess yourself. It's done. You told someone.

KENNY

Yeah, but ...

STEPHANIE

You never asked for it, Kenny. It wasn't your fault.

BRYAN

It's over now. You're stronger than this. You don't have to keep hurting.

KENNY

It's the only thing I know.

BRYAN  
(a pathetic laugh)

I always suspected you were bucking for martyr.

KENNY

I feel like shit.

BRYAN

You going to tell your dad?

KENNY

Tell him? Shit, I can't do that. No, it's not –

BRYAN

He should know, Kenny. You've got to tell him.

KENNY

He's got enough shit on his plate. I can't do that to him. It's better if he doesn't know.

STEPHANIE

Why do you want to protect him? He didn't protect you.

KENNY

It's not like that. He was always so busy dealing with Mama's shit all the time. So, he couldn't possibly know. And Mama and I ... We were careful. It was all part of the game. It was our secret. Mama told me I couldn't tell Dad about it. Ever. So, no, I can't tell him. It'd only mess things up.

*Beat.*

STEPHANIE

You want to know what I think? I think he knows, Kenny. I think your dad knows exactly what was going on.

KENNY

No, he couldn't have ...

STEPHANIE

He knows.

KENNY

There's no way he could ... How could he? Mama and I ...

STEPHANIE

He knows.

KENNY

But if he knew, then ... Then why didn't he ...? He couldn't ... Oh god, no, no ...

*KENNY paces like a caged animal.*

BRYAN

Kenny, sit down. It's going to be all right.

KENNY

No, no, it's not all right. It's like ... everything's a lie. Everything I ever knew. All I've been doing is telling lies to myself all my life. That we were a happy, healthy, normal family. And Mama was a good person. I'm the one who's shit. It's all my fault. She wouldn't have done it to me if I hadn't let her. It must have been me. I must have been the one who started it. Me. It was always me. (Pause.) I am my own unreliable narrator. Like that dude from *Lolita*.

*KENNY heads to the door.*

BRYAN

Where are you going?

KENNY

Just going out for a walk. Clear my head. Do some thinking.

BRYAN

You want some company? We can go with you.

STEPHANIE

If you're going to talk to your dad, we can be there, if that'll help.

KENNY

No. No. I'm good. I'll see you guys later.

*KENNY exits.*

SCENE TWENTY-THREE: PARKING LOT

*Outside a convenience store. KENNY is sitting as before with a six-pack. He holds an unopened bottle. The SHAPE is shivering nearby.*

*JANIS and BILLY enter.*

JANIS

It's déjà vu all over again. Look who's here. The guy who spews when he kisses me.

BILLY

He doesn't look like he's going to puke now, but I wouldn't risk it, if I was you.

JANIS

Nah, I don't have any intention of kissing him again. Though he is awfully cute. Don't you think he's cute? Even when he looks like the weight of the world is on his shoulders. Hey, sexy, it's not so bad, is it?

*BILLY and JANIS sit next to KENNY. They each take a beer.*

BILLY

What's got you down?

KENNY

Don't really want to talk about it.

BILLY

You cheating on your girlfriend again?

KENNY

Nothing like that. Life has just been shitty lately.

BILLY

If you're going to drink that, you're going to have to take the cap off. Here, let me show you.

*BILLY opens and drinks his beer in a series of exaggerated steps.*

BILLY

That's all there is to it. Come on, you can do it. I've seen you knock back a six-pack or two.

KENNY

I'm not sure I want to anymore.

BILLY

Whoa. Dude. Seriously?

JANIS

Leave him alone. If he doesn't want to drink, that's his business. That just leaves more for the rest of us.

*KENNY pushes the six-pack in their direction.*

BILLY

Dude! I told you he was my new best friend.

JANIS

What's the matter? You going on the wagon?

KENNY

Thinking about it. Actually, I don't know what I'm thinking. You ever feel like your life has been in a fog, and suddenly it clears, and you see how fucked up it is?

BILLY

That's why I stay in the fog. No use in looking at that shit.

JANIS

He's being serious, so cut it out. (to KENNY) What's the matter this time? Is it because of me? I mean, you and me doing it? Your girlfriend find out or something?

KENNY

She did, but that's not the only reason we broke up. I've ... I have to tell her something, and I don't know how to do it. Something about what's been going on for me. I'm sure she'll understand. She's the understanding type. But ... I don't know.

JANIS

Try it out on me first. Go on, pretend I'm your girlfriend.

KENNY

No, no ...

JANIS

Come on, you can do it. What's her name?

KENNY

Karen.

JANIS

Okay, I'm Karen. (JANIS primps her hair and acts comically stuck up.) Is that it? Or maybe it's more like this. (She tries a few different looks and expressions.)

KENNY

She's good. She's a good person.

BILLY

Oh man, I don't think you can fake that, Janis.

JANIS

Shut up! Okay, okay. I can do this. I'm Karen. Now, what have you got to tell me?

*KENNY almost drinks his beer but instead sets it down out of reach.*

KENNY

I know ... I've screwed up a lot, and I haven't been honest with you, but ... But there's something I've got to tell you. It's really hard. It's something about ... It's something about my mother.

JANIS

Oh. What'd she do?

BILLY

She offed herself.

KENNY

How do you know that?

BILLY

Shit. I remember when it happened. First year of high school. Man, I felt sorry for you.

KENNY

Oh. Yeah. Okay. (to JANIS) So, it's about her. My mother.

JANIS

You sure you want to do this?

*KENNY nods. JANIS takes his hand.*

KENNY

She wasn't a bad person. I mean, maybe she was. I mean, she did stuff ... I mean, to me. She did stuff to me. And it really messed me up. More than I realized. And that's why I drink and why I screw around, and why I cheated on you, and why I'm such a loser.

JANIS

You're not a loser. You're a high school football star.

BILLY

What'd she do?

JANIS

Come on, you don't need the details. It doesn't matter. What matters is he's telling us.

BILLY

Did she mess with you? Make you do shit?

KENNY

...

BILLY

Yeah, wow. I get it. I do, man. The same thing happened to me.

KENNY

What?

BILLY

Yeah. I don't usually talk about it. But it was when I went to summer camp. One of the counselors. A cool guy. All the kids loved him. And he was real friendly to me. He made it seem real natural. You know, showing me *Playboys* and videos and shit. Showing me what it was like. And you know, it happened.

KENNY

What'd you do?

BILLY

I told my parents. They didn't believe me. I'm the stupid kid, right? I'm the liar and the thief.

KENNY

You never told anyone else?

BILLY

I told Janis here. She listened. She's the only one who believes me.

JANIS

I got to protect my friend. No one's going to mess with him, not while I'm around.

KENNY

I'm sorry about your parents.

BILLY

Who needs 'em anyway? I've got Janis. She takes care of me.

JANIS

You doing okay?

KENNY

Yeah. It's weird, that's all. Telling people. I told my best friend. He listened.

JANIS

So will your girlfriend. She's a good person, remember?

BILLY

And you got us. We'll listen. Hey, it's not so bad. Look at me! I'm still here, right? And if I'm still standing, so can you. And if people don't believe you, screw 'em. You know the truth.

KENNY

Yeah, thanks.

*JANIS and BILLY prepare to leave.*

BILLY

Hey, you want those? (Points to six-pack.)

KENNY

You can have them.

BILLY

Thanks!

*JANIS and BILLY exit.*

*KENNY faces the SHAPE, which is shivering and keening.*

KENNY

I'm going to have to tell Dad. I'm going to have to tell him. I have to.

*As KENNY speed-dials cellphone, the SHAPE wails in fear.*



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KENNY

Dad? You free? I'd like to come over.

SCENE TWENTY-FOUR: TOM'S APARTMENT

*TOM and KENNY face each other. Silence. Throughout this conversation, neither raises his voice. The SHAPE watches warily.*

TOM  
Why didn't you tell me?

KENNY  
About what?

TOM  
That you were depressed. That you ... That you wanted to ...

KENNY  
Kill myself.

TOM  
Yes.

KENNY  
It's not something you really share with anyone when you're in the midst of it.

TOM  
Kenny, I just can't believe ... Son, you know I'm here for you. Always. You can talk to me about anything.

KENNY  
...

TOM  
Why do you do that? Why do you push me away?

KENNY  
You haven't asked why.

TOM  
I am asking.

KENNY  
You haven't asked me specifically why I wanted to kill myself.

TOM

...

KENNY

You haven't asked because I think you know.

TOM

Kenny ...

*The SHAPE approaches. KENNY sees it as it comes to stand beside him.*

KENNY

Don't lie to me. I'm so sick of pretending it didn't happen.

TOM

If this is about your mother ...

KENNY

How could it not be?

TOM

Your mother was very sick.

KENNY

So that makes it okay?

TOM

That's not what I'm saying.

KENNY

Then what are you saying? That you knew and did nothing? That you let her do that to me?

TOM

Kenny ...

KENNY

You let her fuck me.

*Long beat as TOM deteriorates into tears of shame.  
KENNY turns cold.*

TOM

I'm so sorry, Kenny. I'm so sorry. I didn't know what to do. Honest. I didn't know how to help your mother, and I didn't know how to keep you safe. She kept having these breakdowns. She tried to kill herself so many times. All those times we said she was going to visit your Uncle Rob, she really was going to a treatment facility instead. Afterwards, she'd come home with so much hope. It happened over and over again, and every time I believed it was the last time. But the worst was after the miscarriage. She cut herself bad. I found her just in time. I got her to the hospital, and they put her on a suicide watch. I was lost, Kenny. I didn't know what to do. I didn't want to abandon your mother, but I was scared about what this would do to you. All I wanted to do was run away. You remember when I took you to Florida?

KENNY

We stayed at that hotel, and I got to swim in the swimming pool.

TOM

All that time, I tried to figure it out. Should I stay or should I go? I was all set to leave her. But then she called and promised me she was better. And I believed her. I believed her because she told me that I was the only one who could keep her grounded. So, we went back.

KENNY

And she started abusing me.

TOM

I thought she slept in your room because, after the miscarriage, she was afraid of losing you, too. I never believed that ...

KENNY

When did you know for sure?

TOM

...

KENNY

So, you knew, and you didn't protect me.

TOM

...

KENNY

Was she more important than me?

TOM

...

KENNY

Maybe it's not that simple.

TOM

Maybe. Can you forgive me?

KENNY

I don't know.

*TOM nods. He can barely face KENNY and when he finally does, he breaks into wracking sobs. KENNY watches. Is he moved? Indifferent? Angry? Bored? What is clear is that KENNY makes no move to comfort TOM. The crying continues for an uncomfortably long time.*

*The SHAPE steps away from KENNY. Another SHAPE steps from the shadows to stand at TOM's shoulder as the manifestation of his memories.*

*TOM recovers.*

TOM

I'm so sorry. I'm going to be haunted by this for the rest of my life.

KENNY

Join the club.

*KENNY stares at the two SHAPES for several moments before he departs.*

SCENE TWENTY-FIVE: KAREN'S DORM ROOM

*The SHAPE is the farthest from KENNY that it has ever been.*

KENNY

You're packed and ready to head back to Texas? I hope this works out for you. You deserve it. You really do.

KAREN

I can't understand you anymore. You don't make sense to me. You're distant one moment and the next you act like nothing's wrong.

KENNY

It's complicated.

*KAREN takes KENNY's hand and turns it over to look at the stitches on his arm.*

KAREN

You never told me why you did this.

KENNY

I didn't know how to.

KAREN

...

KENNY

I know, it's stupid. But like I said, it's complicated. But I'm going to be okay. I promise.

KAREN

You know, you don't have to go through this alone. You're going to have to let somebody in. It doesn't have to be me.

KENNY

I'm not alone. I know it now. (Pause.) Can I take you somewhere?

*Lights shift as KENNY leads KAREN to the cemetery. They stand beside a grave. The SHAPE is near the grave.*

KENNY

Sometimes, when things got bad at home, I'd sneak out my bedroom window and come over here to the cemetery, and for hours, I'd walk around. When I was really little, I was scared that zombie hands would reach up through the soil and catch hold of my ankles. But as I got older, I realized there were other things to be scared of. Real monsters. So, I found a lot of solace here. And drinking. That's the spot where I hid the booze. Sometimes, my dad would chase me. He'd get to the edge of the cemetery, and he'd be calling my name. "Kenny, Kenny!" But it was never in anger. He sounded so desperate. That was the closest he ever got to admitting that I had a reason to run.

KAREN

Is that your house over there?

KENNY

That's where I grew up. You know how you see abandoned houses from time to time, and they look like no one has ever lived in them? At least, no one still alive. I've spent the last five years like I wasn't really alive. Like, that house isn't where I came from. And if I didn't let anyone know the truth, then nothing terrible ever really happened there.

KAREN

Your mother killed herself there.

KENNY

She also molested me.

KAREN

Oh god, Kenny. I'm so sorry.

*KENNY smiles as he takes KAREN'S hands.*

KENNY

You know you don't have to do that. Try to make me feel better.

KAREN

Oh. Right.

KENNY

I don't know what I'm going to do about it. I'm still figuring it out.

KAREN

You don't have to go through this alone. There are support groups for survivors. And there are therapists; they can help you deal with it.

KENNY

I know. I do. Look. I know it didn't work out between us, and I don't expect you to save me. I don't want you to. But I do want to keep being your friend. If that's okay with you.

KAREN

Always.

*KAREN hugs KENNY. Slowly he discovers how to reciprocate until he is embracing her in return.*

*END OF PLAY*