

PLOT

The play takes place in New Jersey current time, at the Jenkins Theater. The Ballard Independent Theater Company is rehearsing for a production of “The Party Stops Here” a play written by Viola Stephanie. Maria Ballard is the founder and director of the company. The company has problems every day of rehearsal trying to get things together. Although the dress rehearsal goes perfect, the opening performance doesn’t go so well. The play opens with the first scene of the play “The Party Stops Here.”

CHARACTERS:

MARIA BALLARD: She is the director of the production. Age: 36.

BRIAN: He is the stage manager. Age range: 25-30.

VIOLA STEPHANIE: She is the playwright of the play. Age range: 35-40.

ANTHONY BRIDGES: He is a reviewer. Age: 37.

CLAIR: Age: 25. She plays Vicky Johnson, Aaron’s mother, Robert’s wife.

ALEX: Age: 30. He plays Robert Johnson, Aaron’s father, Vicky’s husband.

JOHN: Age: 18. He plays Aaron Johnson, Vicky and Robert’s son.

SARAH: Age range: 26. She plays Elizabeth (Lizzie), and Aunt Gloria.

GREG: Age range: 18-25. He plays Jason.

JILL: Age range: 20-25. She plays the doctor, and Grandma.

USHER

AUDIENCE MEMBERS (1 MAN, 1 WOMAN)

EXTRAS: Includes Uncle Jacob, audience members, rave, party, family, and friends. 6 min.

ACT ONE SCENE ONE

This scene takes place four days before opening night.

ANTHONY

(When the lights come up ANTHONY and MARIA are sitting across from each other. They are sitting at a table, which is apart of the set). I want to thank you for allowing me to interview you.

MARIA

Oh, no problem. So, ask me all the questions you want.

ANTHONY

First things first. Why “The Party Stops Here?” It is one of Viola’s oldest play, and noone likes it. Is there a reason why you chose it.

MARIA

I know how much everyone dislikes it, but I enjoy it a lot. When I read it I knew I had to direct it one day. I’m really glad to do this production. Not only is it a good script, it teaches mankind of good and evil. I enjoy this play because it educates and entertains. *(Laughs)* Listen to me babble on. You must be sick of me.

ANTHONY

Oh, no. I enjoy interviewing someone who has a lot to say. It gives me a lot to write about. So, tell me about this fund-raising project you’re doing.

MARIA

Oh, you must mean the Make-A-Wish Foundation. I’ve decided to give half of our profits to the Make-A-Wish foundation. I think it’s time that all businesses, organizations and companies share their funds with different programs. Next year I plan on donating to the Breast Cancer Awareness Center.

ANTHONY

That is so nice of you. One last question. Is there something you would like to do that you have never done before in this business?

MARIA

Well, there is this one thing. I really enjoy Viola Stephanie as a playwright. I would love to collaborate with her one day. *(Speaking as if she is in a dream)* You know, direct one of her new plays with her by my side. Guiding me as I direct her piece of art. Making her words on the page a miraculous work on stage. It’s a dream I’ve had ever since I read her first play Roger & Julia. *(Returns from outer space)* Of course that’s just a silly dream, but , there’s nothing wrong with dreaming.

ANTHONY

Wow, that’s great. Well, thanks for the interview *(stands)*.

MARIA

(Stands) No problem.

ANTHONY

Now, I’ll be here opening night to write the review. I hope you guys break all legs.

MARIA

I hope so too. I'm so afraid that opening night will go wrong.

ANTHONY

Don't worry about it. If your directing skills are as good as your looks, then you have nothing to worry about.

MARIA

(Blushes) Oh, please. You don't mean that.

ANTHONY

I mean every word. *(Beat)* It was nice meeting you, Maria *(They shake hands. He holds on and looks into her eyes, he then let goes, he exits. MARIA stands their smiling, with her hand out as if ANTHONY is still there).*

SARAH

(Enters, approaches MARIA) Maria *(no response)* Maria *(no response)* Maria! *(Claps hands)*

MARIA

(Snaps out of it) Oh, Sarah, hi. What's wrong?

SARAH

What time are we starting?

MARIA

(Looks at watch) Oh, right now. Tell everyone to get into place. Thank you. Oh one more thing, can you get someone to help you move the table and chairs off the stage. Thank you. *(SARAH exits, MARIA walks toward directing table. SARAH and ALEX enter, they exit with table and chairs, JOHN, and party extras enter).* Lights!

GREG

(Blackout occurs, few seconds later lights and music come up; speaking to JOHN) Hey Aaron, isn't this party great. *(JOHN nods, pauses, then collapses. Everyone rushes over and panics)* Aaron, what's wrong? *(Kneels down and listens to JOHN's stomach)* Oh my gosh he's not breathing. *The crowd goes silent).* Someone call 911.

SARAH

(SARAH takes her cellular phone and dials). Hello, my name is Liz—Lesley Higgins and I have a problem. There's this kid and he's not breathing. *(Pause)* I don't know how he stopped breathing, I just know he's not breathing. *(Pause)* Who cares about all of that, just get someone here fast. *(Pause)* We're by the old warehouse on Morris drive; please hurry.

GREG

(He asks one of the party extras to watch over him (JOHN); then he walks towards SARAH) Why did you lie about your name?

SARAH

If the police find out what he was doing, there's a big chance we are going to get in trouble. I can't get in trouble; it would hurt me and my families' name.

GREG

So you rather worry about your reputation than someone else's life?

SARAH

What do you care, just make sure he doesn't die.

GREG

Well, the police should be here any minute

SARAH

Well, I'm leaving.

GREG

Where are you going?

SARAH

I don't wanna be here when the cops get here. I'll see you tomorrow by Lakeland Ave, that's where Houston's rave is. Jason, don't bring the chump *(exits)*.

GREG

Lizzie, you can't leave me here *(police sirens are heard; the rave extra's disperse. GREG kneels down to JOHN)*. I'm sorry buddy. *(Blackout)*

MARIA

(Lights come back up) That was good guys. Let's continue with the next scene please.

BRIAN

(Enters; has cellular phone to his ear. He has a book bag and a Starbucks cup in his hand). I'll call you later, okay. Bye. *(Walks SL towards MARIA; hangs up phone)*

MARIA

You're late.

BRIAN

Yes I know. I went to Starbucks and the line was crazy. I thought to myself I should probably leave or I'll be late, but then I thought, I really want my French Vanilla drink, so I decided to wait in line for it *(sips drinks)* and it is good.

MARIA

Well, you could have called and told me you were going to be late.

BRIAN

I know, but I didn't feel like it. *(Beat)* So what's going on.

MARIA

We are starting act one scene two.

BRIAN

That's as far as you got?

MARIA

Yes. We would have gone further, but we waited about fifteen minutes for you. When we realized you weren't coming, we started without you.

BRIAN

Well, I was coming, I just had to go to starbucks.

MARIA

Brian, as a stage manager it is your job to be here early. You're suppose to set an example for everyone else.

BRIAN

I know, but starbucks.

MARIA

(Frustrated) I am not about to argue with you.

BRIAN

You don't have to argue, all I was saying was—

MARIA

Be quiet, the scene is about to start

CLAIR

(A blackout occurs for 2-3 seconds. When the lights come back up CLAIR enters. She looks over at JOHN and starts to cry; she walks toward JOHN) Aaron. Aaron, please speak to me. How could you do this to yourself? Why were you hanging around that crowd? *(Pause; kneels down to JOHN and embraces him)* Aaron, please don't die.

ALEX

(CLAIR weeps, ALEX enters and sees CLAIR, and he puts his head down, takes a deep breath and walks towards CLAIR). Honey *(CLAIR gets up and runs to ALEX and they embrace)* Vicky, the doctor said he'll be okay.

CLAIR

(She let goes of ALEX.) We don't know that. Look at him. Robert look at him *(ALEX looks at him)*. Does that look like he's going to be okay?

ALEX

Looks can be deceiving. Many people make miraculous recoveries.

CLAIR

This is our fault. We should have been more strict.

ALEX

Honey, don't start putting blame on anyone. No one could have prepared for anything like this. The only thing we can do is wait *(dramatic pause)* and pray. *(Blackout)*

MARIA

That was great. Please go on.

BRIAN

(JOHN, CLAIR, and ALEX exit the stage. GREG, SARAH, and extras set up for the next scene (see Note (B)). GREG sits in the middle of the "couch" (The couch are three chairs side by side draped with a blanket). SARAH sits next to him; the extras are sitting on the floor, chairs, or standing around a counter/bar. Lights come up, there's party music playing quietly in the background). What the hell are they sitting on?

MARIA

I couldn't afford a couch.

BRIAN

That's ghetto, and it's not gonna work. I can already see something wrong happening with those chairs.

MARIA

Brian, keep it quiet.

GREG

I can't believe he just collapsed. I feel bad; I could have killed him.

SARAH

Jason, none of this is your fault. Aaron chose to take X, and drink all that beer. No one forced him.

GREG

But, I suggested he take it to get comfortable. If I didn't suggest it, he wouldn't have taken it.

SARAH

Well, what's done is done. Don't go beating yourself up for what someone else did to themselves.

GREG

Lizzie. We have to stop doing this. This was a sign. If it happened to him, it could happen to us.

SARAH

Greg, don't go soft on me. *(Picks up a beer from the bar)* Come on, suck it up *(hands him a drink)* have a beer.

GREG

No. *(Stands up)* I need to go for a walk to clear my head. *(He exits the stage. Blackout).*

GREG

(Lights come up. JOHN is lying on the bed and GREG is sitting on a chair besides him. GREG is crying). This is my fault. Why, did I suggest you take those pills?

CLAIR

(CLAIR and ALEX enter. They both look at GREG strangely). Who are you? How do you know my son?

GREG

(He looks up at them) Oh, you're his parents? My name is Jason. I was his friend; we hung out a lot.

CLAIR

(Angry) Are you one of the friends who got him in this state?

GREG

(Hesitant) I...I'm not sure what—

CLAIR

You are. *(She tries to grab him)* I should kill you.

ALEX

(Holds her back.) Vicky, calm down.

JILL

(Enters) I hope I'm not interrupting anything.

BRIAN

(Cell rings, he answers it) Hello. Hi, how are you? *(BRIAN continues to adlib loudly as the scene goes on)*

ALEX

(Holding on to CLAIR) Fortunately yes. *(Beat)* Doctor, how is he doing?

JILL

Not well. *(CLAIR hugs ALEX and begins to cry, ALEX rubs her back. GREG begins to cry).*

GREG

(JOHN begins to move a little) Oh my gosh.

ALEX

What's wrong?

GREG

I just saw him move.

CLAIR

That's impossible, he's unconscious. *(JOHN starts to move some more)* Oh my goodness. *(Runs over to JOHN)* Aaron, can you hear me?

JOHN

Mom...

ALEX

(Runs over to CLAIR) Aaron, son, how are you feeling?

JOHN

Dad, is that you?

CLAIR

Yes, it's your mom and dad.

MARIA

(Frustrated, talking to actors) Guys stop for a second. *(Annoyed)* Brian!

BRIAN

(Talking on phone) Hold on. *(To MARIA)* What is it Maria, *(beat)* can't it wait? Don't you see me on the phone?

MARIA

Do you have to talk so loud? We're in the middle of the scene. Don't you think you should take that conversation out of the theater, where no one will be disturbed?

BRIAN

Oh, of course. Um...I'll just hang up. Hello, yeah, I'll call you back. What, oh yeah *(Starts laughing loudly, MARIA looks at him)*. I gotta go *(hangs up phone)*.

MARIA

Continue please.

JOHN

(He slowly opens his eyes). Mom, where am I?

CLAIR

You're in the hospital. You were unconscious, but you're going to be okay.

JILL

I'm going to need you guys to leave.

JOHN

No mommy, don't leave.

CLAIR

Its okay Aaron, we'll be here, we'll be right outside the door.*(blackout)*

MARIA

(Lights come back up) Good job guys. Let's take a small break. *(The actors exit)*

BRIAN

Thank God. I need one.

MARIA

You just got here. Besides I need to talk to you.

BRIAN

I'm sorry for being late. If you want, next time I'll bring you something from starbucks.

MARIA

That's okay. Besides, this is not about being late. We have a small problem, but I know how to fix it. I need you to operate the lights in the last scene of act two.

BRIAN

Why?

MARIA

Because there is no one else to do it. Normally one of the cast members would do it, whenever they are not on stage, but the whole cast is on stage during the last scene.

BRIAN

Why are the cast members operating the lighting board. I thought Michael was suppose to do that. I mean he is the lighting board operator, correct?

MARIA

Brian, where have you been? Michael quit two weeks ago.

BRIAN

(Shocked) WHAT? What do you mean he quit?

MARIA

He quit. He said he found a better paying job, so he quit.

BRIAN

But we weren't paying him.

MARIA

Exactly. He found a paying job in New York and said that he wouldn't have time for us. I thought I mentioned this to you.

BRIAN

I don't remember. You said two weeks ago, right? *(Pause, thinking)* Was I even here two weeks ago?

MARIA

It doesn't matter now. The whole point is, I need you to operate the board for the last scene. You think you can do it?

BRIAN

Well, sure. It's not a problem.

MARIA

Thank you. You're a life savor.

BRIAN

What flavor?

MARIA

What?

BRIAN

You get it. Life savor, what flavor? It was a joke.

MARIA

It wasn't funny. Okay cast, the break is over.

JILL

(Walks towards MARIA) May I talk to you real quick.

MARIA

Sure. What's up?

JILL

Uh, can I speak to you in private.

MARIA

(To BRIAN) Um...could you please—

BRIAN

Oh, sure, that's not a problem. *(He takes his binder and stands it up to cover himself).*

MARIA

Brian, what are you doing?

BRIAN

I'm giving you privacy. Trust me this binder is tough, I can't hear a thing.

MARIA

Brian, go backstage. *(BRIAN exits to backstage).* What do you need to talk about?

JILL

Are you aware as the doctor I only have three lines?

MARIA

Yes, I read the play.

JILL

Well, I was wondering maybe, we could change that. Add a few lines so that the doctor seems more relevant. Right now as the doctor I feel insignificant.

MARIA

Jill, I can't do that. This is a published script. I am not allowed to adapt it in any way. Unless I pay, which, I don't have the money for that.

JILL

What about a small monologue? It'll be about the conditions of Aaron. You won't even have to write it. I'll write it.

MARIA

No.

JILL

Maybe you could give me someone else's. For instant, in the scene Clair mentions it's impossible for Aaron to move, because he is unconscious. Don't you think I should be the one to say that. I am the doctor, don't you think a doctor would know that better than anyone else.

MARIA

Jill, I am not changing this play. Is that all you wanted to talk about?

JILL

You know, if you wouldn't have made the mistake in the first place and just cast me as Vicky, we wouldn't be having this talk.

MARIA

(Frustrated) Jill, I did not make a mistake. Clair is doing a great job as Vicky. Can we please just drop it?

JILL

The doctor. That's all you saw me as; a doctor with three lines.

MARIA

You're not just the doctor.

JILL

Oh, please, the stupid grandmother. The drunk grandmother. Thanks a lot. Don't you think I have much more talent than that?

MARIA

Yes you do. Your talent has nothing to do with your roles. Now can we please drop this subject. What's done is done. We can't change it now.

JILL

Yes we can. If you let me be Vicky and allow Clair to play my roles everything will be great. Besides, I know all her lines and her blocking.

MARIA

Jill. The answer is no. Go get ready for the next scene.

JILL

(Walks away) I'm not in the next scene.

MARIA

Go get ready to operate the lighting board. *(JILL exits)*

CLAIR

(Enters frantically) Maria, I need to leave, now!

MARIA

Why? What's wrong?

CLAIR

My sister just called me. She's in labor. I have to go see about her.

MARIA

Well, is everything okay?

CLAIR

Not really? Her husband is stuck in traffic, she can't reach a phone, and no one is home. I have to go and take her to the hospital.

MARIA

What do you mean she can't reach a phone, she called you. And why didn't she call 911?

CLAIR

I don't know. I gotta go.

MARIA

You can't *(CLAIR slams door as she exits)* –go.

BRIAN

(Enters) Are you finished with your private meeting?

MARIA

Yes. Unfortunately we might have to cancel the rest of the rehearsal.

BRIAN

Oh, how sad. *(Gets his belongings)* Well, I guess I'll see you tomorrow.

MARIA

Where are you going?

BRIAN

Home. You just said rehearsal is cancelled. *(Yells)* Everyone rehearsal is cancelled for the rest of the night.

MARIA

Brian, I did not say that.

GREG

(GREG, ALEX, JOHN, SARAH, and JILL enters with belongings) What's going on?

BRIAN

Maria is allowing us to go home early.

JOHN

(To MARIA) Is that true.

MARIA

Brian, that's not—

BRIAN

That's what she said.

MARIA

I said I might have to—

BRIAN

See you guys tomorrow *(exits)*.

MARIA

Forget him. Guys I need you to—

GREG

Buy Maria, see you tomorrow *(ALEX, JOHN, SARAH, and JILL say bye to MARIA, they all exit)*.

MARIA

Don't *(door slams)* leave. *(Blackout)*.

ACT ONE SCENE TWO

This scene takes place the next day June 21.

MARIA

(Lights come up. MARIA, GREG, JOHN, JILL, ALEX, and SARAH are sitting around awaiting. BRIAN enters).
You're late, again. *(Beat)* Guys go get ready for the next scene *(GREG, JOHN, JILL, ALEX, and SARAH exit)*.

BRIAN

I'm aware. I have a watch *(Sits next to Maria)*.

MARIA

Are you aware, that we have been waiting for you. *(Looks at watch)* You're thirty minutes late. We wasted thirty minutes. *(Beat)* What's your excuse this time?

BRIAN

I was at home watching Arthur.

MARIA

You can't be serious.

BRIAN

(Seriously) I'm very serious. I love watching Arthur, it's very educational.

MARIA

Brian, I thought I told you to be on time last night.

BRIAN

Well, you're thinking right, because you did.

MARIA

So, why are you late?

BRIAN

I thought I explained that already?

MARIA

Arthur is not an excuse. It's not a reason to be late to rehearsal. You must be here on time. I don't know how clear I can make that. No more being late Brian. *(Beat)* Now, get your script, I need you to read lines for Clair.

BRIAN

Do what for what?

MARIA

I need you to read Clair's lines for the rehearsal.

BRIAN

Why. What's wrong with Clair?

MARIA

She left early yesterday, because her sister went into labor. She took her to the hospital.

BRIAN

That's amazing, I didn't even know that Clair had a sister.

MARIA

She called me today, and said she can't make rehearsal. Her sister, nor the baby is doing well. So, we'll just have to do the rehearsal without her.

BRIAN

We can't rehearse without her. Why don't we just call it a night.

MARIA

What? No, we are not doing that, just read her lines.

BRIAN

I still say we just call it a night.

MARIA

I can't do that. This show opens this week. I don't have time to cancel rehearsals.

BRIAN

It's just one day.

MARIA

It will be two if you can't yesterday.

BRIAN

That was your fault. You shouldn't have cancelled it.

MARIA

I didn't cancel— ...Brian would you please just—

BRIAN

Do I really have to?

MARIA

(Annoyed) Get a script and read her lines.

BRIAN

Well, you don't have to yell about it.

MARIA

I WASN'T YELLING!

BRIAN

Well, you are now. *(She sighs heavily at him)* I'm getting the script *(Gets his script from book bag)*.

MARIA

Guys, please get in place for this scene. Thank you. *(The actors except JOHN get into place)*.

BRIAN

Do the actors know about Clair. I mean they know I'm reading, right?

MARIA

Yes they do. I told them within the thirty minutes you weren't here.

BRIAN

Oh. Well, you didn't have to say it like that. *(Opens script)* What page?

MARIA

Twenty-three.

BRIAN

JOHN enters and lies on the bed, a brief black out occurs then the lights slowly fade in. Brian clears throat. Remember when I used to read to you at night, before you went to bed? *(JOHN nods head yes).* You mind if I read to you? *(To MARIA)* What book is Clair reading to him?

MARIA

That doesn't matter at this point?

BRIAN

Oh, sorry.

MARIA

Start from the beginning please.

BRIAN

(BRIAN clears throat). Remember when I used to read to you at night, before you went to bed? *(JOHN nods head yes).* You mind if I read to you?

JOHN

I would love that. It'll bring—

BRIAN

(To MARIA) Are you sure it doesn't matter. The script says that she reads *The Three Little Pigs*.

MARIA

There is note in the back of the script that says it's okay if the director decides to use another book. Now, can you please just continue? *(BRIAN nods yes)* John, start your line again.

JOHN

I would love that. It'll bring back sweet memories.

BRIAN

(GREG enters) Not you again, get out, and don't come back.

JOHN

(GREG intends to leave) No, don't leave. Mom, I want to talk to him.

BRIAN

Aaron, he is bad news. I don't want you around people like him.

JOHN

Mom, please I must speak with him. *(There is complete silence for about 5 seconds. After the pause they both recite each other's name).* I'm sorry you go first.

GREG

No, no, you; tell me what you need to tell me.

JOHN

Jason, please you go first, I can wait. (*GREG folds his arms as if in protest to speak first*). Alright, I'll go first. I'm sorry I ruined your party.

GREG

Are you crazy? You didn't ruin it. I'm sorry I gave you all that stuff. I didn't know it was going to make you...I'm sorry.

JOHN

Come up here. (*GREG gets on top of the bed*).

BRIAN

Is he really suppose to jump on the bed? It looks...stupid. It doesn't look right. Besides I don't think the bed could actually hold that much weight.

MARIA

Brian, the bed is fine, and keep your negative comments to yourself.

BRIAN

All I was saying is that-

MARIA

Brian. Be quiet. John, continue please.

JOHN

I know you think this is your fault. You know, my mother thinks it's her fault. This is no one's fault but, mine. I made the decision to take ecstasy and drink beer. I was the one who did not use discretion. It is my fault. So, please, stop blaming yourself, (*brief silence, and blackout*).

MARIA

(*Light comes up over MARIA and BRIAN. BRIAN is reading a magazine.*) Great, let's go on to the next scene. (*To BRIAN*) When reading for Clair, just read. That's it. (*Lights out over MARIA and BRIAN*).

SARAH

(*Lights come up over stage, SARAH and the party extras are on stage, they party for a brief moment before GREG enters, SARAH notices him*). Hey stranger, long time no see. Where have you been?

GREG

I went to visit Aaron.

SARAH

How's the slugger doing?

GREG

He's doing. (*Beat*) Uh...Lizzie I need to talk to you alone.

SARAH

Jason, we're partying, come on, party with us. We can talk later.

GREG

No. I want to talk now. (*GREG talks to the party extras*). Excuse me; may I have your attention? (*The party and music stops*). The party's over; everyone please leave. (*The party people adlib disapproval*) Come on, get out. (*They begin to leave*).

SARAH

(*Pulling him aside*) What is wrong with you? You're ruining a good thing. (*Talking to the party people*) Guys, you don't have to leave.

GREG

Yes you do. Everyone out (*beat*) now.

SARAH

(*Party extras exit*). What is wrong with you? You never turn down a party.

GREG

I'm changing, Lizzie...I've changed. I can't do this anymore.

SARAH

You can't do what anymore; what are you talking about?

GREG

I can't live this lifestyle. No more parties, drugs, or alcohol, it ruins lives. It makes people unconscious and—

SARAH

Are you still worried about Aaron? Get over it. Aaron is fine. Besides, he was a punk; he took too much too soon. You're a pro; you can keep partying without passing out.

GREG

Lizzie, I don't wanna do this anymore. I'm done with it, and you should be done with it too.

SARAH

If you're gonna punk out on me, then we can't be friends.

GREG

That is not a problem with me; you know where the door is. (*SARAH exits, blackout*).

MARIA

(*GREG exits, the scene is being set for the JOHNSON's house (see page 49)*). A spotlight appears on MARIA) Let's keep it moving guys, thank you. (*JILL enters with belongings ready to leave*) You're not leaving, are you?

JILL

Yes. I'll see you tomorrow.

MARIA

Wait a minute. *(Stands)* Where are you going?

JILL

I have a manicure appointment.

MARIA

We have a rehearsal to do.

JILL

Maria, I need to leave now, or I will be late. I cannot be late. My nails cannot be late.

MARIA

Jill, you can't be serious. Can't you cancel the appointment or postpone it?

JILL

(Shocked) Cancel, postpone, how dare you?

MARIA

What? What did I say?

JILL

I cannot postpone my nails. My nails need care. How dare you suggest I cancel or postpone. I have to get my nails done, and that's final

MARIA

Jill, please, we need you in order to rehearse. *(Announcing)* The show opens *this week*. Are we all aware of that?

JILL

Have Brian read my lines.

MARIA

He's reading for Clair.

JILL

Then you read it. I'm getting my nails done, now.

MARIA

Jill, you can't leave *(JILL walks towards exit)* Jill, please don't leave *(JILL exits)*. I don't believe this. *(To BRIAN)* Why didn't you say anything.

BRIAN

What did you want me to say?

MARIA

You could have told her, she couldn't go.

BRIAN

I thought to, but—

MARIA

You didn't want to argue?

BRIAN

No.

MARIA

You realize she already made up her mind?

BRIAN

No.

MARIA

You thought she wasn't going to listen to you?

BRIAN

No, I was reading and I didn't want to lose my place.

MARIA

(Sighs hard; speaking to BRIAN) I'm going backstage to meditate. We will continue rehearsal in an hour.

BRIAN

Maybe we should just go home.

MARIA

(Looks at watch) It's only seven. We still have three more hours of rehearsal. We'll all take an hour break, and I'll call Jill and Clair and hopefully they'll be able to come and rehearse.

BRIAN

It'll be too late by then.

MARIA

I need as many rehearsals as I can get. Don't argue with me. I just don't understand, does anyone care about this production besides me. Does anyone care about the kids?

BRIAN

What kids?

MARIA

The kids from Make-A-Wish Foundation.

BRIAN

What do they have to do with anything?

MARIA

(Frustrated) Tell the cast they get an hour break. Rehearsal resumes at 8PM *(exits)*.

BRIAN

(Yells) Cast and crew, please come to the stage! *(GREG, JOHN, ALEX, SARAH and extras enter)*. Jill had to leave, so Maria thinks it's best if we take an hour break and then resume with rehearsal. She's going to call Jill and Clair later and hopefully they can make it back here in time.

SARAH

But, that doesn't make sense. It'll probably be too late by then.

BRIAN

I know, I told Maria that already, but she has spoken. You have an hour for break. *(Puts coat on, and gathers belongings)* If Maria asks, tell her I went to Starbucks *(exits)*.

GREG

I'll be napping backstage *(exits)*.

SARAH

This is stupid. What are we supposed to do for an hour?

JOHN

We can have sex.

SARAH

Shut up John.

JOHN

Come on Sarah. You know you want me.

SARAH

Keep dreaming.

JOHN

I will. They'll be sexy and wet.

SARAH

Oh, gosh, you're so disgusting.

JOHN

You know you like it.

SARAH

What makes you think I like you? You're not even my type.

JOHN

What is your type?

SARAH

Well, for starters, someone who can drink legally.

JOHN

Age ain't nuttin' but a number.

SARAH

It would never work. Older women can't date younger men.

JOHN

That's not true. Halle is older than Erik.

SARAH

You saw how their relationship ended up.

JOHN

Not all relationships end badly. How about Demi and Ashton? They love each other.

SARAH

It's nothing more than a physical attraction. I need more than that.

JOHN

Are you saying, I'm sexy.

SARAH

John, you need help.

JOHN

Than help me. Help me, baby. Give me the help I need.

SARAH

Only a licensed doctor could do that.

JOHN

What's that suppose to mean? You act like I have problems or something.

SARAH

You do.

JOHN

What's my problem?

SARAH

Which one?

JOHN

Sarah, you don't mean that, do you? *(Pause)* Well, what's my problems, name three.

SARAH

Well, for starters, you're way to young for me. Second, I hate the way you wear your hair, it's so out of fashion. Third, you think you're God's gift to women, I hate it when men think like that, you're pushy, immature, vulgar, you have a disgusting mind, you don't know how to act like a gentleman, and I hate it when you—

JOHN

Alright, I get it. I said name three. Goodness, next time just say you hate me (*Hangs head*) .

SARAH

John, I don't hate you, I hate some things about you, but I don't hate you.

JOHN

(*Lifts head, smiles*) Oh. That's good. Well, I will change the way I act, so that you can like me better.

SARAH

John, you don't have to change for me.

JOHN

But, I want to. It'll be my pleasure. Would you like to go out with me.

SARAH

Are you crazy, a date? No way.

JOHN

Not a date. We can walk to a restaurant around the area.

SARAH

I don't know about that.

JOHN

Why not? We have a whole hour to kill. Why not kill it together?

SARAH

Because then I would be your accomplice, and I don't look good in an orange jumpsuit.

JOHN

I'm serious Sarah, just as friends. (*He puts his arm out, she puts her arm around his*).

SARAH

Don't you think we should get our coats before leaving?

JOHN

Of Course. I'll escort you to the backstage area.

SARAH

(*They exit backstage*) So where are we going to eat? (*Blackout*)

ACT ONE SCENE THREE

The next day, Wednesday June 22. MARIA, CLAIR, JILL, SARAH, JOHN, ALEX, and GREG are sitting in the audience area.

CLAIR

So after receiving the speeding ticket, I dash off to my sister's house. My sister was in there screaming. As I go to open the door, it's locked, and I didn't have a key. Finally, I got enough sense to call the cops on my cell. They broke in and got her. It was so bad that they had to deliver the baby in the house. The

next day the doctor said there were problems. I panicked. (*Speaking to MARIA*) That's when I called you, and said I wasn't coming. After a couple of hours the doctor came back, and said everything was okay. I was so happy. Can you believe it? This is the third day of my life that I am an aunt.

JILL

What did they name the baby?

CLAIR

Jonathan Richard.

JOHN

Jonathan? What a great name. It's such a distinguished name. (*Sarah clears her throat*), but yet so common.

MARIA

Well, I'm glad everything went well.

JILL

Does anyone want to hear how my manicure appointment went.

MARIA

No, thank you. We need to start this rehearsal. We'll have to start without Brian, again.

SARAH

Well, who's going to operate the lighting board.

MARIA

We'll have to do this scene without the lights. We can't wait any longer. After we're done with this scene we will do Clair's scene that she missed yesterday, then we will begin from the beginning. (*MARIA sits at directors table, GREG, JILL, SARAH, CLAIR, ALEX, and JOHN get ready for the scene*). Lights.

JOHN

(*GREG, JILL, SARAH, and EXTRAS enter. ALEX, CLAIR and JOHN enter. When they enter everyone on stage yells "Surprise!"*). Oh my goodness, this is wonderful. (*He hugs ALEX and then CLAIR*) Thanks dad, thanks mom, you have made me so happy. I want to thank all of you for coming. Most of all I want to thank you all for the love and support you showed me while I was in the hospital. I made some stupid choices and I had to pay the consequences. I just thank God that I'm still alive. Thanks again. (*Everyone cheers, and returns to partying (drinking, dancing, conversing)*).

UNCLE JACOB

(*CLAIR and ALEX walk toward the guest to thank and welcome them. UNCLE JACOB and SARAH walk towards JOHN. JACOB gives JOHN a rough hug*) Hey, there's my nephew.

JOHN

Uncle Jake.

UNCLE JACOB

How are you doing, buddy, you keeping out of trouble?

JOHN

Yes, I am doing the best I can.

SARAH

(Hugs JOHN) How are you Aaron, you feeling well *(JOHN nods yes)*? That's good.

UNCLE JACOB

(Tries to wrestle with JOHN) Of course, he's okay. He's my slugger.

SARAH

Jake, calm down.

UNCLE JACOB

Gloria, don't tell me what to do.

SARAH

Well, if you weren't acting like a child I wouldn't have to.

UNCLE JACOB

What is your problem?

SARAH

There is nothing wrong with me, however, your problem is too much beer. *(Beat)* Slow down before you hurt yourself. *(UNCLE JACOB and SARAH walk away arguing).*

JOHN

(GREG walks towards JOHN. JOHN sees him and smiles. He puts his hand towards GREG and they shake hands). Hey, thanks for coming.

GREG

When your mom called me I thought she was plotting my death *(They both laugh).*

JOHN

She was very upset, however, after I talked to her, she realize you weren't all that bad. *(Changing the subject)* So, how's Lizzie and the rest of the crew.

GREG

I don't know, *(beat)* I don't hang out with them anymore. I changed, after I saw you in the hospital, I had to stop.

JOHN

That's good. I'm happy for you.

GREG

I'm happy for you too. To see you alive is a good feeling. *(Pause)* I'm sorry—

JOHN

Don't apologize; *(pause)* it's good seeing you again *(he puts his hands toward GREG and they shake, then they hug).*

CLAIR

(*CLAIR and JILL walk towards JOHN*). Aaron, look who is here.

JOHN

(*He looks and smiles, he walks to JILL and hugs her*) Grandma Rose thanks for coming. You didn't have to travel so far for me.

JILL

I know, but you're worth it, you're my puff cakes. How are you doing, puff cakes?

JOHN

I'm doing much better, now that I know you're here.

JILL

Ain't he sweet (*takes a dollar out of her purse*) here you go puff cakes, don't spend it all on one place. (*Walking away with CLAIR and speaking to her*) What do you have to drink?

CLAIR

We have juice, water, soda—

JILL

Do you have any liquor?

JOHN

(*Talking to GREG, referring to dollar*) This may not look like a lot, but the last time I saw her she gave me quarter (*They laugh*).

GREG

That's funny. (*Beat*) Explain something to me.

JOHN

What?

GREG

Puff cakes?

JOHN

(*Laughing*) When I was a baby, I had big puffy cheeks (*beat*) she's been calling me that ever since then.

ALEX

(*Banging fork against glass, to get everyone's attention*) May I have everyone's attention? I want to make a toast to the best son a father could have. (*Everyone has a drink already, JILL brings a glass to AARON, and CLAIR brings one to GREG*). Although he made his mistakes, he still is a son that makes me very proud. If I had a choice, I wouldn't want any other young gentleman as my son. He's the best son ever, (*he raises his glass*) cheers (*Everyone cheers and toast each other and drink*).

MARIA

And this is where the music comes in and the lights fade out. Good job, guys. We're going to take a ten minute break, and then we'll start with Clair's scene. I'll be back stage meditating (*exits*).

JILL

(GREG, ALEX and extras exit). So, what are we suppose to do for ten minutes. That's hardly enough time to do anything.

JOHN

Why don't you get a pedicure to go with your manicure.

JILL

Shut up John. I swear you're so immature.

SARAH

(To JOHN) See, I told you.

JOHN

(To SARAH) Maybe we can go on another date.

SARAH

It wasn't a date. I thought you were trying to change.

JILL

Change, why would he change?

CLAIR

Who would he change for?

JOHN

Sarah. She said, if I change to her liking, she would date me. Maybe even have sex.

SARAH

You see what I mean. You're a disgusting pig. You can change all you want, I would never date you.

JILL

You said you would date him?

SARAH

No I did not. He's dreaming again.

JOHN

Wet and wild baby, wet and wild.

CLAIR

You're so disgusting, John. When are you gonna grow up?

JOHN

Why do you care? Are you waiting for me to grow up, so you can date me?

CLAIR

John, keep dreaming. That's the only date you'll ever have. I swear he's so annoying.

ALEX

(JILL, and SARAH adlib agreement with CLAIR. CLAIR, JILL, and SARAH exit. ALEX, and GREG enter) What's going on?

JOHN

Nothing. Just having fun with the girls.

GREG

What kind of fun?

JOHN

They all have crushes on me. I'm just trying to make their wishes come true.

GREG

In your dreams buddy.

ALEX

We heard everything. If you wanna girl to like you, you have to stop being so adolescent. Those are women, not girls. They graduated high school already. They don't want to deal with high school boys.

JOHN

It doesn't matter, I'm too young for them.

GREG

Age is nothing, but a number. Women don't care about age, they care about personality. You can be forty-five, but if you're acting like a teenager hitting puberty, she wants nothing to do with you.

ALEX

It's all about maturity. A woman wants someone she can talk to like an adult. A man who can understand her.

MARIA

(Enters). We will now resume with our rehearsal.

ALEX

Was that ten minutes?

MARIA

I don't know. All I know is that I am relaxed and ready to continue. I am so relaxed that nothing can get me unrelaxed, or upset. Now let's begin.

BRIAN

(Enters) Hello everyone.

MARIA

(Unrelaxed) You're late. Do you realize how late you are? Why can't you show up on time? Is it against your religion to be on time?

BRIAN

Are you okay? I'm sorry I'm late.

MARIA

What is it now, starbucks, Arthur?

BRIAN

No. I was playing video games and lost track of time. I would have called you but–

MARIA

Let me guess, you didn't feel like it.

BRIAN

No. I couldn't find your phone number.

MARIA

My phone number is listed in the cast and crew directory. Everyone got one.

BRIAN

I know. I got one too.

MARIA

Than why didn't you use it?

BRIAN

Because I misplaced it, and I didn't feel like looking for it. It's not a big deal, I'm here, right?

MARIA

(Takes a deep breath) Right. *(To GREG, ALEX, and JOHN)* Guys, go get ready, thank you. We're about to start, we just finished a ten minute break, before that we finished the last scene of act two.

BRIAN

Who did the lights for me?

MARIA

No one. We had to do the scene without the lights.

BRIAN

Oh, okay. *(JOHN and CLAIR enter, JOHN lies on bed, CLAIR sits on chair next to the bed)* Oh, hey Clair. How are you doing? Did your sister have the baby?

CLAIR

Yes. She had a boy.

BRIAN

Oh, that's so sweet. Maria, did you hear that, her sister had a boy.

MARIA

I know. Clair told us before we began rehearsal. It was probably around the time you were playing video games. Clair start when you're ready.

CLAIR

Remember when I used to read to you at night, before you went to bed? (*JOHN nods head yes. CLAIR shows JOHN a book*). You mind if I read to you?

JOHN

I would love that. It'll bring back sweet memories.

CLAIR

(*Opens children's book (Note (C)), and reads. As she reads GREG enters. As she is reading JOHN looks up at GREG, after glancing at JOHN she turns around and sees GREG, GREG becomes frightened*). Not you again, get out, and don't come back.

JOHN

(*GREG intends to leave*) No, don't leave. Mom, I want to talk to him.

CLAIR

Aaron, he is bad news. I don't want you around people like him.

JOHN

Mom, please I must speak with him. (*CLAIR shakes her head yes as a hesitant approval; she exits. GREG sits down next to JOHN. There is complete silence for about 5 seconds. After the pause they both recite each other's name*). I'm sorry you go first.

GREG

No, no, you; tell me what you need to tell me.

JOHN

Jason, please you go first, I can wait. (*GREG folds his arms as if in protest to speak first*). Alright, I'll go first. I'm sorry I ruined your party.

GREG

Are you crazy? You didn't ruin it. I'm sorry I gave you all that stuff. I didn't know it was going to make you...I'm sorry.

JOHN

Come up here. (*As GREG sits on the bed*). I know you think this is your fault my mom thinks it's her fault. This is no one's fault but, mine. I made the decision to take ecstasy and drink beer. I was the one who did not use discretion. It is my fault. So, please, stop blaming yourself, (*brief silence, and blackout*).

MARIA

(*Lights come up*) Guys, that was good. Please set the stage for the opening scene, thank you.

CLAIR

(*Concerned*) Maria, there's a mouse whole backstage.

MARIA

A mouse whole? It's probably just a regular hole, I'm sure it's not a mouse hole, so don't worry about it.

CLAIR

I don't know, it looks just like a mouse hole. I've see one before.

MARIA

Brian, can you go backstage with Clair to see what she is talking about?

BRIAN

(He's playing a video game on his phone) Not now, I'm on level sixteen, I've never gotten this far.

MARIA

Greg, John can you guys go—

JOHN

Sure thing, it's not a problem.

MARIA

(GREG, JOHN, and CLAIR exit). Brian *(No response)*, Brian *(No response, Maria takes his phone)* Brian!

BRIAN

Maria! *(Takes phone back)* Oh, man! I died, you made me die.

MARIA

Do you have to play that now. We're in the middle of a rehearsal. You really need to go backstage and see what Clair is talking about.

BRIAN

Why, what's backstage?

MARIA

She claims there's a mouse hole back there. You need to go check it out.

BRIAN

Trust me there is no mouse hole backstage *(CLAIR screams)* What was that?

CLAIR

(Frantically enters) I saw him, I saw him!

MARIA

Saw who. Who's back there?

CLAIR

There's a mouse.

MARIA

Oh, no. Why does this have to happen.

JILL

(JILL, ALEX, and SARAH enter) What's going on?

CLAIR

There's a mouse backstage.

JOHN

(JOHN and GREG enters) It's gonna be hard to catch that thing. He can run.

MARIA

What happened

GREG

(Referring to JOHN) Genius, over here takes a broom and sticks it in the whole

JOHN

It's what I'm good for.

SARAH

Shut up! Gosh, you're so disgusting.

GREG

Obviously the mouse got scared and ran. He's somewhere backstage. You're gonna need an exterminator.

MARIA

I don't have the funds for that. This can't be happening. Brian, you need to figure something out.

BRIAN

Why me. I'm not the one who let it loose.

MARIA

Brian, please.

BRIAN

What do you want me to do?

MARIA

I don't know. Get a mouse trap or something. Just figure it out. Guys let's continue this rehearsal.

CLAIR

Well, I don't wanna go back there with that thing still running around.

JILL

Exactly. I refuse to share the backstage with that filthy beast.

JOHN

It's just a mouse.

MARIA

Guys, it won't hurt you. It's more afraid of you than you are of it.

JILL

It might have rabies.

MARIA

It doesn't have—

SARAH

She has a point (*Everyone adlibs in agreement*).

MARIA

Fine. I'll cancel rehearsal, again. But please be here tomorrow, on time (*Blackout*).

ACT TWO SCENE ONE

This scene takes place on June 23. Night before show opens.

ALEX

(Banging fork against glass, to get everyone's attention) May I have everyone's attention? I want to make a toast to the best son a father could have. *(Everyone has a drink already, Jill brings a glass to Aaron, and Clair brings one to Greg)*. Although he made his mistakes, he still is a son that makes me very proud. If I had a choice, I wouldn't want any other young gentleman as my son. He's the best son ever, *(he raises his glass)* cheers *(Everyone cheers and toast each other and drink. The background music gets louder and everyone dances, the light goes out slowly. When the lights come up the actors do curtain calls; after curtain calls a black out occurs and the actors exit the stage; the lights come up)*.

MARIA

(Gives standing ovation, crying) That was beautiful. That was the most beautiful performance I have ever seen. I loved it. I loved it. *(To BRIAN)* Wasn't the at beautiful? It was beautiful. Guys you have made me proud. Go clean up backstage, and then come back out here for notes *(Cast exits)*. Plus I have a surprise. *(Sits)* That was beautiful.

BRIAN

Are you okay?

MARIA

Yeah, I'm fine. Thanks for taking care of the mouse problem. I knew I could count on you.

BRIAN

It was no problem. Are you sure you're okay?

MARIA

Yes, I'm fine. So, how did you take care of the problem?

BRIAN

I brought some mouse traps and put them backstage.

MARIA

How many, and where did you put them?

BRIAN

I don't know about ten or fifteen. I put them in corners, by holes, wherever I thought a mouse would go.

MARIA

It won't be a problem, right? I mean the cast will be able to see the mouse traps?

BRIAN

Yeah, it won't be a problem.

MARIA

I hope not. I don't want the cast stepping in them by mistake.

BRIAN

Don't worry.

MARIA

(Cast enters with belongings, applauding them) There they are. You were beautiful. Gather 'round, I have something to tell you. Have you guys ever heard of Artsy Magazine?

JOHN

Of course.

JILL

It's the best Art magazine in the world. Everyone who is famous today, is famous because of that magazine.

MARIA

Well, Anthony Bridges is coming here—

CLAIR

Anthony Bridges!

MARIA

Yeah, do you know him?

JILL

What do you mean; everyone knows him. He's the best writer for that magazine. He's coming here?

MARIA

Well, yeah. He's coming to review the play.

ALEX

That's amazing. How did you get him to do that?

MARIA

I wrote the magazine, and they sent him? Wow! Is he that famous?

GREG

Are you crazy? You don't know who he is? If he reviews this play, we have a big chance of becoming famous.

JILL

Well, that sucks. He only talks about the leads of a show. He won't even notice me.

CLAIR

I'm finally going to be discovered. *(Everyone adlibs)*

MARIA

Guys, please may I have your attention. That's all fine and dandy, but don't forget the purpose. I called the magazine so they can interview me, so that I could tell them about the Make-A-Wish Foundation. The whole purpose of this company is for the fund-raiser. Don't forget, guys. This show is for the kids, it's not about ourselves.

CLAIR

You're right. I'm sorry I got all cocky.

MARIA

It's okay, just make sure you guys remember that. You guys go home and get some rest. Tomorrow is our last rehearsal...the only time you get to mess up. *(Looks at Brian)* The last time you can show up late. It's the last time—

CLAIR

Maria.

MARIA

Yes, Clair.

CLAIR

I think you're mistaken. Tonight was our last rehearsal. Tomorrow is opening night.

MARIA

You can't be serious.

SARAH

You forgot? That's so unlike you.

MARIA

(Panicking) Is it really tomorrow night. It can't be. We're not ready.

GREG

I think we're ready.

MARIA

But we haven't rehearsed all the way through without stopping. We can't. We just can't.

BRIAN

Maria, they're fine. Everything will be fine. Just calm down.

MARIA

Are you guys sure you're okay?

ALEX

We're fine. Aren't we? *(Everyone adlibs in agreement)*

MARIA

(Worried) Well, if you say so. I've never done a performance without a tech rehearsal. *(Thinking)* I don't think we should do this. We should probably cancel.

BRIAN

Stop all that foolishness. Everything will be perfectly fine *(Blackout)*.

ACT TWO SCENE TWO

USHER

(When the lights come up the stage is set for the rave scene; MARIA, VIOLA STEPHANIE, and ANTHONY BRIDGES are sitting in the audience (lights are focused on the audience area). The usher is standing. A man enters). Hello, welcome to Jenkins Theater, may I help you to your seat?

MAN

No thanks I can find it *(he walks towards the seats and looks for his seat).*

WOMAN

(A woman enters with a bag of chips and soda bottle; speaking to USHER). Excuse me, do you know where I can get tickets at?

USHER

Yes, at the box office.

WOMAN

Where's that at?

USHER

(Sarcastically) Gee, I'm not sure, maybe outside where the big ass sign Box office is.

WOMAN

(Shocked) Well, you don't have to be so rude.

USHER

Well, you don't have to be so dumb. By the way, when you plan to come in here, know that you can't bring in food or drinks.

WOMAN

Are you serious?

USHER

(Sarcastically) No, I'm joking with you, *(beat)* of course I'm serious stupid. Didn't you see the sign at the concessions stand and the theater door.

WOMAN

(Shocked) No, I guess I overlooked it.

USHER

Whatever, no food or drink in the theater (*MAN is still looking for his seat*).

WOMAN

I won't eat it I promise.

USHER

Then don't it eat in the lobby (*pushes her out the door*) thank you.

MAN

(*Man walks over to the usher*) Excuse me, would one of you help me with my seats?

USHER

I ought to slap you in your face. Just a minute ago I offered to help you and you said, (*mocking him*) no I can find it. If you weren't so stubborn, and trying to be Mr Don't need help from an usher, you wouldn't have this problem now.

MAN

Can you just help me?

USHER

(*He snatches the ticket from the man*) Give me the ticket (*walks man to his seat*)

BRIAN

(*Walks towards Maria*). Hey, what's up? (*Sits next to her*)

MARIA

Nothing. What's wrong?

BRIAN

There's nothing wrong.

MARIA

Then why aren't you backstage?

BRIAN

I'm going to watch the play.

MARIA

Brian, I told you I needed you to operate the light board.

BRIAN

Yeah, I know, but that's not until act two. I'll go backstage during intermission.

MARIA

Brian, you should really be backstage, waiting until it's your turns to operate the light board. If anything you should probably operate it during the whole show.

BRIAN

No I shouldn't. I'm the stage manager, not the light board operator. You should be glad I agreed to operate it to begin with. *(BRIAN and MARIA argue; USHER sits WOMAN behind BRIAN, the lights fade out; WOMAN shushes the two).* Who the hell you shushing?

GREG

(A brief blackout occurs; the actors get into place. This scene begins at a rave party. GREG, JOHN, SARAH, and extras are on the stage. The scene opens with rave music. When lights come up all actors are dancing and "raving." Speaking to JOHN) Hey Aaron, isn't this party great. *(JOHN nods, pauses, then collapses. Everyone rushes over and panics)* Aaron, what's wrong? *(Kneels down and listens to JOHN's heart)* Oh my gosh he's not breathing. *The crowd goes silent).* Someone call 911.

SARAH

(SARAH takes her cellular phone and dials). Hello, my name is Liz—Lesley Higgins and I have a problem. There's this kid and he's not breathing. *(Pause)* I don't know how he stopped breathing, I just know he's not breathing. *(Pause)* Who cares about all of that, just get someone here fast. *(Pause)* We're by the old warehouse on Morris drive; please hurry.

GREG

(He asks one of the party extras to watch over him (JOHN); then he walks towards SARAH) Why did you lie about your name?

SARAH

If the police find out what he was doing, there's a big chance we're all gonna get in trouble. I can't get in trouble; it would hurt me and my families' name.

GREG

So you rather worry about your reputation than someone else's life?

SARAH

What do you care, just make sure he doesn't die.

GREG

Well, the police should be here any minute

SARAH

Well, I'm leaving.

GREG

Where are you going?

SARAH

I don't want to be here when the cops arrive. I'll see you tomorrow by Lakeland Ave, that's where Houston's rave is; and Jason, don't bring the chump *(exits).*

GREG

Lizzie, you can't leave me here *(police sirens are heard; the rave extra's disperse. GREG kneels down to JOHN).* I'm sorry buddy. *(Blackout)*

MARIA

(Talking to Brian) Thank God, that went well. We're doing good, we're doing good.

CLAIR

(When the lights come up CLAIR enters. She looks over at JOHN and starts to cry; she walks toward JOHN) Aaron. Aaron, please speak to me. How could you do this to yourself? Why were you hanging around that crowd? *(Pause; sits next to JOHN and embraces him)* Aaron, please don't die.

ALEX

(CLAIR weeps, ALEX enters and sees CLAIR, and he puts his head down, takes a deep breath and walks towards CLAIR). Honey *(CLAIR runs towards ALEX and they embrace)* Vicky, the doctor said he'll be okay.

CLAIR

(She let goes of ALEX.) We don't know that. Look at him. Robert look at him *(ALEX looks at him)*. Does that look like he's going to be okay?

ALEX

Looks can be deceiving. Many people make miraculous recoveries.

CLAIR

This is our fault. We should have been stricter.

ALEX

Honey, don't start putting blame on anyone. No one could have prepared for anything like this. The only thing we can do now is to wait and pray. *(Blackout)*

MARIA

We're doing really good. This is the best day of my life.

BRIAN

(When the lights come up Alex is seen putting the "couch" together. He pauses, then runs off; speaking to Maria) You were saying?

GREG

(Goes to sit on the "couch", as he does so, he misses a chair and falls through the sheet, he gets up and tries to fix it, then sits) I can't believe he just collapsed. I feel bad; I could have killed him.

SARAH

Jason, none of this is your fault. Aaron chose to take X, and drink all that beer. No one forced him.

GREG

But, I suggested he take it to get comfortable. If I didn't suggest it, he wouldn't have taken it.

SARAH

Well, what's done is done. Don't go beating yourself up for what someone else did to themselves.

GREG

Lizzie. We have to stop doing this. This was a sign. Can't you see? If it happened to him, it could happen to us.

SARAH

Greg, don't go soft on me. *(Picks up a beer from the bar)* Come on, suck it up *(hands him the beer)* have a beer *(A camera flash is seen from the audience)*.

GREG

No. *(Stands up)* I need to go for a walk to clear my head. *(He exits the stage; blackout)*

USHER

(A light comes up by the audience. USHER walks towards WOMAN) Excuse me, ma'am, you can't take pictures in this theater.

WOMAN

Oh, I'm sorry.

GREG

(Lights go down in audience area, Lights come up on stage area. JOHN is lying on the bed and GREG is sitting on a chair besides him. GREG is crying). This is my fault. Why, did I suggest you take those pills?

CLAIR

(CLAIR and ALEX enter. They both look at GREG strangely). Who are you? How do you know my son?

GREG

(He looks up at them) Oh, you're his parents? My name is Jason. I'm his friend; we hang out a lot.

CLAIR

(Angry) Are you one of the friends who got him in this state?

GREG

(Hesitant) I...I'm not sure what—

CLAIR

You are. *(She tries to grab him)* I should kill you.

ALEX

(Holds her back.) Vicky, calm down.

JILL

(Enters with a tape recorder, places it on the table next to the bed. Everyone on stage look confused. Under her doctor's coat is another costume one can barely see.) I hope I'm not interrupting anything.

ALEX

(Holding on to CLAIR) Fortunately yes. *(Beat)* Doctor, how is he doing?

JILL

He's not doing well *(CLAIR hugs ALEX and begins to cry, ALEX rubs her back. GREG begins to cry)*, but you know, I'm not just a doctor. *(She pushes a button on the recorder. The music comes on. Jill sings)*

and dance with full costume. When she's done she returns to the scene as if nothing happened. See page 54 for the song she sings).

GREG

(Shocked; he continues) Oh my gosh.

ALEX

What's wrong?

GREG

I just saw him move.

CLAIR

That's impossible,—

JILL

He's unconscious.

CLAIR

(JOHN starts to move some more) Oh my goodness. *(Runs over to JOHN)* Aaron, can you hear me?

JOHN

Mom...

ALEX

(Runs over to CLAIR) Aaron, son, how are you feeling?

JOHN

Dad, is that you?

CLAIR

Yes, it's your mom and dad.

JOHN

(He slowly opens his eyes). Mom, where am I?

CLAIR

You're in the hospital. You were unconscious, but you're going to be okay.

JILL

(Sings) I'm going to need you guys to leave.

JOHN

(Everyone one on stage is confused, and frustrated, except John, whom enjoys JILL's costume) No mommy, don't leave.

CLAIR

(Looking at Jill angrily) Its okay Aaron, we'll be here, we'll be right outside the door.*(blackout)*

MARIA

(Lights comes up by audience. It is intermission the audience exits the theater.) What the hell was that?

BRIAN

It was pretty good. Jill has a great voice, and she can dance too.

MARIA

I'm going to kill her. *(Frustrated)* That was garbage, all of it. What are they trying to do to me? *(Pause)* I hope you plan on going backstage now. Don't forget you are operating the light board.

BRIAN

Well, I figured, since it is the last scene, I'll leave the scene before and go backstage.

MARIA

No, that'll be too late. Brian, why can't you go backstage now?

BRIAN

Because, I'm enjoying the show. I don't remember this being rehearsed.

MARIA

(The audience has returned by now). That's because it wasn't. I don't believe this. Brian, please go backstage. So much bad things have happened already. I don't need anything else going wrong.

BRIAN

Why not, what's one more bad thing?

MARIA

Brian, go backstage.

BRIAN

I'll go after the first scene. I promise.

MARIA

(The lights dim to a black out. Act two begins. As the lights dim the audience applause). Brian, would you please—

BRIAN

Shh! It's about to start.

CLAIR

(JOHN enters and lies on the bed. CLAIR sits on chair next to him, a brief black out occurs then the lights slowly fade in). Remember when I used to read to you at night, before you went to bed? *(JOHN nods head yes. CLAIR shows JOHN a book).* You mind if I read to you?

JOHN

I would love that. It'll bring back sweet memories.

CLAIR

(Opens children's book (see page (C)), and reads. As she reads GREG enters. As she is reading JOHN looks up at GREG, after glancing at JOHN she turns around and sees GREG, GREG becomes frightened). Not you again, get out, and don't come back.

JOHN

(GREG intends to leave) No, don't leave. Mom, I want to talk to him (There is another camera flash seen).

CLAIR

Aaron, he is bad news. I don't want you around people like him.

JOHN

Mom, please I must speak with him. *(CLAIR shakes her head yes as a hesitant approval; she exits. GREG sits down next to JOHN. There is complete silence for about 5 seconds. After the pause they both recite each other's name).* I'm sorry you go first.

GREG

No, no, you; tell me what you need to tell me.

JOHN

Jason, please you go first, I can wait. *(GREG folds his arms as if in protest to speak first).* Alright, I'll go first. I'm sorry I ruined your party.

GREG

Are you crazy? You didn't ruin it. I'm sorry I gave you all that stuff. I didn't know it was going to make you...I'm sorry.

JOHN

Come up here. *(As GREG sits on the bed, it collapse and John and Greg fall through it. John tries to continue the scene. Brian is laughing loud).* I know you think this is your fault *(trying to get up)* my mom thinks it's her fault. This is no one's fault but, mine. *(Still trying to get up; Greg is trying to get up and help John)* I made the decision to take ecstasy and drink beer. I was the one who did not use discretion. It is my fault. So, please, stop blaming yourself, *(brief silence, and blackout).*

SARAH

(When the lights come up SARAH and the party extras are on stage, they party for a brief moment before GREG enters, SARAH notices him). Hey stranger, long time no see. Where have you been?

GREG

I went to visit Aaron.

SARAH

How's the slugger doing?

GREG

He's doing. *(Beat)* Uh...Lizzie I need to talk to you alone.

SARAH

Jason, we're partying, party with us. We can talk later.

GREG

No. I want to talk now. (*GREG talks to the party extras*). Excuse me; may I have your attention? (*The party and music stops*). The party is over; everyone please leave. (*The party people adlib disapproval*) Come on, get out. (*They begin to leave*).

CLAIR

(*Offstage*) AHHHH!! Get it away from me.

SARAH

(*Acting like she didn't here anything; pulling him aside*) What is wrong with you? You're ruining a good thing. (*Talking to the party people*) Guys, you don't have to leave.

JOHN

(*Offstage*) What's wrong; why are you screaming?

CLAIR

(*Offstage*) I just saw a mouse.

JOHN

(*Offstage*) I thought Brian took care of that problem (*a mouse trap snaps, JOHN screams*) THAT HURT!!

JILL

(*Offstage*) What's going on (*snap*) AHHHH!! What the hell was that

JOHN

(*Offstage*) A mouse trap.

JILL

(*Offstage*) Why are there mouse traps back here (*snap*) Ohhh!

JOHN

(*Offstage*) Because there are mice back here (*snap*) Ohhh!

JILL

(*Offstage*) How many are back here?

JOHN

(*Offstage*) I don't know (*snap*) Ohh!

CLAIR

(*Offstage*) Don't be so loud. They can probably here you out there.

JOHN

(*Offstage*) Shut up Clair, (*snap*) AHHH!

GREG

(*Everyone on stage is trying to ignore the backstage interruptions*) Yes you do. Everyone out (*beat*) now.

SARAH

(Party extras exit). What is wrong with you? You never turn down a party. GREG
I'm changing, Lizzie...I've changed. I can't do this anymore.

SARAH

You can't do what anymore; what are you talking about?

GREG

I can't live this lifestyle. No more parties, drugs, alcohol, it ruins lives. It makes people unconscious and—

JOHN

(Offstage; snap) Ohh!

SARAH

Are you still worried about Aaron? Get over it. Aaron is fine. Besides, he was a punk; he took too much too soon. You're a pro; you can keep partying without passing out.

GREG

Lizzie, I do not want to do this anymore. I am done with it, and you should be done with it too.

SARAH

What the hell is going on with you? If you won't party anymore, I'm afraid our friendship is over.

GREG

That is not a problem with me; you know where the door is. *(SARAH exits, blackout).*

MARIA

(The set is being changed; once it is finished; GREG, SARAH, JILL, and, EXTRAS enter. At this point there is still a black out.) Why is there still a blackout? What is wrong with Brian?

BRIAN

What did you say?

MARIA

Who said that?

BRIAN

Me, Brian.

MARIA

(Frustrated) You're suppose to be backstage managing the lights

BRIAN

Oh no, did I forget?

MARIA

BRIAN.

BRIAN

I'm going. *(Brian runs on stage bumps into some people, apologizes, than exits to backstage)*

JOHN

(Lights come up. There is music playing softly in the background. ALEX, CLAIR and JOHN enter. When they enter, the lights come up and everyone on stage yells "Surprise!"). Oh my goodness, this is wonderful. *(We can see his pain; he hugs ALEX and then CLAIR)* Thanks dad, thanks mom, you have made me so happy. I want to thank all of you for coming. Most of all I want to thank you all for the love and support you showed me while I was in the hospital. I made some stupid choices and I had to pay the consequences. I just thank God that I'm still alive. Thanks again. *(Everyone cheers, and returns to partying (drinking, dancing, conversing)).*

UNCLE JACOB

(Clair and Alex walk toward the guest to thank and welcome them. UNCLE JACOB and AUNT GLORIA walk towards JOHN. JACOB gives JOHN a rough hug) Hey, there's my nephew.

JOHN

Uncle Jake.

UNCLE JACOB

How are you doing, buddy, you keeping out of trouble?

JOHN

Yes, I am doing the best that I can.

AUNT GLORIA

(Hugs JOHN) How are you Aaron, you feeling well *(JOHN nods yes)*? That's good.

UNCLE JACOB

(Tries to wrestle with JOHN) Of course, he's okay. He's my slugger.

AUNT GLORIA

Jake, calm down.

UNCLE JACOB

Gloria, don't tell me what to do.

AUNT GLORIA

Well, if you weren't acting like a child I wouldn't have to.

UNCLE JACOB

What is your problem?

AUNT GLORIA

There is nothing wrong with me, however, your problem is too much beer. *(Beat)* Slow down before you hurt yourself. *(UNCLE JACOB and AUNT GLORIA walk away arguing).*

USHER

(Another camera flash is seen. USHER walks towards WOMAN) Excuse ma'am, I'm afraid I'm going to have to take your camera.

WOMAN

You can't do that, *(beat)* it's mine.

USHER

Yes it is, but you've been warned, woman. I'm going to have to take it.

WOMAN

No, I won't let you. *(The WOMAN and USHER fight over the camera, finally the usher grabs the camera) Give me the camera (he throws it and it lands on the stage; the USHER returns to his position).*

JOHN

(GREG walks towards JOHN. JOHN sees him and smiles. He puts his hand towards GREG and they shake hands). Hey, thanks for coming.

GREG

When your mom called me I thought she was plotting my death *(They both laugh).*

JOHN

She was upset; after I talked to her she realize you weren't all that bad. *(Changing the subject)* So, how's Lizzie and the rest of the crew.

GREG

I don't know, *(beat)* I don't hang out with them anymore. I changed, after I saw you in the hospital I had to stop.

JOHN

That's good. I'm happy for you.

GREG

I'm happy for you too. To see you alive is a good feeling. *(Pause)* I'm sorry—

JOHN

Don't apologize; *(pause)* it's good seeing you again *(he puts his hands toward Greg and they shake, then they hug).*

CLAIR

(CLAIR and JILL walk towards JOHN). Aaron, look who is here.

JOHN

(He looks and smiles, he walks to JILL and hugs her) Grandma Rose thanks for coming. You didn't have to travel so far for me.

JILL

I know, but you're worth it. How are you puff cakes?

JOHN

I'm doing much better, now that I know you're here.

JILL

Ain't he sweet (*takes a dollar out of her purse*) here you go puff cakes, don't spend it all on one place. (*Walking away with CLAIR and speaking to her*) What do you have to drink?

CLAIR

We have juice, water, soda—

JILL

Do you have any liquor?

JOHN

(*Talking to GREG, referring to dollar*) This may not look like a lot, but the last time I saw her she gave me fifty cents (*They laugh*).

GREG

That's funny. (*Beat*) Explain something for me.

JOHN

What?

GREG

Puff cakes?

JOHN

(*Laughing*) When I was a baby, I had big puffy cheeks (*beat*) she's been calling me that ever since then.

ALEX

(*Banging fork against glass, to get everyone's attention*) May I have everyone's attention? I want to make a toast to the best son a father could have. (*Everyone has a drink already, Jill brings a glass to Aaron, and Clair brings one to Greg*). Although he made his mistakes, he still is a son that makes me very proud. If I had a choice, I wouldn't want any other young gentleman as my son. He's the best son ever, (*he raises his glass*) cheers (*Everyone cheers and toast each other and drink. The background music gets louder and everyone dances, the light goes out slowly. When the lights come up the actors do curtain calls; after curtain calls a black out occurs and the actors exit the stage; the lights come up*).

MARIA

(*The audience members stand and talk amongst themselves.*) I am going back there and killing each and everyone of them. (*The light goes out and a light comes up on the backstage area. Maria enters*). I want to see everyone's face out here, right now! (*Everyone enters*). What the hell was that? That's not what we rehearsed. Jill, I should kill you. How dare you pull a stunt like that. John, Sarah, and Jill, the mouse hunters, do you think you could have been louder. Brian, that's why I said to stay backstage. What were you doing? Your work was terrible tonight.

BILLY

Well, we still have nine more shows to do it better.

MARIA

(*Angry*) We might not have another try, 'cause chances are this show is being closed.

BRIAN

Everything wasn't our fault. I told you the bed wasn't strong enough for the both of them. You said the bed was fine, so, that part is your fault. And also, the chairs, I said the chairs—

MARIA

You're not aloud to speak to me.

ANTHONY

(Enters) Hey Maria.

MARIA

Anthony, hi. Oh, my gosh. You have to excuse that mess you saw. Wait a minute. How did you get back here?

ANTHONY

Don't worry about that. Guess who was sitting in the audience and wants to speak with you?

MARIA

I don't know. I really don't wanna play guessing games at this moment.

ANTHONY

Viola Stephanie.

MARIA

What?! You can't be serious?

BRIAN

Who's Viola Stephanie

MARIA

She's the playwright *(she looks at JILL with anger; JILL puts her head down)*.

BRIAN

What's a playwright

CLAIR

Someone who writes plays.

BRIAN

What play did she write, maybe we should do one of her plays next year.

MARIA

You idiot, we did one of her plays this year.

BRIAN

Oh, *(pauses, realizes who VIOLA is)* Oh, so this isn't good, right?

MARIA

Jill, I did not know she was coming to see this. What do I tell her?

JILL

(Nervous) I don't know. I'm sorry, I didn't know. I was just trying to get noticed by Anthony.

ANTHONY

You did a good job.

JILL

Oh really, thank you, I was trying to— *(Maria gives her an angry look, she stops talking).*

MARIA

I don't believe this *(beat)* my career is over.

ANTHONY

Are you ready to meet her?

MARIA

(Looks at everyone) Pray for me *(Blackout).*

ACT TWO SCENE THREE

MARIA

The lights come up on the auditorium. The audience members are ad-libbing in the background. Maria enters. She is afraid to face Viola. She walks towards her.) Wow, Viola *(puts her hand out and they shake)* What a pleasure to meet you. Before you say anything let me explain. This is not what we rehearsed for two months, I promise. I have no clue what happened tonight. I just want to—

VIOLA

This is the worst opening night I ever witnessed.

MARIA

I am so sorry. Please forgive me. We had a great dress rehearsal last night, I don't know what happened.

VIOLA

I'm just so speechless.

MARIA

I know I shouldn't ask you this, but would you mind coming back tomorrow. I know for sure it will be better. What you saw tonight is not our best.

VIOLA

I would hope not. It doesn't even look like you guys were ready to open.

MARIA

I know, I know, but, please, understand that tonight was just a mistake. Someone must have said Macbeth or something, I don't know. All I know is I want you to see the version we did last night and I know we can do a better job. It must have been opening night jitters.

VIOLA

Well, I am in town for the weekend. I guess I can swing by here tomorrow night.

MARIA

Oh please do, I promise it will be much, *much* better.

VIOLA

Okay. I'm taking your word.

MARIA

I promise. Thank you so much.

VIOLA

No problem. Now, you go get some rest. I think you need it. (*Viola exits.*)

MARIA

Okay, I will. Thank you again. It was nice meeting you (*Anthony approaches her*).

ANTHONY

Hey, how are you?

MARIA

Anthony, I want to apologize for that...mess. I don't know what happened.

ANTHONY

No, it was pretty good. It was really funny.

MARIA

But it wasn't supposed to be funny. Please don't write a review.

ANTHONY

Don't worry. I'll be back tomorrow night along with Ms. Viola.

MARIA

Oh goodness. You heard that?

ANTHONY

Yeah. Don't worry. At least she understands.

MARIA

I feel like a failure.

ANTHONY

Don't feel that way. (*Beat*) How would you like it if I treated you to dinner?

MARIA

You don't have to do that.

ANTHONY

I know, but I want to. Please, it would give me pleasure to get to know you better (*he takes her hand and kisses it*).

MARIA

(Blushing) Well, you sure know how to treat a lady. *(He takes her hand and they begin to exit)* So, Mr Bridges, tell me about yourself.

ANTHONY

Well, I'm single; *(beat)* hopefully that'll change in a couple of hours.

MARIA

You're such a flirt.

CURTAINS

JILL'S SONG

When people look at me they think I'm a nurse.
Some even think I'm a front desk clerk
But I assure you, I'm not a nurse
I'm not even a plain ole doctor
I am Ms. Doctor Love
Come and get your healing
Ms Doctor Love
I'm more than appealing
I can rub your back
And what you lack I can give you
I'm ms doctor love
A gift from up above
Ms. Doctor Love
The one you're dreaming of
For I am Ms Doctor Love

Dance Break

They say to eat an apple a day
To keep me away
And drink three glasses of milk to keep you fine as silk
But if it's milk you want
Its milk I've got
So, don't you run away
'Cause I'll be your apple a day
For I am Ms Doctor Love
I know what you're feeling
Ms Doctor Love
Come and get your healing
Ms Doctor Love
I'm much more than appealing