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Duo Interpretation (Male/Male)

Sounds of Silence

by Lee Watts and Christopher Cherry

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Greatest American Heroes

by Matt Gerbig and Jace Lux

Duo Interpretation (Male / Female)

Counting Starfish

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Through the Years

by Lee Watts

One Act Play

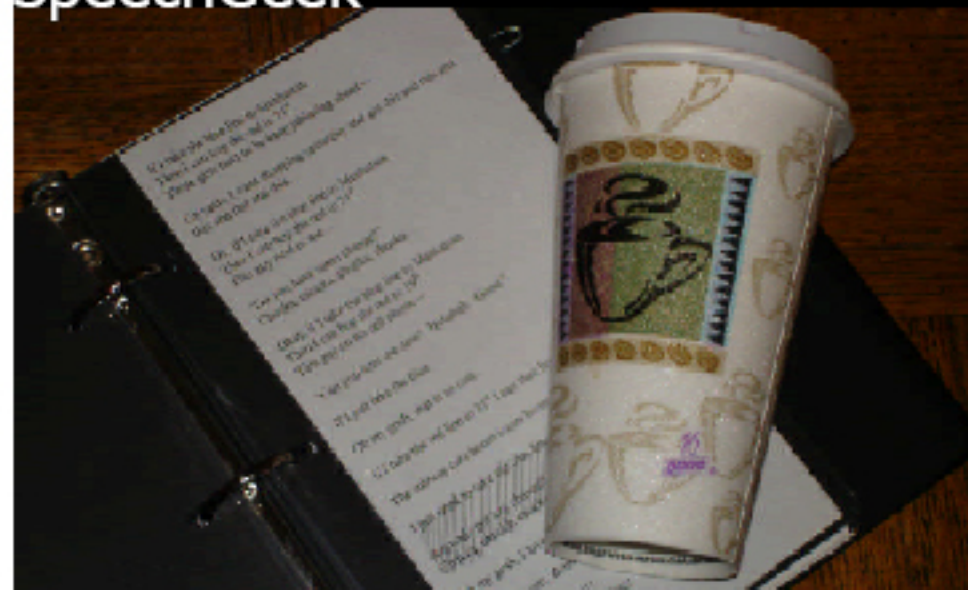
Pop

by Adam Black and Christopher Negvesky

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Sounds of Silence

by Lee Watts and Christopher Cherry

CHARACTERS

Michael, the older brother

Daniel, Michael's deaf younger brother

The time fluctuates between the present and the past. The setting changes as time changes. The past: Michael's bedroom, loosely suggested— a bed, a lamp. MICHAEL and DANIEL are standing in the bedroom. They are brothers. Michael is older than Daniel by two years. The younger Daniel was born deaf due to a growth on his brain. Michael and Daniel have never thought much of the growth. They just outgrew it together. Michael is more than just a brother to Daniel. From the beginning, he has been Daniel's best friend. In this first scene, Michael is trying to teach Daniel how to speak with his voice instead of with his hands.

MICHAEL. All right, Daniel. Let's try this again. (signing and speaking at the same time) I... love... you. (DANIEL tries to speak the words, but all we hear are a jumble of sounds. HE becomes frustrated and signs "I love you" with his hands.) No, no, no... (moving Daniel's hands to his side) Don't sign. Speak. Try again. I...

DANIEL. (slowly) Ung... Uh... I...

MICHAEL. ...love...

DANIEL. (slowly, but with a little more confidence) ...I...I...love...

MICHAEL. ...y...

DANIEL. ...y...

BOTH. ...you.

DANIEL smiles. MICHAEL smiles back at him. Lights fade as DANIEL freezes, and MICHAEL walks into the light coming up downstage center. MICHAEL is older and standing next to a gravestone. We are in the present. It is raining. MICHAEL addresses the grave.

MICHAEL. Well, what can I say? Can you hear me Daniel? (pause) What a stupid question. (pause) Here we are again... in the rain. Only this time, I'm the one getting wet. (pause) Do you remember that, Daniel? I was so mean to you. Lights fade on Michael.

Lights up on DANIEL standing frozen next to a tree. We are now in the past. The tree is only there to suggest the woods. MICHAEL takes his place in front of Daniel. They are both standing stage right of the tree. MICHAEL holds a bag. When he begins talking, the action starts as though in mid-moment. MICHAEL is explaining something to Daniel. DANIEL is trying to make sense of what Michael is saying. DANIEL can talk in this scene, but his speech is obviously affected by the fact that he is deaf. DANIEL "listens" by reading lips.

DANIEL. Okay. One more time.

MICHAEL. Stand here in the middle of the woods with this bag and I'll go find the snipes. When I find one, I'll chase it into the bag, okay? (MICHAEL hands the bag to Daniel, then a wonderful family life in my head? During classes in high school, I would spend entire periods manufacturing the family life I wish I had. Sometimes I'd go so far as to tell the lunch table how great my Dad was and how we were best friends. We'd go fishing and hunting and out to eat- all in my head. (pause) It's as if I created this wonderful bubble world that was amazing and tender and precious- but when I came home from school, it popped. Just like a bubble, it popped when it touched anything real. (MICHAEL exits stage right.)

DANIEL. Okay. But hurry. I don't like being alone... (to himself) ...especially when it is about to rain. (MICHAEL re-emerges stage left behind the tree.) Boy, I feel like a real idiot.

MICHAEL. (whispering) You look like one, too! (a beat, then regular voice) Why am I whispering? He's deaf! This couldn't be better! (SFX- Thunder. It starts to rain.)

DANIEL. Oh no! Wonderful...

BOTH. ...it's raining!

MICHAEL. Great!

DANIEL. Michael, where are you?

MICHAEL. (mooing, but still hiding) I'm over here!

DANIEL. I'm getting wet!

MICHAEL. And I'm loving it!

DANIEL. I'm alone!

MICHAEL. No, you're not!

DANIEL. Michael? Where are you? I love you...

Lights fade on woods scene. MICHAEL walks back to gravestone as the lights come up. We are in the present again.

MICHAEL. I left you in the rain for three hours that day. (smiling) When you finally came home, you were so mad. (pause) But you always kept your chin up. You never let anything get you down. (pause) I can only remember one time when you were really discouraged. Lights fade. Lights up on Michael and Daniel's bedroom, simply suggested with a desk and chair. A stereo is sitting on the desk. We are in the past. DANIEL is frozen while sitting at the desk. HE is working on homework. As before, the action picks up when MICHAEL enters the scene and begins talking.

MICHAEL. Hey. (DANIEL doesn't respond, so MICHAEL taps him on the shoulder.) Hey! (DANIEL turns to face Michael.) Can I talk to you for a second? Mom told me.

DANIEL. Told you what?

MICHAEL. She told me you turned down that job at McDonald's. Why?

DANIEL. I just don't want to work there.

MICHAEL. And why not?

DANIEL. I just don't. I'm perfectly satisfied right here.

MICHAEL. Daniel...

DANIEL. No! I've decided not to take the job. Case closed. Discussion over. So you just go away and leave me alone. I don't want to talk about it.

MICHAEL. Well that's just too bad. You're going to listen to every word I've got to say.

(pause) You just don't know how sick you sound right now.

DANIEL. (annoyed) You're right, Michael, I don't. I'm deaf, remember?

MICHAEL. You're not going to get out of this with your being deaf. I'm not just going to let you sit around feeling sorry for yourself. (During Michael's speech, DANIEL becomes more and more frustrated.) You have got to get yourself a job. Because I can tell you right now, you're not going to live with Mom and Dad for the rest of your life and you're sure not going to live with me. So you can just...

DANIEL. No! Stop! I'm not listening to you anymore. (pause) I'm listening to your stereo.

(DANIEL turns the knob on the stereo. SFX- Loud music. The loud music hurts Michael's ears.)

MICHAEL. Stop it, Daniel! (MICHAEL turns off the stereo.) I am so tired of your stupid deaf jokes! Now, listen to me...

DANIEL. (shouting) No! You listen to me! Close your mouth and listen! (Long pause.) What do you hear?

MICHAEL. (still annoyed with Daniel) Nothing. Silence.

DANIEL. Exactly. (pause) Silence. (pause) That's what I hear everyday. How would you feel if you had to wake up everyday knowing that you couldn't hear anything?

MICHAEL. I understand how you feel...

DANIEL. No! No you don't. You will never understand. I know what being deaf means.

And I also know that there is no place for me out there.

MICHAEL. That's not true. Just because you're deaf doesn't mean you can't function in society. There are plenty of deaf people who are successful. And this McJob program is going to give you a start.

DANIEL. Right. What am I going to do? Work drive-through? (mimicking drive-through operator) Hello. Welcome to McDonald's. Can I take your order? Oh, I'm sorry, I'm deaf. Could you talk a little louder please?!

MICHAEL. That's not funny!

Lights fade. MICHAEL steps center stage, once again in the present next to the gravestone.

Greatest American Heroes

by Matthew Gerbig and Jace Lux

CHARACTERS

Jesse, a television action hero

Christian, also a television action hero

The time is now.

This is a play designed for a specific type of performance, namely a competitive speech/forensics performance. Therefore, the staging is designed to give the Purchaser an idea of what this play would look like in forensics competition.

SCENE ONE

The scene opens with JESSE'S back to the audience. CHRISTIAN is on the other side of him, but unseen by the audience. They begin singing any action song of the actors' choosing. After a few lines, CHRISTIAN fades to a hum, and JESSE narrates.

JESSE. Two heroes... (CHRISTIAN now faces the audience and they BOTH wave.) The best of friends... (BOTH give each other cheesy high-five.) Crime fighters extraordinaire. His specialty... hand to hand combat. (CHRISTIAN displays ferocious fighting style through various punches and kicks.) HIS specialty... throwing knives. (JESSE nonchalantly throws a knife with no emotion. BOTH begin running in slow motion.) Nothing can stop them. They are...

BOTH. ...The Greatest American Heroes! (BOTH stop in their tracks and give a smiling thumbs-up.)

OFF-VOICE. Out.

JESSE. Thank God. Someone get me out of this stupid suit. Are we done with this part?

Can I go? (to Christian) I swear, this show gets worse and worse every time we do it.

Excuse me... (JESSE storms out.)

CHRISTIAN. Jerk.

SCENE TWO

Lights up on JESSE and CHRISTIAN at opposite sides of the stage. CHRISTIAN reaches for his cell phone, and dials a number.

CHRISTIAN. You better answer.

JESSE. Hello?

CHRISTIAN. Where are you?

JESSE. Oh yeah, I was going to call you but I got a little tied up. (covers receiver to talk to unseen woman with him) Yeah, hang on baby. It's just some loser from the show. Give me one second.

CHRISTIAN. Excuse me? Some LOSER from the show? Look, we had a MEETING.

JESSE. Sorry, I forgot. Look, I'll meet you at the press conference. What time is it again?

CHRISTIAN. It starts at two. (BOTH hang up cell phones.)

SCENE THREE

Lights up with BOTH facing the audience, fielding questions at the press conference.

JESSE. (to reporter) Yes. It's funny because we get that question all the time. Christian and I are best friends on and off the camera. We have been since high school. It's impossible to have a chemistry on screen without having one off screen. I just don't think we could do this show without each other. (JESSE turns to CHRISTIAN as if Christian has just been asked a question.)

CHRISTIAN. (a little stunned by Jesse's response) Huh? Yeah, ditto. We were best friends in high school...

JESSE. (to reporter) No, that's no problem. We appreciate this opportunity. Thanks again, Barbara. Thank you, folks. Good luck with the article. (JESSE begins to leave, but CHRIS-

TIAN grabs Jesse's arm.)

CHRISTIAN. What was that about? Best friends? Chemistry on and off camera? What are you feeding these people? The only time you even talk to me off camera is when you bump into me storming off the set. Oh yeah, and the times when you want to criticize my performance. (a beat) What's happened to you? We USED to be best friends...

JESSE. All I know...

CHRISTIAN. I'm not done! This whole lifestyle has gone to your head. You've let it change you into one of those Hollywood-esque types that we used to despise.

JESSE. If you're jealous of my lines or something, take it up with the producer and stop hounding me about this petty junk.

CHRISTIAN. You just don't get it, do you?

JESSE. Chris, if you'll excuse me, I have someplace to be. I know you don't want to hear this, but I have a date at six.

CHRISTIAN. And I'll bet she means SO much to you.

JESSE. (shrugs) Not really.

SCENE FOUR

Lights up on CHRISTIAN sitting in a chair at his house. He is upset. As he pushes the play on the controller, JESSE appears, in the middle of a scene that he continues playing and replaying.

JESSE. (as the TV version of himself) Hold on. (takes out a gun) NOW, you do what you think is right. (CHRISTIAN pushes the pause on the control. JESSE freezes. CHRISTIAN rewinds and JESSE retraces his steps to where he pulled the gun. CHRISTIAN pushes play. JESSE taking out gun, again) NOW, you do what you think is right. (CHRISTIAN rewinds again. Play.) ...do what you think is right. (CHRISTIAN rewinds to the same spot. Play.) ...do what you think is right. (CHRISTIAN rewinds to the same spot. Play.) ...do what you think is right. (CHRISTIAN rewinds to the same spot. Play.) ...what you think is right. CHRISTIAN. (beat) What a jerk.

SCENE FIVE

Lights up. BOTH are taping a scene from their TV show. JESSE throws a knife. This action sequence is cheesy.

JESSE. (as character) There's plenty more where that came from, punk. (CHRISTIAN flies in and punches the guy in the back of the head.)

OFF-VOICE. Cut. (CHRISTIAN starts to leave the scene.)

JESSE. Hey, Christian. Will you come here for a sec? There's something that really been bothering me lately.

CHRISTIAN. (intrigued, hopeful) Yeah? What's up?

JESSE. Look, your behavior lately has been really erratic. You fly off the handle an awful lot. You criticize my lifestyle, and talk about how we... (mookingly) ..."just aren't friends anymore." I think the stress from your work is starting to get to you. And I hate to be the one to break it to you, but your performance is starting to suffer.

CHRISTIAN. Listen up, J. You may fool everyone else into thinking that you have everything under control... that you have it all, more than you could ever ask for. That your whole life is just one big success. Somewhere in there I think you have yourself believing it. But, as far as I'm concerned, the only thing that you have succeeded at is making me feel inadequate. And the friend I know wouldn't let that happen in the first place.

JESSE. (not really caring) Well, I'm sorry that you feel that way.

CHRISTIAN. No you're not. That's the thing. I'm telling you all this, how you've made one of the people that used to mean so much to you just a short time ago feel worthless. You have made me feel like nothing and I've done nothing to deserve that, and you don't care.

JESSE. What am I supposed to do? Apologize for what I've become?

CHRISTIAN. It's not your status that is the problem! It's the way you handle it! And deep down, I think you're ashamed of it.

JESSE. (shaking his head) No...

CHRISTIAN. How can someone not be ashamed of sleeping with a different woman every night?

Counting Starfish

by Matthew Gerbig and Jace Lux-

CHARACTERS

John, a normal guy with abnormal dreams
Woman, the dream woman

The time is now.

The settings are suggested only by simple set pieces.

SCENE ONE

JOHN stands in the middle of a seemingly empty stage. Throughout the performance HE will move to different small locations on the stage set to represent different scenes. For now, HE is alone.

JOHN. Have you ever wondered why women's pant sizes go down to zero? Zero means nothing, right? (beat) So, I'm sitting on this stool at an unfamiliar club, with this unfamiliar clamminess on my skin. I'm nervous but don't know why. I'm staring at this woman. She has pretty all over her face. And this "siren" approaches me, right?

She's got the control and I'm frozen. I look her up and down and she smiles, one of those "sure of yourself" smiles. She leans in and I can't breathe, I can't move. So I just close my eyes and wait...

WOMAN walks up behind John while his eyes are closed and she puts her arms around him, then with the next line, she disappears behind him in the blackness.

JOHN. I open my eyes again and she's gone. Back to my life.

SCENE TWO

WOMAN walks in front of John at another section of the stage.

WOMAN. Does this make me look fat? Would you love me more if I were a size zero?

JOHN. (JOHN'S eyes are closed as he responds.) Honey, zero means nothing and you're not a... (JOHN opens his eyes. SHE has disappeared again.) ...Zero. (talks to audience) And that's how things have been lately. These life altering, mood changing drea...

Experiences I have while I sleep. Then I wake up and I'm confused, excited, in this state of confusion and realize there's nothing. I remember the way she smells, the way the air feels, the softness of her skin. But when it comes to details about her, there's nothing. I remember nothing about her. I don't even know what she looks like. You go through your entire day in anxious anticipation only to know that reality holds nothing.

SCENE THREE

WOMAN is in scene again. JOHN'S eyes are open at the beginning of this scene.

WOMAN. We're going to be late.

JOHN. You know, I have never been to a dance to actually dance. I'm a wall hugger.

WOMAN. This isn't a dance, it's a ball, and there's a first time for everything.

JOHN. I don't know how to dance.

WOMAN. Come here. (WOMAN tries to teach him how to dance. HE is terrible.) If you move your feet, you're fine. Don't move your butt too much. It's your hips that move, not your butt.

JOHN. Show me.

WOMAN. Maybe later. How do I look?

JOHN. Like a zero. (JOHN pulls Woman near to him, and CLOSES HIS EYES as he holds her.)

WOMAN. Mr. Man, are you trying to seduce me?

JOHN. Maybe.

WOMAN. Well, it's working.

JOHN. Then, yes I was. (JOHN opens his eyes, and WOMAN is gone.) Sometimes, if I wake in the middle of the night, I still feel warm from her spooning with me. I remember her curves, her laugh and her touch, but I have no face to put with them.

SCENE FOUR

A bowling alley. WOMAN and JOHN are getting ready to bowl.

JOHN. (watching Woman oomping bowling ball, wearing bowling shoes) Oh, you look cute.

WOMAN. These shoes look stupid. They do not go with this outfit. And do you know how many feet have been in these shoes?

JOHN. Honey, they're perfectly clean. I promise.

WOMAN. How do you know? Do YOU clean them? Do you know who wore them last? Because, if you do, I want to give them a call.

JOHN. They're fine.

WOMAN. Okay. But if I get foot herpes because of these shoes, I'm blaming you. (a beat) Now, how do I do this? I just throw this stupid ball down that stupid court and knock those things over?

JOHN. Yes, you ROLL the ball down the LANE and try to knock the PINS over. Here, I'll show you. (JOHN guides her through the motions. SHE rolls the ball.) Look, it's going... It's... in the gutter. But it was close. (SHE pouts.) No more bowling? (SHE shakes her head.) What do you want to do? (SHE whispers in his ear.) Okay, let's go.

SCENE FIVE

JOHN is on stage alone, talking to audience.

JOHN. Okay, let me break it down for you. It's seven in the morning. I'm lying here alone, fantasizing about this woman that doesn't exist, and I can't recall any physical detail about her. My mind won't let me. (a beat) I don't know if she's short or tall, how long her hair is, what color her eyes are, what her name is, WHAT HER FACE LOOKS LIKE! But every night I can't wait to sleep, just so I can be with her. (a beat) I am in love with a fantasy. A series of dreams...

SCENE SIX

Lights up. JOHN and WOMAN have just finished making out.

JOHN. You're telling me you've never done that?

WOMAN. Nope.

JOHN. Never?

WOMAN. When I was ten...

JOHN. When you were TEN?

WOMAN. No... When I was ten, I used to set my alarm for six in the morning just to peak through my blinds at this neighborhood kid who used to cut our lawn. He was 14. I spent three summers watching this kid and swearing up and down that I was in love. But I never told him my feelings because I was scared and embarrassed and shy...

JOHN. So, you're telling me the lawn boy is my competition?

WOMAN. (WOMAN pulls JOHN towards her.) I'm being serious. It's just that when you feel a certain way about someone, you tell them.

JOHN. Yeah. (JOHN closes his eyes.)

WOMAN. I'm trying to tell you that I...

JOHN. (JOHN opens his eyes and realizes he's alone.) (speaking to audience) She what? She loves me? Hates me? Wants me? She what? This is the hell that is my life! (JOHN walks towards center stage, alone.) Well, that WAS my life... You see, it gets better. (a beat) I couldn't sleep last night. Not at all. I tossed, I turned, but my body refused to settle down. I lied there, eyes wide, just counting the starfish patterns on the ceiling. Finally, I got up, grabbed a book, and went to this all-night diner down on the corner of Grotto and Jefferson. It didn't help though because I ended up just staring into my coffee, counting the number of bubbles every time the waitress filled up my cup. I sat there for about an hour, listening to the random conversations of the people around me, hearing about their lives and their problems, and then I hear these two women in the booth behind me. They are talking about these new low-carb and protein diets. I

Through the Years

by Lee Watts

CHARACTERS

Steven
Jennifer

The time shifts between the present and the past.

The setting is Steven and Jennifer's house.

Single light comes up on STEVEN who is standing downstage center. HE is wearing all black. Both characters will wear black. As the characters age, the aging process will be shown in the way the characters move and talk. In the darkness around Steven are a bed, kitchen table and chairs, and a coat rack and chair. These things will be revealed as the play moves forward.

STEVEN. (to audience) The first time I saw Jennifer was in high school.

She was a sophomore and I was a junior. She was gorgeous. She had long, dark hair, bright blue eyes, and a figure that could stop traffic. Of course, I wasn't too shabby myself. (STEVEN freezes as a single light comes up on JENNIFER. SHE is also wearing only black.)

JENNIFER. (to audience) The first time I saw Steven, he was skinny, pale, and had wiry hair. I wouldn't have believed it then, but he was the one I would fall in love with. (Lights up on Steven while simultaneously off Jennifer. JENNIFER walks to the bed in the darkness and retrieves a ball that will make her look pregnant under the covers.)

STEVEN. (to audience) When I married Jennifer, I had it all planned out. We were going to have the perfect life together. (STEVEN begins to move towards the bed.) (to audience) I promised I would take her to Paris. I didn't want to go, but that was her dream. She also dreamed of a little house, complete with a yard large enough for all the children she had planned. I like children, I just don't like waiting for them to arrive. (STEVEN climbs into bed next to JENNIFER as lights come up full on the bed and a very pregnant Jennifer.)

JENNIFER. I'm hungry. Steven, are you awake? (A beat.) Steven, are you awake?

STEVEN. (from under the covers) No.

JENNIFER. As long as you're up, could you get me something?

STEVEN. (still under covers) No.

JENNIFER. Hey. I'm having your kid here. The least you could do is get me something to eat.

STEVEN. (A beat.) No.

JENNIFER. (fake crying and talking to her pregnant stomach) I guess your father doesn't love us enough to get us anything to eat. (JENNIFER continues crying while casting glances over to STEVEN, who slowly emerges from under the covers.)

STEVEN. Alright! No more guilt trip. (STEVEN gets out of bed.) What do you want? Pickles and ice cream?

JENNIFER. Yuk! Where'd you get an idea like that? Just something simple like... chicken and mashed potatoes.

STEVEN. We ate the last of the chicken for dinner tonight.

JENNIFER. But I want some more. I haven't been able to sleep for thinking about it.

STEVEN. (sneaking his watch) Let me get this straight. It's 3:30 in the morning and you want me to fix you chicken and mashed potatoes?

JENNIFER. I'll settle for the mashed potatoes.

STEVEN. How 'bout an orange? (JENNIFER begins her fake crying again.) All right... all right. (STEVEN walks away from the bed and the lights follow him back to center stage. In the darkness, JENNIFER moves towards the kitchen table, placed elsewhere on stage.)

(to audience) A few months later, we had a healthy baby boy named Chad. But with the baby came bills, and with the house came the big yard. (STEVEN walks towards the kitchen table.) As the years went by, I took up a second job to make ends meet. It strained not only our pocket book, but our marriage as well. (STEVEN sits at the table. JENNIFER is already seated, drinking a cup of tea.)

JENNIFER. Getting in kind of late.

STEVEN. I had some accounts to finish.

JENNIFER. I hate to see you worn out like this. Can't you cut back some?

STEVEN. We can't afford that, Jen.

JENNIFER. What we can't afford is for you to be gone all the time.

STEVEN. The mortgage is due, the car needs fixing, and I've got mouths to feed. What do you want?

JENNIFER. I want a father for our son. We want your time.

STEVEN. Time is the one thing I'm really short of right now. I've got important things to do here.

JENNIFER. Nothing is more important than family, Steven!

STEVEN. Keeping a roof over our heads isn't important? Giving Chad every opportunity YOU think of for him isn't important?

JENNIFER. He needs a father.

STEVEN. Will you... just get off my back? (Pause. Both are seething.)

JENNIFER. What's happened to us? What happened to the life we wanted?

STEVEN. Enough! (With his previous line, STEVEN throws the coffee cup into the wall. The cup shatters. After a long pause...)

JENNIFER. I hope that made you feel better. That cup was part of our original china. You know what those dishes mean to me. You might as well have slapped me.

STEVEN. (regaining composure) Jen, I'm sorry. I'll never hit you or Chad. I'm just...

JENNIFER. There's more than one way to hit your family. (STEVEN walks out of the light, leaving Jennifer sitting at the kitchen table.) (to audience) Somehow, we made it through those times. And somehow life kept throwing hard things our way. (JENNIFER stands and walks downstage center.) After a while, Steven was offered another job, a better paying job, and he quit the one he hated. But by the time Chad was in college, Steven began having problems. (JENNIFER begins walking towards the coat rack and chair.) (to audience) We thought it had to be physical. It took me forever to convince him to go to the doctor. (Lights up on the coat rack and chair with STEVEN sitting next to his hung-up coat. JENNIFER stands next to him.) (to Steven) How long have you been back?

STEVEN. Oh. Just a little while. Been sitting here, thinking.

JENNIFER. What did the doctor say? Everything alright? (STEVEN speaks with fear.)

STEVEN. Doctor says my body is as fit as a fiddle.

JENNIFER. What is it, then? Something's wrong.

STEVEN. (Long pause.) It's my mind. He says I'm in the early stages of Alzheimers. (STEVEN and JENNIFER stand silently next to the coat rack. Neither knows what to say. JENNIFER grows weak and almost falls. STEVEN catches her and places her in the chair.)

JENNIFER. But... but... Maybe there's been a mistake...

STEVEN. They're sure, Jen. (Long pause as the two take in the weight of the news.)

(nearing tears) All my life, I've been able to take care of you and Chad, and in a couple of years, I won't even be able to take care of myself. There's nothing more they can do about it.

JENNIFER. (reaching for Steven's hand) It's alright. We'll get through this. Just like everything else. We'll get through it. I'll do whatever I have to do to help you.

STEVEN. No. I don't want you to see me like that. Or Chad, either. When the time comes, I want you to put me in a nursing home. It's the best way. At least I can make that decision now before it's too late.

JENNIFER. I can't leave you like that.

STEVEN. I'm going to lose everything, Jen. My memories, my dignity, my manhood. Everything.

JENNIFER. You won't lose me. (THEY embrace.)

STEVEN. I'm sorry I never took you to Paris. I'm sorry I wasn't home more. I'm sorry... I'm so

CHARACTERS

Pop, late 40's early 50's, the father
Jacob, 21, the son

The time is the present. The place is Pop's house.

SCENE ONE

Sound effect: winding a music box. The music box plays throughout opening sequence. The lights slowly come up on a table, three chairs, a clear pitcher of water, and two drinking glasses. POP and JACOB are already on stage. POP is standing over his son, Jacob. POP's fist is clenched as though he has knocked Jacob to the ground. JACOB is lying on the ground, hand on his chin, looking up at his father. THEY do not move. The scene is held until the lights reach their peak and the music ends. Black.

SCENE TWO

Lights up again on the same setting. POP is sitting alone at the table drinking water. JACOB enters SR. HE looks at Pop, walks past Pop and exits SL. After a moment, JACOB enters SL and speaks to his father.

JACOB. (softly) So, where is she?

POP. (still sitting) The funeral home.

JACOB. Ah. Then why did you tell me to come here for her viewing? (POP doesn't respond.) (sarcastically laughs, on his way out the door) I'm going. (POP stands as JACOB crosses.)

POP. Jacob... I had to get you to the house because if you went to the funeral home first, you'd say your good-byes to your mother and we'd never get to talk. (JACOB stops.) Alone. We have to talk alone. I thought the house was the best place. (motioning to chair) Please. Jacob. Sit with me.

JACOB. Why?

POP. It's what your mother wanted. (JACOB stares at POP. NEITHER sit.) For her, Jacob. Stay for her.

JACOB. (after a moment) Fine. Sure. I'll stay and chat. For mom. (JACOB sits in the furthest chair from Pop. POP sits. An awkward moment.) Well? Go ahead. Talk.

POP. (starting slowly) Seeing you in the house today.... It's funny, you know.... You'd think I'd be focused on the funeral... (Pause.) I know what you must be thinking. And I don't really know what to say... except that I'd like things to be different between us. I promise, Jacob... I promise that I can-

JACOB. (standing) You know what? Don't. Don't promise. I've heard it before. I heard it for ten years.

POP. I know.

JACOB. -And don't even begin to pretend you know what I'm thinking. You never knew. Ever.

POP. You're right. I didn't know then. But I know now.

JACOB. (heavy sarcasm- not quite angry) Oh really. You do. Well, then Father. Why don't you enlighten me? Tell me what I'm thinking. (A beat.)

POP. (he nails it) You hate me. (POP freezes. JACOB addresses audience while POP remains frozen.)

JACOB. (to audience) Maybe you can answer this question: When do you know you hate someone? (pause) Hm? When do you know, without a doubt, that you hate someone? Is it like love? You've heard people ask that question a lot, haven't you? How do you know it's love? Answer: You just know. Does it work the other way? (pause) My father and I haven't really talked in three years. Since I left home. (pause) Mom and I would always get together for a lunch here and there, but... We talked about anything and everything. Except him. I wouldn't have it. Why ruin a perfectly good lunch talking about something you don't like? I left home when I was eighteen, and I haven't looked back since. Until now. (A beat.) From the beginning, he didn't like me. Tough thing for a child to deal with, your own father not liking you. One of the few people that should like you, that could like you, doesn't. Just a weird feeling I had when I was very young. (pause) He didn't like me. (pause) It was the way he looked at me, I think... as though he expected disappointment. (pause) I remember when I was five

years old at a birthday party for one of my Dad's clients. (POP unfreezes and begins to move in slightly slower motion. Throughout the next few lines, POP mimes meeting "guests" at the party JACOB describes. The effect is that of watching JACOB's memory. JACOB still addresses the audience.) It was early December. When we arrived at the party, I noticed a big table full of presents. On this table was a snow globe. It was patterned after the movie "It's a Wonderful Life." It wasn't wrapped, so I thought it wasn't a gift. I couldn't help myself. It was so pretty. I picked it up. A pretty family in this little glass bubble. I'd shake the bubble and all these shimmering particles soared around each member of the family. What were they? Wishes? Dreams? Hopes? I just stood there, shaking the globe and looking at how happy they all were. How free the dreams were to float anywhere they pleased. (pause) I'm not sure if I had been standing there for minutes or hours, but the next thing I know something startles me and I drop the snow globe. (POP turns to stare at JACOB, who kneels by the imaginary shattered snow globe.) It shatters on the hard wood- spilling all the family members to slip through the cracks. (pause, looking at Pop) My father just looked at me. With that look. (POP freezes in the look as JACOB walks to him, Jacob's memory frozen for all to see.) (looking at Pop) The disappointment in his eyes.... Five years old, you don't remember much. But the look I remember. (JACOB passes in front of POP, who returns to his previous frozen position before the slow motion.) So, maybe now you catch a glimpse as to why I don't care to see him. He has no love for me, as far as I can tell. And he made sure I knew it too: disappointed expressions... later on (he pauses, chooses different words) ... but mostly the silence. An awful and uncertain thing, silence. When it comes to a father's love, silence is crippling. (A beat as JACOB moves back to his pre-monologue position.) (still directed to audience) I bury my mother today. (looks at Pop) But I wish it were him. (POP and JACOB continue as before as though we never saw Jacob's monologue.)

POP. (to Jacob) You hate me and I don't blame you. I would've hated me too if I were you. (pause) But, Jacob. I've changed...

JACOB. (standing, collecting his coat) We're not going to do this. Okay? We've lived our lives. Let's just go see her and forget the rest.

POP. But I'm your father.

JACOB. No. You fathered me, but you were never a father. (POP watches as JACOB puts on his coat and begins to leave.)

POP. All right. You can leave if you want. But before you walk out, let me say one thing. (A beat. JACOB waits.) I'm sorry. (A pause. JACOB hasn't left yet.) What I did to you... to your life. It's.... The words aren't coming...

JACOB. (filling in the blanks) Inexcusable? Cowardly? Pathetic? Painful?

POP. Yes. Any of those- would do fine. My priorities were wrong. I didn't know what I wanted then.

JACOB. And you do now?

POP. Yes. (pause) I want to know my son.

JACOB. Then you should've stuck around for my life. It was on for eighteen years, you know. Now you want the reruns. It was your choice to abandon me-POP. I never abandoned you.

JACOB. Oh, right. You never physically left. But you disconnected from me the day I learned to say "Dad."

POP. (trying to keep peace) Okay, okay. You're right. I did abandon you. And I'm- sorry.

JACOB. There it is again. (pause) You're sorry.

POP. More than you know.

JACOB. (to himself) He's sorry. (JACOB sets coat down on chair.) And sorry's gonna give me back eighteen years without a father?

POP. No. No it won't. But it might make the next eighteen a little better. (JACOB freezes in position.) (to the audience) Did you know I've never hugged my son? I've never hugged Jacob. (pause) It's been three years since I've last seen him, and I can barely contain myself.

Today might be my last chance. (looking up to heaven) Did you hear me, sweet-heart? I'm going to hug our son, just like we talked about. (pause) My sweet Emily... (pause) We went to sleep just like every other night in the last three years. Emily on the left side of the bed, me on the right. Somewhere between the shutting and opening of eyes, she drifted away- like a row boat gently pushing away from the shore. Her heart was so tender. It just gave out. Gentle in death as in life. Gentle. But that word- gentle- it's just not enough. A word has not been created to describe the depth of compassion and understanding- of acceptance and love- that Emily has. Yes. Has. She's still with me. The memory of her love for me is all-consuming, even now. So, if you think of a word to combine grace and child-like openness wrapped in a blanket of comfort, I'd love to hear it. For now, I'll just call it Emily. (pause) Today, I make the choice to hug Jacob. That's what Emily always talked about. Choices. (lovingly mimicking)