

# REGRETS AND RECRIMINATIONS

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A Play in Two Acts

by

Alan E. Richards

1629 South Prairie Ave.  
Unit 3009  
Chicago, IL. 60616  
(847) 648-1235  
alan371949@gmail.com

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## ACT I

## SCENE 1

Furniture and decor is of no discernable style, but it all works together to create a comfortable space.

In the middle of the room is a large couch. In front of the couch is a coffee table. Close to the couch (stage right) is an upholstered recliner. On the other side of the couch (stage left) is an end table. Directly behind the couch situated against the back wall is a buffet table. Above the buffet table are hung a series of pictures of famous European sites. A few feet to the side of the buffet table (stage right) there is an open doorway leading to the study. There is a staircase running along the back wall (stage left) that leads to the second floor. There is a door opening in the side wall (stage right) leading to the kitchen. There is an unseen door inside the kitchen which allows access to the back yard. In the wall opposite of the kitchen (stage left) is the front door.

AT RISE:

ROSE sits on the couch playing a game of solitaire. She is a slender, attractive woman with hair that has been dyed red. She is well dressed in clothes that are a little young for her age. VIOLET sits in the recliner reading a book. She is similar to ROSE in stature, but looks and dresses more conservatively. WALTER sits on a winged-back chair in the study with only the back of his head visible above the chair back. On the buffet table sits a bottle of gin with several glasses. On the end table is a photo album.

ROSE lays down a few cards.

ROSE

Damn it.

VIOLET looks up from her book, but says nothing.  
Rose lays down a few more cards.

ROSE (Cont.)

God damn it.

VIOLET looks up again staring with disapproval.

VIOLET

Rose, must you? You know how I hate it when you curse.

ROSE makes no indication that she hears her sister.  
VIOLET returns to her book. ROSE lays down more cards.

ROSE

Shit!

VIOLET does not take her  
eyes from the book.

VIOLET

Thank you.

ROSE looks up at VIOLET

ROSE

What are you reading?

VIOLET

It's called *Pebbles, Rocks and Boulders*.

ROSE

What?

VIOLET

*Pebbles, Rocks and Boulders*. It's a self-help book. The title's a metaphor for life's problems – the small ones, the big ones and the ones in between. I had never heard of the author or the book. I just happened to be browsing the bookstore and picked it up from a pile stacked on the discount table. But when I skimmed through the Forward I saw that the author had committed suicide a few months after publication. That intrigued me.

ROSE

Isn't reading a problem-solving book written by a woman who killed herself a little like listening to Donald Trump explain how to live life with integrity?

VIOLET

Not at all. Clearly, the woman who wrote the book had problems.

ROSE leaves the couch, walks to the buffet table. She pours herself a generous glass of gin.

ROSE

(holding the bottle aloft)

Would you like to try some of this gin? It is without doubt the best gin I've ever tasted.

VIOLET

No thank you, Rose. To me, gin tastes like medicine. I'll just have some water.

VIOLET stands and walks toward the kitchen.

ROSE

(speaking as VIOLET is walking away)

Not this gin. This gin is very smooth. The more you sip, the more you get a feeling of well-being.

There's a pause long enough to allow VIOLET to enter the kitchen.

ROSE (Cont.)

(shouting after VIOLET)

Two of these a day keeps my problems away.

VIOLET

(off)

I'll stick with water, thanks.

VIOLET re-enters the living room with glass in hand and sits back down in the recliner. Rose returns to the couch.

VIOLET (Cont.)

It isn't the book's advice that I find so compelling, although I do find it to be quite good. It's the author. Wondering if when she began to write the book she knew that she was going to kill herself or if that decision wasn't made until sometime later. I keep looking for something she wrote that hints of despair or hopelessness, but there's been nothing like that so far. But I'm only half way through it.

ROSE

A woman doesn't have to be desperate to kill herself. It can be a very rational decision.

VIOLET

Sometimes rational I suppose, but always desperate.

ROSE takes a drink of her gin and returns to the couch.

ROSE

I'm so looking forward to seeing Keira. The last time I talked with her she told me she'd started a new job. How's that going?

VIOLET

It didn't go well. She quit after six months.

ROSE

What happened?

VIOLET

She said the work wasn't challenging. That it was repetitive. That it was more suitable for a technician than a person with a PhD.

ROSE

So what's she doing now?

VIOLET

The same as before – medical research.

ROSE

She's had quite a few jobs already, hasn't she?

VIOLET

Six in ten years.

ROSE

I would think employers would be reluctant to hire her with that track record.

VIOLET

That's what I thought too, but she leaves one job and starts a new one a few days later. She's never without job offers.

ROSE

Does she seem happy where she's at now?

VIOLET

(VIOLET sighs deeply)

I'm not sure if Keira will ever be happy.

ROSE

What do you mean? Is there something wrong with her? Is she depressed?

VIOLET

No, she's not depressed. It's that she's never satisfied with herself. She's been that way her entire life. She wanted to graduate first in her high school class, which she did. She wanted to go to an Ivy League school, which she did. She wanted to get her PhD, which she did. Everything she aspires to do, she does. But nothing she accomplishes gives her pleasure.

ROSE

She has time.

VIOLET

She's thirty-four.

ROSE

You worry too much. I still hadn't figured out what was important when I was that age.

VIOLET

Is that supposed to make me feel better?

ROSE

May I give you some advice?

VIOLET

If you think I'm in need of some – go ahead.

ROSE

If you want this weekend to have any chance at success, don't be judgmental.

VIOLET laughs.

VIOLET

Okay. I'll try my best to keep my opinions to myself.

ROSE

Good.

There is a brief moment of silence.

VIOLET

But if she wants my opinion, I'll give it to her.

VIOLET waits for a response, but ROSE says nothing.

VIOLET (Cont.)

And you know how Keira has a knack for soliciting advice without expressly asking for it.

ROSE frowns and speaks disapprovingly.

ROSE

Violet...

VIOLET

I'm just pointing out that she doesn't make it easy to keep quiet.

ROSE

It *is* easy. Whenever you feel the urge to comment – don't.

VIOLET

Remaining silent when I think someone I love is making a mistake is something I don't do.

ROSE

I know that only too well.

VIOLET

I've put off talking to her much too long about her priorities. I've decided not to put it off any longer.

ROSE

Surely you're not planning to have a discussion with her about that this weekend.

VIOLET

I am if the opportunity presents itself.

ROSE

Well just remember – we're getting together for a celebration, not an intervention.

VIOLET

Fine. I won't talk to her about it until the day after the party.

ROSE

Good.

The sisters drink from their glasses.

ROSE (Cont.)

What's Keira's boyfriend like?



VIOLET

I haven't met him yet, but I'm not optimistic. She's had almost as many relationships as she's had jobs. He's five years younger than her.

ROSE

So, what does it matter?

VIOLET

I suppose it doesn't.....but I think she'd benefit from someone five years older.

WALTER coughs loudly several times  
as he sits in the study.

VIOLET (Cont.)

(as she looks toward the study)

What's with your boarder? He hasn't gotten up from that chair all day. Does he ever move?

ROSE

Oh, he moves. Mostly at odd hours. If you came downstairs in the middle of the night, you'd probably run in to him.

VIOLET

Well, that's just creepy.

ROSE

You don't have to be apprehensive about Walter. He's gentle and kind, although the poor man is very troubled.

VIOLET

About what?

ROSE

Hell. He believes it's a real place, but he's unsure about what he needs to do in order to avoid going there. You can appreciate how that would be especially disconcerting for an eighty year old.

VIOLET

So what does he do in the study?

ROSE

First he reads. Always theology. Christianity, Islam, Judaism, Buddhism. He has hundreds of books in his room. Then after he reads he either meditates or hallucinates.

VIOLET

Hallucinates!

ROSE

He takes LSD. He says it opens his mind, makes him more insightful.

VIOLET

Doesn't that concern you? Aren't you afraid he might behave irrationally?

ROSE

Not at all. But I do require that he let me know when he's going to use it. Would you like to meet him?

VIOLET

I'm not sure.

ROSE stands and walks to the doorway  
of the study.

ROSE

Walter, there's someone I'd like you to meet. Would you mind coming into the living room? Walter? Come into the living room, won't you? I'd like you to meet my sister.

ROSE returns to the couch.

ROSE (Cont.)

He's coming.

VIOLET is visibly apprehensive as she looks  
toward the doorway.

ROSE (CONT.)

Stop looking so nervous. He appears to be quite lucid.

When WALTER enters he's wearing  
sunglasses and using a cane.

VIOLET

(leaning toward ROSE and  
speaking in a hushed voice)

I didn't realize he was blind.

ROSE

He's not. He needs the cane, but he wears sunglasses to signal that he's taken LSD.

VIOLET

Oh, God.

WALTER makes his way to the couch. He is slightly  
built with an erect, almost stiff posture. He wears a sweater  
vest over a long-sleeved dress shirt and corduroy pants.

ROSE

Walter, this is my sister Violet.

WALTER removes his sunglasses, bends slightly and extends his hand. His manner is dignified.

WALTER

It is a pleasure to meet you, Violet.

VIOLET

I'm happy to meet you, Walter.

ROSE pats the couch.

ROSE

Please, Walter. Sit next to me.

WALTER sits.

ROSE (Cont.)

(looking closely at WALTER'S eyes)

Are you with me, Walter?

WALTER

Yes, I'm with you - you and your lovely sister.

ROSE

Well, good. Welcome back. Would you care for something to drink?

He points at ROSE'S glass.

WALTER

I'll have some of what you're drinking, thank you.

ROSE goes to the buffet.

VIOLET

My sister tells me you study theology.

WALTER

I do.

VIOLET

Is that something you've done for a long time?

WALTER

Since shortly after my wife died - about twenty years.

VIOLET

I've always admired Thomas Aquinas.

*To one who has faith, no explanation is necessary.  
To one without faith, no explanation is possible.*

WALTER

Yes, I'm familiar with that adage. I like its symmetric structure - its rhythmic cadence.

VIOLET

Yes.

WALTER

But the idea expressed is idiotic.

VIOLET

(VIOLET is crestfallen)

Oh?

ROSE returns to the couch and hands  
WALTER the glass of gin.

ROSE

So Walter, how are you feeling?

WALTER

Vexed.

ROSE

About what?

WALTER

God was a no show again. I spent most of the time watching my stomach go up and down while listening to myself breath.

ROSE

So restful at least. That's good.

VIOLET

Why do you find what Aquinas said about faith to be idiotic?

WALTER

Because faith can never be an acceptable substitute for knowledge. To suggest that it can is idiotic.

VIOLET

Maybe it's your interpretation of what he's saying that's idiotic.

WALTER'S reaction is bemused. ROSE is unperturbed.

ROSE

(looking at WALTER)

My sister is a true believer, Walter. And she's never been reluctant to share her views - no matter how indelicately.

WALTER

(looking at VIOLET)

Are you a true believer, Violet?

VIOLET

I believe there is a God and apparently you do too since you spend most of your days in the study looking for him.

ROSE

I put God in the same category as the Loch Ness monster and Big Foot.

VIOLET and WALTER ignore the comment.

WALTER

I do believe in God - that's the problem. Because everything I've read - all the religious scholars - say that you must not only believe in God but you must love him. I don't. I can't.

VIOLET

Why is that?

WALTER

For me God is like the owner of a dog who doesn't teach it how he wants it to behave but when the dog does something that displeases him he punishes the dog.

There is a brief interval of silence. WALTER resumes talking.

WALTER (Cont.)

(looking at Violet)

You say you agree with Thomas Aquinas that faith provides the answers. Well, Christians and Jews and Muslims are all people of faith, yet they all understand God differently. I resent God for allowing that to happen. I find it unjust that the penalty for not following rules that He has failed to clearly explain is to spend eternity in Hell. Would you think it fair that after doing everything within your power to live a good Christian life that you wound up in Hell because it turned out Christian teachings were wrong?

VIOLET

Obviously, I wouldn't.

WALTER

So how are we supposed to love a God that plays so cruelly with us? If He were a just God or a loving God, He would leave no doubt as to what was required. Instead, He's left us blind and then watches as we fumble around in the darkness searching for the path to salvation.

ROSE

I don't think Jews believe in Hell, Walter. Wouldn't that solve your problem? Just become a Jew.

WALTER

(smiles)

I suppose it would, Rose. Maybe I'll try being a Jew.

WALTER downs his drink and stands.

WALTER (Cont.)

Thank you very much for the drink and the conversation.

WALTER (Cont.)

(looking at VIOLET)

I hope before you leave we'll have the opportunity to talk further.

VIOLET

Yes, that would be nice.

ROSE

Walter, you remember we're celebrating two birthdays tomorrow night – my niece's and mine.

WALTER

I hadn't, actually.

ROSE

All the other boarders will be there. You're expected.

VIOLET

Yes, please come.

WALTER

Well, if you're sure you want me there.

ROSE

We are.

WALTER

Then I look forward to seeing both of you at the party.

WALTER exits.

ROSE

Isn't he just as I said?

VIOLET

He was cordial and he's obviously intelligent.

ROSE

What do you think about the things that he said?

VIOLET

Well, if God is as he described, I hope there's no god. What did he do for a living?

ROSE

I don't know.

VIOLET

Has he any family?

ROSE

I don't know.

VIOLET

Where did he come from?

ROSE

He never told me.

VIOLET

Well what *do* you know about him?

ROSE

Nothing really.

VIOLET

(asking incredulously)

Didn't you ask for references? Didn't you do a background check?

ROSE

What for?

VIOLET

Oh, Rose.

The sisters sit in silence, both appearing to be in reflection.

VIOLET (Cont.)

I can't believe you're going to be seventy.

ROSE

The other day I was remembering our mother at seventy and getting depressed thinking that's probably how I look to people.

VIOLET just smiles.

ROSE (Cont.)

Now you're supposed to say that I look much younger than mother did when she was seventy.

VIOLET continues to smile.

ROSE (Cont.)

Violet!

VIOLET

Oh Rose, you look much younger than mother did when she was seventy.

ROSE

Thank you. I think so, too.

ROSE sips her gin/ VIOLET her water.

ROSE (Cont.)

One negative about having Walter living here is that I've started to think about dying.

VIOLET

Well, we're now at the age when thoughts of death start to intrude more frequently anyway.

ROSE

Maybe they had started intruding into your head, but not mine. I never thought much about dying until Walter moved in.

VIOLET

So what do you feel when the thought of dying pops into your head?

ROSE

What do I feel?

VIOLET

Yes. Are you frightened?



ROSE

No, I have no reason to be frightened. I don't believe in heaven or hell or any kind of existence after we die. For me death is the end.

VIOLET

(VIOLET looks dismayed)

It's upsetting to hear you talk about "the end of you."

ROSE

Well, it doesn't sound good to me either.

The sound of the outside door leading into the kitchen can be heard opening and closing followed by inaudible talking. KEIRA enters the living room from the kitchen. She is talking on her cell phone. She is tall, slender and attractive. JESUS follows close behind carrying a suitcase. He is bearded and wears his long hair in a ponytail that protrudes from his baseball cap. He's wearing jeans and a tee shirt.

KEIRA

(shouting into the phone)

We're not going to talk about it when I get back. I'm done talking about it.

KEIRA ends the call.

VIOLET

Who were you talking to?

KEIRA

Joe.

VIOLET

He's not with you?

KEIRA

No.

ROSE

(looking at JESUS)

You can just set the bag next to the sofa, Jesus.

JESUS does as directed.

KEIRA

Thank you so much for picking me up, Jesus. I really appreciate it.



KEIRA walks away from her mother  
toward her aunt.

KEIRA (Cont.)

So auntie, how's the boarding house business?

ROSE

Good. All of my boarders are such interesting people. I'm very lucky to have them.  
We're getting to be like family.

KEIRA

How many boarders do you have?

ROSE

I have four.

ROSE hands KEIRA her drink.

ROSE (Cont.)

Let's sit.

They all sit – VIOLET and KEIRA on the sofa;  
ROSE on the recliner.

ROSE (Cont.)

You've met Jesus, of course. He was my first boarder. He's a student but I don't recall  
what he's studying.

KEIRA

He seems old for a student.

ROSE

I think it has something to do with his immigration status and visa. Then there's Walter, a  
retired older man who your mother's met.

KEIRA

Did you like him mom?

VIOLET

I didn't spend enough time with him to be able to make a fair judgment but if I had the  
chance to talk with him on a regular basis I think our conversations would likely become  
contentious.

ROSE

Then I have Janice. She's a freelancer of some sort who does something or other. And  
there's Pete. He sells drugs.

KEIRA

He sells what!

ROSE

Drugs. He's a drug salesman.

KEIRA

Oh, you mean he reps for a pharmaceutical company.

ROSE

Could be. I'm not exactly sure.

VIOLET

Your aunt doesn't really know anything about her boarders. She doesn't ask for references. She relies entirely on her unerring ability to assess character based upon a five-minute conversation.

ROSE

My boarders are all very good people. I enjoy them very much.

VIOLET

Why didn't Joe come with you?

KEIRA

When we stopped spending all of our time together screwing, we started to talk more and things have become a little contentious.

VIOLET

Don't be vulgar.

KEIRA

Sometimes using vulgarity is the only way to describe where things are in a relationship. Am I right, auntie?

VIOLET

You would do well not to use your aunt's romantic experiences to measure the success of your own.

ROSE

(reacting defensively)

I've had many wonderful relationships.

VIOLET

(looking at KEIRA)

Yes she has – many, many relationships.

ROSE

(talking to KEIRA)

How long have you and Joe been together?

KEIRA

Eight or nine months.

ROSE

And you're arguing already? If the sex can't keep you happy through at least the first couple of years you're with the wrong guy, sweetie.

KEIRA sighs loudly and leans her head against  
the back of the couch.

KEIRA

After so many failed relationships I had decided that the problem had to be with me. That I was too demanding or too inflexible or too critical. Something. So I decided I would make changes. But nothing I've done seems to have made a difference.

VIOLET moves closer to KEIRA and puts  
her arm around KEIRA'S shoulders.

VIOLET

If this Joe isn't the one, move on.

ROSE

Listen to your mother, Keira. Having a penis to use when you need one doesn't require a man.

VIOLET

Honestly, Rose. Unlike you who found the penis to be the only interesting thing about a man, ninety-nine percent of women in the world find things like affection and companionship to be what's important.

ROSE

Those are the reasons why a person gets a dog.

KEIRA

Why didn't you ever marry, Aunt Rose?

ROSE

Just lucky.

KEIRA

No really. I'm serious. Or am I being too personal?

ROSE

No, I don't mind. But your assumption is wrong.

KEIRA

What do you mean?

ROSE

I have been married.

KEIRA bolts upright. VIOLET  
looks confused.

KEIRA      VIOLET  
What!      What?

ROSE

Three times, actually.

KEIRA

(laughing exuberantly)

Oh my God!

VIOLET

(dumbfounded)

How is that possible?

ROSE

I lived abroad for a long time - more than enough time for me to get married. Look at your life during the years of my absence. When I left you had a brand new baby girl and when I got back you were taking her to look at colleges.

VIOLET

(incredulously)

Three times?

ROSE

It could have been four but I thought that another marriage would put me into a different category. You know - like Liz Taylor or Zsa Zsa Gabor.

VIOLET

But how could you never tell me that you had gotten married?

ROSE

We talked so infrequently that when we did I had so many things I wanted to ask you about that there was never enough time.

VIOLET

Not enough time to tell me you got married!

ROSE

If I had said, “by the way Violet, I got married” you would’ve asked me all sorts of questions. What’s his name? How did you meet him? How long have you been together?

VIOLET

Uh-huh.

ROSE

Then the next time we talked you would’ve asked me about my husband and I would’ve had to tell you I was getting divorced and then there’d be more questions. Did I ask for the divorce or did he? Am I okay? Where am staying? I just didn’t want to have to deal with all of it.

VIOLET

I’m speechless. I’m absolutely speechless.

ROSE

And then I’d have had to go through the whole married and divorced explanation two more times.

KEIRA

So who were these guys?

ROSE

(looking at VIOLET)

You see.

KEIRA

I’ll bet they were all good looking.

ROSE

I wouldn’t have any other kind.

As KEIRA and ROSE talk,  
VIOLET silently seethes.

KEIRA

(thoroughly enjoying herself)

Who was your first husband and for how long were you married?

ROSE

His name was Christos – Chris. The marriage only lasted six months – which happened to be five months longer than the courtship. He was handsome and sexy but he didn't speak much English. We were married and divorced in Greece, although I couldn't really understand anything that was said either time so it's possible I was never actually married or I'm still not divorced.

KEIRA

And the second?

ROSE

Tomas. We were married for almost four years. He was the best lover of the three.

KEIRA

Really! What made him so good?

ROSE

Nothing pleased him more than pleasing me.

KEIRA

I'd like to find someone like that. Why did you get divorced from him?

ROSE

I found out I wasn't the only one he liked to please in the bedroom.

KEIRA

Really! How did you find out?

ROSE looks toward VIOLET.

ROSE (Cont.)

(talking to KEIRA)

Sweetheart, why don't you take your suitcase upstairs? I'll come up and we can talk some more while I help you unpack.

KEIRA

All right, but don't take too long. I have a million questions

KEIRA picks up her suitcase and  
exits up the stairs leading to the second floor.

ROSE

I see you're angry with me.



VIOLET

Angry? Angry doesn't begin to explain how I feel. When I think about all the conversations we had and how I thought I was talking to the person I knew better than any other person in the world, the person with whom I had shared the most important moments of my life and then find out that she was deceiving me every time we spoke. How could you have been so uncaring?

ROSE

I didn't tell you because I didn't care. I didn't tell you because it would've been too humiliating.

VIOLET

What did you have to be humiliated about?

ROSE

Because I was basically whoring myself. I couldn't take care of myself so I had to find men who could. I didn't want you to know I still needed help. Not after all you had done to fix things for me before I went away.

VIOLET

Well keeping me in the dark about your life was no way to express your gratitude. Do you know how hurtful it is for me to hear that you thought you couldn't confide in me?

ROSE

I think I do. I'm sorry. I truly am. But can you understand why revealing more of my failures to you would have been just too humiliating for me?

VIOLET

(impatiently)

No. Of course I would have been upset with you, but ...

ROSE

(defensively)

But nothing. You would have jumped on a plane and dragged me home.

VIOLET

Would that have been so bad?

ROSE

It would have been unbearable.

VIOLET

More unbearable than marrying men for their money?

ROSE

Yes.

VIOLET gets up and sits down  
next to ROSE.

VIOLET  
(speaking in conciliatory tone.)

I know I can sometimes be overbearing.

ROSE doesn't comment.  
A brief moment of silence ensues.

VIOLET (Cont.)

I would have helped you.

ROSE

I know you would have. That's why I didn't tell you. You'd already done so much for me. And you had Keira to take care of. You didn't need another person to look after.

VIOLET

So why tell us now? What was the point?

ROSE

Keeping secrets is terribly burdensome. So when Keira asked me about being married, I took advantage of the opportunity. I'm relieved to have one less secret to keep.

VIOLET

You have others?

ROSE

Not from you.

Another interval of silence.

ROSE (Cont.)

So can you forgive me?

VIOLET

I'm sure I will once I recover from the shock.

ROSE hugs VIOLET.

ROSE

Thank you.

VIOLET

I can't believe you had three husbands.

ROSE

And three divorces, but there were parts to all of my marriage experiences that were pretty hilarious.

VIOLET

I'm sure it'll take some time before I can find the humor in any of this.

ROSE

That's because you haven't heard the stories yet. Lets go help Keira unpack.

The sisters stand, put their arms around each other's waist and walk toward the stairs leading to the second floor.

VIOLET

So, who was your third husband?

They disappear up the stairs.

**END OF SCENE**

**BLACKOUT**

## ACT I

## SCENE 2

SETTING: The living room.  
Mid-morning of the second day.

AT RISE: There is no one in the room. Then JANICE descends the stairs from the second floor. She has a cell phone pressed to her ear. She is in her early forties, scruffy in appearance and gruff in manner.

JANICE

(trying to sound solicitous.)

Good morning, Margaret! This is Janice.

Listening to the response.

JANICE (Cont.)

Oh, you do!

Listening.

JANICE (Cont.)

Yes, I have been calling a lot. But that's only because the Congressman hasn't returned any of my calls. He does know I've called, I hope.

Listening.

JANICE (Cont.)

Multiple calls. He knows I've made multiple calls?

Listening.

JANICE (Cont.)

You're right; I *can't* imagine how busy he is. If I had to guess how busy he is based upon what he's accomplished so far, I would've guessed not very. Anyway, since I haven't had any luck getting him on the phone, I decided to send him a text message and I'd like you to make sure he reads it.

Waiting for the answer.

JANICE (Cont.)

Around 2:00.

Listening.

JANICE (Cont.)

AM.

Listening

JANICE (Cont.)

Yes, AM. Anyway, I'd like to read the text to you if that'd be all right.

Listening.

JANICE (Cont.)

So you understand how important it is that the Congressman reads the text and because it could affect you personally.

Listening.

JANICE (Cont.)

Yes, you personally. So can I read you the text? Would that be okay?

Listening.

JANICE (Cont.)

Okay, good. So here goes.

JANICE removes a piece of  
paper from her pocket.

JANICE (Cont.)

“Dear Congressman Grimes, Very frustrated with you. Called you several times – no call back. I need to discuss with you why you haven't kept any of your campaign promises. Very disappointed in you. Not only did I vote for you, but I made a financial contribution to your campaign. Maybe a small one to you, but a large one for me. I deserve to hear from you.”

Margaret, this is the part that could involve you personally so you should pay close attention.

“If you continue to ignore me, I will be forced to take more extreme measures. So if you don't call me in the next forty-eight hours I will drive to your office and blow the fucking place up. Hoping to hear from you soon.”

That's it, Margaret.

Listening.

JANICE (Cont.)

Yes, yes. That's what I said – I'll blow it up.

Listening.

JANICE (Cont.)

Okay, hun. Thanks for listening. Please make sure the Congressman looks at the text. You're a dear. Bye-bye.

JANICE terminates the call. A knock at the kitchen door is heard. JANICE shouts.

JANICE (Cont.)

Come in, the door's open.

After a moment, JOE walks in carrying a box. He is a clean cut Brooks Brothers type. He is wearing a sport coat with an American flag pinned to his lapel.

JANICE (Cont.)

You have a package for us?

JOE

Actually, I'm here to see Keira. I found this on the back porch in front of the door.

Hands the box to JANICE.

JANICE

I don't know a Keira.

JOE

She's Violet's daughter.

JANICE

I don't know any Violet either. Are you sure you're at the right house?

JOE

Hope so. Does a woman named Rose own this place?

JANICE

Yes.

JOE

Violet is Rose's sister and Keira is Rose's niece.

JANICE

I haven't seen either of them. And who are you?

JOE

I'm Joe, Keira's boyfriend.

JOE extends his hand, but JANICE ignores it as she looks at the package.

JANICE

No name on it. Might be something for the party tonight. You know about the party?

JOE

I knew there was going to be a party, but I don't know any of the details.

JANICE

Me neither, except I know it starts at eight. Let me go upstairs and see if I can find somebody.

JOE

Thank you.

JANICE starts toward the stairs but stops halfway and turns to face JOE.

JANICE

You mind if I ask you a personal question?

JOE

I might. Ask and then I'll decide.

JANICE

Did you vote for Trump in the last presidential election?

JOE

I did. Why?

JANICE

I thought that you probably had. I just wanted to know if my initial assessment of you was right.

JOE

What is it about me that suggested to you that I voted for Trump?

JANICE

It wasn't difficult. You're a white male so there was about a sixty percent probability you did. Then I noticed your lapel pin and that clinched it.

JOE

What – don't Democrats wear the American flag on their lapels?

JANICE

Just the ones who are running for office. So are you embarrassed?

JOE

About what – the pin?

JANICE

No – the “ant man.”

JOE

Who are you talking about?

JANICE

Donald Trump.

JOE

What’s this “ant man” stuff?

JANICE

Well, you know how your guy likes to make up nicknames for everyone? “Ant Man” is my nickname for him.

JOE

I don’t get it.

JANICE

Well, he’s arrogant; ignorant; incompetant; repugnant...

JOE

(interjecting)

He’s the presidant.

JANICE

And he’s soon gonna be a defendant.

JOE looks annoyed. JANICE looks pleased.

JANICE (Cont.)

I’ll go see if I can find the people you’re looking for.

JANICE turns to leave.

JOE

Hey, wait a second. I’ve got a question for you.



JANICE

What?

JOE

Are all Democrats obnoxious people or are all obnoxious people Democrats?

JANICE

I wouldn't know. I'm not a Democrat.

JOE

So at least I have an answer to the second part of my question. So is your hostility directed toward Republicans only?

JANICE

Oh no, I'm against all public officials who're more concerned about taking care of themselves than the country. They're plenty of Democrats who're guilty of that. But I do tend to pick on Republicans more because so many of them are self-righteous hypocrites.

JOE

Would you please see if Keira is here?

JANICE

Sure. Maybe we can talk some more at the party if you decide to go.

JOE

I don't think so.

JANICE exits up the stairs.

JOE walks around as he surveys the room.  
He takes a seat on the couch; notices the photo album on the end table and picks it up. He opens it.

JOE

Whoa!

He turns a few pages.

JOE (Cont.)

(snickering)

Ho-lee shit!

He is so engrossed he doesn't hear ROSE come down the stairs. She stands behind him and peers over his shoulder.

ROSE

The ones toward the middle are the best.

JOE is startled. He quickly closes the book and looks over his shoulder.

JOE

(springing to his feet)

Hello, I'm Joe.

ROSE

(extending her hand)

Hi, Joe. I'm Rose, Keira's aunt.

They shake hands.

ROSE (Cont.)

Sit.

JOE sits on the couch. ROSE walks around and sits next to him.

JOE

I shouldn't have looked at this without asking first. I'm sorry.

He hands the album to ROSE.

ROSE

Don't apologize. I'll tell you a secret. I purposely leave it out for people to find. I get such a kick out of watching their reaction when they open it.

JOE

Who's the woman in the album?

ROSE

That would be me.

JOE

You're kidding!

ROSE

No. Except for one year when I was dealing with a medical situation, there's a picture for each year of my life starting when I was eighteen. They're fifty-one of them. I'm hoping to live long enough to add twenty more. That would cover years eighteen through ninety.

JOE

That would be quite an achievement. So how did you get started doing this?

ROSE

I suppose you could say my mother got me started.

JOE

Your mother! Really! So how exactly did your mother get you started?

ROSE

She used to measure our growth on our birthdays by having us stand against the door jam and putting a notch in the wood so we could see how much we had grown in a year. And she also drew on paper an outline of our hands and our feet to see how much those had changed after a year. So that gave me the idea about the pictures. When I was eighteen, I decided that I would have my picture taken every year on my birthday so I could see how much I had changed year to year.

JOE

I see.

ROSE

That's why I posed exactly the same in every picture – to make it easier to compare.

JOE

Yes, I noticed that. I also noticed that you're not wearing any clothes in any of the pictures.

ROSE

Yes. I had to be naked in order to truly show all the changes.

JOE

Well, you do show everything.

ROSE

What's fascinating is comparing pictures taken one year apart. Except for a change in hairstyle every once in a while, you never really see any difference.

ROSE finds two pictures and shows them to JOE, who is clearly uncomfortable looking at them.

ROSE (Cont.)

Look. Here I am at twenty-five and here I am at twenty-six. Can you see even the slightest difference? I can't.

JOE barely glances.

JOE

I can't either.

ROSE

And here's me at twenty-seven. Don't I look exactly the same as I did at twenty-six?

JOE

You do.

ROSE

But if you compare pictures ten years apart, you can see so many changes. My reaction is always the same – when did that happen?

JOE

Uh, huh.

ROSE

Let me find my picture at thirty-seven to compare with the one I showed you of me at twenty-seven and you'll immediately see what I mean.

Begins to look for the picture. JOE puts his hand on the book to prevent ROSE from turning the pages.

JOE

We don't need to look at any more pictures. I'll take your word for it.

ROSE

(smiling)

Oh, I'm embarrassing you.

JOE

A little.

ROSE

(talking as she places the album back on the table)

You needn't be. The pictures you saw are of a woman who doesn't even exist anymore.

JOE

Keira told me that you were unique. She said you were a person who danced to her own tune.

ROSE

Keira talked with you about me?

JOE

She did and she said that she wished that she were more like you.

ROSE

Oooh – that's nothing she should wish for. Believe me. Keira has always had this idea that my living abroad for so many years was some kind of glamorous sojourn, but I assure you, it was nothing of the kind.

JOE  
What made you decide to live abroad?

ROSE  
That's a long and complicated story.

JOE  
Sorry. Didn't mean to pry. Two apologies in five minutes. I'm not doing very well.

ROSE  
You're doing fine. Besides, I want to do some prying of my own.

JOE  
(good naturedly)  
Oh you do?

ROSE  
What's going on with you and Keira?

JOE  
Nothing good.

ROSE  
More than just working out the kinks?

JOE  
I'm afraid so.

ROSE  
That's too bad. She's a very special girl.

JOE  
I agree with you.

ROSE  
You think you can fix whatever isn't working?

JOE  
I'm here to try.

ROSE  
They say, "love conquers all."

JOE  
I guess we're going to find out.

The sound of the back door is heard opening  
and closing. VIOLET enters from the kitchen.

ROSE

Violet, this is Keira's Joe.

VIOLET walks to JOE. JOE stands.  
They shake hands.

VIOLET

Joe, nice to meet you.

JOE

Very nice to meet you, Violet.

VIOLET

We didn't think we'd see you.

JOE

It was a last second decision to come.

VIOLET

I'm glad you changed your mind.

JOE

I'm sure Keira isn't going to feel that way.

VIOLET

She did mention you two were working some things out.

JOE

Only one thing, actually.

ROSE

Well, that doesn't sound so daunting.

JOE

She obviously didn't tell you what that one thing is.

VIOLET

No, she didn't.

JOE

She's pregnant.

ROSE

Oh, my.

VIOLET  
 (momentarily stunned.)  
 She's pregnant?

JOE  
 Yeah, that's what we're arguing about.

VIOLET  
 How far along?

JOE  
 About eight weeks.

VIOLET remains silent for a moment.

VIOLET  
 So you're not arguing about whether to get pregnant. That means you must be arguing over what to do about the pregnancy.

JOE  
 Yeah, Keira doesn't want to have the baby.

VIOLET  
 So what does she want to do?

JOE  
 Abort.

VIOLET  
 (in disbelief)  
 Keira wants to abort?

JOE  
 Yes.

ROSE and VIOLET exchange looks. As they do, KEIRA enters from the kitchen.

KEIRA  
 (looking at Joe and speaking with hostility)  
 What are you doing here?

JOE  
 We have something to resolve and there isn't a lot of time.

KEIRA  
 (impatiently)  
 It's been resolved.

JOE

Not to my satisfaction.

KEIRA

Well satisfying you isn't on the list of my priorities.

JOE

I don't want to argue.

KEIRA

Then you should have stayed at home.

JOE

I'm hoping that we can talk about an alternative – a compromise.

KEIRA

(looking at VIOLET)

Do you know what he's talking about?

VIOLET

Yes.

KEIRA

I'm sorry you found out this way.

KEIRA (Cont.)

(speaking to JOE)

You had no right.

JOE

That's been your attitude about this thing the entire time. I have no rights.

KEIRA

Oh please. You're such a child. How in God's name did I ever get involved with you?

JOE

If belittling me makes you feel better, go ahead and belittle me.

KEIRA

I told you that being a mother was something I never wanted to be, didn't I?

JOE

You did and I accepted that. But then the unexpected happened and when it did that changed things for me.



KEIRA

Unexpected! It sure as hell was something I didn't expect, but you... you can't make that claim. What did you think might happen after you slipped the condom off when I wasn't paying attention?

ROSE

(looking at KEIRA)

What did he do?

KEIRA

He took the condom off during sex without my knowing.

ROSE

(looking angrily at JOE)

You raped her!

JOE

What? I did no such thing!

ROSE

You had unprotected sex without her consent. You got her pregnant against her will. As far as I'm concerned that's rape.

JOE remains silent.

ROSE (Cont.)

If it were up to me, every man who did what you did would be castrated.

JOE

(meekly)

I admitted that what I did was wrong – that it was irresponsible and that I was very, very sorry.

KEIRA

So you think I should reward your apology by having your baby?

JOE

No. Of course I don't.

KEIRA

Well good because I won't.

JOE

But - that doesn't mean abortion is the only option. What I'm asking you to consider is that we have the baby and...

KEIRA

You mean I have the baby.

JOE

That you have the baby and *we* put it up for adoption.

JOE waits for some one to speak, but no one does.

JOE (Cont.)

I understand that requires more on your part, but I think the sacrifice would be a small one considering what's at stake. What do you think?

KIERA

I think not.

JOE

You're not willing to consider it?

KEIRA

No.

JOE

(visibly exasperated)

That's it? Just no. No discussion. No explanation. You've decided. Case closed.

KEIRA

That's right.

JOE

Not good enough. You need to give me a defensible reason why you won't consider adoption.

KEIRA

I don't need any fucking defensible reason. I'm the one who's pregnant. That makes it my decision and I've decided.

JOE

(contemptuously)

Here's the thing, Keira. Yes, you're the one who's pregnant, but that doesn't mean it's just your decision. I've consulted a lawyer. I have rights. The child has rights.

KEIRA

(screaming)

There is no child.

JOE

(equally loud)

That's how you've worked it out in your head, isn't it? There's no life inside you – nothing that will die.

KEIRA

Shut-up, Joe. Leave. Go home and take all your shit and find someplace else to live.

KEIRA storms up the stairs.

JOE

I promised myself I wouldn't lose my temper. I'm just frustrated. I've tried to see things from her point of view, but I can't. You think what I'm proposing is unreasonable? Am I being unfair?

ROSE

What you did to cause this situation was unfair.

JOE

(contritely)

I know. I wish I hadn't done what I did.

VIOLET

What I think about your adoption idea doesn't matter. That's something only the two of you can resolve. But I will say that for every person who might think what you're asking for is reasonable, you'll find another person that thinks what you want is unreasonable.

JOE'S head is bowed. ROSE and VIOLET look at him. JOE then looks at them.

JOE

I really think if we hadn't gotten pregnant so early in our relationship, things would've turned out differently. The pregnancy came before she knew whether she and I were going to work long term. I think she sees having the baby as forcing her to commit to me. I understand that. But why not adoption?

ROSE

Being pregnant for nine months to have a child you didn't want – that's asking a lot. Did you really see a lawyer?

JOE

Yes, I did.

ROSE

Are you going to take legal action?

JOE

I don't want to do something that would only make a bad situation worse. I was hoping I could reason with her.

ROSE

So what will you do now?

JOE

My immediate plan is to find a bar and get stinking drunk.

ROSE

The one just around the corner is very nice.

JOE

Well then – if anyone asks, that’s where I’ll be. It was nice meeting the both of you.

JOE exits through the kitchen.

ROSE

(looking at the door)

Idiot.

ROSE (Cont.)

(looking at VIOLET)

Are you okay?

VIOLET

I’m sick to my stomach.

KEIRA walks down the stairs just  
enough to be able to peer into the room.

KEIRA

Is he gone?

ROSE

Yes.

KEIRA walks down the rest of the stairs  
and enters the room.

KEIRA

I’m so sorry about all this. That’s exactly why I didn’t want him here.

VIOLET

He’s upset and feeling desperate. You can understand that, can’t you?

KEIRA

Of course I can. I have those same feelings.

VIOLET

But in your case, you're getting what you want. He isn't.

KEIRA

(loudly with indignation)

Getting what I want! I didn't want to get pregnant, he did.

VIOLET

I'm talking about what to do now that it's done.

KEIRA

You sound more sympathetic to him than to me.

VIOLET

I'm not. I don't condone in any way what he did.

ROSE

What he did was unconscionable.

KEIRA

It would be nice if I felt like I had your support.

VIOLET

If you're asking me to tell you that what you've decided to do is all right, you know that's something I can't do.

KEIRA

You're going to try to make me feel guilty, aren't you?

VIOLET

I'll do no such thing. If you feel guilty, that's strictly on you.

KEIRA

(protesting loudly)

I don't feel guilty.

VIOLET

Fine. Then you shouldn't need my approval.

KEIRA

I don't need your approval nor am I asking for it.

VIOLET

Well, it seems like you are.

KEIRA

I'm not.

VIOLET

That's good, because you wouldn't get it.

KEIRA

(angrily)

How like you to be so self-righteous.

ROSE

Lets everyone take a deep breath.

KEIRA

(talking to VIOLET)

Just once I'd like not to be judged by you when my life takes a wrong turn according to your moral compass.

VIOLET

If you feel like you've been judged, it's your own conscience that's doing the judging. I've said nothing critical to you about your decision to abort. Stop attributing whatever it is you're feeling to me.

KEIRA

I'll do that, mom.

KEIRA quickly goes up the stairs to the second floor.

VIOLET

That turned out as badly as it possibly could have.

ROSE

She's going through a lot. A pregnancy. A break-up. And even though she won't admit it, I'm sure she's feeling some shame.

VIOLET

I obviously can't talk to her about it. Maybe you could.

ROSE

I will if that's what you want.

VIOLET

I do. She'll regard anything coming from me as criticism. If it comes from you, she'll see it as advice.

ROSE

And what is it that you want me to say to her? If you're asking me to talk her out of having the abortion, I won't do that.

VIOLET

No, no. I'm not asking you to do that.

ROSE

Good. So what then?

VIOLET

Just be there to listen if she wants to talk. Maybe you can find the words that I couldn't that will provide her some comfort.

**END OF SCENE**

**BLACKOUT**

ACT II  
SCENE 1

SETTING: In the living room on the evening of the second day.

AT RISE: All the characters, with the exception of Joe, are standing around a table which has been set up in the middle of the room. On the table sits a birthday cake.

EVERYONE

Singing.

*Happy birthday day dear Rose and Keira, happy birthday to you.*

Everyone except Keira cheers. ROSE blows out candles.  
VIOLET starts cutting cake and putting the sliced pieces on plates.

JANICE

(talking excitedly to PETE)

I love fucking birthday parties.

PETE

Are you saying you love birthday parties where there's fucking? If that's not what you mean, it would be clearer if you said "I fucking love birthday parties."

JANICE

You're a real idiot, do you know that?

ROSE

The cake looks delicious, Peter. Everyone, Peter made this cake.

JANICE

(speaking discretely to PETE)

You made this?

PETE nods.

JANICE (Cont.)

(threateningly)

You didn't put anything in it, did you?



PETE

Why Janice? Have you developed an allergy to cannabis?

JANICE

Don't be a wise guy. Did you?

PETE

Of course not.

ROSE

Help yourself everyone.

Everyone picks up a plate and begins to eat.

VIOLET

Peter, this is delicious.

ROSE

Yes, it's very good.

PETE

Thank you. I'm glad you like it. Baking is something I enjoy doing.

JANICE

He only uses organic ingredients, right Pete?

PETE

That's right, Janice.

JANICE

In fact, he grows some of the things he uses in his baking.

ROSE

Do you really, Peter?

PETE

Yes, I do.

JANICE

Some things he grows right in his room.

ROSE

In his room?

JANICE

Yep.

ROSE

How in heavens name are you able to do that? Your room isn't that big.

JANICE

He doesn't grow that much. Just a few pots.

ROSE

Maybe some time you can show me how you do it.

PETE

Any time, Rose.

PETE (Cont.)

(discretely to JANICE)

Not funny, Janice.

JANICE

Rose, have you had your birthday picture taken yet?

ROSE

I have. And I was so pleased to see that I look the same in this year's picture as I did in last year's.

JANICE

I believe it. I hope I look as good as you when I'm seventy.

PETE

Sorry, Janice. You don't look as good as Rose does right now.

JANICE

Is that right? I'll remember that the next time you come knocking at my door at two in the morning.

VIOLET approaches KEIRA.  
The other characters on the  
stage engage in conversation,  
but are unheard.

VIOLET

You're awfully quiet tonight.

KEIRA

It doesn't seem appropriate for me to be celebrating birth.

VIOLET.

I wish there was something I could say that would help.

KEIRA

I never thought I'd find myself in this situation.

VIOLET

It's through no fault of your own.

KEIRA

But that doesn't really help matters, does it?

VIOLET

No, it doesn't.

There is a pause in their  
conversation.

VIOLET (Cont.)

I have nothing good to say about Joe. But I thought his adoption suggestion was worth more consideration than you gave it.

KEIRA

Well, too bad for Joe he didn't get you pregnant.

VIOLET gives her a look of disappointment.

KEIRA (Cont.)

I'm sorry. That was crass.

VIOLET

Please just explain why adoption isn't an option for you and I promise I won't bring it up again.

KEIRA

I don't want to be a mother. Haven't I always said that?

VIOLET

You have.

KEIRA

So I'm afraid that if I had the baby that that *maternal-instinct-thing* might kick in and once the baby was born I wouldn't be able to give it up, but then later I'd wind up resenting it and then I'd have to live with the shame about feeling that way.

VIOLET

So you think you'll feel less shame aborting the baby than putting the baby up for adoption?

KEIRA

Right now there is no baby, mom. You may see that differently and that's okay. But for me there isn't a baby. So please, no more discussion about that.

VIOLET

All right.

KEIRA

The other reason I won't consider adoption is because I don't trust Joe. I don't trust that he would consent to the adoption once the baby was born no matter what he promises now. If he were to acquire custody of the baby it would force me into maintaining some kind of lifelong relationship with him. That would be intolerable.

VIOLET

I would think that it wouldn't take much of a lawyer to prevent that from happening.

KEIRA

I don't need a lawyer to take care of the problem, mom.

VIOLET

Okay, no more discussion about it then.

VIOLET begins to leave, then stops.

VIOLET

Have you made the arrangements yet?

KEIRA

No, but I've looked into it. It's a simple thing to get done.

VIOLET nods.

VIOLET

You'll let me know?

KEIRA

Of, course.

VIOLET walks over to where  
most of the other guests are milling about.

ROSE

Walter, my sister was asking me what you did before you retired, but I didn't know.

WALTER

I was a history professor. American history to be precise.

JANICE  
Really Walter! History! Can I ask you something?

WALTER  
About history?

JANICE  
Yeah.

WALTER  
Ask.

JANICE  
Isn't history just a bunch of made up bullshit?

PETE  
What the hell do you know about history, Janice?

JANICE  
Enough to know that it's total bullshit.

WALTER  
I've always described history as equal parts of supposition, myth and falsehood with just enough accuracy to prevent it from being an outright lie.

JANICE  
So, *mostly* bullshit. Why would you teach kids bullshit, Walter?

WALTER  
To my credit, I taught them the familiar stories of history, but then I explained to them why and how some of those stories weren't true.

JANICE  
What's your favorite lie that historians like to tell about America?

WALTER  
That's an easy one - that we have a government of, by and for the people. What we actually have is whatever kind of government big money wants.

VIOLET  
Walter, did you teach at a university?

WALTER  
Yes. I taught in the state university system.

VIOLET

Did you enjoy it?

WALTER

I don't really like young people very much, so the research and writing part I liked – the teaching part not so much.

VIOLET

When did you retire from teaching?

WALTER

Just after my wife died. About twenty years ago.

VIOLET

As I recall that's also the same time you became interested in theology.

WALTER

That's right.

VIOLET

So besides studying theology, what else did you do after you retired?

WALTER

I went to prison

Everyone stops eating and looks at WALTER.

ROSE

(disbelievingly)

What?

WALTER

I went to prison.

ROSE

What for?

WALTER

For killing my wife.

JANICE

What the hell!

PETE

Whoa.

ROSE

(hopefully)

Was it some kind of accident?

WALTER

No, I did it on purpose. She was a wretched woman. Made my life unbearable. I murdered her, but it wasn't premeditated.

VIOLET

This has been such an interesting two days.

ROSE

Who'd like a drink?

ROSE goes to the buffet, pours a glass of gin and downs it. She pours a second one and holds up the bottle.

ROSE (Cont.)

Anyone?

WALTER

I'll have one, Rose.

ROSE pours a glass for WALTER and brings it to him.

WALTER (Cont.)

Thank you, Rose and happy birthday to you again.

WALTER raises his glass and takes a sip of his drink. Then he looks around. Everyone is staring at him.

WALTER (Cont.)

I know you're all thinking that I did something horrible. But in a very real sense I was a victim of having too much concern for my wife's feelings.

JANICE

You killed your wife because you were worried about her?

WALTER

Essentially. Yes.

PETE

This is a very unusual guy.

WALTER

Any other man with a wife like mine would have divorced her. I should have. But a divorce would have devastated her and so I stayed - for her sake. But trying to spare her

WALTER (Cont.)

the pain of my leaving turned out badly for both of us. Her constant complaints and endless criticisms finally got to me. So at dinner one night as she was eating a hot dog and complaining about me again, I shoved the bun down her throat causing her to suffocate. She was dead before I knew what I had done.

There is a commotion in the kitchen. Things are being knocked over. Someone falls.

JOE

(off)

God damn it.

There's the sound of things being moved back into place. JOE then enters. He is clearly intoxicated.

PETE

Christ, who's that?

JANICE

That's Keira's boyfriend.

PETE

What's his problem?

JANICE

He's a Republican.

JOE

Happy *birth* day, Keira. Happy *birth* day, Rose.

KEIRA

Joe, you're not welcome here.

JOE

Hello, Violet.

VIOLET

Hello, Joe.

JOE

(speaking to VIOLET)

I can only imagine the joy you must feel as you recall the blessed day of your daughter's birth.

KEIRA

You are truly an asshole.



I am. JOE

Joe, you're going to regret this in the morning. VIOLET

What's one more regret? JOE

Please leave. KEIRA

JESUS  
(speaking to KEIRA)  
Would you like me to take him out?

JOE  
Holds his hand up like  
a traffic cop.

Just wait. I'm not planning on staying long. I just came to see how my ex-girlfriend celebrated her own birth. Are you happy to be alive, Keira?

JANICE  
(talking to PETE)  
This guy has to go.

PETE  
(talking to JOE)  
Hey, buddy. You should leave. Now.

JOE  
I probably should. I'm drunk. I always get drunk at funerals. But I'm a few days early, aren't I Keira?

PETE  
What's he talking about?

JANICE  
I don't know.

JESUS aggressively grabs JOE by the arm and  
begins pulling him toward the kitchen.

JESUS  
Let's go.

JOE  
Hey, you don't have to get physical. I'll leave.

JESUS maintains his grip.

JOE (Cont.)

But before I do I have a riddle for everyone. I thought this up on my own just for this occasion. What is the only difference between a five-year-old child whose mother starves it to death and an eight-week-old fetus that's aborted?

A look of revulsion spreads across everyone's face.

JANICE

What the hell.

VIOLET

Joe, please don't.

JESUS begins to drag JOE out through the kitchen.

JOE

(yelling as he looks back)

Only the age at the time of death.

JESUS and JOE disappear through the kitchen doorway.

PETE

He *is* an asshole.

JANICE

I feel so sorry for that girl.

VIOLET

(talking to KEIRA)

Are you okay?

KEIRA

No, but I'm angry not hurt. When he acts like that it only makes me all the more certain that I'm making the right decision.

VIOLET

You make it sound like the abortion is about getting revenge.

KEIRA

Mother, I can't believe you said that.

VIOLET

I don't mean to suggest that's your motive, but that the way you said what you said makes it sound that way, that's all.

There's a knock at the front door.

JESUS

(talking as he re-enters the room)

I'll get it.

JESUS goes to the front door.

He returns and whispers in ROSE'S ear.

ROSE

Show him in.

JESUS goes back to the front door. When he returns, he is followed by a police officer. PETE begins to slowly back away from the group.

ROSE (Cont.)

Good evening, officer.

POLICE OFFICER

Good evening, mam.

ROSE

How may I help you?

POLICE OFFICER

I'm here to talk to one of your boarders.

PETE quietly begins backing toward the kitchen.

ROSE

Who would you like to speak with?

POLICE OFFICER

A woman named Janice.

PETE stops his retreat.

JANICE

That would be me.

POLICE OFFICER

There's been a complaint filed against you by Congressman Grimes claiming that you threatened him.

JANICE

I did because that guy's a real dickhead.

POLICE OFFICER

He might be, but you shouldn't have threatened him.

JANICE

All he had to do was call me. So are you here to arrest me?

POLICE OFFICER

I'm afraid so.

JANICE goes to the police officer who motions that JANICE should lead the way.

JANICE

Aren't you going to handcuff me?

POLICE OFFICER

I don't think that will be necessary.

JANICE

I'll probably try to run away if you don't.

POLICE OFFICER

Suit yourself.

The POLICE OFFICER begins to cuff JANICE.

JANICE

Someone, take my picture.

JESUS starts taking pictures with his cell phone.

JANICE (Cont.)

When we get to the station, would it be possible for me to file a criminal complaint against Congressman Grimes?

POLICE OFFICER

(puzzled)

I suppose so.

JANICE

Great, then I'm good to go.

They start toward the front door.

ROSE

Janice, what did Congressman Grimes do to you?

JANICE

He stole from me.

ROSE

He stole from you? What did he steal?

The POLICE OFFICER and JANICE  
are now off stage.

JANICE

(yelling back)

My vote.

**END OF SCENE**

**BLACKOUT**

## ACT II

## SCENE 2

SETTING: In the living room the night after the party. Everyone but WALTER has gone to bed. The song White Rabbit by the Jefferson Airplane begins to play a few minutes before lights come on.

AT RISE: At rise Walter is alone sitting on the floor leaning against the front of the couch. He's wearing a tee shirt, boxer underpants and his sunglasses.

The music stops. WALTER is watching his stomach go up and down as he breathes. This continues until he is distracted by whistling coming from the kitchen. He turns his head to look for the source of the whistling. JESUS then enters the living room eating a cookie and holding a glass of milk. He wears a long, white terrycloth robe. His hair is untied and falls to his shoulders. WALTER begins to tremble. He stands and is unsteady on his feet. He squints as he studies the figure that has entered. After several seconds, he haltingly speaks.

WALTER

Gee-zuz, is it you?

The stage GOES DARK. TWO SPOTLIGHTS shine – one on WALTER, the other on JESUS.

JESUS

It's Hey-soos, Walter.

WALTER

(excitedly)

You know my name!

JESUS

Of course I know your name.

WALTER

Of course you know my name! You're Gee-zuz.

JESUS

It's pronounced Hey-soos, Walter.

WALTER

So you prefer the Hispanic pronunciation.

JESUS

Why wouldn't I? I'm Mexican.

WALTER

(in disbelief)

What? You're Mexican? I thought you were Jewish.

JESUS

Jewish? Where did you get that idea?

WALTER

From the Bible.

JESUS takes a bite of his cookie and takes a drink of his milk. He looks closely at WALTER'S face and then smiles.

JESUS

Walter, I see you're wearing your sunglasses. Are you tripping?

WALTER

I am.

(then panicking)

That's not a sin, is it?

JESUS

(laughing)

It's illegal, but it's not a sin.

MARIA enters from the kitchen. She is a young Hispanic woman wearing only a man's pajama top. She stands next to JESUS.

MARIA

(whispering to JESUS)

What's going on, baby?

JESUS

(whispering in reply)

Walter is tripping on acid again. He thinks I'm God.

MARIA

(whispering)

We should go.

JESUS

(whispering)

No we shouldn't. We should stay to see how this thing plays out.

MARIA

(whispering)

I don't think that's a good idea. Let's just go back to bed.

JESUS

(whispering)

Relax. This'll be fun.

JESUS (Cont.)

(to WALTER)

Walter, this is my girlfriend Maria.

WALTER

(sounding confused)

Your girl friend?

JESUS

Yes.

WALTER

So you're not married.

JESUS

Not to her.

WALTER

(perplexed)

I don't understand.

JESUS

My wife and I are separated.

WALTER

You're separated from your wife?

JESUS

Yes, we're in the process of getting a divorce.

WALTER

(shocked)

You're getting a divorce?



JESUS

Yeah.

WALTER

This is very confusing. I thought divorce wasn't permitted.

JESUS

Says who?

WALTER

You did.

JESUS

I don't remember saying that.

WALTER

It's in the Bible.

JESUS

Another misquote.

WALTER

What?

JESUS

A misquote, Walter. It happens all the time.

MARIA

And when the divorce is final, we're getting married, right baby?

WALTER

Excuse me, Maria. If you don't mind my saying so, it strikes me as a little sacrilegious to call the Lord "baby."

MARIA

(annoyed)

Say, listen I can...

Cutting Maria short.

JESUS

Actually Walter, in New Testament times "baby" was a term that boyfriends and girlfriends used all the time when talking to each other.

WALTER

Really. I've been studying religion for twenty years and I never read that anywhere.

JESUS

That's because it wasn't important enough for anyone to write down.

WALTER

That doesn't sound right.

Then remembering he is speaking to JESUS.

WALTER (Cont.)

Oh, sorry. Forgot who I'm talking with. If you say it wasn't important enough for anyone to write down, that's gospel as far as I'm concerned. I'm really sorry –really, really sorry.

JESUS

Relax, Walter. Just talk to me as if I were a regular guy.

MARIA

That's right Walter. He really is just like you and me.

WALTER

I don't know that I'm going to be able to do that. And I have so many questions I want to ask you.

JESUS

I know you do.

WALTER

Of course you do. You know what I'm thinking at all times, don't you?

JESUS

Uh huh.

WALTER

Come to think of it, I wouldn't even need to speak in order for us to converse, would I? All I have to do is think of a question and you'll know what I want to ask.

JESUS

Uh huh.

There is momentary silence.

WALTER

So.

JESUS

So what?

WALTER

So what's the answer?

JESUS

What's the question?

WALTER looks disappointed.  
Then JESUS laughs.

JESUS

I'm just kidding. I know what you're asking me, Walter. But Maria doesn't. It wouldn't be polite for you and I to have a conversation that Maria could hear only one side of.

WALTER

Oh, I didn't think of that.

WALTER (Cont.)

(looking at MARIA)

Sorry, I didn't mean to be rude.

MARIA

(to WALTER)

No problem.

MARIA (Cont.)

(discretely to JESUS)

I think you may be too clever for your own good.

JESUS

So ask your questions.

WALTER

Well, you've already told me that you're married, so do you have any children?

JESUS

No. No children.

MARIA

Not yet.

WALTER

Did you have any siblings?

JESUS

Yes. Six brothers and six sisters.

WALTER

Twelve siblings. How is that possible?

JESUS

Because in Mexican culture children are cherished.

WALTER

No, what I meant was there's no mention of siblings in any of the ancient writings. How could your having so many siblings have gone unnoticed?

JESUS

It didn't go unnoticed in my house at dinnertime.

WALTER

That's a good one, Lord. You have a very good sense of humor.

MARIA

(looking at JESUS)

Yeah, he likes to mess with people.

JESUS

You have another question. Ask it.

WALTER

Which religion should I follow?

JESUS

Scientology.

WALTER

(stunned)

Really!

JESUS

No. Just kidding. Those folks are wacked out. The truth is that you don't need a religion - you just need faith. If belonging to a church is important to you, pick one that has a good choir.

WALTER

I want to ask you about the Ten Commandments. Is it true that in your entire life you didn't break a single one?

JESUS

Yes, it's true.

WALTER

You didn't have even one impure thought?

JESUS

Not one.

WALTER

Really? Not even a brief moment of coveting?

JESUS

Do you doubt me, Walter?

WALTER

I didn't mean to. It's just so hard to comprehend. When I was younger I could have three impure thoughts just in the time it took me to walk from my front door to the mailbox.

JESUS

I think it was more. Anyway, you shouldn't concern yourself with the Ten Commandments. They're not important.

WALTER

(surprised)

Not important?

JESUS

No. Those rules were only for the Jews. They'd been wandering around in the desert a long time and had started to behave very badly. So they were given the two tablets with the Commandments written on them and told to obey them or else.

MARIA

(muttering to herself in disbelief)

Oh my God.

JESUS

There's only one rule you need to keep, Walter. Do you know what it is?

WALTER

I have no idea.

JESUS

I know you don't.

WALTER

Then why'd you ask?

JESUS frowns at WALTER

WALTER (Cont.)

I've offended you. I'm so sorry. I was trying to talk to you as if you were just a regular guy.

MARIA

That *is* how you told him to talk to you - *Lord*.

JESUS

I did, didn't I? Sorry for giving you the look, Walter.

WALTER

Forget it. Hey, I just forgave God. How great is that?

JESUS

The only rule you need to follow is the Golden Rule.

WALTER

Do onto others as you would have others do unto you.

JESUS

Right.

WALTER looks worried.

JESUS (Cont.)

You look upset. What's bothering you?

WALTER

So, you know that I murdered my wife.

MARIA

What!

(whispering to JESUS with urgency)

This guy killed his wife and he's tripping on LSD and you want to stand here at two in the morning to have a conversation with him while you pretend to be God. Are you crazy?

JESUS

(whispering in reply)

The guy's eighty years old and walks with a cane. What could he do?

MARIA

(continuing to whisper)

He could have a gun!

JESUS

(whispering)

And where would he be hiding it? Up his ass

JESUS (Cont.)

(answering WALTER)

Yes, Walter. I know you killed your wife.

WALTER

So I broke the Golden Rule. Does that mean I'm going to Hell?

JESUS

There is no Hell.

WALTER

What?

(stunned)

JESUS

There is no Hell.

WALTER

No Hell?

JESUS

No Hell.

WALTER expresses a look of  
confusion and disappointment.

JESUS (Cont.)

I expected you to be happy about that, Walter.

WALTER

Can I be honest with you, Lord?

JESUS

That would be best.

WALTER

Well, it's just that I've spent the last twenty years worrying about going to Hell and now you tell me there's no such place! That upsets me a little.

JESUS

Would you have preferred hearing that I was sending you to Hell?

WALTER

No, no. I'm happy about not going to Hell but I think I would have felt better if there *was* a Hell that I *wasn't* going to. That would've made me feel that the whole Hell-avoidance thing I went through wasn't a gigantic waste of my time.

JESUS

Walter!

WALTER is both contrite and  
upset.

WALTER

Sorry, Lord. So does that also mean there's no Heaven?

JESUS

No, there's a Heaven.

WALTER contemplates.

WALTER

If there's no Hell, but there is a Heaven, what happens to the bad people after they die?

JESUS

Well, all people are bad, aren't they? If bad people weren't allowed in Heaven the place would be vacant. The only people who don't go to Heaven are the irredeemably evil.

WALTER  
Irredeemably evil?

MARIA  
Irredeemably evil?

JESUS

Right.

WALTER

Like who?

JESUS

Hitler. He was an irredeemably evil person.

WALTER

Who else?

JESUS

I can't say. I shouldn't even have told you about Hitler. There's a right to privacy issue.

WALTER

So what happens to Hitler and others like him?

JESUS

They're vaporized – they just disappear.

WALTER

Seems to me they're getting off pretty easy.

JESUS

So says the murderer.



WALTER

Fair point, which raises another question. Some people are just a little bad and some people are very bad. It doesn't seem quite fair that they all get to go to Heaven.

JESUS

It's fair because people are not treated equally in Heaven. The more righteous a person is on earth, the more privileged that person will be in Heaven.

WALTER

Well that seems like a good system.

JESUS

We thought so. That's why we divided Heaven into different neighborhoods. The best neighborhoods for the best people and so forth.

MARIA

(whispering to JESUS)

You need to stop this now.

JESUS

Okay, okay.

JESUS (Cont.)

(speaking to WALTER)

Walter, I'm going to leave now.

WALTER

May I please ask one more question?

JESUS

One more.

WALTER

(nervously)

Am - am I an irredeemably evil person?

JESUS

No, Walter. You're not.

WALTER

So that would mean I'm going to Heaven. Technically, I think that's a statement, not a question, so if you could confirm that I'm right I would really appreciate it.

JESUS

Yes, it means you're going to Heaven.

WALTER begins to breakdown.

WALTER

(sobbing)  
Thank you, Lord.

JESUS

You're welcome, Walter. Good night.

MARIA

Good night, Walter.

WALTER

(still crying)  
Good night, Lord. Good night, Maria.

JESUS and MARIA walk toward the door leading to the second floor.

MARIA

(talking discretely to JESUS)

I think it was not smart for you to tell him he's going to Heaven. Now maybe he's going to start doing all sorts of crazy stuff because he thinks nothing bad can happen to him.

JESUS

Maria, you worry too much.

They exit

WALTER remains in place while he composes himself. When he is under control, he walks toward the study, repeating the same thing over and over.

WALTER

(in dazed amazement)

I'm going to Heaven, I'm going to Heaven, I'm going to Heaven, I'm going to Heaven....

As soon as WALTER disappears into the study, PETE comes down the stairs from the second floor. He's carrying two potted marijuana plants. PETE walks into the kitchen. The back door is heard opening and closing. A few seconds later, a loud shout from the study is heard.

WALTER

I'M GOING TO HEAVEN!

Then A SINGLE GUNSHOT rings out and a BODY HITTING THE FLOOR in the study is heard.

**END OF SCENE**

**BLACKOUT**

## ACT II

## SCENE 3

SETTING: In the living room later that morning.  
A pot of coffee sits on the table which  
fronts the couch.

AT RISE: ROSE, still dressed in her nightclothes, is  
standing at the entrance to the study. She is  
holding a cup of coffee and peering into the  
room. Yellow police tape is strung across the  
the doorway preventing access. The same police  
officer who arrested Janice the night before  
is standing next to her.

POLICE OFFICER

The technician will be done in there shortly. He'll remove the tape on his way out.

ROSE

Still looking into the room.  
Then can I get in there to clean up?

POLICE OFFICER

Sure, there's no reason you shouldn't. It was an obvious suicide.

ROSE

Thank you, officer.

POLICE OFFICER

Sorry for your troubles, ma'am.

He tips his hat and turns to leave.

ROSE

Officer?

POLICE OFFICER

Yes, ma'am?

ROSE

I was wondering about the lady you took to the police station last night – Janice.  
What's going to happen to her?

POLICE OFFICER

I don't think you'll be seeing her anytime soon.

ROSE

Is she going to jail?

POLICE OFFICER

She is if we can find her.

ROSE

Find her. What do you mean?

POLICE OFFICER

There was a mix-up at the station last night. I left her with another officer so she could file a complaint against Congressman Grimes while I began the paperwork for her arrest. The other officer and I got our signals crossed. I thought he was going to bring her back to me and he thought I was coming back for her. So when the other officer finished with her, he told her to stay seated until I came to get her. He left her alone and when no one came to get her she apparently walked right out the front door.

ROSE

She didn't.

POLICE OFFICER

Yeah, she did. What makes things even worse is that when I ran her prints I discovered that her real name wasn't Janice and that she had several outstanding arrest warrants for being involved in anti- government activities. Two involved the bombings of government offices -one in Texas and one in Illinois. Guess her threat to blow up Congressman Grimes' office wasn't an idle one.

ROSE

That's unbelievable.

POLICE OFFICER

My sergeant said something along those lines when I told him that she'd disappeared.

ROSE

I'm sure he did.

POLICE OFFICER

Good day mam.

The POLICE OFFICER exits through the front door.  
Then KEIRA descends the stairs from the second floor,  
suitcase in hand. She walks next to ROSE, sets her suitcase  
down and places her arm around ROSE'S waist.

KEIRA

He left you with quite a mess.

ROSE

He certainly did.

KEIRA

You may want to have a cleaning service get in there.

ROSE

That's probably what I'll do.

KEIRA

I doubt that they'll be able to get the bloodstains out of the wallpaper though.

ROSE

Probably not, but that's okay. I've wanted to re-paper in there for quite some time anyway. Want some coffee?

KEIRA

I'd love some.

They walk to toward the sofa.

KEIRA (Cont.)

(speaking as they walk)

What about all of his things?

ROSE

Well, he didn't wear a lot of different clothes and what he had was rather worn. So maybe I'll just trash it all. But I'll need to figure out what to do with the books.

They sit. ROSE pours a cup of coffee from the pot sitting on the table and hands it to KEIRA.

KEIRA

Thank you.

KEIRA takes a sip of her coffee.

KEIRA (Cont.)

God, I hope I never have another weekend like this one.

ROSE

It was truly awful. Were you able to get any sleep?

KEIRA

No, the image of Walter putting a gun in his mouth and pulling the trigger kept popping into my brain.

ROSE

Actually, the police officer told me that the entry wound was near his right temple, which is why there wasn't any hole in the ceiling.

KEIRA

How thoughtful of him. I just don't understand how he could kill himself, do you?

ROSE

No, although there's something to be said for choosing the time and means of one's own death.

KEIRA

Why do you suppose he did it?

ROSE

It makes no sense to me, but I did notice that his sunglasses were lying on the floor next to him.

KEIRA

So?

ROSE

That means he had likely taken LSD again. Maybe something he saw – a hallucination - made him think that killing himself was a good idea.

KEIRA

That's why no one should ever take that stuff - it's too unpredictable.

ROSE

Had I known that it had the potential to cause such self-destructive behavior, I never would have tried it.

KEIRA

(shocked and amused.)

You tried LSD?

ROSE

I did. I was curious. I found the experience to be very interesting, but I told Walter that I didn't see how taking it was going to help him. It only made things more confusing for me. But I suppose taking it just the one time wasn't enough to make a fair assessment.

KEIRA

Does mom know you tried it?

ROSE

Of course not.

KEIRA

You know for a man who was so afraid of going to hell, you'd think that killing himself would be the last thing he'd do.

ROSE

I agree.

KEIRA

Did you know that mom believes that suicide is the only unforgivable sin?

ROSE

(laughing)

Yes, that's something your grandmother taught us.

KEIRA

I could never understand the logic of it. How you could kill another person and be forgiven but if you killed yourself you couldn't. Seems backwards to me.

ROSE

That's because you're logical and religion isn't.

KEIRA

You're not religious, are you?

ROSE

No, I see religion the way your grandfather did.

KEIRA

How's that?

ROSE

That religion is like a man who goes around intentionally tripping people and when they fall he expects to be thanked for helping them up.

KEIRA

So grandpa wasn't religious.

ROSE

No he wasn't, but he still went to church every Sunday and never dared to complain.

They sip their coffee.



ROSE (Cont.)

What time is your flight?

KEIRA

Around 1:00. I should leave for the airport pretty soon.

ROSE

I'll have Jesus take you.

KEIRA

No, don't trouble Jesus.

ROSE

I know he wouldn't mind.

KEIRA

That's okay. Honestly, I'd prefer not having to engage in small talk. I've already arranged for a cab.

ROSE

Are you sure?

KEIRA

Yes and besides - did you notice how upset Jesus was last night?

ROSE

I'm sure everyone noticed given his extreme reaction.

KEIRA

They must have been close.

ROSE

I don't think so. I'd never even seen them in conversation.

KEIRA

Well, he was the one who found him. It obviously shocked him.

ROSE

It shocked everyone.

KEIRA

Well, apparently he's more sensitive than most.

ROSE

Apparently.

ROSE pours herself more coffee.

ROSE (Cont.)

I'm sorry about the way things turned out with Joe. I assume there'll be no reconciliation.

KEIRA

No. Not after what he did. And not after the way he acted last night.

ROSE

Had he ever acted that way before?

KEIRA

No, but then again I can't think of anything I'd ever done that would have provoked him.

ROSE

You think he'll try to contact you when you get back?

KEIRA

I'm sure he will.

ROSE

Why don't you stay here for a few extra days? Give everyone some time to get their emotions under control.

KEIRA

It wouldn't make any difference. Whenever I get back he'll start right in again.

ROSE

That concerns me.

KEIRA

Why?

ROSE

Might he lose his temper – become abusive?

KEIRA

That's not in his nature.

ROSE

But he's already acted in a way that you'd never seen before.

KEIRA

I know him well enough to know that he would never harm me. You needn't worry.

ROSE

I am worried and I won't be able to stop until you're no longer pregnant and he's gone.

KEIRA laughs with a look of affection.

KEIRA

I promise to call you the second that happens.

ROSE

Did you talk to your mother at the party last night?

KEIRA

Briefly.

ROSE

You need to smooth things over with her before you leave.

KEIRA

I'll try, but I don't think it'll happen if she starts talking about the abortion.

ROSE

You know she will.

KEIRA

Then we're probably going to have a repeat of our first conversation.

ROSE

There's no reason for a repeat. You've both had time enough to think about how to say what you want to say without antagonizing the other.

KEIRA

I agree, but you know mom. She's going to try to guilt me again into changing my mind.

ROSE

You think your mother tried to guilt you yesterday?

KEIRA

Don't you?

ROSE

No. I think you felt guilty before your mother had said a single word. You felt guilty the second you'd heard that Joe had told us about the pregnancy and your decision to abort.

KEIRA

Why do you and mother keep saying I feel guilty? I don't. I have nothing to feel guilty about. I acted the way I did because I was caught off-guard. I was embarrassed.

ROSE

And your embarrassment made you defensive. I'm not sure there was anything your mother could have said that you wouldn't have taken offense to.

KEIRA

So you think the argument was my fault?

ROSE

No. It wasn't anyone's fault. Abortion is a difficult subject that neither of you were prepared to talk about.

KEIRA

There's no need to talk about it. I've known for a long time what mom thought about abortion. I've seen her shake her head many times in disapproval whenever she heard about some woman having an abortion.

ROSE

Your mother needs to talk about it because she believes that what you're planning to do is wrong.

KEIRA

You mean immoral.

ROSE

Okay, immoral. So you can understand why she'd feel the need to talk to you about it, can't you?

KEIRA

To make herself feel better, I guess.

ROSE

You're being a little unfair, don't you think? You know that whatever she says is only being said out of her concern for you.

KEIRA

But - implicit in her concern is her disapproval, which I very much resent.

ROSE

I understand why you'd feel that way, but didn't she react exactly as you knew she would?

KEIRA

Yes, which is why I didn't want her to ever find out.

ROSE

That would have been better.

KEIRA

(with resigned acknowledgment)

I don't know why I care so much about what mom thinks.

ROSE

My mother died many, many years ago and sometimes I still ask myself what she would have thought about something I've decided to do.

KEIRA

What I'm afraid of is that she'll no longer respect me.

ROSE

I assure you, no mother has ever loved a daughter more than your mother loves you. Having an abortion isn't going to change that.

KEIRA

I know she'll still love me, but that doesn't mean she'll still respect me.

ROSE

Well, sweetheart, I can say with absolute certainty that the only kind of respect that's important is self-respect. As far as other people, if you have to agree with them to gain their respect, their respect isn't worth having.

KEIRA

You know, you've never said anything to me about what you think.

ROSE

There were enough people telling you what to do. I thought if you wanted my opinion, you'd ask for it.

KEIRA

Okay, I'm asking for it. How do you think you would choose if you had to make the choice?

ROSE

I know exactly how I would choose because I did make that choice.

KEIRA

What? Wait. Are you saying you were once pregnant?

ROSE

Yes.

KEIRA

Oh my God.

ROSE

Those were my exact words when I was told that I was pregnant.

KEIRA

I can't believe this is the first I'm hearing about it.

ROSE

Well, there wasn't a good reason to tell you before now.

KEIRA

Was the father one of your husbands?

ROSE

No, it happened before I went to live abroad.

KEIRA

So what did you do?

ROSE

I made arrangements to see a doctor about having an abortion.

KEIRA

You did!

ROSE

Yes. Like you, I didn't want to be a mother. But unlike you I didn't have to deal with the father pressuring me to have the baby.

KEIRA

Didn't the guy know about the pregnancy?

ROSE

Oh, he knew. He just didn't care. Made no difference to him whether I had the baby or not. He made it clear I was on my own either way.

KEIRA

What an asshole. Had you been with him for very long?

ROSE

Long enough to have deserved more consideration than I got. But I decided "good riddance" and that I'd handle things myself.

KEIRA

So you went to a doctor?

I did.

ROSE

Did mom know?

KEIRA

I couldn't keep it from her, but I didn't tell her until the day before the procedure was scheduled.

ROSE

Because you knew she'd try to talk you out of it.

KEIRA

Yes. I waited until I thought there wouldn't be enough time for her to do anything about it.

ROSE

But she still tried to convince you not to do it, didn't she.

KEIRA

She did much more than that.

ROSE

What did she do?

KEIRA

She abducted me.

ROSE

You're exaggerating I hope.

KEIRA

No, I'm not. I was in the doctor's office. It was after hours. Only the doctor, his nurse and I were there. I was already lying on the table with my feet in the stirrups, covered with a hospital gown. I could hear the doctor and the nurse talking in the next room. I remember being annoyed by their chitchat because I was so anxious to get the thing over with. That's when your mother arrived. I still don't know how she knew where to find me because I hadn't told her. She started pounding on the outside door and screaming that they let her in.

KEIRA

Oh my God.

ROSE

So I jumped off the table and ran into the reception area. There was your mom still pounding on the door. I thought for sure she was going to break the glass. The doctor went to the door and opened it. As soon as he did your mother ran up to me and grabbed my arm so hard I cried out. She ordered me to get dressed which I did as fast as I could. By that time I was crying hysterically.

KEIRA

Oh my God!

ROSE

Then she marched me out of the building, ordered me into her car and drove off. Of course, I was very, very angry. I resented her tremendously for it.

KEIRA

As you should have. I can't fathom someone doing what she did.

ROSE

I don't believe anyone but your mother would have tried it.

KEIRA

And you think I can smooth things over with her?

ROSE

Your mother has changed. She isn't fanatical like she was back then.

KEIRA

She may have changed her methods, but her beliefs haven't changed. So what happened?

ROSE

I had the baby.

KEIRA

(speaking with disgust.)

So mother got her way.

ROSE

I don't regret how things turned out.

KEIRA

You put your baby up for adoption?

ROSE

Yes.

KEIRA

Was it a boy? A girl?



ROSE

I don't know. Before the delivery I made it clear that the baby was to be taken from me immediately after birth and that I was not to be told anything about it. I thought the less I knew the better.

KEIRA

So you don't know who adopted the baby.

ROSE

I don't know anything.

KEIRA stands and walks a few steps to center front. After a few seconds, she turns to face ROSE.

KEIRA

Do you ever think about the baby?

ROSE

Oh, yes. Often, actually.

KEIRA

But you don't regret that you had the baby or that you gave it up?

ROSE

No to both questions. I'm at peace with my decisions.

KEIRA

So you think I should have the baby.

ROSE

That's not what I think - not at all. I think you should do what you believe is best for you in your situation.

KEIRA

How did mom convince you not to have the abortion? What did she say to you?

ROSE

You need to understand that up until the time of your mother's intervention I hadn't given the decision to abort much thought. I didn't want to be pregnant and so to me abortion seemed like the logical choice.

KEIRA

It was the logical choice and the one that you alone were entitled to make. So tell me, how did she get you to change your mind?

ROSE

I would say she simply overwhelmed me. She was so adamant that abortion was immoral. She was convinced that having an abortion would ruin my life and she begged me not to go through with it. She was relentless. I just wasn't able to resist her.

KIERA

Sounds like you decided against having the abortion to accommodate my mother.

ROSE

No, no. She was truly worried about me... and the unborn child.

KEIRA

Is that what she called it? The child. Of course you wouldn't kill a child. That's why she called it that.

ROSE

Actually, I did object to your mother referring to the fetus as "the child." But she said I could call it whatever I wanted. That it didn't matter what I called it or what it was – that the only thing that mattered was that it would become a person as long as I didn't interfere.

VIOLET walks into the room from  
the door leading to the second floor.

VIOLET

Are you talking about me?

KEIRA turns to face VIOLET  
and speaks aggressively.

KEIRA

Yes, we're talking about how you shamed aunt Rose into having a baby she didn't want.

ROSE

Keira, I never said your mother shamed me. And calling the baby "unwanted" – well I don't like the way that sounds.

KEIRA

(still staring at her mother)

What gave you the right?

VIOLET

She was my sister who I loved very much and whom I thought was making a terrible mistake. At the time I thought that gave me the right.

KEIRA

*At the time* – does that mean you see things differently now?

VIOLET

Yes.

KEIRA

In what way?

VIOLET

Now I believe in a woman's right to make her own choice. That's not a right that I recognized at the time I strong-armed your aunt Rose into having her baby. That's why I'm not going to say or do anything more to dissuade you from what you've decided to do.

KEIRA

That's not how it sounded to me yesterday.

VIOLET

Well, yesterday I felt that you weren't so much asking me to support your right to choose as you were asking me to support your choice.

KEIRA

Maybe I was.

VIOLET

Don't you see the unfairness in that? I'm not asking you to change what you believe about abortion, but that's what you were asking me to do. Can you understand that I can support your right to choose even though your choice isn't one that I would make?

KEIRA

(dispiritedly)

Yes.

VIOLET

Keira, the last thing I want to do is make your situation more difficult. Please believe me when I say there won't be a problem between us because of the abortion.

KEIRA

How can you be so sure?

VIOLET

Because I won't let it.

KEIRA looks forlorn.

KEIRA

I don't think a person can stop from feeling the way they do just because they want to.

VIOLET

(tenderly)

Sweetheart, is it possible that you're not really sure about having the abortion? I don't think you'd be so worried about what I think if you were.

KEIRA

(stressed)

How could I not have some doubt? You think that abortion is immoral so that makes me think that maybe it is. I mean either it is or it isn't.

VIOLET

Says who?

KEIRA

Says who's ever in charge of deciding what's moral and what isn't.....the RNC; the ACLU, the PTA. I don't know.

VIOLET

Why don't we sit?

ROSE gets up and sits on the recliner.

VIOLET and KEIRA take a seat on the couch

VIOLET (Cont.)

Let me explain how I came to believe in a woman's right to choose. I think knowing that might help you.

KEIRA

All right.

ROSE

I'd like to hear that too.

VIOLET

(a deep sigh and then she begins)

There was a time when, as far as I was concerned, there could only be one truth about certain things and I was sure that I knew what those truths were. Abortion was one of the things I was sure about.

KEIRA

But you still are, aren't you?

VIOLET

I still believe it's wrong.

KEIRA

Then I don't understand.

ROSE

Yes, Violet. How does that help?

VIOLET

Telling you again what I think about abortion won't. But what should help is my telling you that I believe that what I think is only important to me. Not just about abortion, but about anything. I came to believe that after years of listening to the views of many well-informed, thoughtful people about many things and realizing that there was nothing in life that was understood by everyone in the same way. Not God, not morality, not life's purpose, not anything. Once I realized that, I decided that I would live my life according to my values without caring that others would see things differently. And I also decided that I would respect the opinions of other people even though they differed from mine. I think you should do the same.

KEIRA

But maybe I'm not exactly sure about my values.

VIOLET

That's understandable. It takes time to find your own way to reconcile the many contradictions of life.

KEIRA

That doesn't help with the decision I have to make now.

VIOLET

No it doesn't, so you make the best decision you can and move forward.

KEIRA

And if later I should decide that I made the wrong choice?

VIOLET

Then like every person who's ever lived, you'll feel regret.

KEIRA

(a long, deep sigh)

And that feeling never goes away, does it?

VIOLET

Not entirely, but it helps to know that regret is something everyone experiences. After all, we are only human.

KEIRA

Thank you, mom.

They hug.

VIOLET

Wouldn't you like me to be with you when you have the procedure?

KEIRA

It's not really a procedure. As long as I don't wait too long the doctor will just give me a pill and after one or two weeks another pill and then it's done.

VIOLET

So simple.

KEIRA

Yeah, pretty simple.

VIOLET

Well, if you don't want to go to the doctor by yourself or if you'd like some company after it's over, call me and I'll come right away.

KEIRA

I will.

ROSE

And if your ex-boyfriend causes you any trouble, call the police.

KEIRA

(laughing.)

Okay, aunt Rose. I will.

The sound of a car horn is heard.

KEIRA (Cont.)

That'll be my cab. I have to go.

They all stand. KEIRA gives ROSE a  
kiss on the cheek.

KEIRA (Cont.)

Auntie, I don't know if I could handle another one but do you have any more reveals you'd like to make before I leave?

ROSE

No sweetheart. Maybe on your next birthday.

KEIRA

I can't wait.

(she kisses VIOLET.)

KEIRA (Cont.)

Love you, mom.

VIOLET

And I love you.

KEIRA walks to the front door, picks up her suitcase and turns to face VIOLET and ROSE

KEIRA

Bye-bye, auntie. Bye, mom.

KEIRA exits through the front door. VIOLET and ROSE both stare at the closed door. ROSE puts her arm around VIOLET'S waist.

ROSE

How 'bout a glass of gin?

VIOLET

That's not going to help.

ROSE

Then have two.

ROSE goes to get the bottle of gin and two glasses. VIOLET takes a seat on the couch. ROSE takes a seat next to VIOLET, pours two drinks and hands a glass to VIOLET.

ROSE (Cont.)

Drink.

VIOLET takes a small sip.

ROSE (Cont.)

How are you feeling?

VIOLET

I'm heart-broken. She's confused and alone and there isn't anything that I can do to help her.

ROSE

You did help her. You let her know that you're on her side no matter what.

VIOLET

It's my fault she's feeling doubt.

ROSE

Nonsense. You raised her to be a person with scruples. People who have scruples have struggles. She's in distress, but she's not a fragile person. She'll work through it.

VIOLET

Thank you, Rose. Still....

ROSE

No buts. She'll be fine. I'm sure of it.

There is a long pause while the sisters  
sip their drinks.

VIOLET

I was very surprised that you told Keira about your pregnancy.

ROSE

I hadn't planned to. But she asked me what I would do if I were in her predicament. Telling her seemed like the only honest way I could answer her question.

VIOLET

Not entirely honest, though.

ROSE

No, not entirely.

Another pause, another sip.

ROSE (Cont.)

So what do you think she's going to do?

VIOLET

Have the abortion

There is a longer pause.

ROSE

Do you think she would decide to have the baby if she knew that she was the fetus you stopped me from aborting?

VIOLET

I think she might.



ROSE

I think she would.

VIOLET gives ROSE a stern look.

VIOLET

But that's something we're never going to know.

ROSE

No, we're not.

**END OF PLAY**