

FIRST DAY IN DECEMBER

*Time is running out as five fraternity brothers
brainstorm ways to avoid the Vietnam draft.*

By Richard Fouts



"Reflections" by Lee Teter.

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CAST OF CHARACTERS

MIKE HARRIS, age 21, president of the Beta Theta Pi fraternity (Beta house) at the University of Pennsylvania (Penn). A natural leader, admired, loved and respected by his fraternity brothers.

LINDA HARRIS, age 23, Mike's sister and a graduate student in English. Independent, strong and maternal.

CHAD DUMONT, age 21, Mike's roommate and star quarterback of the Penn Quakers.

RORY McALLISTER, age 20, and member of Beta Theta Pi. A bit of a loner, scared and confused; close friend to Chad. Frequently gets his "Irish up."

DAVID ROTHWELL, age 21, a "Big Man on Campus." Beta Theta Pi's Chaplain and Historian; comes from a family of privilege and wealth.

TIM WANG, age 21, member of Beta Theta Pi, a good student and talented athlete.

VOICE ONLY

COL DANIEL OMER, age 54; announces the birth dates on behalf of the Selective Service.

TIME

December 1, 1969, 8-11pm

PLACE

The library of the Beta Theta Pi fraternity house at the University of Pennsylvania.

ACT 1, SCENE 1

DAVID, CHAD and TIM are at a large table, listening to the radio. A 3-ring binder and notepad lies open in front of DAVID, who is wearing a green army shirt. TIM sits next to him. CHAD is wearing a Penn football jersey. A six pack of beer and a bottle of wine is on the table.

COL OMER (RADIO)

It's December 1st, 1969 at Selective Service Headquarters in Washington, DC. You're listening to a live report of tonight's picking of the birthdays for the draft.

(DAVID rips a page from his notebook; gets up and pins it to the bulletin board)

COL OMER

If you're just joining us, tonight's famous first pick is September the 14th.

CHAD

Whatta ya know, I'm famous.

COL OMER

What the Army officially calls

COL OMER

Zero zero one.

CHAD

Zero zero one. Yeah, man, I got it.

COL OMER

Over the next 30 days, young men between the ages of 19 and 26, born on September the 14th ...

CHAD

I HEARD YOU.

COL OMER

... will be called by their local draft boards, followed by those born on April the 24th, December 30th, and February the 14th.

DAVID

Chad, I wish I knew what to say.

CHAD

Me too, but ya know brother, it's Rory we should be worried about. He's the last guy that should be sent to Nam.

COL OMER

Number five is October the 18th.

DAVID

So who's gonna tell him?

CHAD

I'll do it.

TIM

RORY, WHERE THE HELL ARE YOU?

DAVID

He's in his room. He can't hear you.

CHAD

I'll get him.

(Doorbell rings)

It's open.

(CHAD gets up; as he exits the stage he nearly bumps into LINDA)

LINDA

Oh my God, are you guys listening to this?

COL OMER

Number 6 is September the 6th.

DAVID

Hi Linda. If you're looking for your brother /

LINDA

I was parking my car just now and had the radio on. This is happening so fast, wasn't the lottery announced just a few days ago?

TIM

Last Wednesday. You know about Chad, right?

LINDA

I heard February 14th. Isn't that Rory's birthday? What happened to Chad? And where's Mike?

COL OMER

October 26th is number seven.

TIM

Mike left over an hour ago.

LINDA

With Rory?

TIM

No, Rory's upstairs. Chad went to tell him.

COL OMER

Number eight is September 7th.

LINDA

Rory can't be number four. I'm sure I heard it wrong.

TIM

No, you heard right. Number four. But /

LINDA

What are you guys doing?

TIM

I'm helping David capture all of this. You knew about Mike's party didn't you?

LINDA

Is he at McGillin's? I told him to wait for me so we could go together.

COL OMER

Number nine is November 22nd.

TIM

Yeah, said he couldn't wait for you, that he needed to get the hell out. Something about your Mom?

LINDA

She died on Mike's 18th birthday. Three years today.

TIM

Oh that's right, the car accident. How are you doing?

(Telephone rings: LINDA walks over to the phone)

LINDA

I'm fine, Tim, thanks for asking, but right now, I need to know Mike's okay. Do you guys need any help?

(answers the phone)

This is the Beta house. Mike! It's Linda. Your sister? Of course we're listening to the lottery. Are you okay?

COL OMER
December 6th is number ten.

DAVID
(to TIM)
I don't think she knows about Chad.

LINDA
(talking into the telephone)
Oh my God, what are you going to do? Yes, I understand, you
can't leave just yet.

TIM
Let Chad tell her.

LINDA
Sure, I'll hold the fort down but please get here when you
can. Did you talk to Dad? Mike?
(hangs up the phone)
Tell me what?

COL OMER
August 31st is number 11.

TIM
Nothing. How's Mike? Is he okay?

LINDA
Some guy's head is buried in his lap, sobbing uncontrollably.
He's number 10. They have a radio on at the bar. Mike said
he'll be here as soon as he can.

TIM
But Linda, do you know about Chad?

LINDA
Know what?

(CHAD and RORY enter the stage)

LINDA
Rory, oh my God!

COL OMER
Number 12 is December 7th.

RORY
I was going to turn my radio on upstairs, but then I thought,
screw it, I'll look at the list tomorrow.

LINDA
(to CHAD)
You didn't tell him?

COL OMER
Number 13 is July the 8th.

RORY
Tell me what?

LINDA
The lottery. Honey, they called February 14th. Number 4.

RORY
That can't be right.

COL OMER
Number 14 is April 11th.

LINDA
I know, but /

CHAD
It's true brother. February 14th

CHAD
Is number four.

TIM
Is number four.

RORY
David?

DAVID
Afraid so. Fourth capsule drawn.

COL OMER
Number 15 is July the 12th.

RORY
But, it just started. Where's Mike?

CHAD
At the bar, watching his 21st birthday get highjacked by the US Army. Sorry bro, Saint Valentine wasn't exactly lookin out for you. But, we'll figure it out.

COL OMER
December 29th is number 16.

RORY
I can't go to Vietnam.

CHAD
Yeah, well Cupid wasn't lookin' out for me either!

RORY
I don't feel so good.

(RORY finds a chair and sits)

LINDA
Chad, that's not funny; what are you talking about?

CHAD
(salutes)
You are lookin' at *numero uno*, the big kahuna and breakfast of champions.

LINDA
What?
CHAD
September 14th. First one drafted.

LINDA
Slow down! You're saying the Army called your birthday, September 14th

CHAD
That's right sports fans, Chad Dumont, the Quaker's star quarterback will be shipped out first!

LINDA
This can't be happening.
RORY
Chad? Oh my God, you too?

CHAD
Touchdown baby!

LINDA
(Suddenly looks at DAVID and TIM, hoping they are working on some sort of solution)
What's that? In the binder?

TIM
It's the membership log, going back to 1905. I need more wine.

DAVID
We're cross-referencing tonight's draft numbers with the guy's birthdays. Can you relieve Tim for a bit?

LINDA
Just tell me what to do.

(TIM gets up and exits the stage).

DAVID

Right here. Check if anyone's birthday is December 29th or January 15th.

(During this, DAVID show her his list, LINDA sits down, cross references the list, writes one name).

DAVID

Sorry, Chad. But you know the deal.

(Slides a six-pack of beer toward CHAD).

CHAD

Yeah, yeah, the guy with lowest number drinks the whole thing. Hell, I even paid for it. Come on Rory, have a beer on double zero one.

(During this, CHAD opens two beers; hands one to a reluctant RORY)

LINDA

Chad is there anything I can do?

(Telephone rings)

CHAD

Yeah, you can get the phone.

LINDA

(Gets up; walks over to the phone)

Of course.

RORY

If it's my Dad, I'm not here.

TIM

(while re-entering the stage with a bottle of wine)

If it's my mom, same answer.

COL OMER

Number 24 is October the 24th.

LINDA
(gets up, walks over to the
telephone)
Beta House. No, this isn't the house mother.

RORY
Chad, they can't send us to Vietnam. We're Ivy League!

CHAD
Look, we'll be in and out in less than six months.

RORY
But Chad, I've never even held a gun let alone fired one.

CHAD
They'll teach us all that.

RORY
To be killers?

CHAD
Look, this is our chance to part of a big military surge, so
we can win this thing once and for all.

LINDA
(still on the phone)
Yes of course, I thought I recognized your voice.

TIM
500 soldiers are getting their heads blown off every month.
That's the real surge.

COL OMER
Number 26 is December 14th.

TIM
Draft all you want, this war is un-winnable, everybody says
so.

CHAD
We've had setbacks. But, we'll soon blow the Vietcong to hell
and they'll hold a ticker tape parade for us. We'll be all
over TV.

LINDA
(still on the phone)
Yes, he's here.
(puts her hand over the mouth
piece)
Chad, it's your father. He's been drinking. Should I hang up?

CHAD
(walks over to the telephone)
No, I'll talk to him. Brace yourself, this oughta be good.

LINDA
I don't know why you bother.

COL OMER
Number 28 is June 5th.

CHAD
(talking into the phone)
Yeah, Pop ... what's that? Yes sir, thanks for letting me know. What would I do without you?

RORY
I've never met Chad's pop.

LINDA
Consider yourself lucky.

RORY
I'm not feeling so lucky tonight.

LINDA
Oh God, I'm sorry, that came out wrong.

CHAD
(talking into the phone)
The odds? About three hundred sixty-five to one.

RORY
Did you talk to Mike? Is he coming home?

LINDA
Mike's dealing with his own problems, hang in there.

RORY
Mike will know what to do.

CHAD
Yes sir, I know all about facing the facts. Now if you'll excuse me I need to take a really big piss.

RORY
I could never talk to my dad like that.

COL OMER
Number 32 is April the first /

LINDA

Trust me, *Pop* won't remember any of it.

CHAD

No Dad, I can't destroy my draft card, because I already burned it.

(CHAD slams the phone down)

LINDA

His usual words of wisdom?

CHAD

(imitating and mocking his father)

"Now son, it's time to man up. This is your generation's war, just like World War 2 belonged to my generation, and World War 1 belonged to your grand dad."

TIM

Yeah, well your dad's wrong. This is not our war. Did they call my birthday? November 7th?

DAVID

Not yet.

LINDA

What about December 1st?

DAVID

No, they haven't called Mike's birthday. I'll let you know when they do.

CHAD

I know my dad's a blowhard, but he's a decorated war veteran. He knows how this stuff works.

LINDA

(shrugs)

And my Dad makes me hold anti-war signs with him in Rittenhouse Square every Sunday. He says anyone who has seen war up close knows it's never an answer.

CHAD

So your Dad's right, and my dad's wrong?

TIM

Damn straight!

CHAD

Goddamnit Tim.

COL OMER

Number 35 is May the 7th.

LINDA

Chad, I just don't think you should be sent halfway around the world to fight someone else's war.

TIM

Because he's a football star? Isn't that why he should go first?

LINDA

No, Tim.

RORY

Jesus, Tim.

CHAD

Look, if we don't step up the communists will take over the world. Kissinger calls it the domino effect.

LINDA

You don't really buy that war propoganda, do you?

TIM

Oh yeah, Chad totally buys this Vietnam crap.

LINDA

If you ask me, the Army is lying about this war.

CHAD

Why would they do that?

LINDA

Because they lie about everything.

TIM

Chad, do you know Congress hasn't even declared war?

LINDA

It's a disgrace.

RORY

Hey David, you know the Army's death list will be in tomorrow's paper right?

DAVID

As the chapter historian I need to record this.

TIM

Why don't they just start with January 1st and get it over with? David, did they call my birthday?

DAVID

If it's random, it gives an appearance of fairness. No Tim, November 7th hasn't been called.

RORY

Who came up this lottery anyway?

LINDA

Who else? Richard Nixon.

TIM

Yeah, well he ain't my president.

CHAD

Say Lindy, what do you say we go upstairs and get it on? Give your brother's roommate a parting gift before he gets shot up in a rice paddy?

RORY

Come on Chad, don't say shit like that.

TIM

He's just being Chad; always the center of attention.

LINDA

No, that's not it. Chad loves to joke in place of conversation.

CHAD

Yeah, well I wish Vietnam was a joke. Now if you'll excuse me I have to pee like a racehorse.

(picks up the wrapped gift)

Wow, you got me a going away present, already?

LINDA

Put that down, it's Mike's birthday gift. The new Stones album.

CHAD

Nice! Say David, how do you say number one in German?

DAVID

Nummer eins.

CHAD

(as he exits the stage)

Yeah, well up yours nummer eins!

COL OMER

May 3rd is number 40. I repeat, young men, between the ages of 19 to 24, born on May the third, are number 40.

RORY

How could the day we were born be used against us? Oh God,
I'm going to throw up.

TIM

This is going to be a long night.

LIGHTS FADE TO BLACK.

SCENE 2

RORY and LINDA are downstage. TIM is helping DAVID, upstage. TIM posts another piece of paper to the bulletin board. It's 8:55 pm.

RORY
(to LINDA)
Are you going to McGillin's to see Mike?

LINDA
I can't leave Chad right now. Not like this.

COL OMER
August 29th is number 61.

RORY
Chad's not afraid of anything.

LINDA
He's terrified, he just doesn't know it yet. But Rory how are you doing? You scared the hell out of me at that SDS meeting we went to after Thanksgiving. I hope you haven't been back.

RORY
No, Chad told me to stay away from those whack jobs.

LINDA
Listen, I was talking about the draft with my dad, and he told me about deferments and exemptions. It's complicated, but you know Mike will help.

(CHAD returns, a six pack of beer in his hand)

CHAD
Okay, more beer. What are you guys talking about?

LINDA
I was trying to explain deferments and exemptions.

CHAD
So how do we get Rory a deferment?

DAVID
What we need are *exemptions*. Deferments expire when you graduate.

(Telephone rings. CHAD walks over the answer it)

CHAD
(talks into the telephone)
American Travel! Now with direct flights to Vietnam.

TIM
David, how come you know so much about the draft?

CHAD
(still on the telephone)
No, I'm just messing with ya. This is the Beta house.

DAVID
I didn't tell you guys this, but last week I went to the draft board, you know the same place where we registered?

TIM
Holy crap, you signed up?

CHAD
(Still on the phone)
M'am I can barely understand you.

DAVID
No, I went to learn how to avoid the draft.

TIM
You asked the Army how to become a DRAFT dodger? Oh, that's brilliant.

DAVID
No Timmy, I told the recruiter I was a high school senior writing a paper about the evils of communism.

CHAD
(still on the phone)
Lady, this is Chad Dumont, who the hell is this?

DAVID
I was oozing patriotism. After I warmed him up, I started asking questions about the draft.

CHAD
Oh, hello, Rory's mother.

(LINDA gets up and walks over to
CHAD)

LINDA
Give me that.
(talking into the phone)
Mrs. McAllister? This is Linda Harris.
(MORE)

LINDA (CONT'D)

My brother Mike is the president of this embarrassment. Hold on.

(short pause)

Rory, it's your mother.

RORY

Tell her I went to the library.

LINDA

She sounds pretty upset. I think you need to talk to her.

(RORY walks to the phone)

TIM

So what happened at the draft board?

DAVID

I asked what happens when you get your induction letter. So the recruiter takes me to this room where 30 guys are lined up in their underwear.

TIM

He made you take your clothes off?

DAVID

No Tim, they were there for their medical exam, to, you know, determine their fitness for war.

RORY

(speaking into the telephone)

Yeah, Mom.

LINDA

Just ignore your draft notice. This is an illegal war.

TIM

I told my history professor that and he told me to get my unpatriotic ass out of his class.

RORY

(still on the phone)

Yes Mother, I know I'm number four (pause) ... it means I'll be called for active duty after the army goes through the first three.

TIM

I'll just go to Canada. Get a job.

RORY
(still on the phone)
Mom, please stop crying.

DAVID
You can try. But, employers up there favor Canadians over Americans. I'll look into it.

RORY
(still on the phone)
Did Dad just say he was calling the FBI? Hang on. David, what did you say about Canada?

DAVID
You saw that story Sunday night? On that new show, what's it called?

TIM
60 Minutes?

DAVID
Yeah, 60 Minutes. When a bunch of draft dodgers tried to re-enter the country from Canada, the border authorities checked their names against an FBI list; charged them with treason.

TIM
Treason?

DAVID
They got 10-years. The guy on 60 Minutes said draft dodging is a federal offense.

RORY
(still on the phone)
No Mother, according to David, Canada is complicated. Mom, you met David last fall. He's one of the ... NO, I do not need to talk to Dad. Mother, please! Hello, Dad. No Sir, I did not just demand Mom drive me to Canada.

TIM
Do the Canadians require a special visa?

DAVID
All you need is a driver's license.

RORY
(still on the telephone)
Because I don't believe in this war. And neither should you! And you can drop that "be a good soldier" crap. I'm not a killer.

LINDA

Hold on guys.

RORY

(still on the telephone)

I'll call you tomorrow. Why do you have to upset her like that? Yes, I heard you. Good night, Dad.

(RORY hangs up the telephone)

LINDA

What was that all about?

RORY

Apparently, my mother is coming to Philly tomorrow.

TIM

To do what?

RORY

To drive me to Canada. Oh, and she says David can come too.

TIM

Yeah, well make room for three. What's the deal with your Dad?

RORY

Dear old Dad said no son of his is going to escape his rightful duty by going to Canada. Said, "If you choose not to serve, my home will no longer be open to you."

CHAD

What if you come home in a body bag?

LINDA

Chaaad.

CHAD

Sorry.

RORY

Oh, but it gets better. When my mother offered to drive me to Canada, he says, "You do that Carol and I'll call the FBI."

CHAD

Come on, he'd call the FBI?

RORY

That's what he said.

TIM

On your mom?

RORY

You've met my dad. He'd have no issue having his wife prosecuted for treasonous acts.

LINDA

Maybe he should turn on a TV. Or look at a newspaper. Did you see that picture in LIFE Magazine, a seven-year old girl, naked and terrified running from her home as it burned to the ground? Carrying her baby brother? Turns out their mother died in one of those carpet bombings.

TIM

Oh man, I thought was go to war, go to jail, or go to Canada. And now you're telling me Canada might not work?

CHAD

So just tell the army you're queer.

TIM

How? By offering to blow the draft board?

DAVID

Guys, this is no joke.

CHAD

I don't think Tim was joking, were you brother?

DAVID

I talked to a guy who checked homosexual on his induction form, which triggered an investigation into his personal life because the military doesn't allow queers. They even published his name in the newspaper.

CHAD

Why didn't they just post it on the Pennsylvania turnpike?

DAVID

The Army did everything they could to humiliate him, so get this, he exposes other queers that are already in the Army.

CHAD

I hope those guys were thrown out.

DAVID

Dishonorably discharged; their names published in the paper.

CHAD

So there you go, Rory. Just check the homo box.

RORY

Who told you that? Have people been saying that? Because it's not true.

CHAD

Relax buddy. And you know, denying you're a homo only makes it worse. Wow, there's an idea.

LINDA

It's not a bad idea, is it?

TIM

Look, anything you check on a government form follows you for life. One screwup and no one will hire you, you'll never be able to rent an apartment or get a bank loan.

DAVID

Your friends and family will disown you.

TIM

Lying to the government is a really bad idea.

DAVID

And if the guys on this campus find out you're a fairy?

TIM

You'll wake up in a hospital. *If* you wake up that is.

CHAD

Guess you're better off cozying up to the Vietcong than admitting you're queer.

TIM

Yup, either way you're screwed. Hey, If I get drafted I'll show up without my contact lenses. Show them I'm half blind.

DAVID

I'm sure a lot of guys have tried that.

TIM

Let's just burn our draft cards!

RORY

Yeah, Chad. Did you really do that?

CHAD

No, I was just pulling my dad's leg like I always do. Besides, it's a total waste of time.

RORY

Why? If you don't have a draft card, how can they /

CHAD

The army comes looking for you if you don't show up when you're called, draft card or not.

DAVID

That's right.

CHAD

Burn your draft card, go to prison.

LINDA

A lot of women are destroying their husband's draft cards.

CHAD

Send *them* to prison.

DAVID

Look, any way you cut it, draft dodging is treason. I've looked into all the legal ramifications of the draft. I'm pre-law, remember?

TIM

But, treason?

DAVID

And when the *prison guards* find out you're a draft dodger? Like Chad said, you're better off cozying up to the Vietcong.

TIM

It can't be that hard to show you're unfit to go to war.

DAVID

You just need to flunk your exam. Drink a ton of coffee before you go, make it look like you have high blood pressure.

COL OMER

November 28th is number 99.

TIM

What about asthma?

DAVID

Why, do you have breathing issues?

TIM

No. But, maybe I could pay a doctor to say that I do.

DAVID

Sorry bro, but the army docs do the exam. Notes from your doctor don't trump the US military.

LINDA

But, you guys remember my friend Debbie? Her husband gave the Army a letter from his personal physician. They accepted it because they're overwhelmed with exemption requests.

TIM

(picks up an empty bottle)

I don't have a personal physician.

DAVID

I'll set you up with mine.

TIM

Can he help me fake a medical condition? Hey, I'll become an alcoholic. The Army won't draft a drunk, will they? Or a guy with a missing limb? Maybe I'll pretend to be a re-tard.

CHAD

That's the smartest thing you've said all night. But you know, I bet my athletic scholarship makes me exempt.

TIM

Oh sure, because college football is so critical to national security? Gimme a break.

CHAD

I'm just saying there has to be a pecking order.

COL OMER

Number 102 is August 15th.

TIM

A pecking order? Chad, what the hell are you talking about?

CHAD

There's always a hierarchy in these things. This is America after all.

TIM

Sure, wars are fought with racial minorities and poor people, right?

CHAD

Ease up, Timmy. I didn't say that!

TIM

You didn't have to. Guys like you always get a pass.

DAVID

Turn on the six o'clock news. Plenty of young white guys are coming home in coffins.

CHAD

No use trying to get out of this, my pop would never allow it. Says anyone who avoids the draft is a scumbag.

TIM

The real scumbags are the politicians that got us into this war.

CHAD

Hey man, we're fighting this war on BEHALF of people like you; to keep communism from spreading throughout Asia, so watch your mouth.

TIM

Chad, when are you going to get that I'm not Vietnamese? Ever since I was five years old, my Mom's been telling me how she caught the last boat out of China in '49 to escape communism. If she'd waited even one more day, one day, she would have been executed. Every time I spoke Chinese, she'd slap me across the face and say, "I never want to hear that again. We're Americans now."

DAVID

Chad, please try not to make things worse.

CHAD

Sure, right after you shove this lottery up your ass!

LINDA

I think David was just trying to say that /

RORY

Tim's right! Like it or not, this country has a history of exploiting minorities.

TIM

Chad, you do know what exploitation means right?

CHAD

Yeah, I learned it from the Beach Boys.

(sings the next line to the
melody of the Beach Boys
song, *Good Vibrations*; grabs
his crotch at *exploitations*)

I'm feeling those good vi-bra-tions, right down to my ex-ploi-ta-tions

LINDA

Chad, stop it. This is serious.

CHAD

Hey, I didn't engineer this goddamn lottery.

TIM

Chad, you know the U.S. Railroad was built with cheap Chinese labor, right?

LINDA

(tries to diffuse the situation)

It's not just racial minorities. Women have never made as much money as men for the same job. We've been getting the shaft for centuries on so many levels.

CHAD

So, if you're a female slant eye, you're the top of the exploitation pyramid?

TIM

You snotty, privileged white boy, why don't you kiss my Asian ass!

(TIM charges toward CHAD;
DAVID holds him back.)

Let me go!

DAVID

Easy Tim.

RORY

Holy shit!

CHAD

Come get me, China boy. David, let him go.

(CHAD turns around and throws up his arms; realizing that he could crush TIM if he wanted to)

RORY

Come on, Tim, brothers don't fight, they look out for each other.

(TIM raises both arms in surrender;
DAVID reluctantly lets him go)

DAVID

And Chad, we've talked about this. Brothers don't insult each other, they watch their backs. Look, this lottery has everyone on edge. But we have got to support each other, all right?

RORY

Yeah guys, Mike would not be happy with you two right now.

COL OMER

Number 109 is June the 23rd.

CHAD

Hey man, I'm sorry. I shouldn't have said those things.

TIM

No, I get it.

(TIM gives CHAD the finger; lights
start to fade)

COL OMER

June the 6th is number one-hundred-ten, I repeat, June the
6th is number one-hundred-ten, which brings us to a
commercial break.

RADIO AD

(Pepsi ad, 'You're in the
Pepsi generation' plays
while **lights fade to black**
and audience is given a 15-
minute intermission.)

SCENE 3

*LINDA is downstage taking notes.
CHAD, DAVID and RORY are upstage.
It's 9:20pm.*

COL OMER
Number 111 is August the 1st.

TIM
(Offstage)
Did they call November 7th?

DAVID
Linda?

LINDA
They haven't called Mike's birthday yet.

DAVID
But, what about November 7th?

LINDA
Hold on, I'm keeping up as fast as I can.

COL OMER
May 17th is number 112.

TIM
(Enters the stage)
November 7th. Did they call November 7th?

LINDA
Yes Tim, I heard you, give me a second. Oh, no.

TIM
Why? What is it?

LINDA
November 7th is number 51.

TIM
(Slams both hands on the
table; turns defiant)
Turn that damn radio off.

RORY
(gets up, turns radio off)
Sorry, Tim.

LINDA

I forgot to listen for November 7th. I'm so sorry.

TIM

David, how soon will I get my induction letter?

DAVID

I don't know, six months? Nixon wants 50,000 more troops by summer.

TIM

SIX MONTHS?

CHAD

Timmy my boy, if I'm going, you're going. Besides, my Dad says you're either for the war or you're a traitor.

TIM

Then half the people in this country are traitors.

DAVID

(to CHAD)

Wait, your dad actually says that?

CHAD

Why, what does your dad say?

DAVID

(flatly)

My father says a guy like me is too important to go to Vietnam.

CHAD

Wow, your old man actually says that?

LINDA

Slow down, Chad. Just last summer, David found out that his /

CHAD

Let me get this straight. You're telling me you're too *important* to go to war? That you're too *valuable* to serve your country?

LINDA

Chad, I don't think it's that simple.

CHAD

Oh, but apparently, it is. David, you are unbelievable.

DAVID

Hey, it's not my fault your dad wants to send you to Nam.

CHAD

So David, when you see the caskets come off the planes at Dulles, do you say, "Better them, than me?"

TIM

Oh, sweet Jesus, this is awful.

RORY

Even Jesus will get a draft number tonight. Have those bastards called December 25th?

LINDA

No, not yet. Tim, I feel terrible, is there anything I can do?

TIM

Yeah, help me load my stuff into Chad's car so we can all drive to Canada.

CHAD

And then what?

RORY

How will we live?

TIM

We'll sell Chad's car!

CHAD

I'm not selling my Mustang! My grandfather gave me that car.

TIM

We need more alcohol. Wait, why don't we transfer to the University of Toronto? Gotta be cheaper than Penn.

(TIM exits the stage)

DAVID

Hold on, guys. I just remembered. Conscientious objection.

RORY

What's conscientious rejection?

DAVID

Objection! A way to legally avoid the draft.

RORY

I say we go down to that local draft board and blow it to smithereens!

LINDA

Hold on, Rory.

RORY

Or burn it down!

LINDA

David, what do you mean, conscientious *objection*?

CHAD

It's what Mohammed Ali tried. Said he had a religious belief against war. So he checked conscientious objection. It's right under homosexual. Check both boxes and they'll definitely throw you out.

RORY

Right on!

DAVID

Look, you can't just become a gay Buddhist the day before your physical. But if you're studying to be a Rabbi, that might work.

CHAD

You mean a Jewish minister?

DAVID

No Chad, Rabbis aren't ministers.

CHAD

Hmm, Rabbi Rory. Has a nice ring, doesn't it?

RORY

Works for me.

CHAD

Say David, did your number come up?

DAVID

What?

CHAD

Your birthday, pretty boy.

(louder and slower)

Did they call ... your birthday? We're all just a number now, remember?

DAVID

Look, I'm telling you, these draft boards are getting aggressive as hell, because more troops are needed, fast.

RORY

What if you believe in the 10 Commandments? One of them says *thou shalt not kill*.

CHAD

And which one would that be?

RORY

I don't know.

CHAD

Thought so.

DAVID

Are you active in anti-war causes, opposition to guns or capital punishment, things like that?

CHAD

Rory's extracurricular activity is limited to the association of accounting majors.

RORY

I'll join one of those pacifist groups. Back date my application to 1965.

CHAD

Okay, you're on the battlefield and some crazy gook is about to stab you through the heart with his bayonet. Do you shoot him?

RORY

Wouldn't you?

CHAD

You just flunked conscientious objection. Bro, if you want to dodge the draft you need to think these things through. Besides, my dad says

(imitating his dad)

"Those pansy-ass, moral objectors to war only increase their chances of being drafted."

RORY

Why?

CHAD

Because it pisses off the draft board.

DAVID

Chad's right. It's why they went after Mohammed Ali.

RORY
Ali went to Nam?

DAVID
No. He refused induction.

CHAD
So they stripped him of his heavyweight title. Then sent him to prison.

LINDA
He's alive, isn't he?

RORY
Hey, David, didn't your brother Dan go to Vietnam? He's back, right?

DAVID
Yes. Dan was sent home.

(TIM is heard screaming offstage)

CHAD
Was that Tim? From the kitchen? Sounds like he burned himself again. Linda, you better go check on him.

(LINDA gets up as TIM enters the stage with his blood-soaked t-shirt around his left foot. He sits down and elevates his foot on the table)

TIM
(Screaming in pain)
OH MY GOD I REALLY DID IT.

LINDA
TIM! RORY
JESUS.

CHAD
What did you do?

TIM
It's my toe! I cut off my toe.

LINDA
You WHAT? CHAD
YOU CUT OFF YOUR TOE?

TIM
Yes, I cut off my friggin' toe! I thought about my big toe, but I went for the second toe, left foot.

LINDA
Hold on.

DAVID
Oh my God, Linda, he's
bleeding badly.

LINDA
We need to wrap this tighter.

(LINDA wraps him tighter, TIM
screams in agony)

CHAD
Tim, you are one crazy bastard. Here, let me see.
(peels back the bloody t-
shirt to peek at TIM'S toe)
Dude, you only got half your toe. Let me get the knife, we
need to do this right.

RORY
Just call an ambulance!

LINDA
There's no time. Take my car and get him to the infirmary.
Chad knows where it is.

(CHAD and DAVID pick TIM up, carry
him out as RORY keeps TIM'S leg
elevated)

RORY
Tim, where's your toe? We might be able to save it. We just
need to get it on ice.

TIM
I ground it up in the garbage disposal.

(LINDA shoves her keys into CHAD'S
pocket)

CHAD
Of course you did, you crazy fuck. Rory, keep his leg
elevated!

(As the guys carry TIM out, his
foot brushes the door frame)

TIM
OW! Come on guys, take it easy!

CHAD
Hey man up, we didn't whack your toe off.

RORY
(TIM screams again)

Sorry, Timmy.

CHAD
Oh man, all this blood is making me queasy.

TIM
Sorry, Chad!

COL OMER
March the 6th is number 139.

(Telephone rings)

LINDA
(talks into the telephone)
This is the Beta house. Mike! When can you get here? No, Chad left with Rory because Tim ... Tim's hurt himself. What? Mike, I can't hear you. Mike? Mike!

COL OMER
Before we go to break January the 18th is number 140. I repeat, January 18th is number one-hundred and forty. We are now more than one-third through tonight's draft lottery. We'll be right back.

LIGHTS FADE TO BLACK

SCENE 4

The bulletin board is now full of sheets. LINDA is on the telephone. It's 10:05pm.

COL OMER

May 25th is number 361.

(DAVID is capturing dates on a steno pad; RORY and CHAD enter the stage)

LINDA

(Talking into the telephone)

Mrs. Wang, I'm Linda Harris, we met at parent's weekend last year? That's right, I'll be sure and tell Tim. Okay, bye now.

(Hangs up the telephone)

Woman was in the middle of bridge club. She wasn't even aware of the draft, or the lottery. How's Tim?

CHAD

Get this, the doctor said, "The guy that whacked his toe has promise as a surgeon."

LINDA

I will never understand men. Is Tim okay?

COL OMER

March 29th is number 362.

RORY

He'll be fine. But, dig this. When we get to the infirmary, two other guys with low draft numbers were being treated.

CHAD

One shot himself in the foot with his dad's 22-gauge shot gun. Completely shattered his bones.

RORY

The other guy was caught staring into a sunlamp.

CHAD

Would have burned off both retinas if they hadn't stopped him.

LINDA

Sounds like a horror show. I'm just glad Tim is okay. His mother is flying out tomorrow.

And his dad?

CHAD

You didn't know?

LINDA

Know what?

CHAD

COL OMER
Number three hundred sixty-four is May the 5th.

LINDA
Like Tim said, his mother barely escaped China in '49. His father didn't make it.

CHAD
You mean he's still in China?

LINDA
Tim's father was a landlord. His tenants executed him under orders from the communist party.

DAVID
So, for Tim, this is personal.

CHAD
You don't think this is personal for all of us? David, sometimes you've got your head, so far up your ass /

LINDA
GOD, WILL THIS NIGHT EVER END?

COL OMER
February 26th is number three hundred sixty-five. And number three hundred sixty-six is June the 8th. I repeat, the last capsule, number 366 is June the 8th.

RORY
Three hundred sixty-six? Is that the joker? How about I trade my birthday for June 8th?

DAVID
There are 366 days in the year if you count February 29th, leap year.

(stands and tacks the last
sheet of paper to the
bulletin board)

Like I said before, the Army has this pretty well-covered.

CHAD

So, what's the final score? For the unimportant slobs destined to go to war?

LINDA

Chad, I swear to God give it a rest.

CHAD

All right, I apologize. David, I'm sorry.

DAVID

Go to hell.

CHAD

Ah, come on, don't get all sensitive on me. I didn't mean to hurt your feelings, you're just really good at pissing me off sometimes. Go ahead, David. Please.

DAVID

(takes a deep breath as he studies the list)

The Beta house has 73 members. Looks like at least a third of them will be called.

CHAD

And how did Mike do?

LINDA

Oh my god, Mike! In all the chaos I forgot to listen for December 1st.

DAVID

Mike is number 129. He fell into the middle third. Might get called, might not.

LINDA

What do you mean?

DAVID

If the Army goes through 10 draft numbers each month, they'll get to number 120 by the end of the year. At 129, he's at risk, but I think he'll be okay.

CHAD

Looks like I'm the lone ranger at number one?

DAVID

Sorry, Chad. I wish I knew what to do.

CHAD

It's the card I was dealt. What else?

DAVID

This is so weird. September the 6th and 7th fell into the top 10. September 3rd, September 5th and the 10th are in the top 50.

CHAD

So much for sweet September.

LINDA

And just for morbid curiosity, what about my birthday?

DAVID

Which is?

CHAD

She was born Christmas Eve.

DAVID

Let's see December 24th, number 95. But the heavenly child didn't fare so well. December 25th is number 84.

(pauses)

Oh man, this is really messed up. You know Ethan and Edward, the twins? They're seniors, right?

RORY

Yup. Both of 'em.

LINDA

I need to call my dad.

(LINDA walks to the phone and dials)

DAVID

According to chapter records, Ethan was born June 7th just before midnight. His twin brother, Edward, was born at 12:04am, on June the 8th.

RORY

So?

DAVID

Ethan's birthday, June 7th is number is 85.

CHAD

Meaning, he'll get called.

DAVID

But his brother Edward was born June 8th, number 366. He won't get called, ever.

(MORE)

DAVID (CONT'D)

One brother is safe, while his twin is being shipped to Vietnam. Who else but the US Army could do such a thing?

CHAD

By the way, David, what's your number?

DAVID

My birthday is March the 14th.

RORY

And your draft number?

DAVID

(pauses)

Three hundred fifty-four.

(After it's clear LINDA's dad isn't picking up, she hangs up the phone)

LINDA

My dad's not picking up. I need to get out of here, I'm going for a walk.

(Linda exits the stage)

CHAD

Well, well, well, could this night get any better? America-the-Beautiful here is number three hundred fifty-four. I'll be sure and think about that when I'm on the can.

(CHAD exits the stage; RORY and DAVID are alone)

RORY

Screw you, David.

DAVID

Look Rory, this is not something I feel good about.

RORY

Oh, but you must be relieved, right? You're not qualified to pick up Chad's shit, yet he drew *nummer eins* as you say, and you? You drew number three hundred and fifty-four.

DAVID

No, Rory. I didn't draw number three-fifty-four. It was given to me just like number four was given to you.

RORY

Who cares, you're number three-fifty-four. Nothing scary about that, David. Yup, you must be feeling pretty good right now. Come on man, admit it.

DAVID

Okay, I admit it. Happy? Now get out of my face.

RORY

Oh sure, I'll get out of your face, because what David wants David gets, right?

(opens a beer bottle)

David Rothwell, captain of the debate team, consistently on the Dean's List, played Lancelot at the opening of the new repertory theatre last year ... because as the critics so duly noted, he has a voice like Robert Goulet. Here's to you, stud.

(RORY starts drinking from the beer bottle)

DAVID

Rory, will you please just listen to me for a minute?

RORY

Wake the hell up, David! While you're away at Harvard Law School I'll be getting my legs blown off.

DAVID

I'll do more research on deferments and exemptions.

RORY

Or, how about you volunteer for this shit storm? Come on a Vietnam tour with me and Chad, and when I'm getting ready to shoot some Vietcong soldier in the head you can tell me exactly how it's done. Or, when we need to torch a village or just throw of a bag of grenades into it you can educate me on just the right technique.

DAVID

That's not funny, Rory. And spare me the lecture.

RORY

Lucky in war, lucky in school, lucky with the chicks. Yup, the prettiest girls follow you around like little puppy dogs and if they're lucky and you're feeling generous, you flash them a smile. Hell, you're even from *Palo fucking Alto*.

DAVID

But I didn't get into Stanford.

RORY

You cocky son-of-a-bitch.

(RORY charges DAVID, but DAVID
flips RORY around, forces and holds
one of RORY's arms behind his back)

DAVID

Look Rory, I don't want to hurt you but you *know I can*. Look,
tonight was just a random luck of the draw. I didn't invent
this twisted death lottery.

RORY

But why me and not you? Why does everything always go your
way?

DAVID

Because none of this makes any sense. And I'm not letting you
go until you *calm down*.

RORY

Okay, I'm calm!

(DAVID still won't release
RORY)

David, please, I'm alright. Let me go.

(DAVID releases RORY before he
falls into a chair, clearly
exhausted.)

DAVID

The fact is I couldn't enlist if I wanted to.

RORY

Why not? You said you wanted to /

DAVID

After my brother Dan graduated Princeton, he joined the Air
Force and got shipped off to Vietnam. You know how I feel
about Dan.

RORY

Sure, but what does he have to do with us? Besides, you said
they sent Dan home.

DAVID

Rory, will you just let me talk?

(CHAD enters the stage.)

DAVID (CONT'D)

The day Dan went to Vietnam he said, "I'll go and come back." He wrote to me every week, sent me this shirt, said it didn't feel like we were saving democracy, that things were really bad over there. Last summer my little sister Lori turns on the TV, just as dozens of caskets come off the army planes. She starts crying, so I go to turn the TV off when Cronkite announces over 35,000 soldiers have been killed so far. Lori gets hysterical; asks me if Dan is in one of those boxes.

(LINDA enters the stage)

DAVID (CONT'D)

I try to tell her he isn't. But her crying gets worse; tells me she doesn't want Dan to come home in a box even if it's decorated with a pretty American flag. After that she stops watching TV altogether hoping it will bring Dan good luck. Then last July he gets shot down in one of those search-and-destroy missions. He comes back all right; in a flag-covered coffin. After that I get a letter from the army, informing me of my triple S status.

CHAD

Triple S?

DAVID

Sole Surviving Son. If you're triple S you can't be drafted. You can't be called.

LINDA

Mike told me about Dan. I'm so sorry, David.

CHAD

You knew about this? You *and* Mike knew about this?

DAVID

I told Mike to keep it to himself. I didn't want anyone feeling sorry for me. And I didn't want to talk about it. After the draft was reinstated, I started researching deferments and exemptions. If I wasn't going I at least wanted to help my brothers from going. I think Dan would have wanted me to do that.

CHAD

Okay, so you've been sitting here all night

RORY

and the whole time ...

CHAD

this whole time, you've known you can't be drafted ...

RORY
that you'll never be called ...

CHAD
pretending to be one of us.

DAVID
I am one of you. I'm your brother, remember?

RORY
Oh no, no, no you piece of crap. You're no brother of mine.

LINDA
Rory!

CHAD
You're not really in this, not like the rest of us. You said it yourself.

RORY
You can't be drafted, you can't be called.

CHAD
(grabs DAVID by his shirt
lapels)
I ought to string you up and beat the living crap out of /

LINDA
Chad, please. His brother is dead!

CHAD
And so what? I'm the only son in my family.

RORY
So am I.

CHAD
Where's my official letter that says, "Hey boss, thanks for playing, but due to your dead brother we insist you return to your *important life*."

LINDA
All right you two, stop it! That's enough. Mike told me that's just the way Sole Surviving Son works. I know it's unfair, but /

CHAD
Linda, please stay out of this.

LINDA

Why, so you guys can kill each other? Chad, what's to be gained by coming down on David? If you need to unload your frustration, scream at me all you want, just stop using each other as punching bags.

RORY

You have no idea how this feels.

LINDA

And I won't pretend to understand what you're going through! But I care about you guys and you're scaring the hell out of me right now. Look, take a deep breath and count to 10, go for a walk, have another beer, do whatever you need to do, just /

CHAD

I don't need to *do* anything.

LINDA

Chad, I'm begging you.

CHAD

All right, just give me a little space. I can't even look at David right now.

DAVID

(to CHAD)

Do you know what it's like to hear your father cry himself to sleep? Night after night?

(turns to RORY)

Maybe you can explain to a 9-year-old girl why her mother forgets to pick her up from school.

CHAD

Leave Rory out of it.

DAVID

(stays in RORY's face)

A little girl who stopped watching TV because she thought it would bring the brother she idolizes a little bit of luck.

(turns to CHAD)

But, all it did was bring his dead body home, IN A BOX.

CHAD

Look, I'm sorry.

DAVID

I'll go and come back. Those are the last words she remembers and she still believes them. And what am I supposed to do? How do I explain to my 9-year-old sister, why she'll never see her brother Dan, the brother she idolizes, ever again?

(MORE)

DAVID (CONT'D)

Tell me that and I'll gladly trade places with you. Don't you know I want to get the guys that shot my brother down? To even the score, just a little? But no, the army won't let me, hell my own father won't let me. Can't you see that I want to help? God, why can't you see that?

(During this, LINDA starts fumbling through her bag to get her keys)

LINDA

Listen, David, can you do me a favor and find Mike? He should have been here by now and I'm getting concerned. Something feels wrong.

(hands DAVID her keys)

Here, take my car.

(DAVID starts to exit the stage)

Wait, I'll walk you out.

DAVID

Sure.

(LINDA and DAVID exit the stage)

CHAD

Hey Rory, you okay?

(RORY, his head in his hands, muffles his crying. CHAD takes RORY in his arms, but RORY resists).

CHAD (CONT'D)

Hey, I got you man, you know that.

RORY

Chad, I'm scared. I'm really really scared.

CHAD

I know, we all are.

RORY

But, I'm not like you. Last summer, I got lost in Central Park! And now the army wants to drop me into a jungle of Vietcong killers? You and I both know, the only way I'm coming home is in a body bag.

CHAD

Jesus Rory, why do you always assume the worse? Look, we'll talk about it tomorrow. There are always options. Okay, look at me Rory. There are always options.

RORY

You mean like telling the draft board we're queer?

CHAD

No, Rory. Not that.

RORY

Because, Chad, you must know that I'm, that I'm /

CHAD

Stop right there. Look, I thought maybe you were, but no Rory, you can't do that. In fact, this conversation is over.

RORY

Chad, just listen to me for a second /

CHAD

And what am I supposed to do with that kind of information? Look, you're not gay, all right?

RORY

Won't you please just listen?

CHAD

I'm warning you Rory, stop this NOW.

RORY

Last summer, when I was in New York, I went to a bar in Greenwich Village, called the Stonewall Inn.

CHAD

I won't listen to this.

RORY

There was a raid, a police raid. You must have heard about it.

CHAD

No, Rory. I didn't. And I don't want to /

RORY

Stonewall is a bar for men. It's on Christopher Street.

CHAD

Stop it Rory!

RORY

There was a police raid. I was arrested. My mom came and bailed me out after I spent the night in jail.

(MORE)

RORY (CONT'D)

But what's really messed up is that I was on my way out when the cops busted the door in. I think I was even the first one they cuffed.

CHAD

Why would they cuff you?

RORY

Because I fought back! We all did.

CHAD

This is such bullshit.

RORY

No Chad, it's not. And, who do the cops think they are? It's not like I was under age. I showed them my driver's license.

CHAD

You what?

RORY

And my draft card.

CHAD

Look, you're not gay all right? And even if you are, you are NOT going to check the homosexual box on your induction form!

RORY

Then I'll show them my arrest warrant.

CHAD

You do that, you ruin everything.

RORY

I'll be alive, won't I?

CHAD

You tell the draft board you're a homo and we all go down. I become the football faggot, the coach kicks me off the team and the Beta house gets thrown off campus for immoral behavior!

RORY

Chad, I don't want any of that to happen. I just don't want to go to Vietnam.

CHAD

By telling the draft board you're queer? Rory, the Beta house has been here since 1880! They'll shut us down. They'll take my scholarship. It's guilt-by-association; don't you get it?

RORY

But, Chad, I'm not guilty of anything /

CHAD

You do this Rory, and I swear to God ... now, you listen to me. I am not going to let anything happen to you.

RORY

Chad, what are you talking about?

CHAD

We'll get drafted together.

RORY

What?

CHAD

I'll arrange we get assigned to the same platoon, so I can keep an eye on you.

RORY

You can do that?

CHAD

I'll figure it out like I always do. Brothers protect each other, the Army gets that. Look at me Rory, I'm your brother.
(turns serious)
But not if you pull this crazy stunt. You do that and we're no longer brothers. Do you understand me? Rory, tell me you understand!

RORY

All right, I understand. But Chad, maybe I was supposed to be there that night.

(LINDA enters the stage)

LINDA

What are you two up to? Plotting to take down the White House?

CHAD

We were just talking about options. Some good, some bad. Very, very bad.

RORY

You know what, Chad? Screw you. I'll be in my room if you want to have a real conversation.

(RORY exits the stage)

LINDA

Chad, what's going on?

CHAD

Look, it's fine.

LINDA

But, something's changed, I can feel it. And you know how Rory worships you. It would crush him if anything got in the way of your friendship, especially now. Chad, you can't let this lottery interfere with /

CHAD

Look, I said it's fine! Rory's scared and he's letting some crazy stuff interfere with his ability to think. Let him blow off some steam. He'll be okay.

LINDA

(pauses, then looks shocked)

Oh my God, Rory isn't actually considering ...

CHAD

Considering what?

LINDA

Chad, you have to stop him.

CHAD

From what?

LINDA

From blowing up the draft board.

CHAD

Oh, for the love of God, no one is blowing up any draft board. Why would you even think something like that?

LINDA

Remember, earlier? When Rory said he wanted to go down to the draft board and blow it to smithereens? Or burn it down? Look, I should have told you, but the day after Thanksgiving, Rory asked me to go with him to one of those secret antiwar, meetings.

CHAD

Lindy, hold on.

LINDA

I said no. But, I didn't want him to go alone, so I took him. When the conversation turned to ideas involving violence, Rory started asking a lot of scary questions.

(MORE)

LINDA (CONT'D)

The answers were even scarier, so I grabbed him and got us the hell out of there.

CHAD

Baby, I know all about the SDS meeting. Rory told me the day after.

LINDA

He did? What did you do?

CHAD

I proceeded to scare the crap out of him. Warned him to stay away from those nut jobs, unless of course, he wanted a visit from the Feds.

LINDA

You mean the FBI? Chad, what have I done?

CHAD

Relax, Rory told me you didn't sign anything.

LINDA

Actually they made us register, but we used fake names.

CHAD

Don't tell me, you used Zelda Fitzgerald.

LINDA

Of course I did.

CHAD

What name did Rory use?

LINDA

Moby Dick.

CHAD

Oh my god, that's hilarious.

LINDA

It was pretty funny, but Chad, you can't tell Mike any of this. I'm serious, if he knew /

CHAD

That his sister is one of those crazy, anti-war lunatics? Relax, secret safe. Where the hell is he anyway?

LINDA

He called while you were getting Tim to the doctor.

CHAD

Mike called? And?

LINDA

And, he said he'd be here soon.

CHAD

Good, now try and relax, let me get you a glass of wine. Or something stronger. I think we've got some vodka upstairs.

LINDA

A glass of wine will do.

(CHAD pours her some wine as LINDA removes a world globe from a book shelf and places it on the table)

LINDA (CONT'D)

(spinning the globe)

Chad? Where exactly is Vietnam?

CHAD

It's in Asia.

LINDA

But, where in Asia? Help me, Chad. Find the place on the map that you want to save.

CHAD

Stop it.

LINDA

(keeps spinning the globe)

But, why? If it's that important surely you know where it is?

CHAD

Lindy, I'm warning you ...

LINDA

You're willing to risk your life for South Vietnam. At least you can show me where it is.

CHAD

(Slams his hands on the globe)

Okay, I don't know exactly where it is, but don't you get it? My Dad would never let me dodge the draft. You saw what he did when I turned West Point down to come here.

LINDA

And he was totally out of line.

CHAD

And when I told him I was at that protest at Houston Hall, he slapped me so hard it knocked me to the floor. Said he expects me to step up and do the right thing, the honorable thing.

LINDA

But your father doesn't get to make this decision.

CHAD

Because the army already did!
(pauses, his tone to romance)
Of course, there is another option.

LINDA

Like what?

CHAD

Like you give me a reason not to go.
(CHAD grabs LINDA around the waist)
Give me a reason, Lindy.

LINDA

Chad, don't do this. That was a long time ago.

CHAD

No, it wasn't. Not for me. And not for you either.

LINDA

But we both agreed it was just a casual fling. You know that.

(LINDA breaks away from CHAD)

CHAD

And you know that nothing about us has ever been casual. Look, I know you care about me. God Lindy, we grew up together. No one loves you, or knows you, better than me.

LINDA

And I love you too, I do, but Chad ...

CHAD

If we get married I can file for an exemption. Marry me, Linda.

LINDA

What?

CHAD

Oh God, please marry me. If you get pregnant I know I'll get an exemption.

LINDA

Pregnant? Chad, let's not ...

CHAD

Look, that's in the past. We can start over.

LINDA

Chad, even if I wanted to ...

CHAD

I know I blamed you for the abortion. But, I forgave you. You were right, the timing was terrible. I was 19, you were just starting grad school. I had nightmares about it for weeks, but Lindy, I really did forgive you.

LINDA

I know you *forgave* me, but this is a bad idea. It's not a reason to /

CHAD

Then give me a better reason other than I love you and want to stay here with you. Isn't that good enough for you to marry me? Save me from a place I can't even find on a map?

LINDA

I can't do this right now.

CHAD

But, why not?

LINDA

Because there were complications when I went to New York.

CHAD

What kind of complications? Linda, look at me.

LINDA

No. I can't look at you when I tell you this.

CHAD

Baby, it's me. What kind of complications?

LINDA

The kind that mean I'll never have children.

CHAD

Of course you'll have children. You'll be a great mom. And I'll be an even a better dad.

LINDA

But Chad, I couldn't give you a family even if I wanted to.

CHAD

Lindy, please stop this /

LINDA

Chad, after the abortion, I had an emergency hysterectomy ... which means ... /

CHAD

Oh my God, Linda, I know what it means. How could you not tell me something like that?

LINDA

I didn't tell anyone, not Mike, not my Dad. And, neither can you, Chad you can't.

CHAD

You know I would never betray you. I just can't believe you went through that alone. Lindy, you know I would anything for you. Why did you keep it from me?

LINDA

I just needed to get it behind me and never look back.

CHAD

(short pause)

No, I get it. You wanted to wipe it from your memory.

LINDA

Okay, maybe I did. But I did what I had to do, for both of us. Look, we should have talked about this a long time ago, we were so clumsy in the way we ended things. I was just so embarrassed. Every time I saw you, I wanted to /

CHAD

Come over here.

LINDA

I failed you then and I'm failing you now.

CHAD

No, I'm the one that screwed up /

LINDA

Oh, but you don't get all the credit, Chad. I've failed myself. After Mom died, I tried to be there for my brother, and my dad, but I wasn't.

CHAD

Mike and your dad just need a little more time, I'll talk to them again.

LINDA

And now, you're being shipped off to war, and me? Oh yeah, here's me, Linda Harris, right on cue, scoring another, spectacular failure.

CHAD

You think I only see you as my ticket out of Vietnam? Look, forget about this stupid draft, it's just that I know how we feel about each other. With a fresh start, we could /

LINDA

Chad, it's too late for that and now I'm trying to dig myself out of this unforgiving hole, but the harder I try, the deeper it gets.

CHAD

But I'm here now.

LINDA

I wish I could give you everything you want, everything you need, and all the things you deserve, but I can't.

(CHAD stares at her)

Chad, please don't look at me like that.

CHAD

(embraces LINDA)

Just hold me. I feel like I'm dying.

MIKE

(enters the stage with the help of a walking cane, singing *California Dreamin*; he's a bit drunk, trying to act sober)

"All the leaves are brown." Well lookie here. Chad buddy, I always knew you were sweet on my sister. Hey man, you could have told me.

(Singing)

"I been for a walk"

(An embarrassed CHAD quickly exits the stage.)

Chad, where you going buddy? Hey, I'm just messing with ya. Get your butt back in here.

LINDA

Mike, where the hell have you been? It's been almost an hour since I talked to you!

MIKE

I told you I couldn't leave the guys! Not until the last number was called.

LINDA

I know, but /

MIKE

Most of them had no idea this was even coming. One guy started stuffing himself with cheeseburgers saying, "I'll just get exempt for obesity!" That was kinda funny, until we started stuffing fries down his throat.

LINDA

Mike.

MIKE

Another guy was sticking toothpicks in his arm, trying to make himself look like a heroin addict. Can you imagine?

LINDA

No Mike, I can't /

MIKE

I tried to console Edward. Lucky bastard got number three hundred sixty six.

LINDA

That's good, right?

MIKE

Sure, he should've been over the moon but he was crying like a baby 'cause his twin brother is number eighty five.

LINDA

What did you do?

MIKE

I've never heard a guy cry like that.

LINDA

I'm sure you'll figure it out.

MIKE

Figure it out? What in God's name are you talking about?

LINDA

The Mike I know always finds a solution.

MIKE

We're talking about a draft, by the United States Government, issued by the president of the United States, through an executive order that the US Congress did NOTHING to stop! Or even challenge! Today was not exactly how I envisioned my 21st birthday. Or remembering Mom. And now Dad isn't answering his phone, won't even take five minutes to call me back. And by the way, do you know I'm number 129? Yup, might go, might not. The army's version of purgatory.

LINDA

Mike, I didn't mean to sound insensitive. I know you're number 129, but there are medical exemptions. David said /

MIKE

That's not something I can think about, at least not for myself. I need to be here for my brothers.

LINDA

Yes, Mike, I know. I've been here all night, trying to hold things together and you finally show up, drunk on your ass.

MIKE

You're damn right I'm drunk!
(quietly)
I just want this day to be over.

LINDA

And why didn't you wait for me? You know what? I'm leaving.

MIKE

No, no, no, Linda. I'm sorry, I didn't mean it, come on, get back here, come one, I'm sorry.

LINDA

Mike.

MIKE

I didn't mean to be so cross just now. I'm really sorry, I'm not myself tonight.

LINDA

And I completely understand, but /

MIKE

Everyone made such a big deal that you were born Christmas Eve.

(MORE)

MIKE (CONT'D)

So Mom took me aside once, I was six maybe seven, told me that I was the special one because I was born on the very first day of December, that it was the most important day of the year. On Thanksgiving, she'd start the countdown and by the last day of November I could hardly stand it. Finally, the next morning, I'd awake with a smile on my face and the smell of Mom's pancakes. Now, December 1st celebrates her death and my brothers' being sent halfway across the world to get their legs blown off in a swamp.

LINDA

Then you know about Chad?

MIKE

What about him?

LINDA

His birthday is September 14th.

MIKE

But, today is MY birthday. And whatever you're doing with lover boy is your business.

LINDA

No, Mike. Chad and I aren't ... but September the 14th ... tell ya what, I'm going to make some coffee. Oh, and I sent David to find you. Maybe you should call the bar.

MIKE

I'll go get him.

LINDA

God no. Stay right there. I'll be right back.

(LINDA exits to the kitchen as
DAVID enters the front door)

DAVID

Mike? I looked for you at McGillin's.

MIKE

I left after the last number was called. What a night. Tried to console the poor souls that got low draft numbers, but ... listen brother, we've got a tough road ahead.

DAVID

Mike, you know I'll do whatever you need.

MIKE

(puts his hand on DAVID's
shoulder)

I appreciate that.

(MORE)

MIKE (CONT'D)

Look David, all of this is going to be published in tomorrow's paper. I need you to make a list, starting with the seniors.

DAVID

Already did. We cross-referenced tonight's lottery with the guy's birthdays.

(DAVID points to the bulletin board; MIKE gets up, starts to walk over to study it)

MIKE

I see, so you have.

DAVID

But we'll calibrate it with the army's official list. I'm afraid we missed a few. Tonight was insane.

MIKE

Hey, what went on here tonight? Linda seems pretty upset. And why did Chad run off?

DAVID

Chad? I don't know, but I can walk you through this list, show you where /

MIKE

No, no, we've all had enough for one night. So many guys walked into the bar tonight without a clue as to what was going on. But we all need to take a step back, and craft a game plan in the morning when we're not drunk as skunks. And we need to do it, together.

(During this, MIKE starts to lose his balance; DAVID catches him just as RORY walks in)

RORY

Mike? Are you okay? Let's get you upstairs.

MIKE

No! I appreciate it guys, but the brothers need me right now. They need us. David, you and I need to step up, show some real leadership.

DAVID

Of course.

MIKE

(points his cane toward RORY)
Hey, Valentine, how are you holding up, buddy?

RORY

Holding up?

MIKE

Weren't you were born February the 14th?

RORY

Yeah, and you can spare me the jokes, I've heard them all.

MIKE

Come on Rory, no one's making any jokes. But, didn't you land in the top five?

RORY

Number four.

MIKE

Yeah, well I know you must be pretty scared ...
(takes RORY in his arms; RORY
holds onto MIKE as if he's
drowning)

Look, we're gonna deal with this together. Damn it Rory, you always think you have to handle everything by yourself even though you've got a houseful of brothers that care about you.

RORY

Yes, I know. I'm sorry, Mike. I'll man up, you'll see.

MIKE

Rory, stop that. David, get him some water!

(DAVID rushes from the stage)

RORY

God Mike, I just don't know what I'm going to do /

MIKE

You're not going to do anything right now but take a deep breath. Look, I'm going to meet with the University Ombudsman tomorrow, AND the Chancellor. As seniors we're about to lose our college deferments, but we may have other options. I've already called my father's attorney.

(During this, DAVID enters and slowly hands RORY a glass of water, which RORY accepts but with hesitation. DAVID exits the stage)

MIKE

Okay, what is up with you two? I may be a little drunk, but I can cut the tension in here with a knife.

RORY

It's just that, well, David told us that he's got some sort of special status. Unlike the rest of us, he /

MIKE

This is about David being triple S? You can't blame him for something like that! Come on, the guy just lost his only brother.

RORY

I know, but ...

MIKE

David, get your butt back in here, NOW!

(as DAVID walks in)

Okay, you guys are going to fix whatever went down here tonight. Rory? Don't you have something to say to David?

RORY

I'm sorry what I said tonight. You know I didn't mean it.

DAVID

Sure. Thanks.

MIKE

And?

(pause)

Go on, Rory, we haven't got all night.

RORY

And, David. We're all here for you. Your brothers are here for you.

(DAVID and RORY shake hands, which morphs into an embrace)

MIKE

That's more like it. We're all for one, one for all, remember? Now's not the time to forget that. If you could have seen how lifelong friends turned on each other tonight. Well lemme tell ya, that stops, right now. And where is that lousy roommate of mine?

RORY

You know about Chad, right?

MIKE

Know what? Is he all right?

DAVID

He's September 14th. They called his birthday first.

MIKE

(pauses, and is clearly
shaken)

Oh man, I was so caught up listening for my own birthday, I forgot he was born on ... but you know Chad, he's the strongest, fastest quarterback this university will ever see! He'll boot the Vietcong all the way to Japan. Come back a hero like he always does. Hey, Chad, come have a drink with me. God knows we could use one. I'm coming for you, man.

(MIKE exits the stage)

DAVID

We didn't tell him about Tim.

RORY

There's time for that.

(CHAD enters the stage.)

Chad, where've you been?

CHAD

Is Linda still here? Is she gone?

RORY

No, she's still here.

(Picks up the wrapped gift)

She still needs to give Mike his present.

CHAD

Was that Mike I heard just now?

RORY

MIKE! YO, MIKE! Chad, are you all right?

CHAD

Where's Linda?

(MIKE re-enters the stage)

MIKE

Well, look what the cat dragged in. Hey butthead, time we had a drink.

CHAD

Looks like you've had enough, birthday boy.

MIKE

Thanks man. By the way, you look like hell.

(MIKE embraces CHAD)

CHAD

You know how this lottery turned out, right?

MIKE

Oh yeah, that out of three hundred sixty-five days of the year ...

DAVID

Three hundred sixty-six.

MIKE

What?

DAVID

If you count leap year, there are three hundred sixty-six days in the year.

MIKE

Thank you, David! Now, as I was saying, that out of three hundred *sixty-six* days of the year, you did what you always do, and came in first?

CHAD

Touchdown, baby. They refer to me as /

MIKE

As double zero one. Yes, I heard.

CHAD

Michael, I'm scared.

MIKE

I hear you but Chad, you gotta listen to me.

CHAD

Last night you and I were holed up in our room studying for finals when we got distracted, and we started talking about what we want to do after we graduate, remember?

MIKE

And we're still going to do everything we talked about /

But now, 24 hours later, everything I've done with my life feels like it doesn't matter.

MIKE

Now slow down, we may have to postpone a few things, but come on Chad, you're up for the Heisman. You're being courted by two NFL teams! Do you know how many guys on this campus wanna be you?

CHAD

None that *I* know.

MIKE

I only meant that you and I have so much to look forward to /

CHAD

But Mike, you and I might not have a future.

MIKE

Okay, stop right there! Come on guys, haven't you always trusted me? Look, we're going to face this thing head on, and we're going to do it together like we always do.

CHAD

You mean all for one, and one for all?

MIKE

Yes Goddamnit, now drop the long faces and start pulling together. We're stronger than this. And sure, I know our house got more than its fair share of low draft numbers tonight, David showed me your little chart over here, but here's what we're going to do.

(During this, TIM enters the stage;
walking with a crutch under his
right arm)

DAVID

TIM!

RORY

TIM!

MIKE

What the hell?

RORY

Come on Tim, let me help you. What are you doing here?

TIM

I checked myself out. Bribed a cute nurse. We have a date this weekend.

(RORY helps TIM elevate his foot)

MIKE

What happened to your foot?

RORY

Are you all right? You seem, kinda high.

TIM

Scored me some extra pain pills. They're perfect with red Gallo. Besides, you will never believe what the doctor told me; that I possess the natural talent of a budding surgeon, thank you very much. Now, be a pal and hand me that bottle.

(DAVID, with a surrendering look,
hands TIM the bottle)

MIKE

Okay, what happened here tonight? David, you're the smart one, you start.

DAVID

Well, Tim here, decided to engineer his own medical exemption by ... by removing

TIM

Oh hell, I cut off a toe. I still have nine more.

MIKE

You cut off your toe? Who does that?

TIM

Hey man, medical exemption.

RORY

Timmy, you really are one crazy bastard!

MIKE

Was it your big toe?

CHAD

Oh God.

RORY

Oh boy.

TIM

You know, Mike, I thought about my big toe, but /

MIKE

That's it, we're taking you back to the hospital. Here Dave, take my keys.

TIM

NO WAY MAN. My place is right here, with my brothers! And Mikey, I want to wish you a happy birthday.

(holds up the bottle)

And to all our birthdays.

MIKE

All right, you win, but if you start bleeding, we are getting your bad ass to the hospital.

TIM

I am a bad ass, aren't I?

MIKE

Oh yeah, I'll give you that buddy boy. Now hand over that bottle.

(MIKE tries to take the bottle from
TIM but with no success. LINDA
walks in with a cake)

LINDA

Okay, here we go. David, can you get the coffee? Mike, I see you found Chad. It was beginning to feel like *Ten Little Indians* around here. Rory, can you get some plates? I couldn't find any candles in this dump, but Mike, you still need to make a wish before you cut the cake.

(RORY and DAVID head for the
kitchen)

MIKE

Okay, I wish I had a knife!

LINDA

David, can you get the knife please? Wash it off first.

(DAVID and RORY enter the stage,
DAVID carrying a pot of coffee and
a knife, RORY some plates)

MIKE

Okay, let's cut this thing.

TIM

I got it!

LINDA

NO!

DAVID

NO!

LINDA

Mike, please cut the cake, after you make a wish, a real wish.

(Lights fade to black as a
spotlight rises on MIKE; the actors
disperse around the stage)

MIKE

All right, listen up. Today is my 21st birthday. My wish is that I am here, with all of you, to celebrate my 22nd, my 23rd, and my 63rd.

CHAD

(Spotlight goes down on MIKE,
up on CHAD)

That night, Mike tried to assure us that if we were all for one, and one for all, that together, we could face anything. But after I got drafted, I had to face my own mortality, by myself.

LINDA

(spotlight goes down on CHAD,
comes up on LINDA)

Chad got his induction letter the day after Christmas. After graduation, he left for Fort Benning and by September 1970 he was in combat. He came home later that year, on December 5th, in a body bag.

TIM

(spotlight goes down on
LINDA, comes up on TIM)

Mike and I managed to get 4Fs, making us unsuitable for war. After graduating medical school, I became an orthopedic surgeon. Today, I live in Beverly Hills with my wife and four boys. Mike and I talk every Sunday.

MIKE

(spotlight goes down on TIM,
comes up on MIKE)

My first book, *Head-on Collision*, chronicles how the draft interrupted the lives of our generation. It's dedicated "To Chad, though you were taken too soon, you'll always be our friend, our brother, our hero."

RORY

(spotlight goes down on MIKE,
comes up on RORY)

Chad did his best to get us in the same platoon. The Army said No. I went to Vietnam, came back minus my left arm, and became an antiwar activist. Got arrested seven times. Today, I'm the CFO of a human rights foundation. My partner and I live in New York City with our daughter and son. I think about Chad every day.

LINDA

(spotlight goes down on RORY,
comes up on LINDA)

When Rory came home, I joined him in the antiwar movement, got arrested eight times, but mostly remember the taste of tear gas. I never did get married. But, last year with David's help, I adopted a baby boy. His name is Michael Charles Harris. We call him Chad.

CHAD

(spotlight goes down on
LINDA, comes up on CHAD)

The day I went to Vietnam, I told David I'd go, and come back. I'm afraid I disappointed him. Today I saw him studying my name on the Vietnam Memorial Wall. And he whispered, "Chad, I forgive you." Then he cried, and my heart broke.

DAVID

(spotlight goes down on CHAD,
comes up on DAVID)

After Chad and Rory went to Vietnam I was diagnosed with depression. But with a lot of help from my brothers, I channeled my frustration into founding a defense fund to help young men legally avoid the draft. Today I'm the Attorney General of the great state of Michigan. I meet up with the guys every couple of years, in Philadelphia, where I typically drink too much, brag about my kids, and answer a lot of legal questions. We end the evening with a toast to our fallen brother.

COL OMER

(spotlight goes down on
DAVID, comes up on COL OMER)

My name is Colonel Daniel Omer. I was the one calling those dates, one by one, on that cold December night back in '69. I suppose you could say I'm like Rory's dad; when your country calls, you answer. In 1977, I helped convince President Carter to grant unconditional pardons to the thousands of boys that had left the country to avoid the draft. It was not my most popular recommendation, but I believe it was the right thing to do.

MIKE

(spotlight goes down on
DAVID, comes up on MIKE)

Every generation experiences an event that becomes branded in its collective memory. For some, it's 9-11. For others, it's the Kennedy assassination, Martin Luther King's *I Have a Dream*, or the day the Berlin Wall came down. For the greatest generation, it's December 7th 1941, Pearl Harbor Day. But for me and my brothers, it will always be the first day in December, a day that changed our lives forever.

END OF PLAY

Playwright's statement

As an 18 year-old college freshman you have your whole life in front of you. Then, in less than two hours, any dreams of the future are shattered when the US government flippantly assigns you a low draft number, assuring you'll be called to fight a war in Vietnam (a country you can't even find on a map). You've never even held a gun, let alone fired one.

For me personally, these feelings returned as we approached the 50th anniversary of the Vietnam draft (which inspired me to write this story).

When people hear the words "Vietnam War" lots of feelings come up. But, no play has ever been written about "that first day in December" in 1969. I hope this labor of love helps us remember a date that Americans have largely forgotten.