

**...but you could've held my hand**  
**By JuCoby Johnson**

**Representaion:**

Rachel Ellicott

(845)568-7775

rellicott@paradigmagency.com

## **Characters**

Eddie (He/Him/His)  
Charlotte/Charlie (They/Them/Theirs)  
Marigold (She/Her/Hers)  
Max (He/Him/His)

## **Setting**

*The past and present.*

## **Notes**

Off top: Everybody in this play is Black. I strongly encourage anyone casting this play to avoid getting bogged down in a narrow understanding of Blackness or limit themselves to their own opinions on what it means to be Black. Consider the full spectrum of Blackness and what you will find is the full spectrum of humanity.

One character in this play is gender non-binary. I encourage people to fill the role with an actor who is also gender non-binary. I also urge people not to stop there. Consider trans performers for any and all roles. This play can only benefit from their presence in the room.

The ages of the actors don't need to match the ages of the characters. I would actually encourage an ensemble of all different ages. As we play with time in this play, this will open us up to possibilities that extend beyond realism or any other genre.

Speaking of genre, my only request is that the play be theatrical. Whatever that means to you. This is not realism, or naturalism, or expressionism, or any other ism. Forget all about genre.

All that to say: Be bold. Have fun. Lead with love.



*Colin Jones, The Black House, London 1973-76*

*“Love is or it ain’t. Thin love ain’t love at all.”  
-Toni Morrison*

## A Beginning

*Darkness.  
We hear wind chimes echoing in the distance.  
Waves crash.  
Children laugh and play.*

*Lights slowly begin to come up on the space.*

*Four figures are revealed.  
They sing to us.*

## ALL

*While I'm far away from you, my baby  
I know it's hard for you, my baby  
Because it's hard for me, my baby  
And the darkest hour is just before dawn.*

*Music fills the space and picks up where the actors left off.*

*The figures begin to dance.  
They move together, lose each other, find each other again.  
The dance is sweet at times. Violent at others.  
They grab, hug, push, pull, kiss, hit.*

*The dance ends.*

*The music ends.*

*They face each other.*

*They turn to face us.*

*Blackout.*

**1. “We Don’t Like Crowds”  
A Wedding- Age 10**

*A kitchen.*

*There’s a half-eaten wedding cake on a table.*

*Music plays in the distance.  
Music you’d hear at a wedding reception.  
The Cha-cha Slide, The Electric Slide, the Cupid Shuffle.*

*Eddie enters slowly and looks around.*

*The coast is clear.*

*He takes off his jacket and undoes his tie.  
He shakes flower petals out of his jacket.*

*He spots the cake.  
He picks it up, sits on the floor, and begins to eat the cake with his hands.  
It’s the best thing he’s ever tasted.*

*He hears someone else entering the kitchen.  
He looks for a hiding spot.  
There’s nowhere stealthy enough.  
He grabs the cake and hides under the table.*

*Max enters.  
He dusts flower petals off his clothes.  
He immediately spots Eddie.*

**MAX**  
Hey.

**EDDIE**  
Hey.

**MAX**  
Whatcha doin’?

**EDDIE**  
Hiding.

**MAX**  
That's a bad hiding place.

**EDDIE**  
I know.

*A moment.*

**MAX**  
You can come out from under there now.

*Eddie doesn't move.*

**MAX**  
I won't tell anyone about the cake. I promise. They probably won't notice anyway. They're all in there drunk and dancing. Badly.

**EDDIE**  
I like it under here.

**MAX**  
Oh, okay. That's cool.  
*(beat)*  
I'm Max.

**EDDIE**  
I've never met a black person named Max before. We have three white Maxes at my school. But no black ones.

**MAX**  
It's short for Maxwell. Like the singer. My mom played "This Woman's Work" every day when she was pregnant with me. She thought it would make me a good singer.  
*(He sings a little bit of "This Woman's Work". It's not good.)*  
I don't think it worked. What's your name?

**EDDIE**

Eddie. Like Eddie Murphy. My Dad loved Eddie Murphy.

**MAX**

He's the best! Dr. Doolittle is the best.

**EDDIE**

My Dad says Dr. Doolittle is trash. He called Eddie Murphy a "sell out".

**MAX**

What's a "sell out"?

**EDDIE**

I don't know. I think it has something to do with money and white people.

**MAX**

Oh.

**EDDIE**

Yeah.

**MAX**

*(beat)*

Why are you in here? Shouldn't you be out there celebrating?

**EDDIE**

Celebrating?

**MAX**

Um...it's, like, when you're happy and you dance because you're so happy.

**EDDIE**

I know what it means. I don't like crowds. And I don't like dancing.

**MAX**

What?! Dancing is fun!

**EDDIE**

Not for me.

**MAX**

Why not??

**EDDIE**

My body won't do what my brain tells it to do. It makes me feel silly.

**MAX**

Silly is good! Silly is fun! Dancing is fun!

**EDDIE**

I disagree.

**MAX**

It is! Watch.

*Max begins to dance.  
It's less dancing and more flailing of limbs.*

**EDDIE**

That's not dancing.

**MAX**

Yes, it is!

**EDDIE**

It doesn't look like dancing to me. It just looks like moving.

**MAX**

All dancing *is* moving! Dance with me.

**EDDIE**

What?

**MAX**

Come out from under there and dance with me!

**EDDIE**

No, thank you.



**MAX**

If you don't dance with me, I'll be sad.

**EDDIE**

I think you'll be sadder if I *do* dance with you.

**MAX**

If you don't dance with me, I'll cry.

**EDDIE**

No, you won't.

*Max cries.*

*He makes a spectacle.*

*Eddie comes out from under the table and tries to stop him.*

**EDDIE**

Shhh!

*(he doesn't stop)*

Please!

*(he keeps going)*

Please stop!

*Max stops crying.*

**MAX**

Will you dance with me now?

**EDDIE**

I don't know.

**MAX**

I'll cry again.

**EDDIE**

Please don't. My Dad says boys don't cry.

**MAX**

I cry.

*A moment.*

EDDIE  
Me too.

MAX  
Dance with me.

EDDIE  
I'm scared.

MAX  
Good!

*Max begins to flail once more.  
Eddie joins half-heartedly.*

MAX  
Come on! You can do better than that.

EDDIE  
I'm not really sure that I can.

MAX  
Here!

*Max grabs Eddie's arms and begins to move them around like a puppet.  
Eddie starts out uncomfortable, but eventually gives in.*

*They laugh.*

*The distant music ends.  
Another song starts.  
This one is slower.*

*They stop dancing.*

MAX  
Ah, man! I don't know how to dance to this. My Mom and Dad are always dancing to stuff like this and it looks gross. Do your Mom and Dad dance to

**MAX (cont.)**  
stuff like this?

**EDDIE**  
My Mom and Dad got a divorce.

**MAX**  
What's a divorce?

**EDDIE**  
The worst thing ever.

**MAX**  
Hm. I don't know if it's the *worst* thing. I mean, people die.  
*(beat)*  
Why did they get a divorce?

**EDDIE**  
My Dad drinks too much.

**MAX**  
Oh.

**EDDIE**  
Yeah.

*A moment.*

**MAX**  
Wanna sit under the table and eat more cake?

**EDDIE**  
Yeah.

*They do so.*

*They hear someone else entering and try to make themselves smaller.*

*Charlotte enters.  
She wears a dress and a blazer.*

*She shakes flower petals out of her hair.*

*She spots them immediately.*

**CHARLOTTE**

Hey.

**EDDIE & MAX**

Hey.

**CHARLOTTE**

Whatcha doing?

**EDDIE**

Hiding.

**CHARLOTTE**

That's a bad hiding place.

**MAX**

We know.

**CHARLOTTE**

I'm Charlotte.

**MAX**

I'm Max.

**CHARLOTTE**

I've never met a black Max before. We have, like, 5 white Maxes at my school. No black ones.

**MAX**

It's short for Maxwell. Like the singer.

*He sings a bit of "This Woman's Work".  
Badly.*

**CHARLOTTE**

That wasn't good.

**MAX**

It never is.

**CHARLOTTE**

*(to Eddie)*

Who are you?

**EDDIE**

I'm Eddie. Like Eddie Murphy.

**CHARLOTTE**

I love Eddie Murphy!

**MAX**

Dr. Doolittle!

**CHARLOTTE**

Dr. Doolittle is trash. My Dad says it made Eddie a sell-out. Something about making money for white people.

*Eddie and Max look at each other.  
Then back to her.*

**CHARLOTTE**

Why are you in here?

**MAX**

We don't like crowds.

**CHARLOTTE**

Yeah, me either.

**EDDIE**

Why are you wearing that suit jacket?

**CHARLOTTE**

What do you mean?

**EDDIE**

Girls don't wear suit jackets.

**CHARLOTTE**

I do.

**EDDIE**

You already have a dress on. Why are you wearing a jacket too?

**CHARLOTTE**

I hate the dress. I love the jacket. My mom said I had to wear the dress. So, I made her let me wear the jacket too. She called it a “compromise”.

**MAX**

What’s a compromise?

**CHARLOTTE**

Bullshit.

*Max and Eddie gasp.*

**CHARLOTTE**

What?

**EDDIE**

You cussed.

**CHARLOTTE**

So what? Don’t you?

**EDDIE**

No.

**MAX**

I do!

**CHARLOTTE**

Yeah?

**MAX**

Yeah! All the time.

**CHARLOTTE**

Then do it.

**MAX**

*(pretending not to have heard her)*

Hm?

**CHARLOTTE**

Do it. Cuss.

**MAX**

Now?

**CHARLOTTE**

Yeah. Now.

**MAX**

You ain't said nothin' but a word!

*Silence.*

**CHARLOTTE**

Max?

**MAX**

Hm?

**CHARLOTTE**

Are you gonna do it or not?

**MAX**

I'm bout to! Thinking of the best word to use.

**CHARLOTTE**

Fuck!

**MAX**

What?

**CHARLOTTE**

Say “fuck”. It’s the best one.

**MAX**

Alright.

*(beat)*

Here it go.

*(a deep breath and then a whisper)*

Fuck!

*Eddie gasps.  
Charlotte slow claps.*

**CHARLOTTE**

Wow.

**MAX**

Told you. Ain’t nothin’ but a word.

**CHARLOTTE**

*(to Eddie)*

Your turn.

**EDDIE**

No, thank you.

**CHARLOTTE**

No, thank you?

**EDDIE**

I’d rather not.

**CHARLOTTE**

Why?

**EDDIE**

My Mom and Dad got a divorce and my Mom is always taking me to church now. Almost every day. She used to cuss all the time. Not anymore. Every time I cuss she finds out. I don’t know how, but she does. I said “Damn” one time when I tripped on the stairs at school. When she picked me up, I got in



**EDDIE (cont.)**

the car and she said “I know you been up in that school cussin’! I can feel it!” So, I don’t cuss no more. It ain’t worth the trouble.

*This makes Charlotte giggle.  
What an odd, amusing little boy.*

**CHARLOTTE**

Okay. Can I have some cake?

**EDDIE**

/Sure.

**MAX**

Yes!

*She joins them under the table*

*They hear someone else entering.  
The boys try to make themselves smaller,  
Charlotte does not.*

*Marigold enters  
She wears a bright pink dress, a tiara, and holds her shoes in her hands  
She shakes flower petals out of her shoes  
She spots them immediately*

**MARIGOLD**

What are you doing?!

**MAX & EDDIE & CHARLOTTE**

Hey.

**MARIGOLD**

What. Are. You doing??

**CHARLOTTE**

We don’t like crowds.

**MARIGOLD**

That's not your cake! That's my Mommy's cake!

**MAX**

Your Mom is the one who got married?

**CHARLOTTE**

*(re: Marigold)*

She was the flower girl.

**MAX**

I remember!

**EDDIE**

*(to Marigold)*

You did a good job.

**MARIGOLD**

Shut up! That's not your cake! That's my Mommy's cake!

**MAX**

They let everyone have some.

**MARIGOLD**

*Some!* Not all!

**CHARLOTTE**

It's not all gone.

**MARIGOLD**

If you eat it all, my Daddy won't get any!

**EDDIE**

He had some already. I saw him. They made everybody watch him and your Mom feed some to each other before we got any.

**MARIGOLD**

That's not my Daddy! He's NOT!

*Marigold bursts into tears.*

**MAX**

*(whispering to Charlotte)*  
This is a lot.

*Eddie comes out from under the table with a piece of cake in his hand.  
He goes to Marigold.*

**EDDIE**

My Mom and Dad got a divorce.

**MARIGOLD**

Mine too.

*He holds the cake out to her.  
She takes it.*

*He goes back under the table.  
She follows.*

*They sit in silence for a while.*

**MARIGOLD**

How do you know my Mommy?

**EDDIE**

I don't. My Mom brought me.

**CHARLOTTE**

Me too.

**MAX**

Me three.

*(beat)*  
You did a good job with those flowers.

**MARIGOLD**

Thanks.

**CHARLOTTE**

What's your name?

**MARIGOLD**

Marigold.

**MAX**

Wow. Even your name is a flower.

*They sit and eat.*

**2. “Sparkling Grape”**  
**A Wedding- Age 33**

*A vineyard.*

*Pre-wedding.*

*Eddie stands alone, holding a wine glass, staring out at all the guests.*

*A wedding playlist plays in the distance.*  
*90’s RnB.*

*Marigold enters.*

**MARIGOLD**

Excuse me, sir. Don’t I know you from somewhere?

**EDDIE**

Hey, Marigold.

**MARIGOLD**

What’s your name again?

**EDDIE**

What?

**MARIGOLD**

I’m so sorry for not remembering. Great with faces, bad with names. Always have been.

**EDDIE**

Marigold-

**MARIGOLD**

It’s the same name as a black comedian, right? Chris? Tucker? Rock?  
Keenan? Kel?

**EDDIE**

Eddie. Like Murphy.

**MARIGOLD**

YES! Right! I remember now. You know, it's funny, I used to have a really good friend named Eddie. We met when we were ten. At my Mom and Stepdad's wedding. Both our parents had gone through divorces, so we bonded instantly. We grew up together, dated, broke up. He was my ex-husband's best man at our wedding. He was so good. So kind. He could get a little sloppy, a little wobbly. But he never ceased being good. And he never ceased being kind.

**EDDIE**

Whatever happened to him?

**MARIGOLD**

He went to rehab and stopped calling. They didn't allow phones in the facility, which I could understand, but after a year you'd think he could have called once. There must've been at least one opportunity. After two years, you feel hurt. Does he hate me? Is it my fault? After three, it starts to become normal. You think about it less, you get into your routine, and you start to feel like you might be able to let it go. Until one day when you run into him at a friend's wedding. And it all comes flooding back.

*Silence.*

*They take each other in.*

**EDDIE**

It's not your fault.

**MARIGOLD**

I know.

**EDDIE**

I don't hate you.

**MARIGOLD**

You better not.

*(re: Eddie's wine glass)*

What do we have here?

**EDDIE**

Sparkling grape. Keeps my hands busy and lets me pretend.

**MARIGOLD**

Sparkling grape. They didn't have any Zevia at the bar?

*Eddie smiles.  
An inside joke.*

**EDDIE**

Fuck no.

*They share a laugh.*

*Marigold moves in close to him.*

*They wrap themselves in a tight embrace.*

**EDDIE**

I'm sorry.

**MARIGOLD**

Shhh.

*Silence.*

**MARIGOLD**

Where you been, man?

**EDDIE**

I got lost. I finished the program, left the facility, and...I got lost. I uh...I relapsed after a week. Which is...not what I wanted to happen. I didn't know where I was supposed to go or who I was supposed to be. So, I checked myself back in.

**MARIGOLD**

I'm sorry, love.

**EDDIE**

It's okay. Ya know, it actually...

**EDDIE (cont.)**

*(beat)*

I learned a lot. I learned all of it the hard way but...I learned it.

**MARIGOLD**

I'm happy that you did.

**EDDIE**

Me too. To be honest, I'd still be there if I could.

**MARIGOLD**

Why aren't you?

**EDDIE**

My Mom. She's not doing well. She...she's not doing well.

**MARIGOLD**

I'm sorry.

**EDDIE**

Ain't nothin to be sorry about. People get older, people get sick. That's life.

**MARIGOLD**

We tried calling the facility. We tried writing you. We even tried visiting in person. We could never get to you.

**EDDIE**

We?

**MARIGOLD**

Max and I. Charlie tried telling us to leave it alone, but we never listened.

**EDDIE**

Ya'll never do. Especially when you put both your heads together. It's like a force field.

**MARIGOLD**

I wanna argue with you...but you ain't wrong.



**EDDIE**  
I know I ain't.

*A beat.*

**EDDIE**  
I was sorry to hear about the divorce.

**MARIGOLD**  
Who told you?

**EDDIE**  
I read it in one of your letters.

**MARIGOLD**  
You read them?

**EDDIE**  
Every single one.

*Max enters.*

**MAX**  
Yo, Marigold-

*He sees Eddie and freezes.*

*He takes in the sight.*

*He moves to Eddie.*

*It's unclear if this will lead to intimacy or violence.*

*Max wraps Eddie in an embrace.*

**EDDIE**  
I'm sorry.

**MAX**  
It's okay.

**EDDIE**  
I've been-

**MAX**

Shhh. It doesn't matter. You're here now.

*They come out of the embrace.  
Max can't take his eyes off him.*

**MAX**

I don't know whether to hit you or kiss you.

**EDDIE**

I'm sure there will be time for both.

**MAX**

*(re: Eddie's wine glass)*

What's this?

**EDDIE**

Sparkling grape.

**MAX**

May I?

*He gestures to Eddie's drink.*

*A moment.*

**EDDIE**

Sure.

*Eddie hands him the glass.*

*Max takes a sip.*

*Sparkling grape.*

*He hands back the glass.*

**MAX**

How long?

**EDDIE**

Seven hundred and twenty days.

**MAX**

Well done, my friend. Proud of you.

**EDDIE**

Thank you.

**MAX**

Well, here we are! Another wedding.

**EDDIE**

What do we know about this person?

**MARIGOLD**

Charlie met her in New York about a year ago. After a bunch of back and forth and long-distance, She decided to move down here so they could give it a real chance. Four months later, we're here.

**EDDIE**

Seems fast.

**MAX**

That's what we said.

**EDDIE**

How are they? You know...together.

**MARIGOLD**

Really good, actually. There's a lot of love for each other.

**EDDIE**

That's good to hear.

**MAX**

No shade, but I'm a little surprised Charlie invited you.

**EDDIE**

They didn't. Charlie invited my Mom, but she can't really get out much these days. So, I came in her place.

**MAX**

Has Charlie seen you since you got back?

**EDDIE**

Nope.

*A moment.*

**MAX**

This should be fun.

*Charlie enters.*

**CHARLIE**

Yo, we're gonna-

*Charlie sees Eddie.  
And chooses to ignore him.*

**CHARLIE**

*(to Max and Marigold)*

We're gonna get started in ten minutes or so. Better grab your seats now.

**MARIGOLD**

Okay, love.

**EDDIE**

Charlie-

**CHARLIE**

Gotta get in there and make sure the photographer is all set. See ya'll inside.

*Charlie starts to exit.*

**EDDIE**

Charlie, wait-

*Eddie tries to grab Charlie's arm.  
They shake him off.  
Turn around.*

*And squeezes his jaw in their hand.  
She stares daggers.*

**CHARLIE**  
Don't.

*They exit.*

*Silence.*

**MAX**  
See? Fun.

*Max exits.*

**MARIGOLD**  
Let's go get our seats.

*She starts to exit.  
Eddie doesn't move.*

**MARIGOLD**  
It's all gonna be okay, babe. It's just gonna take time. Okay?

*Eddie nods.*

**MARIGOLD**  
Let's go sit down.

**EDDIE**  
You go ahead. I'll be there in a sec.

**MARIGOLD**  
You sure?

**EDDIE**  
Yeah. I'll be right behind you.

**MARIGOLD**  
Okay. I love you.

**EDDIE**

I love you too.

*Marigold exits.*

*Eddie stares into the distance.  
He inhales deeply,  
Exhales,  
Downs his sparkling grape juice,  
And exits to find a seat.*

**3. “Like All The Flowers Started To Bloom”  
Winter Formal- Age 15**

*A parking lot.  
Charlotte reads a book.  
Eddie enters holding a flask.*

**CHARLOTTE**  
Hey dude.

**EDDIE**  
Hey.

**CHARLOTTE**  
You good?

**EDDIE**  
Yeah, yeah I’m good. It’s just...crowds, you know?

**CHARLOTTE**  
Yeah, I know.  
*(re: flask)*  
Whatcha got there?

**EDDIE**  
Malibu Coconut from my Dad’s place.

*He hands her the flask.  
She takes a pull.  
Coughs.*

**CHARLOTTE**  
Dear, Lord. How do you drink that shit?

**EDDIE**  
It tastes like heaven.

**CHARLOTTE**  
Agree to disagree. Yo, check this out.

**CHARLOTTE**  
Give me your hand

Make room for me  
to lead and follow  
you  
beyond this rage of poetry.

Let others have  
the privacy of  
touching words  
and love of loss  
of love.

For me  
Give me your hand.  
- Maya Angelou

Brilliant, right?

**EDDIE**  
I hate holding hands.

**CHARLOTTE**  
What??

**EDDIE**  
Yeah, I don't like it.

**CHARLOTTE**  
Are you crazy?

**EDDIE**  
Nope, I just don't like it.

**CHARLOTTE**  
Ridiculous. It's the best feeling in the world.



**EDDIE**

Agree to disagree.

**CHARLOTTE**

Whatever, dummy. Are M&M still in there? I say we dip the fuck out and got to Sonic. I want a slushie and a corndog.

**EDDIE**

M&M?

**CHARLOTTE**

Max and Marigold. People are saying that's their couple name.

**EDDIE**

They aren't a couple.

**CHARLOTTE**

Oh, please. Did you see them in there on the dance floor? If that's how they are in public, I don't wanna imagine what they're like when they're alone. Might as well call the camera crew now. *(TV announcer voice)* "This season on Teen Moms."

**EDDIE**

Gross.

**CHARLOTTE**

Hey, I'm just reporting the facts.

**EDDIE**

Do you think they've already...you know?

**CHARLOTTE**

Already what?

**EDDIE**

...you know.

**CHARLOTTE**

I can guarantee I do not.

**EDDIE**

*(whispers)*

Had sex.

**CHARLOTTE**

The fuck are you whispering for? Yeah, I'm about one thousand percent certain they've *(makes a megaphone with her hands)* HAD SEX. Ninety-five percent sure they're in a closet, or a bathroom, or a dark corner right now *(megaphone)* HAVING SEX.

**EDDIE**

Could you please??

**CHARLOTTE**

You seriously gotta lighten up, Edward.

**EDDIE**

Why you gotta use my full government?

**CHARLOTTE**

Names are important. Gotta take pride in them.

**EDDIE**

Yeah, well let's stick with Eddie for me. I take pride in that.

**CHARLOTTE**

You got it, Mr. Murphy.

*(beat)*

I think I'm gonna start having people call me Charlie.

**EDDIE**

Why?

**CHARLOTTE**

I don't know, I just feel like it suits me better. Don't you?

**EDDIE**

I ain't never really thought about it.

**CHARLOTTE**  
Call me Charlie.

**EDDIE**  
Like, now?

**CHARLOTTE**  
Yeah.

**EDDIE**  
Charlie.

*Charlotte inhales deeply.  
Exhales.  
It suits her.*

**CHARLIE**  
I like that.

**EDDIE**  
You know, Eddie Murphy has a brother named Charlie. We're siblings now.

**CHARLIE**  
Gross.

*They share a smile.*

**EDDIE**  
You really think they're having sex?

**CHARLIE**  
Positive.

**EDDIE**  
Like, right now?

**CHARLIE**  
I mean, that was mainly a joke. But I wouldn't rule it out.

*Eddie lowers his gaze.*

**CHARLIE**

Your time shall come, little one.

**EDDIE**

In this lifetime?

**CHARLIE**

And in the next.

**EDDIE**

We'll see. I haven't even kissed anyone yet.

**CHARLIE**

What?

**EDDIE**

Nothing. I don't know why I said that.

**CHARLIE**

You've never kissed anyone?

**EDDIE**

Whaaat? Pfft. Of course, I have!

**CHARLIE**

That's not what you just said.

**EDDIE**

Could you please not tell anyone?

**CHARLIE**

How in Jesus' name have you not kissed anyone? I thought everyone passed that mark in Middle School.

**EDDIE**

Not me.

**CHARLIE**

You haven't even had the opportunity?

**EDDIE**

I did once. Tonya Crawford. Last day of 6<sup>th</sup> grade. The day the AC broke.

**CHARLIE**

God, that sucked.

**EDDIE**

The last bell rang and we ran into each other in the stairwell. I mean literally ran into each other. Like, turned the corner and BAM! After, like, a hundred apologies I asked if she'd sign my yearbook. She did, and I signed hers. Then we just stared at each other. Eventually she smiles and leans in for a kiss and that's when everything went black.

**CHARLIE**

What??

**EDDIE**

I passed out. The heat got to me and I passed out.

**CHARLIE**

No!

**EDDIE**

Yes. Woke up a few minutes later with Max standing over me. Tonya found him and brought him to me. Why she didn't go get a teacher? I couldn't tell you. But Max got me some water and helped me out of there.

**CHARLIE**

That's why you two weren't on the bus that day!

**EDDIE**

Bingo.

**CHARLIE**

Damn, dawg. That sucks.

**EDDIE**

You can say that again.

**CHARLIE**

Damn, dawg. That sucks.

*Eddie smiles.*

**EDDIE**

I hate you.

**CHARLIE**

I hate you too. That was so long ago! You've gotta have had another opportunity.

**EDDIE**

Not a one. Now look at me. A fifteen-year-old who's never had his first kiss.

**CHARLIE**

Do you want to?

**EDDIE**

Have my first kiss? Duh, Charlie. That's the whole point of this conversation.

**CHARLIE**

I'll do it.

**EDDIE**

What?

**CHARLIE**

I'll kiss you. Give you your first kiss so you can move on.

**EDDIE**

Woah, I don't know, dude.

**CHARLIE**

What?

**EDDIE**

You don't think that'd be weird?

**CHARLIE**

Weirder than being a fifteen-year-old lip virgin?

*A moment.*

**EDDIE**

You won't tell Max?

**CHARLIE**

No.

**EDDIE**

What about Marigold?

**CHARLIE**

I won't tell her either.

**EDDIE**

You tell her everything.

**CHARLIE**

No, I don't!

*Eddie gives her a look.*

**CHARLIE**

What?? I don't! She doesn't even know my name is Charlie now.

*They share a smile.*

*Charlie steps into him.*

**CHARLIE**

You ready?

*He nods.*

*She gently squeezes his jaw in her hand.*

*She kisses him.*

*It's stiff at first, but eventually they relax.*

**CHARLIE**

How was that?

**EDDIE**

Not as weird as I thought.

*(beat)*

But still a little weird.

**CHARLIE**

Yeah, just a little.

*They laugh.*

*Charlie takes his hand,  
Places it into hers,  
And interlaces their fingers.*

*A moment*

**CHARLIE**

How's this?

**EDDIE**

Not as bad as I remember.

**CHARLIE**

*(kisses her teeth)*

Best feeling ever.

*Max and Marigold enter disheveled and smiley.  
They clearly just finished having sex a few minutes ago.*

**MAX**

What are ya'll doing out here?? Don't you know there's a party happening inside?

**CHARLIE**

We don't like crowds. And neither do you last time I checked.



**MARIGOLD**

Yeah, but this is different! This is our first school dance! We're making memories tonight.

**CHARLIE**

From the looks of you two, that ain't the only thing we're making.

*She makes a baby bump gesture.*

**MARIGOLD**

*(shoving her playfully)*

Whatever, bitch. The DJ said he only has a few songs left. You gotta dance with me before the night is through.

**CHARLIE**

Bitch, you know I don't dance.

**MARIGOLD**

Tonight you do! Let's go!

*She pulls her inside.*

**MAX**

What about you, Ed? You tryna dance with me before this is all over?

**EDDIE**

I don't know, man. I think I'll stay out here.

**MAX**

Come on! You heard Marigold. We're making memories tonight!

**EDDIE**

You head in.

*(re: flask)*

I'mma finish this off, and then I'll join.

**MAX**

Fine. Get loose, but not wobbly!

*Max starts to exit.*

**EDDIE**

Can I ask you a weird question?

**MAX**

Always.

**EDDIE**

Do you love Marigold?

**MAX**

So much.

*He starts to exit again.*

**EDDIE**

Follow up question: When you look at her, what does it feel like?

**MAX**

*(beat)*

You know how people talk about getting butterflies in their stomach? For me, it's more like someone planted a garden deep inside me a long time ago. Maybe even before I was born. And when I met Marigold, all the flowers started to bloom. My own personal garden brought to life by her. Does that make sense?

**EDDIE**

Totally.

**MAX**

Good. I'll see you in there, right?

*Eddie nods.*

**MAX**

Remember: Loose, but not wobbly.

*Max exits.*

*Eddie looks off after him for a while.*

*He takes a long pull from the flask.  
It goes down the wrong pipe.  
He starts coughing.  
Softly. Then violently.*

*He coughs something into his hand.  
He holds it in his fist.  
He opens his hand and reveals.  
A flower.*

*He examines it.  
He looks toward the dance.*

**“A Moment of Expansion”  
A Dance- Age 10-?**

*A magical space*

*Charlie stands before us*

*Music*

*Charlie explores her body*

*It's part dance, part investigation*

*It takes as long as it takes*

*For a body to transition from belonging to the world*

*To belonging solely to the spirit housed inside.*

*As it comes to an end,*

*Charlie takes a deep breath*

*In*

*And Out*

*A moment of expansion*

*From “she”*

*To “They”*

*They step into the next scene*

**4. “The 5 Royals”  
A Divorce Party- Age 30**

*A backyard.*

*A banner hangs somewhere that reads: “Til Divorce Do Us Part”.*

*Marigold and Charlie sit in lawn chairs.  
They’re in the midst of a rousing game of “Would You Rather”.*

**CHARLIE**

*(laughing)*

Okay, okay. Would you rather always be choking or always be having diarrhea?

**MARIGOLD**

Oh, God.

**CHARLIE**

OR...or...always be choking on diarrhea?

**MARIGOLD**

None of the above.

**CHARLIE**

That’s not an option.

**MARIGOLD**

I hate all of them.

**CHARLIE**

That’s the point! Answer the question.

**MARIGOLD**

*(beat)*

Always be having diarrhea.

**CHARLIE**

What?! Are you kidding me?

**MARIGOLD**

What?

**CHARLIE**

Always be having diarrhea? Think of your asshole, Sis!

**MARIGOLD**

Yeah, well it's better than always choking!

**CHARLIE**

In what respect?

**MARIGOLD**

*(can't think of a logical reason)*

Ah, fuck, I don't know! I just feel like I'd rather breathe than-

**CHARLIE**

Than what? Have a dry asshole?

**MARIGOLD**

Whateva, bitch.

**CHARLIE**

*(clutches pearls)*

\Why I gotta be all that??

**MARIGOLD**

My turn.

**CHARLIE**

Alright, go ahead leaky butt.

*Marigold flips Charlie off.*

**CHARLIE**

*(playfully gasping)*

The attitude this evening!

**MARIGOLD**

Would you rather eat a-

**CHARLIE**

Oh God.

**MARIGOLD**

What?

**CHARLIE**

Nothing. Keep going.

**MARIGOLD**

No, Charlie, what?

**CHARLIE**

You always do some stupid shit about eating something.

**MARIGOLD**

So what?

**CHARLIE**

Just sayin.

**MARIGOLD**

Fuck you. Yours was about diarrhea! This is “Would You Rather”, not a TED Talk.

**CHARLIE**

True, but you *could* come up with something that doesn’t involve eating something weird for once.

**MARIGOLD**

Okay fuck it. I’ll do something else.

**CHARLIE**

No, look, if you wanna do the eating thing it’s fine.

**MARIGOLD**

Nah, nah! Already came up with something else.

**CHARLIE**

Great. Let’s hear it.

**MARIGOLD**

Would you rather be with the love of your life for five years-

**CHARLIE**

Christ.

**MARIGOLD**

Shut up! Would you rather be with the love of your life for five years and then be alone for the rest of your life, or marry someone you didn't fully love and never have to be alone again?

**CHARLIE**

Really?

**MARIGOLD**

What?

**CHARLIE**

You're gonna do one about marriage and love...right now?

**MARIGOLD**

Why not??

*Charlie gestures to the banner.  
'Til Divorce Do Us Part.*

**MARIGOLD**

Ah, shit. I forgot.

**CHARLIE**

You forgot?? It's *your* party!

**MARIGOLD**

First of all: It's *our* party. Max is the one who first brought it up. Second of all: I'm high as shit off that gummy you gave me. You can't expect me to remember anything right now.

**CHARLIE**

*(laughing)*

Lightweight.



**MARIGOLD**

So?

*Silence.*  
*They stare into the night sky.*

**CHARLIE**

How does it feel?

**MARIGOLD**

It's good. A nice body high without feeling like I'm gonna melt into the floor.

**CHARLIE**

Not the gummy, stupid! The divorce.

**MARIGOLD**

Right.

*(beat)*

Strangely fine. Max has been so good about the whole thing. No fights. No lawyer drama. People talk about going with grace. He has an almost eerie calm.

**CHARLIE**

Very unlike him.

**MARIGOLD**

Very. When I filed, I expected a fight. A fucking blowout. But I got the exact opposite. He'd made dinner and we were just finishing up. I told him and he just looked down at his plate for a while. Eventually he looked up at me and said "Okay, baby. Whatever you want." He went to the kitchen, pulled a pint of ice cream out of the freezer, and we ate it. The end.

*A beat.*

**CHARLIE**

Have you hidden all the sharp objects? Because he might be a murderer.

**MARIGOLD**

*(laughing)*

I hate you.

**CHARLIE**

I'm just saying!

**MARIGOLD**

We've known each other for twenty years now. I think we'd know if he were a murderer.

**CHARLIE**

You'd think that, but you can never really ever be sure. On this podcast I'm listening to-

**MARIGOLD**

Nope! Don't tell me nothin' about your scary ass murder podcasts. Last time, I didn't sleep for a week.

**CHARLIE**

Fine. I'm just saying...stay vigilant.

*Silence.*

*They stare into the night sky.*

**MARIGOLD**

How's Eddie?

**CHARLIE**

I don't know. There's a "no-phone" policy at the facility. Haven't talked to him since he went in.

**MARIGOLD**

How long has it been?

**CHARLIE**

Six months.

**MARIGOLD**

When does he get out?

**CHARLIE**

Another thing I don't know. He can stay as long as he can afford it.  
So...we'll see.

**MARIGOLD**

And how are you?

**CHARLIE**

Honestly?

*(beat)*

Relieved.

*Silence.*

*Marigold gets up and moves to Charlie's lawn chair.*

*She lays down next to them.*

*They hold each other.*

*Max enters holding an envelope.*

*He watches them from afar.*

**CHARLIE**

**(singing) Each night before you go to bed, my baby.**

**Whisper a little prayer for me, my baby.**

**And tell all the stars above.**

**This is dedicated to the one I love.**

*Marigold kisses Charlie.*

*Max hangs back a moment to give them space.*

*The kiss ends.*

*They lay in each other's arms.*

*Max makes his presence known.*

**MAX**  
The Mamas and the Papas.

*Charlie and Marigold jump out of their skin.*

**CHARLIE**  
/JESUS CHRIST!

**MARIGOLD**  
/FUCK! MAX!

**MAX**  
WHAT?? WHAT'D I DO??

**CHARLIE**  
You can't just be sneaking up on people like that!

**MARIGOLD**  
Seriously! Announce yourself!

**MAX**  
I ain't wanna interrupt! Ya'll looked all cozy and everything.

**MARIGOLD**  
I almost peed my pants.

**CHARLIE**  
I *did* pee my pants.

*All the attention snaps to Charlie.*

**CHARLIE**  
Only a little bit.

**MAX**  
Well, I'm sorry. Everybody inside left, so I thought it was about time for this.

*He holds up the envelope.*

**MARIGOLD**

Right. We still have to do that.

**CHARLIE**

I'll get out of your way.

**MARIGOLD**

You're way too high to drive home.

**CHARLIE**

I'll be fine! I'm an expert.

**MAX**

Just stay in the guest room.

**CHARLIE**

Ya'll, I got this. You ain't gotta worry.

**MAX**

You sure?

**CHARLIE**

I'm positive.

**MARIGOLD**

Fine. Come here.

*Charlie and Marigold hug.*

**MARIGOLD**

I love you.

**CHARLIE**

I love you, too. I'll see you soon.

**MARIGOLD**

See you soon.

*Charlie goes to Max.  
They hug.*

**CHARLIE**

Love you, Maxwell.

**MAX**

Love you, Charlie.

**CHARLIE**

See you soon.

**MAX**

Absolutely.

*Charlie starts to exit inside,  
Stops,  
Turns around.*

**CHARLIE**

Also, that's not the Mamas and the Papas.

**MAX**

What?

**CHARLIE**

That song. It's not theirs. It's a cover of The "5" Royals. Created by black people, made popular and immortalized by white people. Go figure.

**MAX**

Typical.

**CHARLIE**

Ain't it?

*Charlie exits.  
Max and Marigold are alone.  
Max takes the forms out of the envelope.  
He takes a pen from his pocket.*

**MAX**

You ready?

**MARIGOLD**

*(she nods)*

You?

**MAX**

Ready as I'll ever be. Want me to go first?

**MARIGOLD**

Please.

*Max sits and signs.  
He hands her the forms and lies back into the lawn chair.*

*Marigold sits.  
She starts to sign, but hesitates.  
She looks to Max.*

*They lock eyes for a long moment.*

*She looks back to the forms and signs.*

**MAX**

Well.

**MARIGOLD**

Yes. Well.

*She moves to his chair.  
They hold each other.  
Max chuckles.*

**MARIGOLD**

What?

**MAX**

You're a wonder, you know that? I've always thought so and I always will. I mean, come on, even your name is a flower.

*Silence.*

*They stare into the night sky.  
Charlie enters.*

**CHARLIE**

Ya'll were a hundred percent right. I couldn't even tie my shoes. Cool if I sleep in the guest room?

*Max and Mary laugh.*

**MARIGOLD**

/Absolutely.

**MAX**

Anytime.

**CHARLIE**

Ya'll cuddling?

*They make room.*

**MAX**

Just come on. We already know what you want.

**CHARLIE**

I'm just saying, ya'll look real warm and cozy.

**MARIGOLD**

If you don't get over here and be quiet.

*Charlie snuggles in.*

**CHARLIE**

I love ya'll.

**MARIGOLD**

We love you too.

*The stars swallow them whole.  
They set up for the next scene.*



5. "Very Handsome. Very Charlie."  
Senior Prom-Age 18

*A high school hallway.*

*Outside a "Teachers Only" bathroom.*

*Max stands in front of the bathroom door.  
He knocks.*

**MAX**

Charlie, please. Please open the door and talk to me.

*Marigold rushes on.*

**MARIGOLD**

Any luck?

**MAX**

What does it look like?

**MARIGOLD**

Hey, do not catch an attitude with me! This ain't my fault. I ain't the one who made her cry.

**MAX**

I didn't even do nothing! One minute we were dancing, the next minute she ran off and locked herself in here.

**MARIGOLD**

What'd you say to her?

**MAX**

Nothing.

**MARIGOLD**

You must've said something! Something stupid. Or maybe she found out the truth about some lie you told. Lord knows you love to lie.

**MAX**

Could you please?! Fucking Christ! You don't know everything about me, Marigold.

**MARIGOLD**

I don't know everything about you?

**MAX**

Not even close.

**MARIGOLD**

Tell me. What don't I know?

*A moment.*

**MARIGOLD**

What did you say to her?

**MAX**

Look, we were dancing. Slow dancing! And you know how much I hate that shit. But Charlie? Ah, man. She LOVES it! She'll buss down for a slow song. So, I take her out on the dance floor, and we dance. To my surprise, I don't hate it so much. I don't know if it's this particular song or if it's just that I'm maturing-

**MARIGOLD**

*(kisses her teeth)*

You know it ain't that.

**MAX**

Do you wanna know what happened or not?

**MARIGOLD**

I wanna know what you said to make that girl cry. I ain't ask for your little backstory.

**MAX**

You're the most beautiful girl I've ever seen.

**MARIGOLD**

What?

**MAX**

That's what I said to her. We were dancing, I looked her in her eyes, and I said, "You're the most beautiful girl I've ever seen." Then she started crying, ran away, and locked herself in here.

**MARIGOLD**

Oh.

**MAX**

Yeah.

**MARIGOLD**

That's all you said?

**MAX**

Swear to God.

**MARIGOLD**

You must've said something else.

**MAX**

I'm telling you!

**MARIGOLD**

That don't make no sense, Max! A compliment shouldn't make nobody cry.

**MAX**

Now you understand my confusion.

*A moment.*

**MARIGOLD**

Is she really the prettiest girl you've ever seen?

**MAX**

What do you care?

**MARIGOLD**

I don't.

*Eddie rushes in,  
Wobbly.*

**EDDIE**

Yo! What's up??

**MARIGOLD**

Where you been?? I texted you, like, 20 minutes ago.

**EDDIE**

I'm sorry, babe. I was in the parking lot.

*Marigold and Eddie kiss.  
Marigold is aware of Max's gaze.  
She makes a meal of it.*

**MARIGOLD**

*(licking her lips)*

Ooh, you taste like rum.

**MAX**

Of course, he does.

**EDDIE**

*(to Max)*

What'd you do?

**MAX**

Nothing.

**EDDIE**

You must've done something. Why else would she be locked in there?

**MAX**

I don't know, man.

**MARIGOLD**

He called her the most beautiful girl he's ever seen.

**EDDIE**

Aw, cute.

**MAX**

Yo, shut up! Yes, that was my BIG mistake. I just had to go and call the girl beautiful.

*We hear Charlie's voice behind the door.*

**CHARLIE**

Stop calling me that!

**MAX**

Calling you what?? Beautiful??

**CHARLIE**

Stop calling me a girl!

**MARIGOLD**

*(to Max)*

Yeah, stupid! She's a WOMAN!

**CHARLIE**

Not that either!

**MAX**

Well, goddamn! What else we 'sposed to call you?

**CHARLIE**

I DON'T KNOW!

*(beat)*

I don't know. Just...just go back to Prom and leave me alone.

*Max starts banging on the door.*

**MAX**

Come on, Charlie! Open the door!

*Eddie stops Max.*

**EDDIE**

Yo, relax. Fuckin hell. You really think bangin' on the door like you the police is gonna make her want to talk to you?

**MAX**

Just go away, man.

**EDDIE**

Let me try to talk to her.

**MAX**

You're drunk.

**EDDIE**

First of all: rude. Second: I'm not drunk. I'm loose.

**MAX**

Fuck off, Eddie.

**EDDIE**

Just let me try.

**MAX**

I *been* trying to talk to her! I'm her boyfriend, you think you can do better than me?

**EDDIE**

That's not what I said. I said I wanted to try.

**MAX**

You don't know everything, Eddie.

**EDDIE**

You're right. And I'll do you one better, I don't know *anything*.

*A moment.*

*Max moves away.*

*Eddie approaches.  
He leans up against the door.*

**EDDIE**

Hey, Charlie it's me. Can I come in and talk to you real quick?

*(silence)*

Dope, I'mma take that as a "no". Can I come in and *listen* to you real quick?  
How's that?

*(silence)*

I got your back, dude. You know that, right?

*(silence)*

Yo, check this out:

**Give me your hand**

**Make room for me  
to lead and follow  
you  
beyond this rage of poetry.**

**Let others have  
the privacy of  
touching words  
and love of loss  
of love.**

**For me  
Give me your hand.  
- Maya Angelou**

Brilliant, right?

*Silence.*

**EDDIE**  
For me. Unlock the door.

*A moment.*

*We hear the door unlock.*

*Eddie looks to the others.  
He DID that.  
He opens the door and steps inside.*

*We hear the door lock.*

*Max presses his ear to it.*

**MARIGOLD**

What are they saying?

**MAX**

I don't know. I can't hear shit.

**MARIGOLD**

Move.

*She pushes Max aside.*

**MAX**

Any better for you, Dumbo?

*She flips him off.  
A moment as she tries to listen.*

**MARIGOLD**

I can't hear shit!

**MAX**

Told you, stupid.

**MARIGOLD**

Don't call me stupid, stupid.

**MAX**

*(re: Eddie)*  
I can't believe you're with him.



**MARIGOLD**

Well, believe it.

**MAX**

He so fucking annoying. Always drunk. Always trying to be poetical and shit.

**MARIGOLD**

He is not *always* drunk. And I like poetical.

**MAX**

*(kisses teeth)*

Whatever, man. Poetry ain't shit. Anybody could do it. I could be poetical if I felt like it.

**MARIGOLD**

Oh yeah? Show me.

*A moment.*

**MAX**

I don't feel like it right now.

**MARIGOLD**

Chicken.

**MAX**

Fuck you.

**MARIGOLD**

Fuck you, too.

*Silence.*

**MAX**

So, you like being with him?

**MARIGOLD**

What do you care?

**MAX**  
I don't.

*We hear the door unlock.*

*Eddie steps out wearing Charlie's prom dress.  
Charlie steps out wearing Eddie's tux.*

**MAX**  
Yo, Charlie I-

*Charlie raises their hand to stop him.*

**CHARLIE**

I have an announcement. I've been feeling this way for a long time. For as long as I can remember. It's been hard for me to find a way to express it, and I'm still figuring it out, but I think I'm close. Here's what I know for now: I'm not a girl. I'm not a woman. I'm just me. I'm not she or her. I'm me. I don't know a lot of things, but I know one thing for sure. I'm. Just. Me.

*A moment.*

*The group looks to each other.  
They process.*

**MARIGOLD**

What should we call you, then?

**CHARLIE**

For now, just call me by my name. Call me Charlie.

**MARIGOLD**

Okay, Charlie. I can do that.

*Charlie looks to Max.*

**MAX**

You're the most beautiful Charlie I've ever seen.

*Charlie smiles.*

*They look to Eddie.*

**EDDIE**

How do I look?

**CHARLIE**

Gorgeous. How about me?

**EDDIE**

Very handsome. Very Charlie.

*The group looks to each other.*

*They smile.*

*They laugh.*

*They set up for the next scene.*

6. "Like I know who you are"  
A Wedding- Age 28

*A bedroom.*

*Max is pacing back and forth, analyzing a wrinkly sheet of paper.  
He's in a tux from the waist up,  
boxers and dress socks from the waist down.*

*Eddie watches.  
Fully dressed.*

**EDDIE**

Could you please sit down? You're giving me motion sickness.

**MAX**

*(re: wrinkly sheet of paper)*  
This is trash! Who wrote this?!

**EDDIE**

You did.

**MAX**

Why do people even do this shit?

**EDDIE**

Get married?

**MAX**

Write vows. I told Marigold I didn't wanna do this. I begged her to let me just read a poem or a quote or something. ANYTHING, as long as it's written by somebody else. But "NOOOO", she said. I had to be the one to write it. It had to be "original" and "from the heart". I mean, who even cares?!

**EDDIE**

She does.

**MAX**

Could you please stop answering my rhetorical questions?!

**EDDIE**

Could you please put your pants on?

**MAX**

I have to figure this out first.

**EDDIE**

We gotta be out there in ten minutes.

**MAX**

TEN MINUTES?! That's nowhere near enough time!

**EDDIE**

Well, I don't know what to tell you.

**MAX**

I can't go out there and read this shit!

**EDDIE**

Give it here.

**MAX**

No.

**EDDIE**

For fuck's sake. It can't be that bad.

**MAX**

Well, I'm not giving you the chance to find out.

**EDDIE**

Give it here.

**MAX**

No.

*Eddie stands up and moves to Max.*

**EDDIE**

Come on.

**MAX**  
No!

*Max moves away.*

*A chase ensues.*

**EDDIE**  
Dude, stop playing.

**MAX**  
Get away!

**EDDIE**  
As your best man, I'm entitled to read those vows.

**MAX**  
You ain't entitled to shit!

*Eddie catches Max.  
They struggle over the paper.  
They fall to the ground and the struggle continues.  
Eddie finally wrestles the paper away, stands, and reads.*

**MAX**  
Come on, dude. Give it back.

**EDDIE**  
Shut up. I'm in it now.

*Silence, as Eddie reads.  
Max watches intently.  
Eddie finishes and looks to Max.*

**MAX**  
Well?

*A moment.*

*Eddie rips the paper into bits.*

**EDDIE**

Yeah, that was terrible.

**MAX**

WHAT THE FUCK?! Why would you do that?!

*Max falls to the ground and tries to put the pieces back together.*

**EDDIE**

It's a public service! As the best man, I have a responsibility to the people in that room. And part of that responsibility is that they NEVER have to hear a word of what was on that paper.

*Max sits on the floor amongst his scattered vows.*

*He cries.*

*Not a joke cry.*

*Or an exaggerated cry.*

*Or a cry for attention.*

*A genuine, frustrated cry.*

**EDDIE**

God dammit.

*Eddie moves to Max.*

*He takes him in his arms.*

**MAX**

I'm not good at this.

**EDDIE**

Sure, you are.

**MAX**

I'm not! She knows how I feel about her. Why does she need me to talk about it in front of all those people?

**EDDIE**

You know how Marigold is. She loves this shit.

**MAX**  
Well, I hate it.

**EDDIE**  
I know.

*(a beat)*  
You remember our first Winter Formal? You and Marigold spent the whole night disappearing into every corner you could find to make out.

**MAX**  
*(laughing)*  
We were awful.

**EDDIE**  
Yeah, you were. Charlie and I were so over it. Me especially. At the time, I thought it didn't make sense that two people would want to spend that much time together. But you said something to me that night that made me understand.

**MAX**  
What'd I say?

**EDDIE**  
I asked you what it felt like being with Marigold. You said it was like all the flowers started to bloom. Deep inside you. A garden brought to life.

**MAX**  
*I said that??*

**EDDIE**  
You did.

**MAX**  
That's pretty damn good.

**EDDIE**  
Yes, it is. You made me realize me being annoyed had nothing to do with you two. I was angry that no one wanted to spend that much time with *me*. Watching the two of you together forced me to acknowledge how lonely I really was.



**MAX**  
I'm sorry.

**EDDIE**  
Don't be. It all worked out, didn't it?

**MAX**  
Yes. Yes, it did.

*A moment.*

**EDDIE**  
Alright, my friend. Let's go.

*He starts to get up.  
Max stays in his lap.*

**MAX**  
Wait! Let's sit here a little longer.

**EDDIE**  
It's time. We can't keep the people waiting. As the best man-

**MAX**  
You have a responsibility to the people, I know. But, first, you have a responsibility to me.

**EDDIE**  
*(a beat)*  
True.

*Max stays in Eddie's lap and looks up at him.*

**MAX**  
How's Charlie?

**EDDIE**  
Charlie's...  
*(searching for the right word)*  
phenomenal. They really are.

**MAX**

How's that other thing?

**EDDIE**

Better. Working on it.

**MAX**

Good.

*(a beat)*

Does Charlie know about your first kiss?

**EDDIE**

They *were* my first kiss.

**MAX**

No, they weren't.

**EDDIE**

Yeah, they were. Winter Formal. Same night you said that thing about Marigold.

**MAX**

Are you kidding me? That was *not* your first kiss.

**EDDIE**

How you gon' tell me about *my* first kiss? They weren't your lips.

**MAX**

Actually, they were. The day we met. Marigold's Mom's wedding. Marigold went up to give her speech and we stayed in the kitchen. You had cake frosting all over your mouth. I dared you to let me lick it off. And you did.

**EDDIE**

We were ten years old.

**MAX**

So, you remember?

**EDDIE**

Of course, I remember. But that wasn't a proper kiss. That was you being gross.

**MAX**

Woooooow. It wasn't a *proper* kiss?

**EDDIE**

That's right.

**MAX**

It was mouth to mouth contact.

**EDDIE**

No, it was tongue to outer rim of mouth contact.

**MAX**

Same thing.

**EDDIE**

Absolutely not.

**MAX**

So, in your mind, we have never kissed?

**EDDIE**

Correct.

*Max takes his head out of Eddie's lap.*

**MAX**

Well, we'll have to settle this right now.

**EDDIE**

What are you talking about?

**MAX**

We're gonna kiss right here, right now. Then you can never deny it again.

**EDDIE**

We certainly are not.

**MAX**

Why not?

**EDDIE**

I'm dating Charlie.

**MAX**

I *used* to date Charlie.

**EDDIE**

You're with Marigold.

**MAX**

You used to be with her, too.

**EDDIE**

You're about to marry her.

**MAX**

That's right. And then I'll never be able to kiss anybody who's not her ever again. This is the last chance we've got. Let's go.

*Eddie stares at him dumbfounded.*

**EDDIE**

You're ridiculous.

**MAX**

Yes, I am. May I kiss you now?

*A moment.*

**EDDIE**

You may.

*They share a proper kiss.*

**MAX**

How was that?

**EDDIE**

Much better than the last time. Now, can we please go get you married?

*Max nods.  
They stand.  
Max checks the time.  
They're late.*

**MAX**

Holy shit! We're so late!

**EDDIE**

That's what I've been saying this whole time!

*Max, still pantsless, puts his shoes on.  
Charlie enters.*

**CHARLIE**

What are you fools doing in here?! People are about to riot!

**EDDIE**

Sorry, babe. We got caught in a last minute vow crisis in here.

**CHARLIE**

Well, wrap it up and let's get this show on the road!

*They start to exit.*

**CHARLIE**

Max, where are your pants??

**MAX**

Shit!

**EDDIE**

Told you.

**MAX**  
Shut up!

*Max locates his pants and puts them on.*

**MAX**  
How do I look?

**CHARLIE**  
Late. Now go.

*Max exits.*

**CHARLIE**  
What happened to the Best Man's responsibility to the people?

**EDDIE**  
It got overruled by the Best Man's responsibility to the Groom.

**CHARLIE**  
Sucker.

*They kiss.*

**CHARLIE**  
Hm.

**EDDIE**  
What?

**CHARLIE**  
It's just funny. I remember what your lips tasted like when we first kissed.

**EDDIE**  
What did they taste like?

**CHARLIE**  
Rum. That terrible Malibu Coconut you used to drink all through high school.

**EDDIE**

What do they taste like now?

**CHARLIE**

Like I know who you are.

*They gently squeeze his jaw in their hand.*

*They kiss again.*

*They smile.*

*They set up for the next scene.*

**“A Moment of Expansion (Part Two)”**  
**A Dance- Age 28-30**

*A magical space.*

*Max and Marigold enter from opposite sides.*

*They wear the clothes they were married in.*

*They meet at center and begin to dance the story of their marriage.*

*It's a dance about never being on the same page at the same time.*

*The moment one wants to be close, the other wants distance.*

*The moment one wants to move quickly, the other opts for a slower pace.*

*There are tiny moments when they move in perfect unison.*

*Moments our eyes barely catch before, suddenly, it vanishes.*

*Like it never happened to begin with.*

*They lose each other, find each other again.*

*The dance is sweet at times. Violent at others.*

*They grab, hug, push, pull, kiss, hit.*

*The violence is not indicative of abuse,*

*It's the embodiment of their frustration and heartbreak.*

*A manifestation of all the things they don't know how to say.*

*When it's time, the dance ends.*

*The music ends.*

*They face each other.*

*They take a deep breathe*

*In*

*And Out.*

*A moment of expansion.*

*From “Us”*

*To “I”.*

*They face us.*

*They enter the next scene.*



**7. “They have Zevia at the bar”  
A Renewal of Vows- Age 23**

*Split scene.*

*Eddie and Marigold in a bathroom.*

*Charlie in a shitty hotel vending machine room.*

*Eddie is puking in the toilet.  
Marigold is rubbing his back.*

*Charlie would kill for a Dr. Pepper.  
Like, seriously commit homicide.  
They put the required amount into the machine.  
They make their selection.  
We hear the machine begin dispensing.  
Then a loud thud.  
Charlie looks to where a can should be.  
There is nothing.*

**CHARLIE**

Give me a fucking break.

*They pound on the machine.  
Nothing.  
They shake the machine.  
Nothing.*

*They get on their knees and try to reach up inside.*

*Eddie finishes puking.*

**MARIGOLD**

What the fuck, Eddie?

**EDDIE**

I’m sorry.

**MARIGOLD**

Keep it. I don’t want your fucking “sorry”.

**EDDIE**

I'm sorry.

**MARIGOLD**

You do this every time. Every. Time. I spend the whole night trying to parent you.

**EDDIE**

I don't need a parent.

**MARIGOLD**

Oh, you don't?

**EDDIE**

No. I have it under control.

**MARIGOLD**

Now, you done told some lies in your day. But that by far is the worst one.

**EDDIE**

Not a lie.

**MARIGOLD**

It damn sure ain't the truth! You do not have it under control, Eddie. You lost control six double gin and tonics ago. You lost control senior year of high school when you showed up every day smelling like Malibu coconut. You lost control the day you learned how to fill your sippy cup yourself. If you weren't so afraid of telling yourself the truth, you'd admit you ain't never had control a day in your fucking life!

*Max enters the vending machine room.*

**MAX**

Charlie-

*Charlie doesn't look at him.  
They continue trying to retrieve the can.*

**CHARLIE**

Go away.

**MAX**

What the fuck, Charlie? Why would you run off like that?

**CHARLIE**

I was thirsty.

**MAX**

There's an open bar in the ballroom.

**CHARLIE**

I wanted a soda.

**MAX**

There's soda at the bar!

**CHARLIE**

No. There's *Zevia* at the bar. Bullshit no sugar, no calorie *Zevia*. I want a real soda. A fucking Dr. Pepper. I want ALL the sugar and ALL the calories.

**MAX**

You walked out in the middle of my Mother's toast for a Dr. Pepper?!

*A moment.*

*Charlie abandons the lost can and looks at him.*

**CHARLIE**

That's correct.

**MARIGOLD**

I can't keep doing this.

**EDDIE**

I know.

**MARIGOLD**

You need help, Eddie.

**EDDIE**

I know.

**MAX**

What the fuck is wrong with you? Why can't we have one day with my parents? One good day. They're renewing their vows for Christ's sake! This is their day, and you have to go and make it about you.

**CHARLIE**

What?

**MAX**

You're fucking selfish, Charlie.

**CHARLIE**

*I'm selfish?! Are you fucking kidding me? I have made every allowance, given every ounce of patience, every inch of space to your parents. I have exercised the highest level of calm as your Mother has called me "girl". "Girl" this and "sweetheart" that. Trying to pawn dresses off on me like I'm her fucking barbie doll. "You'd be such a pretty girl if you'd just wear a dress every once in a while." Fuck! Off! It's been seven years, Max! Seven! Seven years and I still have to hear my fucking dead name despite correction, after correction, after correction. I can't breathe when I hear that name. Do you understand?! So, when she looked at me...in front of all those people in there...and called me "...The daughter I never had." And you looked at me and smiled. As if that's who I really am. I couldn't take it, Max. I couldn't, I can't, I won't take it.*

**MARIGOLD**

Let me take you somewhere. Let's go home, sleep this off, and in the morning let me take you somewhere. Somewhere you can get the help you need.

*A moment.*

**EDDIE**

I can't.

**MARIGOLD**

Can't or won't?

**MAX**

So, what do you want me to do? I've talked to her a thousand times. I've corrected her over and over again. I don't know what else to do! She's older, it's a lot of new information she didn't grow up with. This is all really hard for her.

**CHARLIE**

And what is it for me?

**MAX**

Look I...you know I love you. I don't want you to be nobody else but you. You're my Charlie. Who cares what my Mom says or doesn't say? What she understands or doesn't understand? As long as *we* understand, isn't that enough?

**CHARLIE**

No, Max, it's not. Not even close.

*Charlie starts to exit.  
Max tries to follow.*

**MAX**

Charlie, come on.

**CHARLIE**

Don't. Follow me.

*Charlie exits.*

*A moment.*

*Max punches the machine.*

*The lost can falls loose.*

*Max reaches in and takes it out.*

*Charlie re-enters and grabs the can from him.*

**CHARLIE**

Thanks.

*Charlie re-exits.*

**MARIGOLD**

Just say you will.

*(beat)*

Please.

*(beat)*

Even if it's a lie. Just say you'll let me take you and we'll deal with it in the morning.

*A painful silence.*

*Marigold stands and starts to leave.*

**EDDIE**

Hey.

*(she turns to him)*

I love you.

**MARIGOLD**

Not enough.

*She exits.*

*We hover in silence for a while.*

*Max sinks to the floor.*

*Charlie enters the bathroom.*

*Surprised to see Eddie.*

*But also not surprised.*

*Marigold enters the vending machine room.*

*She sees Max.*

**EDDIE & MARIGOLD**

Hey.

**CHARLIE & MAX**

Hey.

**CHARLIE**

On the bathroom floor again, are we?

**EDDIE**

*(smiling)*

It sure looks that way, doesn't it?

**CHARLIE**

That it does, friend. Let me go get you some water.

**EDDIE**

No, no. Don't go. Just...sit with me for a little bit.

*Charlie joins him on the floor.*

**CHARLIE**

Dr. Pepper?

**EDDIE**

Fuck yeah.

*Charlie hands him the can.*

**MARIGOLD**

What are you doing in here? Shouldn't you be celebrating?

**MAX**

Shouldn't *you*?

**MARIGOLD**

They're *your* parents. We only came cause you invited us.

**MAX**

Yeah, well you ain't gotta stay.

**MARIGOLD**

Okay, attitude. Let me just get my little soda and go.

**MAX**

There's soda at the bar.

**MARIGOLD**

No, there's *Zevia* at the bar. That is *not* the same thing.

*(beat. She puts money in the machine.)*  
Where's Charlie?

**MAX**  
No clue. Where's Eddie?

**MARIGOLD**  
*(making her selection)*  
Guess.

**MAX**  
Do we need to do something to help him?

**MARIGOLD**  
He's gotta wanna help himself first.  
*(We hear the machine start to vend. The can gets stuck)*  
Give me a fucking break!

**MAX**  
Here.

*Max stands and punches the machine.  
The can drops.  
He sits back down.*

**MARIGOLD**  
Thanks.

**MAX**  
You're welcome.

**EDDIE**  
You remember that note I wrote you in the fifth grade?

**CHARLIE**  
Yeah, I remember. All you wrote was "I love you". No "check yes if you like me, no if you don't" or nothing.

**EDDIE**  
I don't think I wanted to know all that information. I don't even think I



**EDDIE (cont.)**

wanted you to write me back. I just wanted you to know. I wanted you to know that I loved you. You turned around and smiled at me, and in that moment...in that moment was everything.

**CHARLIE**

Oh, please. I had a chipped tooth and the most busted afro puffs anyone has ever seen. It couldn't have been that good.

**EDDIE**

It was everything.

**MARIGOLD**

What'd you do to Charlie?

**MAX**

I ain't do nothin'.

**MARIGOLD**

Maxwell-

**MAX**

Can we not? I really don't wanna talk about this right now. I'm all talked out.

**MARIGOLD**

Okay.

*She starts to exit.*

**MAX**

Wait. Could you just...sit with me for a second?

*A moment.*

**MAX**

Please?

*She sits.  
She cracks open the soda can and sips.*

*She hands it to Max.  
He sips.*

**EDDIE**  
Charlie?

**CHARLIE**  
Yes, Eddie?

**EDDIE**  
I don't know what the fuck I'm doing.

**CHARLIE**  
None of us do.

*They sit in silence.  
They share a soda.  
They set up for the next scene.*

8. "...but you could've held my hand."  
A Eulogy- Age 38

*Eddie speaks to us.  
As he speaks, waves crash in the distance.*

**EDDIE**

When I am alone,  
which is much more often than I'd like,  
I close my eyes and try to listen for the ocean.

The day I found out my parents were getting divorced  
my Mother took me to the beach.  
We sat down on the sand and she told me that her and my Dad wouldn't be  
living together anymore.  
I asked her "why".  
Why was Dad moving out?  
Why could I only see him on weekends?  
Why couldn't they just talk about it?

She put her hand in mine and was silent for a long time.  
Eventually, she asked me "When was the last time you saw your Dad hold  
my hand?"  
I tried to remember a time.  
There must have been at least one time.  
But I couldn't think of it.  
I searched  
And searched.  
And couldn't find a memory anywhere.

"The weight of my hand in your Father's doesn't mean anything anymore. It  
used to. But, it's not the same. It can never be the same again. I still love  
your Father. And he still loves me. But that love doesn't hold any weight.  
Not anymore."

I haven't been to the beach since then.

I promised myself that I would always be there for my Mother after that.  
That I would *always* be there for her.  
I made a promise to myself.

To her.  
But if I've learned anything about promises,  
It's that they're hard to keep.  
If I've learned anything about love,  
It's that it doesn't last.  
And if I've learned anything about death,  
It's that it's always on its way.

I'm gonna be honest with you all,  
I wasn't the best son I could've been.  
I loved my mother,  
But love is something that lies dormant in my blood.  
Frozen in my mouth.

On the last night of her life,  
My mother held her hand out for me to take.  
I stared at it like a foreign object.  
It hovered in space  
And all I did was stare.  
That's me.  
A man so paralyzed by love that he can't...  
He can't.

I don't go to the beach anymore,  
But when I am alone,  
which is much more often than I'd like,  
I close my eyes and try to listen for the ocean.  
And sometimes,  
on occasion,  
I think of the words contained in a letter from my mother to my father.

I found it in a box in her closet one day while I was trying to sneak a peek at my Christmas presents.

“We weren't together long, but I thought it could last forever. You didn't feel the same. I can forgive you for that. But you could've held my hand, a little more often, when we were alone. To let me feel the weight. To let me know the worth.”

Thank you.

9. "Will you take care of me?"  
A Funeral- Age 38

*A kitchen.*

*An assortment of casserole dishes litter every surface.*

*No music in the distance.*

*Only silence.*

*And the occasional hushed murmur of condolences.*

*Eddie enters slowly and looks around.*

*The coast is clear.*

*He takes off his jacket and undoes his tie.*

*He shakes flower petals out of his jacket.*

*He looks through the array of food he wishes he could throw away.*

*Nothing remotely appetizing in sight.*

*Does no one eat sugar anymore?*

*Finally, he finds what he's looking for.*

*A cake.*

*Jackpot.*

*He begins to eat the cake with his hands.*

*Not the best thing he's ever tasted.*

*Definitely some sort of sugar alternative at play here.*

*But it'll do.*

*He hears someone else entering the kitchen.*

*He looks for a hiding spot.*

*There's nowhere stealthy enough.*

*He grabs the cake and hides under the table.*

*Max enters.*

*He dusts flower petals off his clothes.*

*He immediately spots Eddie.*

**MAX**  
Hey.

**EDDIE**

Hey.

**MAX**

I see you found the cake.

**EDDIE**

It's the only edible thing in here.

**MAX**

Marigold's Mom made a squash casserole.

**EDDIE**

Like I said, the only edible thing in here.

*They share a laugh.  
Eddie comes out from under the table.*

**EDDIE**

How's it looking in there?

**MAX**

It's thinning out. Should be clear in 20 minutes or so.

**EDDIE**

Thank God. Crowds are one thing, but when the whole crowd is staring at you with the grief face?

*(he shivers)*

If I had to hear one more "Sorry for your loss", I was gonna lose it.

**MAX**

I feel you. This reminds me of my ill-advised divorce party.

**EDDIE**

If there's one thing I regret more than anything, it's that I missed that party.

**MAX**

Don't even. It sucked.

**EDDIE**

I bet.

**MAX**

Divorce is the worst thing ever.

**EDDIE**

Hm. I don't know if it's the *worst* thing. People die.

*Eddie smiles.  
Max does not.*

**MAX**

Eddie-

**EDDIE**

Let's not, okay? I feel like I said everything I needed to say out there, yeah?

**MAX**

Yeah. I think you did.

*They embrace.*

*Charlie enters.  
They shake flower petals out of their hair.*

**CHARLIE**

Sexy.

**MAX**

Always.

**CHARLIE**

Hey Eddie.

**EDDIE**

Hey Charlie.

*A moment.*

**MAX**

I'mma go find Marigold and shoo the rest of these people away. Be right back.

*He exits.*

*Silence.*

*Charlie moves in close to him.*

*A moment.*

*They embrace.*

*Stiff at first.*

*But eventually they melt into each other.*

*They sway together.*

**EDDIE**

Thank you for coming.

**CHARLIE**

Of course.

**EDDIE**

I'm sorry about-

**CHARLIE**

You broke my heart.

**EDDIE**

I know.

**CHARLIE**

You could've called.

**EDDIE**

I know.

**CHARLIE**

Why didn't you?



*A long beat.  
They sway.*

**EDDIE**

It's a long story and I don't think I have it in me to tell it today. I promise I'll tell you every detail. Just give me today. Tomorrow, I'll tell you everything.

*Charlie pulls away but stays in close.*

**CHARLIE**

Everything?

**EDDIE**

Everything.

*They stroke his face and take him in.  
They gently squeeze his jaw with their hand*

**CHARLIE**

I've waited this long. I can wait until tomorrow.

**EDDIE**

Thank you.

**CHARLIE**

*(a beat)*

You doin' alright?

**EDDIE**

Yeah, I think so. I thought today would make me want a drink really bad. But, somehow, it doesn't.

**CHARLIE**

Good. You don't need it.

**EDDIE**

No, I don't.

**CHARLIE**

How does it feel? Being clean for so long.

**EDDIE**

Like I know who I am. For the first time.

**CHARLIE**

That's good stuff, dude.

**EDDIE**

Fuck yeah, it is.

*They share a smile.*

**EDDIE**

I was sorry to hear about...

**CHARLIE**

You don't even know my ex-wife's name, do you?

**EDDIE**

Rigorous honesty? No.

*They laugh.*

**CHARLIE**

That's alright. It didn't last long enough for most people to remember.

**EDDIE**

How you feeling?

**CHARLIE**

Rigorous honesty? Relieved.

*Max and Marigold enter.  
Marigold has her shoes in her hands.  
She shakes flower petals out of them.*

**MARIGOLD**

The room has been cleared!

**EDDIE**

Marigold! Killing it with the crowd control!

**MARIGOLD**

Fuck crowds!

**EDDIE**

Agreed!

**CHARLIE**

Me too!

**MAX**

Me three!

*They take each other in.*

**MARIGOLD**

Look at us. Still standing after all these years. A little busted. A little tired. Quite divorced. But still standing.

**EDDIE**

I can only cop to two of those things. Busted? Yes. Tired? Dear God, yes. Divorced? I'd have to get married first.

**MAX**

You're the only one of us to have dodged that bullet.

*Marigold punches him.*

**MAX**

Ow!

**CHARLIE**

You think you'll ever try it, Ed? Marriage?

**EDDIE**

I don't know. I can't think of one person I'd want to spend the rest of my life with.

*(beat)*

**EDDIE (cont.)**

But I can think of three.

**CHARLIE**

*(kisses their teeth)*

Corny.

**EDDIE**

Maybe. But it's the truth.

**MARIGOLD**

I'd marry you guys.

*(re: Max)*

Even that dummy. If we could all be together.

**MAX**

Me too.

**EDDIE**

Yeah? You compared it to taking a bullet earlier.

**MAX**

And I stand by it. But it's worth it with you all.

**CHARLIE**

Me three. This is all corny as shit. But I'll buy into it.

**EDDIE**

Hm. Good to know.

*Eddie goes to Marigold.  
He gets down on one knee.*

**MARIGOLD**

What are you doing?

**EDDIE**

Shh. Listen.

*(beat)*

Will you take care of me?

**MARIGOLD**

That's not the question you're supposed to ask.

**EDDIE**

Well, it's the one I'm asking. Will you take care of me?

*A moment.*

**MARIGOLD**

I will.

*They kiss.*

*Eddie goes to Max.  
He gets down on one knee.*

**EDDIE**

Will you take care of me?

**MAX**

I will.

*They kiss.*

*Eddie goes to Charlie.  
Charlie gets down on one knee.*

**CHARLIE**

Will you take care of me?

**EDDIE**

I will.

*They kiss.*

*Marigold goes to Max.  
She gets down on one knee.*

**MARIGOLD**

Will you take care of me?

**MAX**  
I will.

*They kiss.*

*Max goes to Charlie.  
He gets down on one knee.*

**MAX**  
Will you take care of me?

**CHARLIE**  
I will.

*They kiss.*

*Charlie goes to Marigold.  
They get down on one knee.*

**CHARLIE**  
Will you take care of me?

**MARIGOLD**  
I will.

*They kiss.*

*Silence.*

*They take each other in.  
They sing.*

**MARIGOLD**  
*(sung)*  
While I'm far away from you, my baby

**MAX**  
*(sung)*  
I know it's hard for you, my baby

**EDDIE**

*(sung)*

**Because it's hard for me, my baby**

**CHARLIE**

*(sung)*

**And the darkest hour is just before dawn.**

*Music fills the space.*

*They begin to dance.*

*They move together, lose each other, find each other again.*

*The dance is sweet at times. Violent at others.*

*They grab, hug, push, pull, kiss, hit.*

*The dance ends.*

*The music ends.*

*They face each other.*

*They smile.*

*They laugh.*

*They sit under the table and eat cake.*

*Flowers rain down from above.*

*Lights fade.*

**END OF PLAY**