

**PLEASE BE AWARE THAT  
THIS PLAY IS FULLY PROTECTED BY COPYRIGHT**

All plays, books, music and other materials published by Heartland Plays, Inc. are fully protected under the copyright laws of the United States of America and all countries which the United States has reciprocal relations including, but not limited to all countries covered by the Pan-American Copyright Convention, The Universal Copyright Convention and the Berne Convention. All rights to the plays and materials on our website are strictly reserved including, and without limitation, professional and amateur performance rights; motion pictures; public reading; radio and television broadcasting; audio and video recording and reproduction of any type known or yet to be invented; information storage and retrieval systems of any type known or yet to be invented; and the rights of translation into any and all languages. No individual or organization whether amateur or stock may perform this or any play published by Heartland Plays, Inc. without first obtaining advance permission from Heartland Plays, Inc. and paying the appropriate fees including Royalties and Single-Use Copyright fees. Heartland Plays, Inc. collects royalties on behalf of the Playwrights whose plays it publishes. Unauthorized copying, transcribing or reproduction of this or any play or excerpt, or storage or transmittal in any form and by any means whether known or yet to be invented, is strictly forbidden except as provided by Agreement with Heartland Plays, Inc. Any unauthorized use is a violation of copyright laws and will be prosecuted to the fullest extent of the law.

**FIVE SIMPLE RULES TO REMEMBER**

1. DO take advantage of the free online perusal of our plays to help you make the best choice for your particular needs or production.
2. DO enjoy the convenience of our online purchase application for performance rights and single-use copyright.
3. DO understand that this play and all plays and materials on our website are controlled by Heartland Plays, Inc. and fully protected by copyright.
4. DO NOT attempt in any way to copy, transcribe or reproduce this play by any means or perform this play or use any play or material from our website without first receiving permission from Heartland Plays, Inc. Any attempt to use this or any other work without first obtaining permission is a violation of copyright and punishable by law.
5. DO NOT rob this Author or any of the Authors we represent of their right to be paid for the use of their property. It is a crime and it is wrong!

Product Code A0860-SP

# **Life's Little Exams**

**A collection of 3-character short plays  
for a full evening of entertainment**

**by Craig Kenworthy**

**ALL RIGHTS RESERVED  
REPRODUCTION WITHOUT SPECIFIC WRITTEN PERMISSION PROHIBITED**

**Performance Rights Available Exclusively through  
Heartland Plays, Inc. at [heartlandplays.com](http://heartlandplays.com)  
[playsnow@heartlandplays.com](mailto:playsnow@heartlandplays.com)  
customer service: 406-431-7680**

**Copyright © 2011 by Craig Kenworthy**

# Life's Little Exams

by Craig Kenworthy

## CAST OF CHARACTERS

### BUT THAT'S NOT WHAT WE ORDERED

**TINA**; a woman in her late 20's to late 30's

**REX**; her husband, late 20's to late 30's

**DR. BANNON**; a reproduction specialist in his/her 40's-50's

### ENVOY

**EXAMINER**; a female State Department official in her mid-40's administering a test to two foreign service applicants

**ANDREA**; a rather tall 25 year old graduate of a small Midwestern liberal arts college

**TIM**; a 29 year old graduate of Sewanee, tall in stature with a slight paunch

(+TWO MEN IN SUITS)

### LINE

**BRENT/BRENDA**; a counselor between 30 and 50 years of age

**DAN**; an underemployed young man in his early-mid 20s

**JENNY**; a substitute teacher in her late 20's to early 30's

### ANTI-VENOM

**JUANITA**; a teen-age tour guide in a Central American country

**DAWN**; a woman bout 28-35, married to Scott, who recently had an affair

**SCOTT**; Dawn's husband, slightly younger in age

### THE BLUE BOOK VALUE OF SMALL THINGS

**DRAKE**; an army recruiter, age 40 to 50

**MIKE**; the father of a soldier, a used car salesman age 50 to 60

**TRISH**; a high school senior army recruit age 17

### STATISTICALLY SPEAKING

**RORY**; a mildly developmentally challenged 17 year old

**JULIE**; his medical doctor, about 50-60

**PAM**; Rory's mother, about 40

### SO MUCH FOR SEATBELTS

**KARA**; a med student in her late 20's

**JOSH**; mid 20's, engaged to Kara's sister. He sells shoe accessories at the mall

**BRIAN**; an independent contractor "grim reaper"

## **Life's Little Exams by Craig Kenworthy**

### **A Note from the Publisher**

Although intended for a full evening of performance, the plays within this collection are available for production individually or in part. Royalties quoted at our website represent the performance rights for the entire collection. To obtain a royalty quote for the performance rights for an individual play or select group of plays from within the collection, please contact Heartland Plays, Inc. by e-mail: [playsnow@heartlandplays.com](mailto:playsnow@heartlandplays.com) or by calling: 406-431-7680.

*Please continue to the next page  
to begin reading the collection*

Life's Little Exams  
**“But That’s Not What We Ordered”**  
 by Craig Kenworthy

Characters:

**TINA**; *a woman in her late 20’s to late 30’s*

**REX**; *her husband, late 20’s to late 30’s*

**DR. BANNON**; *a reproduction specialist in his/her 40’s-50’s*

Setting:

*In the year 2040 (Or thereabouts) in the ultra-modern office of a doctor who specializes in reproductive services. The setting is minimally represented by a desk chair and two visitors’ chairs.*

Required Props:

*One Droid-type device and a Raggedy Andy doll*

*(AT RISE: TINA and REX are seated in the visitor’s chairs at a desk Stage Left; DR. BANNON is sitting on the front edge of the desk holding a Droid-type device in her hand.)*

Bannon

*(Looks at device)* I just reviewed the test results. It confirms what we thought. Your baby is completely normal.

Tina

Oh, my God.

Rex

How could this happen?

Bannon

Rex, Tina. I am so sorry.

Tina

This is all your fault. You insisted on getting the athletic package.

Rex

It had a 98% uptake rate. And that six weeks of junior high would be a lot easier for him, believe me.

Tina

Not everything is about your childhood, Rex.

Rex

We ordered several upgrades, Doctor Bannon. You mean none of them took?

Bannon

No. Our technicians are still checking the DNA processing stream. Frankly, I haven't seen something like this since the 2020's.

Tina

*(Stands; crosses to Center Stage)* This is going to kill my mother.

Rex

Well, nothing else seems to.

Tina

What did you say?

Rex

She's 85 and you just got a new half-sister. Or is it a ¼ sister? I can't keep track. Well, whatever fraction she is, at least she's not...

Tina

Mundane?

Rex

I was going to say normal, Tina.

Bannon

I think maybe you should both talk to someone. I can refer you to people who deal with these matters.

Rex

"Deal with?" We expected him to be in college in five years. Now what are we supposed to do? Spend eighteen years with him at home?

Bannon

There are options.

Tina

You mean...

Bannon

There are couples in other countries who actually seek out such children. The unenhanced.

Tina

Look, I may not have given birth, but I carried him for twenty weeks.

Bannon

If you want to keep him, there are places near here that you could consider.

Rex

A school for the normal?

Bannon

Yes, several of them are quite good.

Tina

But that seems so cold, to send him away like that.

Bannon

He'd be with other children just like himself. He'd feel like he was just like somebody else.

Rex

I don't know. (*Crosses back to TINA; takes her hand*) Honey, I'm sorry. I mean, if it was the athletic package that did this.

Bannon

(*Looks at screen on hand-held device*) Actually, we don't think that's what went wrong. Look, he may not be able to run a two minute mile, but he is one cute little red-haired boy, if you don't mind me saying. (*Holds out device*) Here, take a look.

Rex

Did you say red-haired?

(*REX releases Tina's hand. TINA drops her head and crosses slowly toward Stage Left.*)

Bannon

Yes.

Rex

(*Turns to TINA*) How could you? You cheating little...

Tina

I just wanted...

Bannon

(*Crosses to REX*) Please, Rex. He's your son. The DNA is yours.

Rex

Not all of it.

Tina

I did it for my grandmother. She had such beautiful red hair. I didn't think it would matter.

Bannon

You mean you had work done elsewhere? And you didn't tell me? Tell us? (*Sets device on desk*)

Tina

I didn't think it would matter. They said it wouldn't.

Rex

You went to one of those drop-in places, didn't you?

*(REX storms out Stage Left.)*

Tina

It was such a small part of the genome and it was so late in my part of the term. They said they could just slip it in, before he went into the artificial womb.

Bannon

These things are all connected. Your package had the resistance to sunburn features. When you mix that with a pigmentation alteration, the results can be...

*(REX enters Stage Left. HE is holding a Raggedy Andy doll.)*

Rex

I should have known when you put this in the car a couple of weeks ago. You couldn't have just used hair dye?

Bannon

Actually, those are not always safe. Besides the whole artificial aspect of it—

*(TINA and REX glare at DR. BANNON.)*

Bannon, Continued

*(Beat)* Look, I need to go talk with the lab. You may want a moment alone, anyway. I'll be back.

*(DR. BANNON exits Stage Right.)*

Rex

Do you know what you've done?

Tina

I told you how much the hair color meant to me. But you didn't listen.

Rex

We agreed to give him your skin, the way it flashes when the sun hits it in the early evening. And my hair. You used to say my hair in your hands was... I just wanted him to seem like one of us.

*(REX hands the doll to TINA.)*

Tina

But just not to be one of us, right?

Rex

That's not fair. I wanted a better life for him. (*Picks up device; looks at image*) And now this. All because you wanted him to look the part while he sang 'Danny Boy.'

Tina

Now you're just being mean. And I'm not the one who asked for the tenor package.

Rex

Think about how much we spent.

Tina

Is that all you can think about? You wanted a Peyton Manning III arm crossed with the Michael Phelps lungs and guess what? Now you've got Charlie Brown.

Rex

We might outlive him.

Tina

One of us might not.

*(TINA closes on him and reaches for the device to see her child.)*

Rex

No. (*Lifts it above his head*) I think maybe it'd be better if you didn't look. After all, you've created this...

Tina

Monster? He's not a monster. He's ours, remember?

Rex

No. He's not a monster. But what is his life going to be like?

Tina

Is it his life you're worried about? I could just take care of him. On my own, I mean.

Rex

You think you can handle raising a child who can't even drive when he is four? Who isn't potty trained at six months? Who needs his mommy to get him a drink at night instead of just blending his own protein-antioxidant shake?

Tina

I could manage.

Rex

You know that after this, I'd get custody of our other embryos if you left.

Tina

You'd do that? Take them? Leave me?

Rex

Do you realize what the impacts on the allele specific oligo are from the cloning vector?

Tina

You don't even know what that means, do you?

Rex

No. It was in the liability waiver. You know my cousin Larry? What it was like for him? I still remember the family reunions. When I wasn't around for him to play with? He didn't just get picked last for everything; the parents wouldn't even let him be umpire because it wouldn't be fair to the other kids to have someone like that judging them.

Tina

I don't think kickball is a reason to send our child away to a special school. But I know you were always closest to Larry.

Rex

What is that supposed to mean? Just because my parents couldn't afford self-healing wounds and perfect pitch.

Tina

Rex.

Rex

I'm just not sure we'd survive this.

Tina

You'd hold the hair thing against me forever?

Rex

No. I mean having to deal with this. All of this.

Tina

All of him? We'll figure it out, OK? Besides, Larry did alright once he left home.

Rex

He was an actuary. If he hadn't just had... what do they call it?

Tina

Natural ability? Maybe our little 'Mundane' will have some of that.

Rex

They wanted to study Larry in a lab. Didn't believe anyone with test scores that high could be unenhanced. When he'd go out, his 'friends' would make him do things for bar bets. The company he worked for treated him like their pet salvage project. And the way his parents acted.

*(REX crosses to Stage Right, his back to TINA.)*

Tina

Eighteen years is a long time, isn't it?

*(TINA sets the doll on the desk.)*

Rex

What does it mean to be someone who doesn't believe in his own child?

Tina

You wouldn't be that way.

Rex

Well, if there is a chance it really will kill your mother.

Tina

No, she won't give up until she gets a Nobel Prize winner of her own.

Rex

It's not just the long time. It's a lifetime of worrying about how this... how he'll turn out.

Tina

People used to do that. Do you remember my roommate at college? Junior year?

Rex

Jennifer Gaspard? The captain of the tennis team? The one who is chair of the anthropology of New Europe department at Cal?

Tina

I can see you barely remember her. You really liked her, didn't you?

Rex

*(Turns to face her)* She was OK. I doubt her parents ever had to worry about how she was going to turn out.

Tina

She was perfect, wasn't she?

Rex

I don't know if I'd go that far.

Tina

I heard that you told your roommate she was. And she was perfect. Perfectly normal. Didn't you ever wonder about her?

Rex

No.

Tina

Do you remember her older brother?

Rex

The one who lived at the monastery?

Tina

They ordered an auditory enhancement for him. He could tell what kind of hummingbird was in the yard by counting the beat of its wings. She said he used to stand outside the house, screaming at them to “Just stop, please stop.” After that, they just had her.

Rex

Just had her? You mean they even... the old fashioned way?

Tina

Yes. And she said it took them several weeks of trying. And you would have married her, wouldn't you?

Rex

I never said that.

Tina

It's alright, dear. I know you asked her out before me.

Rex

You know my fast-twitch/slow-twitch muscle fiber ratio is just right down the middle. That's why I was never a sprinter. Or good at the marathon. Just right down the middle.

Tina

You've done OK. You got me, didn't you?

Rex

*(Looks at screen)* I just thought he'd be better. Different than us. Than me.

Tina

He is different, Rex. And maybe he will be better. Better than us. I bet he's got your eyes, even if they aren't 20/10.

Rex

And your nose. Even if it's not... well, it's your nose.

Tina

You know, we could just never tell anyone. Just get the best tutors and coaches. Then, when he gets good at something say, “Yes, that Doctor Bannon. He's a genius.”

Rex

*(Hands device to TINA)* I guess you should get to see him, before we decide. About what to do.

Tina

I don't need to see him, Rex. Did you?

Rex

*(Sets down device)* He does have the red hair. Maybe people would figure we had that done. But you know I always wanted—

*(DR. BANNON enters Stage Right.)*

Bannon

Well, we're pretty sure that was it. Look, I didn't want to say this before, but there's a chance we could still do something. I think I could strain out the red hair DNA and we could reinfuse. Get some, but not all of the qualities you wanted.

*(TINA picks up the doll.)*

Rex

You could do something? But isn't postnatal work illegal?

Bannon

This could be very embarrassing for my practice. Your wife should have told us, but we normally do a check at 33 weeks. The digital file got degraded and we missed it. If we'd caught it, I might have been able to salvage some things.

Rex

Did you say salvage?

Bannon

Yes. The speed and vision parts. The good news is I think I could still get the hyper sense of smell and the physics affinity inserted. I couldn't guarantee the rest, but I think we could pull those off. We'd have to ditch the hair color, though. Did you want a moment to discuss it?

Tina

Yes.

Rex

No.

Bannon

Maybe I should step back out.

*(DR. BANNON starts to exit Stage Right. REX takes the doll from TINA.)*

This is Not the End of the Play  
Ending Intentionally Omitted for Security Purposes

**Please continue to the next page to read "Envoy"**

Life's Little Exams  
**“Envoy”**  
 by Craig Kenworthy

Characters:

**EXAMINER**; a female State Department official in her mid-40's administering a test to two foreign service applicants

**ANDREA**; a rather tall 25-year-old graduate of a small Midwestern liberal arts college

**TIM**; a 29 year of graduate of Sewanee, tall in stature with a slight paunch

(+TWO MEN IN SUITS)

Setting:

*At present; a conference room*

*(AT RISE: EXAMINER seated at the head of a square table in a small conference room; she holds two darts in her hands. There are two additional chairs at the table, each with two stacks of 4x6 cards on the table in front of them. There is also a stuffed envelope on the table. Across the room, Stage Right, is a map of the world. EXAMINER turns toward the map, aims the first dart and throws it. SHE then aims the second dart at the map and throws it as well.)*

Examiner

Damn, the North Atlantic is so small.

*(ANDREA enters Stage Right as TIM enters Stage Left. THEY take seats in the empty chairs at the table.)*

Examiner

All right, let's get started. This is the final competitive portion of the Foreign Service examination. You will engage each other in a series of role playing exercises. On most of them, you will be given the basic situation, but will need to construct details for the other person to respond to. When I say, "Card," you will each turn over a card, read the scenario and start in on it. Tim will start (*Nods at TIM*) and Andrea (*Nods at ANDREA*) will go second. You will continue with each scenario until I say "Card" again. Once we start, I cannot answer any more questions.

Andrea

Have we started?

Examiner

Yes.

Tim

*(Turns over card; reads it)* Mr. Ambassador, this matter is of critical importance to the United States.

Andrea

*(Reads his card)* My country respects your concerns but believes this is an internal matter.

Tim

Surely, you agree that it has regional implications. Your neighboring countries may act based on your position.

Andrea

Flattery will not avail you here. My people have a long-standing connection to the current situation. We cannot change that to appease one of your industry leaders.

Tim

So you are staying with Coke?

Andrea

*(Looks at card again)* Hey, my card says we are supposed to be discussing getting a genetically modified crop into his market.

Examiner

Stay in your role, please.

Andrea

Yes, Coke.

Tim

Pepsi?

Andrea

Coke.

Tim

Pepsi One?

Examiner

Card.

Andrea

*(Reads card, looks at it again, turns over to look at the back)* I want to make it clear that my government does not condone the actions of the few, even if they believed they were expressing the concerns of the many.

Tim

*(Reads his card quickly)* Mr. Secretary, will you be issuing a formal apology?

Andrea

No, that would imply that our government bears some responsibility for this unfortunate occurrence.

Tim

So, you contend that letting the National Police hand out ripe fruit just before the vice-president's motorcade passed by is not your responsibility?

Andrea

*(Looks down at table; shrugs)* Our efforts at improving the national diet could have been better timed. Still, I believe your embassy spokesperson's characterization of my countrymen as "guava-chucking hoodlums" was also unfortunate.

Tim

Yes, he is well aware that your national fruit is the papaya.

Examiner

Card.

*(ANDREA turns over a card, reads it, picks up the envelope and slides it across the table. TIM looks right and left, picks up the envelope and slips it into his pocket.)*

Examiner, Continued

Card.

Tim

*(Reads his card)* We... we continue to hope for resolution of this crisis, but we urge your government not to consider giving into these demands.

Andrea

We share your hope, but you must see our position. We are a small country, with deep family bonds. If we refuse to negotiate, the possible loss would be devastating to us and could threaten the stability of our government.

Tim

Still, there is the question of encouraging further actions by this group. Negotiating with them will lead to other groups believing that the best way to sway your government is by taking hostages.

Andrea

Do you have any children, sir?

Tim

No, I don't.

Andrea

Every day I get a call from a family member of one of the hostages. I take all of those calls. Sometimes it is an uncle tells me his sister is not well enough to come to the phone. Sometimes it is a father, who weeps... and men here do not weep on the phone to other men. Do I tell them that geopolitical concerns are worth more than seeing their child again?

Tim

Card?

Examiner

*(Shakes her head)* Not so fun anymore, is it?

Tim

What will you say to another father three years from now? That what HIS daughter's kidnappers want is too much to ask? Will you tell him that releasing foreign extremists was okay, but releasing your own terrorists is too much of a threat?

Andrea

What alternatives can you offer me? Can you assure me that a rescue mission will be a success?

Tim

I cannot. But I can assure you that it will be the better option, whatever the outcome.

Andrea

Meaning?

Examiner

Card.

Andrea

*(Reads his card)* I am asking for your assistance in communicating with their government. Since we do not maintain diplomatic ties with them, you would be doing us a favor by conveying our concerns.

*(ANDREA rolls the stuffed globe across table at TIM.)*

Tim

And how concerned should we say you are? Somewhat concerned? Very concerned? *(Rolls globe back across)*

Andrea

We are asking you to convey our utmost concern. *(Rolls globe back)*

Tim

That serious, eh. Are there any additional details about their activities that you can share with me? It might help place those concerns in context when I speak with their minister. I would prefer to appear an interested party, not an errand boy.

*(TIM starts to roll globe. EXAMINER leans over and grabs it away.)*

Andrea

My government has the deepest respect for you and would never consider such an implication to be correct.

Tim

So, in other words, you have no intention of telling me what they are up to since you know we'll talk to them even if you don't tell us anything more.

Andrea

There may come a time when my department finds it appropriate to permit me to provide more details. Of course, that will depend on the circumstances at the time.

Tim

*(Looks at EXAMINER)* Do you test for people who are congenitally incapable of just saying “No?”

Examiner

Let’s take a break. I can’t let you talk to each other during it, so Andrea, you can use the bathroom first.

*(ANDREA exits backstage. TIM stands up, steps over to EXAMINER.)*

Tim

So, how am I doing? I thought the Coke thing was pretty funny.

Examiner

Yeah, you’re a riot. If this was a match, she scored big time on you with the call from weeping fathers thing.

Tim

I just asked for a new card for authenticity’s sake. If I handled that too smoothly, she might get suspicious.

Examiner

Yeah, right, Tim. She’s coming back. Sit down.

*(TIM sits. ANDREA enters and takes her seat. TIM nods at her.)*

Andrea

Don’t you want to use the bathroom?

Tim

Maybe I do, but you never know when you might find yourself in a negotiation where leaving the room for even a minute could be seen as a sign of weakness.

Examiner

Interesting theory, Tim. I guess you won’t mind if we skip the second break later on. Let’s get started again. But just for the fun of it, Andrea, why don’t you reach across and switch top cards with Tim.

Andrea

Okay.

*(ANDREA reaches across the table and switches cards.)*

Tim

*(Reads his card; glares at EXAMINER)* I am begging you, sir. Not for myself. My child is the son of an American. He deserves a better life than I can provide here.

Andrea

I am sorry, but without some evidence as to the identity of the father, I cannot process your application.

Tim

*(Looks at card again; holds arms forward as if holding a baby)* What evidence do you need? Look at me and look at my son. Look at his eyes.

*(EXAMINER puts her hand over her mouth to conceal a smile.)*

Andrea

He is a... a beautiful baby, but the mixed heritage could be the result of a relationship with someone from any number of countries.

Tim

But I have given you the father's name and the name of the company he worked for.

Andrea

*(Looks at back of her card)* Yes, I know. We contacted him. He declined to speak with me, although his wife seemed intrigued by the call. I'm sorry; you did know he is married?

Tim

*(Pulls arms back as if pulling baby closer)* Yes, I knew. I can get money for a DNA test. Can't you get him to take one, to get enough evidence?

Andrea

Regrettably, no. If he were a member of the armed forces I could, but not for an American civilian.

Tim

He does not respond to my letters, he has blocked my emails. You seem like an honorable woman. Why won't your government help me?

Andrea

I really wish I could help you. Is there any other basis on which you could be eligible...

Examiner

*(Talks over her)* Card.

Andrea

*(Reads her card; looks a little taken aback)* As I indicated, I am here on a diplomatic passport.

Tim

That does not explain why you were taking photos of one of our military sites.

Andrea

I assure you, I was taking pictures of the birds. I didn't know that was a restricted area.

Tim

Please do not lie to me. I believe you are with the CIA. I expect that revelation could be most embarrassing to your country. Spying on such a small, weak nation as ours.

*(TIM smiles and waves his arm in a sweeping gesture.)*

Andrea

We can clear this up if you will just allow me to—

Tim

*(Slaps the table, speaking over her)* I do not have to allow you anything. I am sure you realize that you could leave here and have difficulty returning to your lodgings. The streets of our capitol can be quite dangerous at night... for a woman.

Andrea

*(Grips edge of her chair with her right hand)* I am telling you I am not an agent. I am a diplomat on a trade mission.

Tim

That is unfortunate, then. I have no need for diplomats. On the other hand, someone who has the right connections might find knowing me to be very useful.

Andrea

I see. Well, of course I am always willing to pass along information to the right people. Even if I don't know them myself since, as a trade diplomat, I have no reason to. If you will allow me to make a phone call, I can see if such people can be found. Although I am sure there are none in your country itself.

Tim

I do wish I could accommodate you, but time is short. Your presence here with me alone could lead to questions. No, I will need you to remain here. If you will give me a contact phone number, I will assure them you are quite safe and we can take it from there. Once I establish that you have put me in touch with the right people, I will send for you. My men will see to your comfort.

Andrea

*(Runs her left hand through her hair)* We seem to be at an impasse since I would have to make inquiries myself.

Tim

Why is it you Americans are so willing to declare a draw when you are clearly behind? This is not a negotiation. My men can also see to your discomfort. I will give you a few minutes to decide. *(Gets up and walks past Examiner, stage whispers to him.)* I'll be taking that bathroom break now. *(Tim exits backstage.)*

Examiner

You can relax for a second while he's out.

Andrea

*(Unclenches right hand from edge of her chair.)* Can I ask you a question now?

Examiner

No. Just kidding. So long as it isn't for advice on this scenario, it's okay.

Andrea

You've been a field officer, right. That's why you are a trainer now.

Examiner

Yes.

Andrea

Did you like it, as a job? I mean the exotic part wears out, but you liked what you did day to day?

Examiner

Kind of late to be asking those kinds of questions, isn't it? Good thing you aren't CIA. Wouldn't do to have that level of uncertainty in one of them, would it?

Andrea

No, it wouldn't.

*(The EXAMINER looks at ANDREA, opens mouth to speak, but TIM enters and returns to his seat.)*

Andrea, Continued

You know, you left me in here with my cell phone. I could have made any number of calls.

Tim

I think it's fair to assume that you were being held in a room with call blocking equipment in use.

Examiner

I don't remember saying, "Card," people. Please continue.

Tim

My men are outside the door. Has your memory of who you know improved?

Andrea

I do want to assist you, but I would need to contact my embassy.

Tim

*(Screaming)* I do not have time for this.

*(TIM exits backstage and returns moments later with TWO MEN IN SUITS.)*

Tim, *Continued*

We can skip the introductions. Take her to somewhere where her memory is likely to improve.

*(The LARGER MAN grabs ANDREA, pulls her upright and starts to lead her away. ANDREA looks at EXAMINER as SHE is dragged off backstage.)*

Andrea

Hey, what the hell is this? Is this supposed to be part of the exercise?

Tim

*(Takes Andrea's seat.)* Pretty good, huh. I convinced a couple of the security guys to have a bit of fun. This should tell us how she handles pressure.

*(ANDREA, a bit disheveled, enters from backstage. SHE tilts her head down and looks at TIM.)*

Tim

I see you have eluded my men. You are indeed a worthy adversary, American.

*(TIM returns to his seat. ANDREA sits down, picks up old card, folds it over twice.)*

Andrea

Yes, actually I am.

Examiner

Last round, you two. For this one, I have the option of jumping in if I feel like it.

Tim

*(Turns over card)* Mr. Ambassador, we have a credible report that explosives have been planted here in the embassy. They claim they will go off in the next thirty minutes.

Andrea

*(Reads her card)* How credible?

Tim

They included one of our internal layout diagrams with the threat. They didn't list the location of the bomb, but they marked our panic rooms and our evacuation routes.

Andrea

What are you recommending?

*(LIGHTS DOWN with RED LIGHT UP.)*

Tim

We need to evacuate everyone but security and the Marines. Now.

Examiner

We have fifty guests downstairs, Sir. You'd have to send them out the front. This could be a set-up. We put them on the street and shooting starts. You don't want to find out it was an empty threat. Order a sweep for the explosives.

Andrea

That could take too long. We can send the guests out through our secure route.

Tim

No, Ma'am. The threat shows they know those routes and even if nothing happens, that means all of the guests, some of whom can't be trusted, will know our internal security layout. Unless you are planning to ask Washington for a new building, we can't have that.

Andrea

Have you asked the locals to assess the threat?

Tim

They've never heard of the group.

Examiner

*(Stands up, leans on table toward ANDREA)* Order the sweep and go back down to the party.

Tim

*(Stands up straight)* I disagree and this is my responsibility. Order the evacuation. We'll pull it as a fire alarm and decoy it to look like a real fire. That might buy us a few minutes if someone is watching the building.

Andrea

How long to get everyone out?

Tim

Too long to wait any longer. You need to act now.

Examiner

Every embassy gets these threats. If you're wrong and they just wanted to put people on the street...

*(EXAMINER sits down, but still leans forward.)*

Andrea

We are sending them out. Pull the alarm just before I get back downstairs. But I want all our security on the street shielding the guests *(Looks at TIM)* ...all the guests. I'll get back up here as soon as they are out.

Tim

That's fine, except you go out the back. It's not as secure, but we can cover moving you.

Andrea

I'm not leaving until the staff is clear.

Examiner

Sir, I agree with him on this. You don't go down with the ship here. We don't lose ambassadors. For one thing, it makes recruiting more difficult.

Andrea

If you are right, we could have people dead in the street. How is that going to sit with the populace here if I find out I went out the back. I stay here.

Tim

You're CIA, aren't you?

Andrea

Did we just go back a card?

*(TIM sits down and begins starts shuffling his cards.)*

Examiner

No, we didn't. But speaking of cards, turn mine over, Andrea. What's it say?

Andrea

*(Holds card so audience can see it)* "BOOM." So there was a bomb. What does that mean to my score?

Examiner

It means you're dead, but you made the right call to stay in the building. So, are you with the CIA or not?

Andrea

What? You guys have my whole life history. When did I have time to join the CIA? Between high school chorus and band?

Examiner

You spent a summer traveling between your sophomore and junior years of college, didn't you? Besides records can be faked.

Tim

*(Stops shuffling)* What's the matter, Andy? Agency got your tongue?

Examiner

Do you remember that discussion we had once, Tim? About how the CIA might do better if they slipped a few people into the Foreign Service process instead of just inserting their people in the field?

Tim

Yeah.

Examiner

So, I wonder about our girl here. She asked me whether I liked working in the field, like she was mulling that over. Seemed kind of strange at this stage. Maybe she wants to know what her day job will be like.

Andrea

I asked you because I thought you'd give me a straight answer. I may get shipped to East Timor or the Azores and it would be nice to know if it is worth it. And I am not CIA. If I wanted to be a spook, I'd just do it and not go through all of this. By the way, when did you two get so chummy?

Tim

Can I tell him? I'm a trainer, too, Andrea. We don't really make candidates face off. It's better if they have to role play against a real Foreign Service officer.

Andrea

*(Gives TIM a weak smile; turns to EXAMINER)* So, how did I do?

Examiner

In my opinion, you did fine. But the videotape will be reviewed by two other officers and they will score you. With your written score, I think you'll pass with no trouble. Unless we do find out you are CIA.

Andrea

For the last time, I am not CIA. I've never even read "Six Days of the Condor".

Tim

The movie was better. Lighten up. We're just yanking your tail. But I do get to offer input on your performance, so can you excuse us?

*(ANDREA rises and offers her hand to TIM. THEY shake hands. As ANDREA exits, SHE bends down to whisper in Examiner's ear. EXAMINER laughs. ANDREA exits backstage.)*

This is Not the End of the Play  
Ending Intentionally Omitted for Security Purposes

**Please continue to the next page to read "Line"**

Life's Little Exams  
**“LINE”**  
 by Craig Kenworthy

Characters:

**BRENT/BRENDA**; a counselor between 30 and 50 years of age

**DAN**; an underemployed young man in his early-mid 20s

**JENNY**; a substitute teacher in her late 20's to early 30's

Setting:

A “Crisis” Center

*(AT RISE: DAN is seated at a desk Stage Left with BRENT standing to his left. On the desk is a phone with a headset, a notepad, a three-ring binder,, a newspaper and a paper coffee cup.)*

Brent

Look, Dan, don't worry, It's forwarded to my cell phone.

Dan

Then why even have me here?

Brent

Just so if somebody comes in, someone is here.

*(BRENT exits Stage Left. DAN picks up the newspaper and thumbs through it until he reaches the classifieds. HE takes a swig of coffee as HE reads through the classifieds.)*

Dan

*(Blanches)* Why doesn't it ever say, “Nine hours short of bachelor's degree required?”

*(SOUND: Phone Ringing. DAN puts the paper down, looks at the phone and picks up the receiver on the 6<sup>th</sup> ring.)*

Dan

Uh, this is Dan... I mean suicide hotline.

*(LIGHTS UP on JENNY seated Stage Right in a kitchen chair, speaking into her phone.)*

Jenny

You know what, never mind. What's the point?

Dan

*(Fumbles for three-ring binder, opens it)* Wait, what's your name?

Jenny

It's Jenny. Is Dan your real name?

Dan

Yes. I am kind of new. In fact, if you want to call back, my friend Brent is... *(Flips pages in binder.)*

Jenny

You don't want to talk to me. Maybe you're right.

Dan

No. No, I just thought you might want someone more experienced. How are you feeling today, Jenny? *(Lays binder flat)*

Jenny

Well, I am about to end it all, Dan. How do you think I'm feeling?

Dan

Sorry. *(Reading from binder)* Where are you, Jenny?

Jenny

At my apartment.

Dan

I mean where is your apartment? *(Looks at phone)* You've blocked the caller ID.

Jenny

That's kind a personal question, for the first time we've talked, isn't it, Dan? I know why you want to know. So you can call the police and send them here.

Dan

What if I promise not to do that?

Jenny

You'd be lying.

Dan

Yeah.

Jenny

Where are you, Dan?

Dan

Uh, I'm at the social services building at 7<sup>th</sup> and Main. The address is *(Looks at binder, reading)* 121 South 7<sup>th</sup>. Do you want to come by?

Jenny

Is that how this works, Dan? Drop in service for the suicidal?

Dan

Did you want to write down the address here? There are counselors here.

Jenny

I don't think I need the address, Dan.

Dan

I'd feel better if you wrote it down, Jenny.

Jenny

You'd feel better. Well, let me get a pen. I wouldn't want you to feel bad about this.

*(JENNY writes the address on her left hand.)*

Dan

That's not what I meant. Jenny, tell me why you're thinking about... killing yourself?

Jenny

Well, Dan. Last week, I got home after a day as a substitute P.E. teacher. You ever been a substitute, Dan? You know where you aren't really prepared for it because it isn't what you do?

Dan

*(Flips pages in binder)* I think I know what you mean.

Jenny

See, my degree is in Art. So, when I got home from that horrible day my boyfriend had moved out. He just... he just left.

Dan

I'm sorry. Had you been together long?

Jenny

Long enough. Six months. The worst part is that he was right to leave. He didn't deser...  
deserv... *(Crying)*

Dan

He didn't deserve you.

Jenny

*(Soft laughter)* Yes, Dan, he didn't deserve the worthless piece of shit that I am.

*(SOUND: thud.)*

Dan

Jenny, what was that noise? Jenny?

Jenny

Calm down, Dan. Just the newspaper hitting the front door.

Dan

Don't you want to go get it? Garfield is actually funny today.

Jenny

Well, that's great. Fine, I'll get it.

*(JENNY exits. DAN picks up his cell phone and dials BRENT.)*

Dan

OK. *(Dialing)* Brent, get back here. Someone called and I am on the phone with her.

*(JENNY returns a moments later with five rolled-up papers and drops them on the floor. In the DAN, hearing the noise, sets down his cell phone and looks at binder.)*

Jenny

So, I've spent a week trying to come up with a reason to live. Want to hear my list?

Dan

Of course I do. *(Long pause)* Jenny?

Jenny

You are kind of slow, aren't you, Dan?

Dan

You didn't come up with anything. Jenny, do you have some kind of plan for... killing yourself?

Jenny

Yes. I have been working on it since Peter left. I started saving up my anti-depressants and did some research on the Internet.

Dan

So, you are on medication? Do you have a doctor who is helping you? Have you ever tried this before?

Jenny

You sound like you are reading off a checklist or something.

*(SOUND: Cell Phone Rings.)*

Dan

*(Knocks cell phone off desk; it skids away)* Jenny. Can I answer this? It might be someone else needing help. I just have to connect them with someone. I'll be a second.

Jenny

Sure, I need to do a couple of things.

*(JENNY sets her phone down, lays out a plastic bag and begins counting out pills.)*

Dan

Brent, you asshole, get down here. Oh, hi, Mom. Listen, this isn't really a good time. I'm on the other line. Yes, in fact, I am talking to a girl. Mom. It is not one of those kinds of calls. God, that was just one time you found that on the phone bill. I am hanging up now.

Jenny

*(Picks up phone)* You're hanging up?

Dan

No, not on you, Jenny.

Jenny

Oh, you helped the other person that fast.

Dan

The other person was my mother and no one can help her. Listen, Jenny, are you alone?

Jenny

Yes.

Dan

Is there a friend of yours we could call to come over?

Jenny

*(Crying)* There aren't any... not any that will care a couple of months from now.

Dan

What about your family?

Jenny

Just my brother.

*(JENNY takes a photo off the wall, looks at it then sets it down.)*

Dan

He'll miss you.

Jenny

He'll understand. He'll understand why.

Dan

You think so?

Jenny

Maybe you'd understand this better if I just read the note to you. Note. Sounds kind of silly, doesn't it? Maybe it should be suicide essay. Well, here is what my note says: (*Picks up letter*) Dear Thomas, I have departed this veil of too many tears. I think you'd understand why this was the right thing to do. Do you remember when we moved to Wichita from Topeka and Dad said we could not take Trigger until we got a house? That was our dog, Dan. I was six. He told me that Trigger was going to live with a neighbor. We found later that didn't work out and he asked them... he asked them just to put him down. He couldn't be bothered to drive three hours to find him somewhere else to live. (*Sets down letter*)

Dan

I'm sorry, Jenny.

Jenny

Do you know what I've been doing? Sitting around the apartment, playing solitaire on the computer. If I was a guy, at least I might be downloading porn. My sculptures, they're crap. All but one. The stone bird that the U bought. Being dead can't be any worse than things are now.

Dan

I'm sorry.

Jenny

Now is when you make a speech about why life is worth living or sing that annoying song from Annie.

Dan

Tell me about the stone bird, Jenny. Why is it good?

Jenny

No. I did one thing right. It doesn't matter.

Dan

Which university bought it?

Jenny

The same one that put it in storage a year later. They probably can't even find it. (*Head in hands, starting to cry*) They don't care. No one cares.

Dan

Someone cares about you. Your brother cares.

Jenny

Not anymore.

Dan

We could call him.

Jenny

No, no. He died when I was eighteen. He fell asleep and crossed the centerline...

Dan

I'm sorry, Jenny. I'm so sorry.

Jenny

*(Crying)* Yeah, right. You don't know what it's like to be worthless. You ever get ready to brush your teeth at night and just end up standing there for an hour? You wonder why anyone ever wanted to be with you. You lock the bathroom door, look at the mirror and wonder why God hates you so much that he gave you this life. You ever do that, Dan?

Dan

No.

Jenny

You don't know what the fuck you're talking about.

Dan

No, I don't.

Jenny

I can't even help anyone. In the PE class, the kids told me they got to play dodge ball. Pretty soon there are four guys left and one fat... sorry, proportionally challenged girl. The boys are throwing at her, but just missing on purpose. Making her run... run back and forth. I didn't stop them. I just let it go on.

Dan

High school boys can be pretty intimidating.

Jenny

*(Yelling)* They were 3<sup>rd</sup> graders. When they almost hit her in the head, she looked at me. They tell us to never touch the kids, but I should have gone over and just hugged her. I turned away. That's why no one should care when I'm dead.

Dan

But I do care about you, Jenny.

Jenny

You have to say that. You're supposed to.

Dan

No, I'm not. Do you remember when I agreed that I don't know what I'm talking about? It's true. I'm not even supposed to be here.

Jenny

What?

Dan

Listen, I am only here because Brent had to leave for a few minutes. His ex-wife's car broke down. You are only talking to me because somebody at Sprint doesn't know what they are doing.

*(DAN starts to cross Stage Right carrying the binder.)*

Jenny

I can't even get a real counselor. Well, that about sums up my existence.

Dan

But don't you see, Jenny. I don't have to care. It's not required. But I do. I do care.

*(JENNY starts to move Stage Left towards DAN.)*

Jenny

Really? *(Puts her hand out as if he is there)*

Dan

Yes, really. *(Crossing Right, puts his hand out)*

Jenny

*(Stops)* Wait a minute. Oh, you're good, buddy. How often do you pull this one out of your bag of tricks? "I am just another human being who cares."

Dan

It's not a story, Jenny. Listen, I am reading from a manual. If the person is alone, have they done something to ensure they will not be interrupted? Has the person disposed of personal items?

Jenny

You'd say anything to get me not to do it, so why should I believe you?

Dan

I don't lie, Jenny. That's one thing I've always been proud of.

Jenny

Let's say I came down there to talk to you. What if I weigh 300 pounds and have buck teeth. If I asked you if I was beautiful, you'd say, "No," because you never lie.

*(JENNY and DAN stand but three feet apart from one another.)*

Dan

Uh, I don't know, but I do care, damn it.

Jenny

You're just a guy doing your job. I'm just another depressive.

Dan

You want me to prove that I don't have to care? That I don't have to care about you, Jenny? I'll prove it.

*(DAN turns back to the desk and hangs up phone: BLACKOUT on JENNY.)*

Dan

Oh, God.

*(SOUND: Phone Rings.)*

Dan

Jenny, I'm so sorry, but I... Yes, this is the suicide hotline. Listen, I'm sorry to hear your husband is depressed... He's passed out on the couch... how many beers...? Can I get your number and have another counselor call you back? *(Hangs up)*

*(SOUND: Phone Rings.)*

Dan

*(Answers)* Hello?

*(LIGHTS RESTORE on JENNY. SHE is seated in her chair.)*

Jenny

You know hanging up was one thing, but being busy when I hit redial, that takes nerve.

Dan

Jenny, I'm so sorry. I just wanted you to believe me. I thought if I hung up...

Jenny

Why do you care?

Dan

What?

Jenny

Why do you care, Dan?

This is Not the End of the Play  
Ending Intentionally Omitted for Security Purposes

**Please continue to the next page to read "Anti-Venom"**

Life's Little Exams  
**“Anti-Venom”**  
 by Craig Kenworthy

Characters:

**JUANITA**; *a teen-age tour guide in a Central American country*

**DAWN**; *a woman bout 28-35, married to Scott, who recently had an affair*

**SCOTT**; *Dawn's husband, slightly younger in age*

Setting:

*In the Rainforest*

*(AT RISE: The stage remains dark. SOUND: BIRDS.)*

Juanita

And this plant is used for...

Dawn

What's that on the ground over there? It's moving.

Juanita

What? Wait, I see it. Don't move, miss.

Dawn

*(Screams)* Oh, God, it bit me.

Juanita

You moved.

Dawn

Scott. Scott. Damn it, where are you?

*(LIGHTS UP. At center stage is a rock about two feet high with a jungle plant hanging over the top of it. DAWN is sitting Stage Right, holding her ankle. SOUND, OFF: Thunk.)*

Juanita, Off

Miss, I got it.

*(SCOTT enters Stage Left, running to and crouching at Dawn's left. JUANITA enters Stage Right with a burlap bag in her left hand and a large knife in her right hand and stands behind DAWN.)*

Scott

Dawn, what happened?

Dawn

A snake bit me. Juanita caught it. God, *(Rubs left leg)* that hurts.

Juanita

Please, I will go down the river. The village nurse will know what to do. I will bring the nurse. *(Looks in bag; meets SCOTT's eyes)* I should not delay. *(Exits)*

Scott

*(Kneels beside DAWN, looks at her leg)* Did you see what it looked like?

Dawn

I'm a dietician. Not a lot of snake recipes. Brown and green, maybe.

Scott

How big?

Dawn

I don't know. What was that snake she talked about on the boat?

Scott

The Fer-de-lance?

Dawn

Yes, but it had another name.

Scott

The seven step snake. If it bites you, you make it about seven steps before you die.

Dawn

I only took two steps or three steps, tops. And they were baby steps.

Scott

You'll be fine. It's probably not even poisonous. And we're not far from help. Plus, you're young and healthy. Most fatalities are older people or small children who...

Dawn

Please, please stop trying to make me feel better.

Scott

Sorry.

Dawn

What were you doing anyway?

Scott

Just scouting ahead.

Dawn

For what? More rocks and trees?

Scott

Actually, I found a view of the canyon.

Dawn

That's just great. Listen, since you're sure I'll be OK and we're stuck here for awhile, there's something we need to discuss. We need to make a decision. She's not getting any younger. She needs more and more help.

Scott

It's not that bad. She can still feed herself.

*(SCOTT stands and crosses Stage Left.)*

Dawn

That's not a really great measure. You can feed yourself.

Scott

I just don't think it's time yet.

Dawn

You agreed we could finish the basement bedroom this year. It's a good time to decide.

Scott

You want to decide this based on redecorating. God, that's cold.

Dawn

Why? That's a good time to decide what to do with her.

Scott

I am not going to decide this based on something you just saw in Architectural Digest.

Dawn

Come on. It's more simple than that.

Scott

Simple? You think after all these years, this is simple?

Dawn

Sure. I'm sure my Mom can do part of it.

Scott

Your mom? Now, there's someone who can barely feed herself. She probably poops in the corner as much as...

Dawn

What? Don't say that. We're talking about...

*(DAWN and SCOTT talk over each other.)*

Dawn  
My mother.

Scott  
My dog.

Dawn  
I thought we were talking about my mother moving in with us.

Scott  
I thought we were talking the dog's health. Now, if you want to put your mother down, I'm ready to talk about that.

Dawn  
That's just hilarious. Are you saying you won't even consider it?

Scott  
Are you asking because I can't exactly say no right now?

Dawn  
No, if I was doing that, I'd ask you to...

Scott  
Say 'I forgive you?' You put someone between us.

*(Beat.)*

Dawn  
Since I told you about what happened, you've never said...

Scott  
Fine, in case you are dying and you are NOT dying, I forgive you. It's not exactly like forgetting to pay the Visa bill, you know.

Dawn  
Since I told you, you've never said you still...

Scott  
I stayed.

Dawn  
Yes, you stayed. *(Wipes brow; holds leg)* My leg really hurts.

Scott  
Let me look at the book. I'm sure it talks about snakebite.  
*(SCOTT pulls out a "Boy Scout Manual and begins to thumb through it.)*

Dawn  
Yes, I'm sure the American Boy Scout manual addresses snakebites in Costa Rica. Why did you bring that thing?

Scott

It's a very valuable resource. (*Reading from book*) For example, it says here that sucking out snake venom is not effective and it is dangerous.

Dawn

Is that for the sucker or the suckee? God, why did I let you bring me here for our trip?

Scott

I never said I should get to pick.

Dawn

No, you never said that. You've never asked for anything. Or about anything.

Scott

What does that mean? Is this about me not wanting to hear the blow by blow?

Dawn

There wasn't any blow, Scott.

Scott

(*Covers ears*) See, that's what I mean. Why does everybody think I need to know where you dropped your robe or if the room service guy noticed that only one of you had a ring?

Dawn

What did you say?

Scott

Nothing. Just things I thought...

Dawn

No, not that part. What was that about "everybody?"

Scott

Nothing.

Dawn

Who did you tell?

Scott

Nobody. It's not exactly something guys want to share. "Yeah, I thought the Cubs could finally win this year too. Hey, did I tell you my wife cheated on me?"

Dawn

You told your sister, didn't you?

Scott

I had to explain why we weren't coming to the beach house. Christina made a deposit.

Dawn

I'm sure the owner loved hearing that excuse. (*Fans self; hyperventilates*) Does the book say if drinking iodine flavored water is OK?

*(SCOTT pulls his pack open, takes out two books, baggie with toilet paper and a water bottle. HE hands the bottle to DAWN. She drinks, shakes a bit and dribbles some water down her front.)*

Scott

I'm sorry. Here. Let me look at your leg again.

*(SCOTT Reaches around her leg with his right hand and runs his hand up it to her knee.)*

Scott, Continued

How does it feel?

Dawn

*(Takes another drink)* That feels good.

Scott

You know, our guide, Juanita, is quite a soccer player. She thinks she could get a college scholarship, if she could play a year at a high school in the U.S.

Dawn

Are you trying to be nonchalant? OUR guide has a long life ahead of her except for the poor choice of living near so many things that can kill you. Give me your other hand.

*(SCOTT hesitates. DAWN takes his left hand and starts to pull herself up.)*

Scott

What are you doing? It's better if you rest, so the venom doesn't spread.

Dawn

I want to see this 'Sacred Canyon' you kept talking about. And I thought you said it's probably not poisonous.

*(DAWN steps forward, leaning on SCOTT. HE helps her cross to Down Stage Right.)*

Scott

Careful. That's the start of the edge of the canyon. Come on, sit back down.

Dawn

You never asked me why.

Scott

Why why?

Dawn

Why is what most people want to know.

Scott

You want to know why no why?

Dawn

*(Shakes off his arm; crosses back to rock; sits)* Now you're just turning this into an Abbot and Costello routine. You're such an ass sometimes.

Scott

I'm not the one who put whoever on first. Look, maybe it's because I could handle it if there was a why. I'm not sure I could if it was 'Why Not.'

Dawn

It was never 'Why Not,' Scott.

Scott

Do you know what I did that night after you told me about it? I drove to the river and threw in rocks for an hour. Then a cop pulls up and asks me what I'm doing. He made me do the DUI tests. I started crying at the number 89...88... 87 and I was bawling when he made me touch my nose. He told me not to take it so hard. Said that I could go into a first time offender program. Then he took me to the station. But I passed the breathalyzer. So I reminded him that my plates were expired and didn't have proof of insurance and I was pretty sure I was wanted in Iowa for several serious parking violations. They still said I needed to go. Told me to go home. *(Looks at his watch)* Where is Juanita? It shouldn't take this long. Maybe I should take the trail to the river and see if I can flag down someone.

Dawn

I just think it might help if you understood what happened...

Scott

I should have told her that I'm type O, so you can have my blood if they need to... Look, the sooner we get you help, the better.

*(SCOTT crosses to his get his backpack. HE opens it and removes a camera and notebook.)*

Dawn

Scott, don't...

Scott

You know, we haven't taken a single photo all day. And I spent all that time emptying the memory card.

Dawn

Scott, don't leave me...

Scott

I'll leave you the pack. *(Bends down and takes her leg)* I think you should elevate this.

*(SCOTT lifts leg up over the pack and exits Stage Left.)*

Dawn

...don't leave me. I won't. I still love you. Shit. *(Picks up Scout book, sets it aside and pulls another book out of pack)* So, what did you leave me to read besides 'Knot tying for the Sexually Frustrated.' Great, Joseph Conrad. *(Reads from book)* "The brown current ran swiftly out of the heart of darkness, bearing us down toward the sea with twice the speed of our upward progress: and Kurtz's life was running swiftly too, ebbing, ebbing out of his heart into the sea of inexorable time. *(Sets book down, touches leg then picks up notebook and begins writing)* Scott, in case I don't... I want you to understand what happened. It was a guy I knew from school. We went out once in college. I always liked him but not as much as he liked me. Twice. Not as in liked me twice as much, but it was two times. Why? Was it our sex life? *(Beat)* Not really but the truth is that lately, when we made love, it was like we were playing Scrabble and all you could do was make words like "the" and "it". *(Tears off bottom of page, balls it up, throws it into 'canyon' and starts writing again)* I guess I always liked the chase too much. You used to chase me, like a cheetah, like you'd run after me until your heart burst.

*(SOUND, OFF: Thrashing; SCOTT cursing. HE enters Stage Right with cuts on his arm and one pant leg missing. There is foliage stuck to his clothes and in his hair. DAWN see him and stops writing.)*

Scott

Ah, shit. I cut off the main trail, took some game trail. I figured all the animals used it as a shortcut. It just comes back here.

Dawn

Was that idea in the Boy Scout manual? Animals have road engineers?

Scott

I'll just go down the main trail, maybe cut toward the sound of the river.

*(SCOTT crosses past DAWN with noticeable limp.)*

Dawn

Maybe you should just stay here. Are you limping? What happened?

Scott

I was running down the trail and there was a tapir.

Dawn

One of those things that looks like a cross between an anteater and a large pig?

Scott

Yeah. Weighed about three hundred pounds. It was blocking the trail. *(Rubs his leg)* I yelled and screamed at it. I guess it didn't like that. I fell off a ledge when it started chasing me.

Dawn

You could just wait here with me.

Scott

We need to get you help as soon as we can.

Dawn

I'd rather you stay here. Besides you said, "It's probably not poisonous..." Wait, do you think it's poisonous?

Scott

I'm not saying that. It's just that I found a piece of the snake's tail that Juanita must have dropped. Listen, many of these snakes look alike. Let's not overreact.

*(SCOTT reaches towards DAWN and touches her cheek.)*

Dawn

*(On verge of tears, takes his hand)* Please, just stay here. Don't go. Just stay. Tell me... Stay here, Scott.

Scott

You're going to be all right. I'll hurry. I promise.

*(SCOTT kisses DAWN lightly on her forehead as SHE turns her face away. SHE lets go of his hand and SCOTT limps off. DAWN opens the notebook, picks up the pen and begins to write once again.)*

Dawn

So, this guy from school chased me and I slowed a little and then a little bit more. Then, I let him catch me. *(Shakes her head)* Do you want to know why I slowed up that last little step? Remember your last family reunion? I got to observe the whole clan. I realized right then that I might be in for forty, maybe fifty years of watching you become your father. That the best parts of you could wear away. That maybe I didn't mean enough to you to keep that from happening. For you to step up and tell your older brothers to not blame their wives for the kids falling down or get angry because there's no mustard. That's the kind of man I hoped you were. And I was afraid I was wrong about who you were. So, I let him catch me.

*(SCOTT enters. HE is soaking wet.)*

Scott

I heard a boat. I thought it was them, but it was going downriver. I yelled but they didn't hear me, so I tried to swim after it.

Dawn

You tried to swim after a motorboat?

Scott

Yeah, pretty dumb, huh?

Dawn

*(Big smile)* Yeah. In a river full of crocodiles. There are crocodiles, right? And piranha?

Scott

I was getting pushed by the current. I was afraid I'd end up on the wrong side and not get back in time.

Dawn

In time for what?

Scott

In time... in time for help to come.

Dawn

What if it doesn't come in time? Scott, can't you...

Scott

*(SCOTT turns away)* When the cop was driving me back to my car that night you told me about your affair? He drove by the drive-in where you worked in college. There was a girl in one of those yellow polo shirts and green shorts they wear. She was closing up. Remember how I'd get there 15, 20 minutes early, just on the chance you'd be the one cleaning up outside, so I could talk to you?

Dawn

You usually did half my work for me. And I always traded with someone in case you did stop by.

*(DAWN's eyes begin to droop and her head drops.)*

This is Not the End of the Play  
Ending Intentionally Omitted for Security Purposes

**Please continue to the next page to read**  
**“The Bluebook Value of Small Things”**

Life's Little Exams  
**“The Bluebook Value of Small Things”**  
 by Craig Kenworthy

Characters:

**DRAKE**; *an army recruiter, age 40 to 50*

**MIKE**; *the father of a soldier, a used car salesman age 50 to 60*

**TRISH**; *a high school senior army recruit age 17*

Setting:

*An army recruiter's office.*

*(AT RISE: DRAKE is seated behind the desk; MIKE in one of two visitor's chairs in the office. There is a pen in a wooden holder at the center of the desk. )*

Drake

So, you don't have any prior military experience, sir?

Mike

No.

Drake

We don't take someone over 42 years of age, sir, unless they are re-upping after a break in service.

Mike

I'm only 46. You can't make an exception?

Drake

For some skills we do. Doctors, lawyers – that kind of thing.

Mike

I sell cars.

Drake

I can't say we are full up there but that is not a skill set we need to have.

Mike

Couldn't hurt.

Drake

Listen, Mike, I want to tell you how much I appreciate your interest in serving your country, but I have an appointment now.

Mike

I really want to make this work. What if I knew someone who had served, knew them well?

Drake

That is not how this works, sir.

Mike

Well, what would it take to get you—

*(TRISHA enters. SHE is 17 years old, heavy and wearing casual clothes.)*

Drake

Trisha, glad you made it. Did you get those forms I emailed?

Trisha

Yeah.

*(TRISHA sits. SHE looks at Mike.)*

Drake

Do you two know each other?

Mike

No.

Trisha

I've seen him. He sold my auntie a car. It don't run very well.

Drake

Mike, Trisha and I have a number of things to cover. Thank you again for...

Mike

Do her parents know she's here?

Drake

Sir, that's really not your...

Trisha

Excuse me. I am right here. Why don't you ask me the question?

Mike

Do your parents know you are here?

Trisha

Hell, no.

*(TRISHA turns back to DRAKE and pulls out some papers.)*

Drake

Again, thanks for your interest, Mr. Walker.

*(MIKE , concerned, exits.)*

Drake

You know we are going to need your mom's signature.

Trisha

I was just messing with him. She signed, but she wants to make sure I get the med tech course.

Drake

You will.

Trisha

Where do I sign?

Drake

Not yet. I need to go over a couple of things first.

*(MIKE enters.)*

Mike

I'm sorry, but I just have to ask if this is the kind of person you are getting now?

Trisha

Excuse me?

Mike

Someone like this?

Drake

Mr. Walker, I am going to insist you to leave now.

Mike

You used to take football players, student council. My wife... my ex-wife called them young adult patriots.

Drake

Trisha is a fine young woman.

Trisha

Trisha is right here. And I am a fine young woman.

Mike

Kids who were going off to college if they got to. Are you off to, what, Harvard, when you get through? If you get...

Trisha

I am going to be a medical technician. Help people, not sell them used cars.

Drake  
Do I have to call someone, sir?

Mike  
They give you a flag.

Trisha  
I know. One of them little shoulder patches.

Mike  
No, it's full sized. Except they fold it up in a little triangle.

Drake  
Shit. Trisha, can you give us a few minutes?

Mike  
They fold it so neatly, much more neatly than you think that much cloth can fold.

Drake  
Mr. Walker, I am so sorry.

Trisha  
What are you sorry for? He's just some guy trying to scare me, right?

Mike  
They come to your house. Unless you are separated. Then they find someone who calls you, hoping they can lie well enough about needing to come over for some other reason, like wanting to borrow golf clubs. I don't even know where those are. When I said, "How badly is he hurt?" they said, "He's gone." Like he left work early or something.

Drake  
Where was your son?

Mike  
Afghanistan. Helmand.

Drake  
Again, I am very sorry for your family's loss. Trisha, how about if I come out to your apartment later today?

Trisha  
No, I want to do this now.

Drake  
Now is not the best time.

Mike  
Afraid of what she'll hear me say next?

No. Drake

Trisha  
(*To DRAKE*) Why did he come here?

Drake  
He wanted to enlist.

Trisha  
(*Laughing nervously*) And he was flipping me shit? I could probably carry him further than he could carry me.

Drake  
Trisha, please.

Mike  
It's amazing what doctors can do. Half your brain can spill out, half of what makes you only you laying there in the dirt. Did you ever see that kind of thing?

Drake  
Bits and pieces of things you aren't supposed to ever see. Like Halloween without any candy. That's what we used to say over there.

Trisha  
I'll get to help people who are hurt like that and I am going to sign my papers today.

Drake  
Mike, if you want to talk about this, there are people I can call. Or you can talk to me.

Mike  
No. No. My boy, they got him a plane to Germany. Six hours. They kept him going for six hours.

Trisha  
Did he sign up your kid?

Drake  
No, I didn't. I know who I signed up. There are two who... I know who I signed up.

Mike  
I was just walking by here and saw the sign. I told myself I am going to walk right in and ask them to make a trade, (*Breaking down*), a trade in. This piece of shit with a lot of miles for a brand new just off the truck 19 year old who wanted better than community college.

Trisha  
My mom can't even afford community college. Or a car.

Mike

I could get you a car. If you leave here right now, I'll get you a free car.

Trisha

(To DRAKE) Aren't you going to say anything?

Drake

No.

Trisha

Because you feel bad for him?

Drake

No, because if a car is enough to change your mind, well...

Mike

I have some money, from the death benefit. Money for school later? I could help with that.

Trisha

How much?

Drake

Okay, now I am going to say something. She can't take your money, sir.

Trisha

I don't want it anyway. Can I use this pen when I sign? (*Picks up holder*)

Drake

No.

Mike

Is it some kind of commemorative award? Your first or your one thousandth sent to fight?

(*DRAKED reaches across to take it from her. MIKE grabs it first.*)

Trisha

I probably have one in my bag.

(*TRISH starts looking through her purse. SHE does this through the following action: DRAKE rises and crosses to MIKE. HE puts his hand out for the pen holder. MIKE looks at it then smashes it to the floor. DRAKE looks down on the pieces. TRISH looks up at them. MIKE, flushed, glares at DRAKE. [Beat] DRAKE looks at the pieces again, then hugs MIKE and holds him gently. MIKE begins weeping. TRISHA gets up and picks up the pen holder and reads the plaque on it.*)

Trisha

It says specialist Thomas Maxwell Reed. 11/23/2006.

*(DRAKE takes MIKE to a chair and sits him down. HE then takes the pen and pieces from TRISHA.)*

Mike

Who is he?

Drake

I bought this pen myself, a fifty dollar one. I thought, "Who should sign up to serve your country with a plastic Bic?" So, I used this for everyone.

Mike

Make it more of an event.

Drake

Right.

Trisha

So, Thomas died?

Drake

Engineer's assistant. Checking structures after bomb damage, that kind of thing. When they found his right hand it still had three fingers on it.

Mike

My son was in a convoy.

Drake

There was a bit of cloth clutched in Thomas' fingers. Part of someone else's uniform.

Trisha

Like he tried to pull someone away? Right?

Mike

Or grabbed them in fear.

Trisha

Was it an IED?

Drake

It was just a bomb. Improvised device? They make it sound like some guy with a cooking show.

Mike

Was Thomas trying to save someone or not?

Drake

The day before it happened he wrote his girlfriend that, "No, it was not okay for her to go to the prom with someone else as 'just friends.'" She was still a junior in high school.

Mike

Which was it? You don't know what happened to Thomas, do you?

Drake

There isn't always some kind of CSI bullcrap that tells why someone did something when they were getting blown up.

Mike

What did they tell his parents?

Drake

(*Low*) We told them the whole truth. That we didn't know the whole truth.

(*DRAKE looks at the pen.*)

Mike

I have a pen, too. I thought, "Hey, it's a big purchase." A big deal for some people.

Drake

Make it an occasion. Maybe we could use a few car salesmen on our side.

Mike

Let her go home, Drake. Make her go home.

Drake

I can't do that. You know that.

Mike

You gonna tell me there will just be another one tomorrow and ask me am I gonna save that one or the next or the next after that?

Trisha

You are not saving me. (*Looks at DRAKE*) He is not saving me.

Mike

I could call your mother. Tell her you are here.

Trisha

Is that what you did before?

Mike

What?

Trisha

Did you find out your boy wanted to enlist and you ran home to find his mom?

Mike

No. If he... if we had known. I just want you to think this over.

Trisha

*(Looks at MIKE)* What do I look like to you?

Mike

A seventeen year old.

Trisha

A seventeen year old Chevy? You think I am one of your deals? Want to go talk this over with your manager and see what you can do about the price of rust proofing me?

Drake

Trisha.

*(MIKE slumps in his chair.)*

Drake

Mike, I'll tell you what. I'll tell the next one and the one after that. About Thomas.

Mike

Tell them that their parents or their girlfriend may never know if they were a hero or just some kid riding in a convoy on the wrong road on the wrong day?

Drake

Or just some kid who grabbed their buddy's arm as he died. Yes. Before they sign up, they'll all hear it. I promise you that.

Mike

*(Looks at Trisha)* You heard all this and you still want to sign up? Want your mom or your boyfriend to maybe never know for sure?

Trisha

Yes. And please stop acting like you are my daddy.

This is Not the End of the Play  
Ending Intentionally Omitted for Security Purposes

**Please continue to the next page to read "Statistically Speaking"**

Life's Little Exams  
**“Statistically Speaking”**  
 by Craig Kenworthy

Character List:

**RORY**; a mildly developmentally challenged 17 year old

**JULIE**; his medical doctor, about 50-60

**PAM**; Rory's mother, about 40

Setting:

*A run-down apartment*

*(AT RISE: the clean living room of a run-down apartment; RORY standing next to the couch, JULIE seated at a chair to the left.)*

Rory

What kind of doctor did you say you were?

Julie

OB/GYN. Obstetrician/Gynecologist.

Rory

Are you treating my mom, Dr. Maxwell? Wait. If you were treating her, you couldn't tell me, right?

Julie

No, I am not treating her and you're almost an adult, Rory. You can call me Julie.

Rory

What do they call that? Patient confiden... confiden...

Julie

Confidentiality.

Rory

*(With vigor)* You should have waited for me, Julie.

Julie

*(With a tinge of defensiveness)* I didn't think there was time. I did the best I could. It was happening so fast...

Rory

Say the word with me.

Julie

Sorry. I'm so sorry.

Rory

Confidentiality.

Rory

Why did you just apologize? I was talking about how I could have gotten the word right. My mom knows to wait. So, how many babies have you delivered this week?

Julie

None. I've stopped doing that. I need to tell you something about that.

*(PAM enters. SHE is overloaded with bags from a discount grocery store. JULIE stands up.)*

Pam

*(Beat, then recognition)* What the hell? Rory, take this stuff and put it away for me, sweetie.

Rory

She's a doctor, Mom. An OB/GYM.

Pam

I know who she is. Now, take these bags. Go. Now.

*(RORYR exits with all but one bag. PAM crosses to JULIE.)*

Pam

Why are you here, doctor? *(Last with emphasis)*

Julie

I want to talk to him, tell him I'm sorry. About what happened.

Pam

Just go. I'll tell him you used to be my doctor and... you were in the neighborhood and dropped by to say hello, but got called away.

Julie

I am sorry for what happened. I am.

Pam

You didn't say that 17 years ago. A small check from the insurance company and a lot of forms to sign away our rights isn't, "I'm sorry."

Julie

That's the way they did things then. We were never supposed to admit anything. The lawyers...

*(RORY enters unseen and is about to speak.)*

Pam

You didn't have to... The lawyers didn't have to...

Rory

Mom?

Pam

Yes, honey?

Rory

You got the wrong kind of peanut butter again. I only use chunky. You got creamy.

Pam

They didn't have any chunky. I'll mix some nuts in for you.

Rory

Okay. *(Waits)*

Pam

I didn't mean right now.

Julie

Rory, can you come sit down with us?

Pam

I thought you had to answer a call. And he's got chores. Go check on the cat's water.

*(RORY exits.)*

Julie

He doesn't know what happened during the delivery, does he?

Pam

He just thinks he got the worst of his dad's side. They were never that bright. Please, just go.

*(JULIE picks up the grocery bag and looks inside. SHE takes out a cheap brand of cereal and a melon.)*

Julie

He's still in high school? Just a year behind?

Pam

*(Takes the bag)* How do you know that?

Julie

I just want him to know there is a reason. So he knows it's not his fault. That it's my fault.

Pam

He doesn't need to know that he's got a disadvantage. One you gave him. He's doing pretty well. And not in some stupid-savant kind of way, where he's only good at one thing. Except maybe miniature golf. He's uncanny at that.

*(JULIE sets down the cereal bag and holds the melon in one hand and holds the other out in front of it.)*

Julie

We used these once. In training. Ripe ones. We had to use the forceps to pull them out of a too small paper bag. Without cracking the melon.

Pam

Be careful. The food bank rarely gets those and it's the only fresh fruit he'll eat.

Julie

We could tear the bag if we had to. Guess they thought that was a good...

*(JULIE'S hand trembles and SHE almost drops the melon. PAM grabs it.)*

Pam

I really don't care about your obviously inadequate training. Or did you want to tell me that you delivered three thousand other kids without an incident?

Julie

Would that make it better or worse?

Pam

I wanted to make it part of the settlement agreement. That you could never deliver another baby. My lawyer said it would mean a lot less money, even if we could get it and he doubted we could.

Julie

Don't you think he should know?

Pam

Would that make it better or worse? That's my decision.

Julie

You reuse the grocery bags, so he doesn't know about the food bank, don't you?

Pam

They usually hold some chunky peanut butter for me. Why now? *(Sets down melon)*

Julie

I'm in the early stages of a neurological disorder; one that will take some time to kill me.

Pam

Good. Then come see me when he's 25. We'll talk then. Right now, I don't need him having a ready-made excuse for his English grade.

Julie

Statistically speaking, it will take awhile to kill me, but I won't be talking by the time he's twenty-two. *(Picks up melon again)*

Pam

Statistically? You want to know about odds? I can tell you the betting line put out by schools, therapists— Put down the goddamn melon. (*Starts to break down*)

Julie

We don't have these kinds of injuries now, with the equipment we have. When it happened, it was... it was a mistake. Using the forceps was a mistake.

Pam

A mistake is backing over a trash can. A mistake is sugar instead of salt. Do you even remember what his head looked like when finally you got him out? To look at your own baby and hope that's he's just really ugly. Because his head can't look that way. It just can't.

*(JULIE steps towards PAM and touches her shoulder.)*

Julie

I'm sure it's been...

*(PAM backhands JULIE who staggers slightly. RORY enters with a knife and plates and rushes to JULIE.)*

Rory

*(To PAM)* Why are you always so angry at people?

Julie

It's my fault, Rory. I... it's my fault. *(Beat)* That doesn't mean it's okay to hit people. You know that, right?

Rory

Of course. Geez.

*(RORY sets down the plates and knife.)*

Pam

I'm sorry. No, I don't know if I am. Yes, I am sorry. Let's sit down.

Rory

Is Julie staying for dinner? She could help me make the lasagna.

Pam

He's taking a culinary arts class at community college. And he knows how to sew.

Rory

I'm not planning on going from table to table to offer alterations while people wait for their food, Mom. Would you like some water, Julie?

Julie

Yes, please. I bet that costs a lot. Tuition and all.

*(RORY exits once again. PAM and JULIE sit.)*

Pam

We can manage.

Julie

I could wait until he is walking home from school, you know. Just stop him on the street and tell him.

Pam

So you can really destroy his life this time? Tell me you lived with this all this time. That even on some beach in the Bahamas, it never left you.

Julie

Not all the time, but enough of it. Enough of it to be able to...

*(RORY returns with a glass of water and gives it to JULIE. HE sits next to his mother.)*

Julie

*(Hands melon to PAM)* I delivered you, Rory. I was the doctor who delivered you.

Rory

I knew it. I've heard about things like this.

Pam

No, honey. It's not...

Rory

Where is he?

Julie

Who?

Rory

My twin. The one you stole to raise as your own.

Julie

No, sweetie. Not that your twin wouldn't be nice to have raised.

Rory

Was I switched at birth? Is that why we never go to the hospital?

Julie

You have quite the imagination.

Pam

He likes to read my romance novels. He's kind of fixated on them. *(Low)* I blame you for that.

Julie

(*Low*) Responsibility accepted.

Rory

Do you want any of this? I brought three plates. (*Beat*) I could hear you yelling, Mom. My mom yells at my teachers sometimes. Tells them they are the ones not trying hard enough.

Julie

I need to tell you something, Rory. When you were born, things were not going right. I was delivering you and you got stuck.

Pam

(*Rising*) You don't have to listen to this, Rory. She doesn't have the right to make you listen to this. I don't want you to listen to this, understand?

Rory

Should I go to my room now, Mom? I have math homework. Or are you going to tell me to go water the cat again?

Pam

(*Beat*) No. No, I'm not.

Rory

So, you mean if I ask her to stop, she will?

Pam

Will she? Will you, doctor?

Julie

Yes. And I won't come back. Unless I forget I already came here once. There is some risk of that.

(*PAM exits. RORY begins slicing melon and putting it on plates.*)

Julie, Continued

We were worried that you weren't breathing right. Your mom never wanted you to know this. But we should wait for her.

(*PAM returns with a jar of peanut butter, a spoon and a bag of peanuts in shells. SHE begins breaking them open and mixing them into peanut butter.*)

Julie, Continued

I think... I think you'll understand why she didn't want you to know in a moment.

Rory

My mom never lies to me. We agreed. Not even about Dad.

Julie

Sometimes people don't tell other people everything. Because it's too hard.

Pam

Or because it's the right thing to do.

*(PAM spreads peanut butter on RORY's melon slice, never looking at JULIE.)*

Julie

So, I was hurrying to get you out, Rory. I was trying so hard to get you out, but I couldn't. No matter how hard I tried. So, we... I had to make a decision. *(Looking at PAM)* A tough decision.

*(PAM hands RORY his melon slice.)*

Rory

Was my twin already out? *(Pause)* I'm just messing with you, Julie.

*(PAMP resumes breaking open the peanut shells and mixing in the peanuts.)*

Julie

So, your mother... your mother told me to save you even if she had to sacrifice her life for yours.

*(PAM looks up at her.)*

Julie, Continued

Because she'd do anything for you. Even give up her life, Rory.

Rory

If she had died, would you have told me about what she said?

Julie

I would have told you it was my fault. It was all my fault. You see, how it went is... *was* my responsibility.

Rory

Why didn't she want you to tell me about that?

Julie

I guess because she didn't want you to ever feel bad about it. To ever feel bad about yourself.

*(THEY all think for a moment.)*

Julie, Continued

That's all I wanted to say. When you are older, maybe your mom will tell you more about it.

Pam

Maybe. Don't you have that homework?

Rory

*(To JULIE as HE exits)* Bon Jour, Doctor.

Pam

He thinks trying to speak French will help him get a better cooking job. I guess I should thank you. For what you said. Even if it wasn't accurate.

Julie

Let's call it a not yet discovered truth. They never told me that you wanted me to stop delivering babies. Well, I am not delivering them anymore. *(Feels her face)* Maybe you should have asked to be allowed to take a swing at me instead.

Pam

*(Without anger)* Maybe.

*(PAM mixes more peanuts into the peanut butter.)*

Julie

Can I do anything for you? I meant what I said about the tuition.

Pam

Have you seen what school costs now? Amazing. You must not be visiting too many other patients if you are making this offer to everyone.

Julie

Just him. I just did it with him.

This is Not the End of the Play  
Ending Intentionally Omitted for Security Purposes

**Please continue to the next page to read**  
**“So Much for Seat Belts”**

Life's Little Exams  
**“So Much for Seatbelts”**  
 by Craig Kenworthy

Character List:

**KARA**; a med student in her late 20's

**JOSH**; mid-late 20's, engaged to Kara's sister. He sells shoe accessories at the mall

**BRIAN**; an independent contractor “grim reaper”

Setting:

*A car buried in a mudslide*

*(AT RISE: KARA in the driver's seat of a car buried in a mudslide; JOSH seated in the passenger seat beside her. BRIAN, who THEY picked up hitch-hiking, is partially hidden, spread out in the back seat. The dome light is on. A cup of soda and Kara's purse can be seen. As the lights come up, JOSH is busy pushing buttons on his cell phone.)*

Josh

How long do you think our air will hold out?

Kara

We'd have more of 'our' air if we hadn't picked up your friend back there.

Josh

I thought he was your friend. *(Still pushing buttons)* And I'm not the one who drove us into a mudslide, Kara.

Kara

You act like I saw a sign saying, “Mudslide just ahead,” and kept going. There is no cell service here. So why are you still messing with that?

Brian

*(Leaning up and forward to look over JOSH's shoulder)* Hey, Josh, who's Cindy?

Kara

It's not my younger sister, April, his fiancée, is who it's not.

Josh

It's nobody.

Brian

Nobody sends you a lot of messages.

Josh

What if we're already toast... dead and just don't know it?

Brian

Like Schrödinger's cat.

Kara

Are you saying we are already dead?

Brian

If you haven't been observed to be dead yet, you could exist in many states— Dead/Alive. Boring.

Josh

I'd know if I was dead, Dude.

Kara

How?

Josh

I'd have felt my aura dissipate. My essence going. So, tell me more about this cat, Brian. It's Brian, right?

Kara

Maybe less talk by the hitchhiker, more air for us to survive.

Brian

Don't worry. I'm not taking up any air. Here, watch.

*(BRIAN leans forward to blow onto the rearview mirror.)*

Josh

Nothing. His breath did nothing. Didn't fog the mirror.

Kara

Who are you?

Josh

Are you the guy with the... what is that thing? Death?

Brian

The scythe? No. I do some work for him. Kind of an on-call thing. A dispatcher calls me. Get it? Dispatcher? Sorry.

Josh

So, we are dead already. Except that cat just hasn't looked at us yet.

Brian

No, you are both still alive. For now.

*(JOSH starts pushing buttons on his phone again.)*

Kara

Let me see the phone.

No. Josh

*(KARA grabs for it. SHE and JOSH struggle.)*

You're both breathing awfully hard. Brian

*(KARA gains control of the BRIAN's phone and drops it down her shirt.)*

Josh  
*(Looks at her like he might reach for phone)* Brian, are we gonna die?

Brian  
The good news is that help is coming. They are banging around with probes, searching for the trapped cars. The bad news is that you run out of air before they find the car.

Kara  
Great. I should have let you take the bus home from the airport.

Brian  
You didn't let me finish. There is enough air for one of you to last just long enough.

Kara  
One of us?

Josh  
So, how are you going to decide which one?

Brian  
Oh, I'm not going to decide. You can either both die from a lack of oxygen or one of you can save the other.

Josh  
Kara?

Kara  
Yes?

Josh  
I promise to tell April how brave you were.

Kara  
What? Wait a minute. Why are you assuming you get to survive?

Josh  
Because you're the med student.

Kara

The Hippocratic Oath says, 'Do no harm,' not, 'Kill yourself to save your batty, underemployed potential brother-in-law.'

Brian

Hmmm, doctor, doctor assisted suicide.

Josh

Did you just call me batty?

Kara

You sell shoe accessories at the airport. The world doesn't exactly cry out for that, does it?

Josh

You want to be a dermatologist.

Kara

Hey, skin is one of the most important organs.

Josh

Yes, much more important than a heart.

Brian

I think the lungs are the important ones here.

Josh

There has to be some fair way to decide.

Kara

Yes, let's see. *(Sarcastically)* Brian, pick a number between one and a hundred.

Brian

Okay. Two. No. One.

Kara

Brian, how long do we have to decide?

Brian

About five minutes.

Kara

I just renewed a prescription.

*(KARA removes a bottle of pills from her purse and hands it to JOSH.)*

Brian

There is a plastic bag back here you could use. *(Holds it up)* Smells like... talcum. *(Waves it around)*

Josh

It's good for blisters. We use it at the shop for people who have a bit of a rubbing problem.

Kara

These could work. They can induce a light coma. If you... if one of us swallows most of them and then we... one of us uses the bag to cut off their air supply after they pass out. Of course, we'd need to make sure they don't vomit up the pills.

Brian

That would leave enough air for one of you.

Kara

*(Beat)* I'm sorry about the 'batty' remark, by the way.

Josh

I'm sorry this is how you're finding out about it, Kara, but April is pregnant.

Kara

I was wondering when or if she was going to get around to telling you.

Josh

You knew? You knew that and you still wanted me to die? What kind of sister-in-law are you?

Brian

I think what kind of aunt might be the better question. *(Waves plastic bag around)*

Kara

I've never been in love. April loves you. A lot. I just don't know why.

Josh

She talks about you all the damn time.

Brian

Ah, love. It's like a firefly on a summer night. It's beautiful for awhile, but when you catch it, it just dies in the jar.

*(KARA and JOSH stare at BRIAN.)*

Brian, Continued

Four minutes by the way.

Josh

They are your anti-anxiety pills.

Kara

So that means I should have to take them?

Josh

You'd really leave him or her without a father?

Kara

How do you know you're the father?

Josh

What? *(Starts hyperventilating)* Are you saying April is cheating on me?

*(KARA grabs the bag from BRIAN and gives it to JOSH.)*

Kara

Calm down. You're using up a lot of air. She'd never cheat on you, but what about you? You didn't want April to see all those text messages, did you?

Josh

*(Breathes into bag)* Yeah, I didn't want her to see the messages. But you have to believe me. It was a one-time mistake. I've been trying to get Cindy to realize that.

Kara

April didn't tell you about the baby right away because I thought you might be cheating on her. Turns out I was right.

Josh

The thing with Cindy happened when April came to stay with you. Right after you wrote her that letter where...

Kara

I told her not to marry you.

Josh

I was going to say where you told her not to sell my organic foot care products door to door. You told her not to marry me?

Kara

Yes, I crushed your latest brilliant business scheme. *(Takes bag away from him)* Who buys anti-fungal spray from someone who comes to the door?

Josh

People care about their feet.

Brian

Maybe you should agree to become a podiatrist, Kara.

Kara

Do you know how hard it is to work full time and still get into med school?

Josh

I made one mistake. They don't execute other parents who cheat.

Brian

He's right. Most adulterers just get weekends at Chuck E. Cheese.

*(KARA sets down the pill bottle.)*

Josh

Brian, isn't there some cosmic reason it needs to be one or the other of us? Karma or something?

Brian

Sorry, just a quota I need to meet. *(Looks out the window)* But if it makes you feel any better, a Honda full of Hari Krishnas just went. Man, are they in for a surprise.

Josh

*(Looks around)* You had to buy this old Hyundai instead of taking that used Explorer I offered you. Bet it had twice the interior space. Twice as much air.

Kara

Used twice as much gas. *(Reaches into her purse, pulls out a little photo holder)* You'd think I'd have a more recent photo of the two of us.

Josh

*(Looks over)* That's the same one April has in the kitchen.

Kara

Aren't you going to get out your photos of her? Just to see her?

Josh

I left my wallet at work.

Kara

Right.

Josh

You'd leave her all alone, with a baby and heavily in debt? Or I guess she wouldn't be alone. There'd be you to tell her who to marry or not.

Kara

Debt? She doesn't have any debt. I paid for five-and-a-half years of college, so I should know. She won't have to pay off your debts from that stupid foot massage salon, since you aren't married yet.

Josh

Maybe it wouldn't have been five-and-a-half years if you hadn't told her to change her major after she started out in Bakery Science.

Kara

She was drifting. Cupcakes is just not a viable career path.

Josh

She cosigned for the business loans.

Kara

She never told me that.

Brian

Need a decision soon.

Kara

What if I refuse to do it? If I just decide that April is better off without both of us. You, the cheater, and me, the one who tells her who and what...

Josh

Oh, that makes sense. Kill her (*Air quotes*) 'potential' husband and her only sister.

Kara

April'd leave you if she knew.

Brian

Women are funny like that. You sleep with another one and they get antsy.

Kara

I meant if she knew you let me die for you. She'd take the baby and go.

Josh

Maybe we should destroy my phone now, just in case we both die. No reason for her to know about Cindy.

Kara

You cheated on her once. How can I be sure you won't do it again?

Josh

I won't. You... can't.

Brian

I love last moment honesty. Gets me right in the heart, if I still had one.

Kara

I only saw the ocean once. And it was raining. Josh, do you mind if we turn off the light for a moment?

Josh

Sure.

*(JOSH turns off the dome light. LIGHTS TO ½.)*

Josh, *Continued*

I think I have a hanky if you...  
*(SOUND: Car horn.)*

Brian

*(Loudly as if deafened)* I could have told you the rescuers aren't close enough for that to matter.

Kara

I just thought screaming would use too much air. I was going to help people. I know it's just on the surface, but help them with the way they feel about themselves. When you think about it, it's like cosmetic psychiatry. How people see others seeing them matters a lot.

Brian

Whatever you two decide, it's no skin off my nose. *(Looks at KARA)* Sorry.

Josh

You'll have to hold the bag down if I start to struggle. Do you understand?

Kara

Stop.

Josh

She needs one of us, Kara. We both know that. Even if it has to be the wrong one.

Kara

Stop.

Josh

Do you want to tie my hands down with the seat belt, so I don't try to take the bag off?

Brian

You don't have to tell anyone you killed him. He'll look much nobler that way.

Kara

Stop. Both of you. I know who it has to be, okay. I want you to tell her about Cindy.

Brian

One minute.

Josh

Alright. I'll tell her. I promise.

Kara

*(Takes pill bottle from JOSH)* She needs to decide if you are gonna be a Chuck E. Cheese regular or a regular dad.

*(KARA shakes some pills out into her hand.)*

Josh

*(Takes the bottle)* I don't think you need all of the pills.

Kara

*(Kara looks at him, puzzled)* Worried that too many might make me vomit?

Josh

Right.

Kara

*(Picks up cup of pop)* I am going to die with the taste of watery Diet Coke in my mouth. God.

*(KARA takes the pills and a swig of pop. SHE swallows then leans back in her seat.)*

Josh

How do I tell my wife I killed her sister?

Brian

She could leave a note explaining. Say it was her choice, I suppose.

Kara

He wouldn't like the note I'd leave. *(Starts to pass out)* And she's not your wife yet. I see a light above me. No, that's just that little map thing.

Josh

Brian, what is going to happen to her?

Brian

Not my department. Besides, why do you care?

Josh

*(Looks at pill bottle)* Two light comas might work. Give us both just enough air.

Brian

You can't be sure about that.

Josh

Like they say, nothing in death is guaranteed.

Kara

Maybe I should leave a note. About little Ms. Cindy.

*(JOSH looks at BRIAN and reaches down for the plastic bag.)*

Brian

*(Stage whisper)* Or maybe you aren't inclined to be so noble...

*(JOSH looks at plastic bag.)*

Brian, Continued

April needs one of you in her life, remember?

Kara

*(Almost passed out)* I'm a life, right? *(Head slumps)*

Josh

And we are so gonna name the baby after you.

Brian

She won't feel a thing now.

This is Not the End of the Play  
Ending Intentionally Omitted for Security Purposes