

# Revelations

A play in two acts  
by Barry Smoot

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# REVELATIONS

## Cast of Characters

**JOSHUA FAIZAN**— (18) Full of fire and bravado. Third generation Arab American. Very physical. Estranged from his father and his mother. Best friend to Cade. He says exactly what he thinks. He may be the only one in the Faizan family who understands his mother.

**EVA FAIZAN**— (38) Joshua's mother. A native Texan. Frail, thin, and worn. A highly devout follower of the Church of Christ. She quotes the bible as easily as she speaks. Probably abused by her husband, if not physically then verbally. She has taken a back seat in raising their children. She had a difficult childhood. She has lived in the same house since she was a child.

**DAMIEN FAIZAN**— (41) Joshua's father. A second generation Arab American. Like his son in many ways but somewhat faded. He shows signs of former physical glory. He lives in the past. Since the lynching of his father after he immigrated to America, he has become a different person. He is a farmer. He oppresses his wife. He met his bride through her father.

**SARAH FAIZAN**— (14) Joshua's younger sister. Third generation Arab American. Smart way beyond her years. She is a writer. Curious. She sees everything.

**ELIZABETH FAIZAN**— (20) Joshua's older sister. Third generation Arab American. Growing up she completely bought into the small-town community. After her senior year she unexpectedly ran away to a large city. She, like her sister, speaks her mind.

**CADE MADDOX**— (17) Joshua's best friend. A typical, popular young man. The only child in the Maddox family. He plays baseball and is very good at it. He has had a strained relationship with his father since his mother passed away. Quiet in some ways, and mysterious. A non-believer.

**LES MADDOX**— (40) Cade's father. The sheriff. He had a friendly relationship with Damien Faizan, but they no longer have that affinity. He has a tough job in a small town where everyone knows everyone. He is still grieving over the loss of his wife. He has high expectations for Cade.

## ABOUT REVELATIONS

REVELATIONS is a murder mystery with religious undertones. I was born and raised in Texas and grew up immersed in the dogma of the Church of Christ. For those not familiar, it is (historically) a highly conservative approach to religious teachings--as a child I heard more than my share of "hellfire and damnation" sermons. It instilled in me the concept that what we do, the choices we make, always have consequences. The fact that this play also deals with an ongoing conflict between Americans and Arab American immigrants is particularly important.

I have learned that we are all citizens of the world. I have long since left behind most of the extreme teachings of my childhood. My faith was moderated by my experiences in the real world, and my interactions with the best and the worst of humanity. I came to a personal revelation that things are not always as black and white as they seem. But it is that initial seed of religious fervor—still firmly planted somewhere in my psyche—that fueled the creation of REVELATIONS.

## THE SETTING

REVELATIONS is meant to be played on an abstract unit set, cracked and peeling. It at once evokes small town Texas in the 1960s but has some decidedly Arab architectural influences. There is a worn, weathered, raked wooden floor. Sun damaged southern gothic windows hang suspended upstage. There is another level above the windows for observation. It should appear sunbaked and dry. The only foliage is suggested by the breakup of leaves.

## WRITER'S STATEMENT

The conflict between Americans on the issue of Arab-American immigration has been a volatile one throughout history. Arab immigration to the United States began before our country achieved independence in 1776. Since the first major wave of Arab immigration in the late 19th century, the majority of Arab immigrants have settled in or near large cities. They felt as if they were outsiders from the very beginning.

Part of the play's history is loosely based on the 1929 Romey Lynchings in Florida. N'oula Romey was the fourth victim of racial terror that year in Florida and one of ten people who were lynched by white mobs across the US in 1929 alone. Just hours before, his wife Hasna (Fannie) Romey was fatally shot by Lake City police in their store. Their tragic murders were the most gruesome and violent attacks on Lebanese immigrants in the US, but this was not an isolated incident. Their killing was the culmination of a widespread pattern of racially motivated hostility, vitriol and physical abuse directed at early Arab immigrants who came to, worked, and lived in America between the 1890s and the 1930s.

In the 1950s and 60s, during the height of American's racist attitude toward Black Americans, the same attitude was extended toward those Americans who had immigrated from Arabic

countries. I have used the N'oula Romey lynching as a part of the backstory of the Faizan family in Texas.

His father's lynching was impetus for Damien Faizan to move to Texas to settle and raise a family. The play deals with the subsequent generations, and how their lives continue to be marginalized by a country with history of racist behavior.

Part of the play is also a study of America's conservative religious past, and how new generations have started to question the dogma of religions like the early Church of Christ that tended to marginalize people as well. That the issues of prejudice and religion lie on the same page is not accidental.

At its core, however, the play is a murder mystery about the loss of a promising and innocent life. Joshua Faizan represents what is best and worst about this nation. He is intelligent, vain, blindly loyal, difficult, seen as an outcast, and full of a fire that makes him unique. Above all—he is the son of immigrants. His death and its revelation says much about who we are and what we have become.

# Revelations

## ACT ONE

### Prologue.

*1961. Texas. A worn, weathered, raked wooden floor. Sun damaged southern gothic windows hang suspended upstage. There is another level above the windows. It is a simple setting, cracked and peeling.*

*There is an old dining room table with five chairs. Various other old chairs sit in the space. There is also a desk.*

*A young man appears in light near the windows. Isolated. This is JOSUHA FAIZAN, a dark, angular eighteen-year-old. He is tough, vain, no-nonsense.*

*An open longneck sits near a six-pack. He smokes. Finishes the beer. Drops it in an old grocery sack. Bottles crack.*

JOSHUA

I know I should be punished. Like the Bible says. For the things I've done. Hell. For the things I've seen.

*A pause. He opens another beer. Drinks.*

JOSHUA (cont.)

“And death and hell were cast into the lake of fire. Whosoever was not in the book of life was thrown into the fire.”

*A long swig.*

JOSHUA (cont.)

That's from Revelations. Mama says most Christian folk wouldn't be caught dead reading from that book. She says it talks about a beast with seven heads rising from the ocean. I'd like to see that.

*CADE MADDOX appears, isolated in light. He is seventeen, spirited. He has an easy-going manner that makes him open. Accessible.*

CADE

Mueller's Lake's a soggy bottom. Mud grabs your feet when you jump in. Cloudy too. Most of the time. It winds down to the Faizan's place. That's where Joshua lived with his folks, Miss Eva, and Damien. Josh and me were friends a long time. Miss Eva thinks my daddy needs help taking care of me now.

JOSHUA

The bible is full of the most amazing stories. Hail of fire. Oceans that open like mouths. Brothers killing brothers. People rising from the dead.

CADE

We spent a lot of time at the lake. Drinking. Raising hell. My daddy tried to keep a hold on all of it. Small town sheriff. It's not easy. He grew up here. He knows. Sometimes it makes more sense just to look the other way.

JOSHUA

This summer I finally got my own pickup truck. It took some doing. Shit. Daddy would have me walking the rest of my life if it was up to him.

*A beat, he downs the beer.*

JOSHUA (cont.)

Beat to shit Chevy. Fuck it.

*EVA FAIZAN appears. She sits at the dining room table. She is forty-two, willowy, plain. There is fragileness to her. It comes from her eyes. She wears a simple cotton dress.*

EVA

Children are so vital to our lives. Watching them change from one day to the next. It's a wondrous thing. Joshua was such a strong spirit. He had such a fire burning under him. People like that can make such change in the world.

JOSHUA

The Shithouse Chevy. Cade and me piled into it every day. Headed to the water. We fished until the sun fried our brains or the bugs got to us. Then we practiced our dives.

CADE

Josh made the rope swing this summer. It's a bitch. Throws you way out over the bank. You sail so damn high your heart crawls up your throat.

*JOSHUA, a little drunk, demonstrates the dives.*

JOSHUA

The Swan. The Spread Eagle.

CADE

Let go of that rope and you fall. You fall so far, the water feels like rocks. When you cut though, something takes you to the bottom. Some hands. Some thing. Mud grabbing you. Then the cold.

JOSHUA

*(still demonstrating)*

The Preacher Seat.

CADE

I'd fly to the surface first. Josh stayed under till his lungs caught fire.

EVA

I taught the lessons of the Bible to my boy. He was baptized a year ago June. I know that his heart was right with Jesus. I know that he was washed in the blood of the Lamb.

CADE

*(softly)*

Daddy says that's where it happened. Part ways behind the Faizan's place. In that dark water.

EVA

Jesus told us that "everybody's a sinner. Everybody's missed out on the glory of God." We get dunked in the water. Called the river Jordan. It washes us clean like the day we were born. Carries us along like the baby Moses.

JOSHUA

I liked it when the baby Moses took a ride in that basket of weeds.

*LES MADDOX appears, in his sheriff's uniform. He is forty, compact, straightforward. His is clearly shaken and speaks in carefully chosen official words.*

LES

Even though it would appear that the cause of death was not accidental, there is still a significant amount of evidence to be gathered. Joshua Cates was found dead at 7:55 p.m. this evening. His body was discovered on the bank of Mueller's Lake, near FM 225. The exact cause of death is unknown.

*DAMIEN FAIZAN appears. He is forty-one, rugged, weathered. The resemblance to his son is very evident. Same dark features. Same swagger. He speaks with little emotion.*

DAMIEN

I found him first. Twisted up on the bank. It was not my boy. It was some. Thing. Sprawled there in the mud.

JOSHUA

Riding in a basket.

DAMIEN

He had tried to pull himself. To the water.

EVA

What do I say to him? To Jesus? What can I ask him?

DAMIEN

By the time I got to him he was dead. Blood coming out his ears. And his mouth.

LES

An official investigation is underway.

CADE

Joshua told me he was going after supplies. There's this Mexican man out by the lake sells beer to anybody. Shit. That's supposed to be a secret. *(beat)* Doesn't matter now.

EVA

Jesus give us strength.

DAMIEN

I saw a calf once. Hung up while being pulled from its mother. Just caught there. Halfway between one world and another. Not sure which struggle was the right one. Goddamn if that's not what I thought of when I saw him lying there. Just that.

*ELIZABETH FAIZAN appears. She is striking twenty-year-old. Well spoken. Well dressed. She carries a suitcase.*

ELIZABETH

The train ride home was endless. I passed the time with Life magazine. Grace Kelly's wedding. Now she's a princess. Frank Sinatra is the "Tarzan of the Boudoir." Isn't that laughable? And poor Kim Novak. I had no idea she was so lonely. I guess I never considered it.

JOSHUA

I couldn't do that. Set a baby on the river. Let it float away.

*JOSHUA is restless now. He paces. Opens the last beer. Lights a cigarette.*



ELIZABETH

People lose people. I don't understand why we're so damned careless. Folks lose their kids. Men lose their women. Even friends get lost if you don't keep an eye out. *(beat)* It's strange. Being home. You can get lost in this town. Small as it is. My brother's not the first.

*Everyone stands. Silent. JOSHUA is drunk. Something turns. Inside him.*

JOSHUA

*(shouting)*

Bright white light. That's what I am. So much light it's hard to see nothing but my eyes. Two shiny eyes and wings out to here.

*He holds out his arms, imitating the Swan dive.*

JOSHUA (cont.)

Wings like arms.

*SARAH FAIZAN appears. She is fourteen years old. Vibrant. She speaks her mind. She holds a small book.*

SARAH

My family is about the only excitement anybody gets around here. My father struts around like a rooster. My mother is nice but she's strange. She told me when she was young her mama made her clean her privates with kerosene. No wonder she grabbed onto Jesus. And Elizabeth running off like that. Right after she was named the Queen of Halloween.

*JOSHUA collapses. Laughing. Quite drunk. The lighting begins to shift. Patterns of leaves appear. SARAH sits Near JOSHUA. She opens the book and writes.*

CADE

Josh was my brother. Not in relation, but just as close. Nobody understood him. Not really. I remember when we were kids, we'd have mudball fights in the field across from my house. Mama would let us drag the hose as far as it would reach. We'd dig big holes and fill them up with water. Josh could throw those bastards hard. *(beat)* I've never seen a dead body before.

SARAH

*(writing)*

Cade Maddox was the most beautiful thing I ever saw.

ELIZABETH

When I walked up to the screen door, I heard crying. It was coming from back in the kitchen. I walked inside. I could see the dark outline of a woman in front of me. Without turning around, she says "Joshua's dead."

EVA

Joshua's dead.

ELIZABETH

Just like that. No feeling. Then she was silent, doing the dishes like it was any other day. The only person who ever scared me more than Josh was mama.

LES

I don't know what to say.

SARAH

Someday I'm going to be the Queen of Halloween. Soon as my bosoms come up.

DAMIEN

No amount of soul saving was going to help that boy.

ELIZABETH

I hate funerals.

*A pause. Lights fade slowly. Joshua laughs softly as he walks toward SARAH.*

## Scene 1—The Tree.

*A tree. SARAH sits, writing. JOSHUA lies down next to her enjoying the outdoors. They have a unique dynamic.*

SARAH

Daddy would kill you if he found out you were drinking.

JOSHUA

Who says I'm drinking?

SARAH

*(After a beat)*  
Cade.

JOSHUA

Why were you talking to Cade?

SARAH

Why are you asking me so many questions?

JOSHUA  
*(he laughs)*  
I'm curious.

SARAH  
I know things.

JOSHUA  
You are way smarter than you ought to be.

SARAH  
Maybe I'm a space alien.

JOSHUA  
It's legal now to be one. They have a law. Maybe you should register.

SARAH  
You can stand up for me.

JOSHUA  
I am not a great example of our species.

SARAH  
Aliens don't judge.

JOSHUA  
People like me appreciate that.

SARAH  
Sinners need grace. Nobody gets that.

JOSHUA  
Well, fuck me if that's not true.

SARAH  
*(beat)*  
I saw him at the lake.

JOSHUA  
Who?

SARAH  
Cade. He was with that girl Marcie. She met him. They were kissing. She put her hand down his shorts.

JOSHUA

Everybody likes a hand job.

SARAH

They went around into the bushes. When he came out, I spoke to him.

JOSHUA

What did he say?

SARAH

Why do you care?

*A beat. SARAH writes.*

JOSHUA

*(a bit angry)*

What did you see?

SARAH

I didn't see them doing it. If that's what you want to know.

JOSHUA

I meant about the drinking. He can fuck whoever he wants.

SARAH

*(unfazed)*

I was just curious. I asked him what he was doing. He said he was going to try and get beer from Mr. Martinez.

JOSHUA

I'm the only one that knows Mr. Martinez.

SARAH

Maybe he was lying.

*SARAH continues. JOSHUA listens. Eyes closed.*

SARAH (cont.)

When he came back from the bushes, he was putting his clothes back on. I was afraid I would get caught. I moved away, but he saw me.

*SARAH writes. JOSHUA tries to see what she is writing.*

JOSHUA

What's in the book?

Everybody's secrets.

SARAH

Not mine.

JOSHUA

You have the best ones.

SARAH

So, you saw him naked?

JOSHUA

(smiles)  
I did.

SARAH

Is that in the book?

JOSHUA

There's a whole chapter.

SARAH

*JOSHUA laughs. CADE enters apart from them. He is in cut-off shorts and wet from swimming. He sits. He picks up a beer and starts drinking.*

SARAH (cont.)

He just smiled. I love his smile. I was so nervous. I asked him what he was doing, and he got quiet. Like it was some big secret. When he said he was looking for beer I knew he was lying. Then his face pinched up like he was hurt. Almost crying. (beat) We aliens can sense these things.

JOSHUA

I'd rather fuck than drink beer.

*JOSHUA gets up and walks away. SARAH closes her book. The lights isolate CADE.*

## Scene 2—Sins of the Father.

*CADE drinks. JOSHUA enters. He is also in cut-off shorts and wet from swimming. HE falls to the ground and lights a cigarette.*

JOSHUA

I think your daddy hates me.

CADE

Probably.

JOSHUA

He says he believes in Jesus. Like my momma does.

CADE

Yeah. But the Jesus your momma believes in is truly unique.

JOSHUA

He is her boyfriend.

*They laugh. JOSHUA smokes. CADE dries off.*

CADE

You smoke too much.

JOSHUA

The fuck do you care? Everybody's got to have something.

JOSHUA

What do you have?

CADE

I haven't figured it out yet.

JOSHUA

A guy like you has got to know what he wants.

CADE

I don't think it will happen.

JOSHUA

That's shitty.

CADE

It's complicated. *(beat)* My father said you got in trouble again.

JOSHUA

Yeah.

CADE

What for?

Another fight. JOSHUA

Shocking. CADE

*JOSHUA*  
*(changing the subject)*  
The last time your father arrested me, he told me “I need to stop blaming other people for my own mistakes.” Fuck him.

So why do all these things to get in trouble? CADE

Attention, I guess. JOSHUA

*(laughs)*  
My father didn’t do shit for me. Maybe his father didn’t do shit for him. JOSHUA

Not true. CADE

Maybe I am a liar. JOSHUA

You are the most honest person I know. CADE

It’s tough being the son of an angry man. JOSHUA

It is. CADE

*They sit for a moment.*

How old was he when he died? CADE (cont.)

Who? JOSHUA

Your grandfather. CADE

Why are we talking about him?

JOSHUA

I'm curious.

CADE

You never asked me this before.

JOSHUA

I'm asking now.

CADE

*(after a beat)*  
Twenty.

JOSHUA

Damn. That's young. What happened?

CADE

His family ran from their home in Syria. They had a terrible life. America is where they stopped running. And this is where my father stopped running. This town. And now they hate us here, too.

JOSHUA

Not everybody.

CADE

Well, aren't you full of the grandest shit? Remember when you slammed me so hard against a locker I couldn't breathe.

JOSHUA

You deserved it.

CADE

*They fake-fight. JOSHUA gets a bit rough. CADE backs away and sits. There is silence.*

My grandfather and his wife and two daughters had a country store that sold vegetables. They had come here to escape the Ottoman invasion. Their lives had been destroyed. In my grandfather's American town, the KKK paraded in the streets. Parents took their children to watch. Shouting hatred. One day two policemen trashed my grandfather's store for selling vegetables in the street without a license.

JOSHUA

That was really a law?

CADE



JOSHUA

It still is. *(beat)* When they came back to talk to him, he was at the movies. My grandmother was there. She had the family gun. When they started trashing the store again, they struggled with her and she shot one of them in the shoulder.

*CADE lies back in the grass to listen.*

JOSHUA (cont.)

The other policeman fired a shot into her leg and two more into her body. They said she deserved it. They took her to the hospital. *(beat)* When my grandfather returned from the movies, he found blood on the floor. He was drunk. He stormed the hospital to find out how she was. He threatened the police. When they tried to detain him, he shot a policeman. In the leg. They arrested him and took him to jail.

CADE

This is what happens when you shoot a policeman.

JOSHUA

She was pregnant.

CADE

She died?

JOSHUA

Yes. So did the baby.

CADE

Damn.

JOSHUA

While he was in jail some townspeople found out what he had done. They stormed the jail. They tied him to a car and drug him down a country road. They hung him from a tree and took pictures. Then they cut him down and fired ten shots into his body. Left him on the side of the road.

CADE

My father would not allow that.

*Silence. They lie in the grass. Not moving.  
DAMIEN, EVA, and SARAH sit at the table.*

JOSHUA

I have no respect for the law.

CADE

You mean my father

JOSHUA

I can't imagine a world without hate. Is that answer simple enough?

*A beat. JOSHUA smokes. The lights highlight the table and fade on THE BOYS.*

### Scene Three—Handfuls of Dirt.

*JOSHUA enters the scene and sits. HE salts his food.*

EVA

"Bless us, O Lord, and these, Thy gifts, which we are about to receive from Thy bounty. Through Christ, our Lord." Amen.

DAMIEN

Amen.

SARAH

Amen.

JOSHUA

*(interrupting)*  
Bismillahi wa 'ala baraka-tillah...

*(DAMIEN grabs JOSHUA'S arm, roughly.)*

DAMIEN

Stop.

SARAH

It's a blessing from Allah.

*JOSHUA and SARAH exchange glances. They all eat, except JOSHUA.*

DAMIEN

How do you know that?

JOSHUA

I know lots of things.

EVA

Joshua, eat your food.

*DAMIEN'S glass of tea is full. He speaks to EVA.*

DAMIEN

I need more tea.

*EVA stares at him for a moment then gets up and immediately leaves the room. JOSHUA pushes his plate aside.*

DAMIEN (cont.)

Do what your mother says.

*JOSHUA does not respond.*

SARAH

He has plans. With Cade.

JOSHUA

*(to Sarah)*

That's not your business.

*JOSHUA stares at SARAH. She eats. EVA returns with tea. SHE pours a small amount of it in her husband's glass HE drinks the entire glass. He indicates for HER to fill his glass again. SHE does.*

DAMIEN

*(to Joshua)*

You should stay away from him.

EVA

Who?

DAMIEN

Cade Maddox.

SARAH

He's a nice boy.

DAMIEN

*(dismissing her)*

He's the sheriff's son.

JOSHUA

Who cares who his father is?

DAMIEN

I do. And you certainly keep him busy.

JOSHUA

Now you give a fuck.

*DAMIEN puts his finger in JOSHUA'S face.*

DAMIEN

Don't you *ever* use that language again in my house.

JOSHUA

Why not? You do.

*There is a long pause. DAMIEN stares at JOSHUA.*

EVA

*(changing the subject)*

You know the boys have been friends since elementary school.

JOSHUA

*(to EVA, quietly)*

I don't need your help.

*EVA stands. JOSHUA is silent.*

EVA

"Surely God is my salvation; I will trust and not be afraid. The Lord, the Lord himself, is my strength and my defense; he has become my salvation."

DAMIEN

*(to EVA)*

What the hell are you talking about.

EVA

Cade lost his mother. A boy needs that influence in his life.

*DAMIEN stares at JOSHUA. After a beat, he pushes JOSHUA'S plate back in front of him.*

JOSHUA

She passed while he was at school. (beat). They took him from class and told him she died. Just like that.

DAMIEN

I see.

*JOSHUA looks at EVA. There is a moment. EVA removes every plate but JOSHUA'S.*

EVA

“The Lord himself is your source of salvation and strength. He is your Defender against Satan and your enemies. Your own sinful tendencies. You can trust in him and give him your fears while you are grieving.”

*EVA exits with plates. CADE enters and sits on the ground.*

SARAH

They carried her casket on their shoulders without using their hands.

DAMIEN

My father's body was washed and wrapped in three pieces of white cloth. Women were not allowed to participate in the funeral procession. It took three days for his body to be released. I did not see him. I placed three handfuls of dirt on his grave.

*There is a beat. They sit in silence. Suddenly JOSHUA rises to exit.*

JOSHUA

Now you know why I'm not hungry.

*EVA returns to her seat. No one speaks.*

#### **Scene Four—Preacher Seat.**

*JOSHUA joins CADE. They have both been swimming.*

CADE

Why is it called the Preacher Seat?

*JOSHUA demonstrates by placing his palms over his face and dunking backwards.*

JOSHUA

*(laughing)*

When you jump you lay back into the water. “And I shall call you newly baptized.”

CADE

*(after a beat)*

What made you decide to do it? Get dunked?

JOSHUA

My mother. She was after me for years. But honestly mostly to piss my father off. I am the only Faizan child baptized. In Islam, to believe is enough to enter the faith.

CADE

I guess that's a good a reason as any. So. You seriously believe in Islam?

JOSHUA

I believe I need a beer.

*CADE hands him a beer. There is a moment when neither boy speaks. CADE sits down next to JOSHUA*

JOSHUA

I am misunderstood.

CADE

Not really.

*JOSHUA puts his arm around CADE'S shoulder.*

JOSHUA

You are my only friend.

CADE

Yeah right. Every girl at school wants you.

JOSHUA

That's just sex. *(beat)* Not friendship. Not love. I don't know that I have ever felt really loved.

CADE

My mother loved you.

*A beat. CADE stares at JOSHUA.*

JOSHUA

*(dismissing him)*

When your mother died. I saw what happened to you.

CADE

Nothing happened to me.

JOSHUA

After they told you in the hallway. Your face.

*A beat. Suddenly CADE stands up to remove his shorts. He delivers the following as he changes back to his jeans and T-shirt.*

CADE

I don't want to talk about this anymore.

JOSHUA

We can talk about my grandfather being lynched but we can't talk about your mother dying from cancer.

CADE

It's not the same.

JOSHUA

What the fuck do you mean? It's exactly the same.

CADE

Why do you do this? Why do you always try and stir the shit? *(beat)* You never knew your grandfather. Hate killed him. Nobody hated my mother.

JOSHUA

She was lucky.

*CADE throws his shorts at JOSHUA and hits him in the face with them.*

CADE

Lucky? *(beat)* You are an asshole.

JOSHUA

She died knowing she was loved. That's all I'm saying.

CADE

And what do you know about that?

JOSHUA

Enough to know that both are cruel.

*CADE is now dressed. JOSHUA lies in the grass.*

CADE

*(softly)*

I had not seen her for two days. I was busy getting ready for a game.

JOSHUA

That's not your fault.

CADE

I just couldn't watch her. Wasting away. *(beat)* I didn't even want to go to her funeral. My father insisted.

JOSHUA

Church of Christ funerals are so creepy. Open casket. *(beat)* When I die, I want to return to the Earth. Just burn me up and dump my ashes in the ocean or a forest. Our bodies should become part of nature. Plus, there's no point to them once we die. Why dress them up and put them in fancy boxes like they can exist forever?

CADE

I couldn't look at her the entire service. I stared at the hymnal on the back of the pew in front of me. I didn't hear the speaker. He was some friend of my father. I didn't even know him. *(beat)* I saw your family in the church. It's the first time I had seen you all together.

JOSHUA

We respected your mother.

CADE

I just didn't want to be there. When the crowd left the church, everybody had to walk past the open casket. The family was last. Just me and my father. It was like a museum. When we passed the casket, my father put his arm around me and made me walk faster. I don't even remember what she looked like.

JOSHUA

I do. Like plastic. Or wax.

CADE

When we left the church, the crowd was outside waiting for us. Split on either side of the doors. We walked down the middle. Like some stupid parade. It wasn't that I didn't want to say goodbye to her. I just didn't need to be the center of attention.

*JOSHUA shoves CADE aside and stands up.*

JOSHUA

For once you didn't want to be the center of attention.

*ELIZABETH is revealed at the dining room table.*



CADE

When we got into the back of the car my father didn't speak. He reached for my hand, but he didn't take it.

JOSHUA

The Church of Christ believes that only baptized Christians can enter paradise at death. The others are taken to hell.

CADE

That's harsh.

JOSHUA

Who knows? It's just words. Paradise could be another life without pain.

CADE

I hope you are right.

*JOSHUA suddenly pulls CADE to him and hugs him. Cade holds on to JOSHUA tightly.*

CADE

*(finally speaking)*  
She wasn't baptized.

JOSHUA

God is smarter than that.

*The lights fade. JOSHUA steps into ELIZABETH's light and starts to circle the table as they talk. He is still dressed from the creek.*

## **Scene Five—Queen of Halloween.**

ELIZABETH

It was mother's idea. She wants me to be Queen of Halloween. I'm not sure what Jesus thinks about that.

JOSHUA

I don't think He has an opinion.

ELIZABETH

Every girl wants to be Queen. I think it's because then you could have any guy you want.

JOSHUA

Is that right?

ELIZABETH

A lot of girls want *you*, but that's just because you are dangerous.

JOSHUA

I give a shit. But then I don't.

ELIZABETH

I want Cade Maddox.

JOSHUA

*(laughing)*  
Good luck with that.

ELIZABETH

So, I bought a dress. I am practicing my walking. Grace is teaching me how to put on makeup.

JOSHUA

Momma is letting you wear makeup?

ELIZABETH

Up until this point, she has not allowed it. I'm not sure why she changed her mind.

JOSHUA

This is a lot of trouble to go to for Cade Maddox.

ELIZABETH

Well, honestly, it's not just for him. I want Cade to notice me because he is the boy everybody wants.

JOSHUA

I thought I was the guy everybody wants.

*ELIZABETH sits for a moment.*

ELIZABETH

To be in the pageant you have to do three things. Swimsuit, talent, and evening wear. When daddy found out I would be parading around in a swimsuit he forbade it. He and momma got into a terrible fight. He told her that in her bible it says to 'live and dress moderately, so not to gratify the flesh.'

JOSHUA

Well, that's one passage from the bible he remembers.

ELIZABETH

Momma said women from his country were just being uncovered from their veils, so he should understand.

JOSHUA

In my experience, religious people tend to interpret the bible in whatever way makes them right.

ELIZABETH

Father is not coming to the pageant.

JOSHUA

Cade and I will be there.

ELIZABETH

I thought you hated each other now.

JOSHUA

Maybe we do.

ELIZABETH

You know what will happen if you are seen sitting with him.

JOSHUA

Isn't that what we both want?

ELIZABETH

I will be parading around in a swimsuit with those white girls knowing most of the town hates me.

JOSHUA

And we will be saying "fuck you" to everyone.

ELIZABETH

I wish I had the strength to do that. *(beat)* Last night sheriff Maddox found me at the drive-in and made me pour my beer out into the grass.

JOSHUA

*My* beer.

ELIZABETH

Marcie Smith is my biggest competition, so I assumed it was her who told him about it.

JOSHUA

Cade told him.

ELIZABETH

How did he know?

*JOSHUA smiles at her.*

ELIZABETH (cont.)

I really don't understand you.

JOSHUA

So, what is your talent?

ELIZABETH

My talent is singing "Getting to Know You." Marcie is going to twirl. Another girl is playing "La Cucaracha" on the trombone.

JOSHUA

Now *that* is entertainment.

ELIZABETH

*(after a beat)*

And when did you and Cade become friends again?

JOSHUA

Who says we're friends?

ELIZABETH

Sarah sees you at the lake together all the time.

JOSHUA

Sneaky girl.

ELIZABETH

There's no way I'm going to win.

JOSHUA

Maybe you will. Maybe it's a way for the town to show that even a poor, brown-skinned girl might have a chance. Or maybe it will be because you slept with half the boys at school.

*There is a moment. No one speaks. After a beat  
ELIZABETH continues.*

ELIZABETH

I'm leaving. When the pageant is over. I'm coming straight home. I packed enough things in the trunk of my car to get away. I'm taking the train to Chicago.

JOSHUA

That takes money.

ELIZABETH

I've been stealing from momma's purse. A little at a time. For over a year now.

JOSHUA

Good for you.

ELIZABETH

Momma smothers me. Daddy has become this ...

JOSHUA

...shell.

ELIZABETH

This town thinks I am some foreign whore.

JOSHUA

All of this is true.

ELIZABETH

I can't breathe.

JOSHUA

You should get out while you can.

*There is moment. JOSHUA smiles at ELIZABETH. CADE is revealed in light. He is dressed for baseball practice. He is removing his shoes.*

ELIZABETH

If I win, I'm taking the Queen of Halloween crown with me.

JOSHUA

Maybe I underestimated you.

## **Scene Six—Someone Else's Life.**

*CADE is still sitting. LES enters, in HIS sheriff's uniform.*

LES

Don't you have practice?

Joshua and I are going swimming. CADE

You're the pitcher. LES

I'm one of three pitchers. CADE

But you're the best. LES

I am. CADE

You should go to practice. LES

I don't want to. CADE

*There is a moment. LES looks at his son.*

LES  
There was a time you wouldn't even think about disrespecting me.

*Another pause. CADE does not look at his father.*

LES (cont.)  
So. Swimming.

CADE  
Yes. Swimming.

LES  
Why are you friends with that boy?

CADE  
He's not a boy.

LES  
He has no respect for authority. He's been in jail. He steals.

CADE  
*(sarcastically)*  
And he has a mother who is bible-crazy and a father who is Arab.

LES

He already has the town on edge. Do you know why his father moved to Texas? Do you know what happened?

CADE

He told me.

LES

His family brought all that hatred with him. That wasn't their intention, but they did. Most of the people around here are afraid of them.

CADE

Yeah, well sometimes we want something to be true so bad that we convince ourselves it is true.

LES

His father told me he feels trapped. He can't control him.

CADE

Why are you talking to his father?

LES

It's my job. *(beat)* Joshua is exactly like him.

CADE

*(laughing)*  
He is *nothing* like him.

LES

What would your mother think?

CADE

My mother would think I am smart enough to make the right choices.

LES

That is a lie, Cade. A lie you're telling yourself that's getting you into trouble. She would not have wanted this.

CADE

You have no idea what she would have wanted. You were consumed with getting everyone's respect. Not me. Other people. *(beat)* Did you know she was friends with Joshua's mother? Eva was the first person she called to tell someone she was sick.

LES

That's not true.

CADE

Yes. It is.

LES

I want you to be a leader. I want you to be the kid that everybody looks up to. That will be impossible if you stay friends with him.

CADE

My mother would be ashamed of you. You are worried that the town will talk just because I am friends with him. They have no reason.

LES

They have a reason because he gives them one.

CADE

Momma taught me that when we are injured, we never recover until we forgive. She taught me that you never know what someone else is experiencing in their own life until you ask them.

LES

I know you loved her.

CADE

I am friends with Joshua because his life has been shitty. He is lonely. And rejected. Why can't I be a leader and still be his friend?

LES

I am the sheriff of this town. I have obligations. I have a charge to try and keep the peace. I know what is in men's hearts. I see it every day. I'm afraid for you. I don't want you to be a part of any of this.

*There is silence.*

CADE

Did you know mama knew she was sick for months before she told us? She was afraid of the attention. She thought if we knew it would interrupt our lives.

LES

How do you know this?

CADE

She told Eva. Eva told me.

*LES sits down. Stunned.*



CADE (cont.)

I talk to Joshua. He listens to me. There is a part of him that understands me. Just me. *(beat)*  
This whole thing is fucked up. You didn't even look at me through the whole service. It's like I wasn't there.

LES

Some people get numb.

CADE

Or blind.

LES

We heal.

CADE

Well, I guess you have, and I haven't.

*LES chooses his words carefully.*

LES

When I was thirteen years old on a Saturday afternoon I snuck into my mother's purse and took her car keys. She was asleep in her room. I went outside to the carport. I unlocked the car. I got into the driver's seat. I had seen her do this hundreds of times. I put the key into the ignition and when the car roared to life my heart jumped into my throat. My feet didn't reach the pedals in the floorboard. I had to stand to make them work. I could barely see over the dashboard.

*CADE looks and him. HE smiles.*

LES (cont.)

When I put the car in gear it moved forward instead of backwards and bumped into the garage wall that sealed off what was now my brother's room. My grandmother had paid to have the garage closed off to get him out of the house. He was a nightmare. When I bumped the wall, I saw the blinds on my brother's window open then I saw him give me a "thumbs up." Like he was some kind of marshal giving me permission to leave the driveway. When I finally got the car in reverse, I backed out. I hit a neighbor's car.

CADE

Holy shit.

LES

I don't know how I drove the three blocks to the store without causing an accident. I ran every stop sign. The store was at the top of a hill and the parking lot was very steep. When I got there, I had to gun the engine to get the car up the hill. I pushed on the gas so hard I ran the car into the side of the store and cracked the wall.

*There is a pause. LES becomes emotional.*

LES (cont.)

When I got out, there was a girl sitting in a car beside me. She had seen the whole thing. It was your mother. She smiled at me like I was some sort of superhero.

CADE

Did you get in trouble?

LES

When I finally got inside, I shoplifted candy from the store. Fireballs. I didn't know you had to pay for things. My mother always put it on account.

*A short pause. EVA and SARAH enter. EVA sits in a chair. SARAH stands beside her.*

CADE

Joshua and I shoplifted magazines from that store.

LES

When I went back to the car, I was discovered by the boy in the parking lot who carries out groceries. He called his boss who knew my mother. The whole time the girl in the car just stared at me and smiled. I wanted to give her a ride.

*CADE lowers his head. He doesn't look at his father.*

CADE

What kind of car was it?

LES

I think the secret is just to settle for the shape your life takes.

*The lights fade on both of them.*

## **Scene Seven—Fellowship.**

*Lights fully reveal EVA and SARAH.  
EVA is mending socks*

EVA

When I first saw your father, he was at carnival that had come through town. He was just standing there watching it all and listening to the screams of people being twisted and spun and thrown into the air. He looked so out of place. I will never forget the first time I saw him.

SARAH

I love the feeling of meeting someone for the first time.

*EVA'S mind wanders.*

EVA

He first came to the fellowship hall for a Sunday church potluck. He told me a neighbor had invited him. I'm not sure that's true. We sat across from each other at a small table and barely spoke a word. He was so. Sad. The eyes of everyone in the room were like knives to him. When I told my mother about my intentions toward Damien, she rebuked me.

SARAH

What does rebuke mean?

EVA

That's like a parent yelling at a child for not keeping up with them while they're walking.

*EVA stops sewing.*

EVA (cont.)

She said men should be conformed to the image of God, which is perfectly free from sin, and completely pure. But men love darkness instead of the light of the Lord.

SARAH

They are mysterious.

*EVA'S mind wanders.*

EVA

I invited him to church the next Sunday. He came and sat in the very back. When I went to talk to him after the service, he was crying. *(beat)* He renounced his Islamic faith and was baptized two weeks after that day. We were married three months later.

SARAH

That sounds like Romeo and Juliet.

*EVA puts the sewing aside. She is very quiet.*

EVA

I suppose it does. *(beat)* What I see now is a man whose family left a hell on earth to come to a better place. A man who realized after he arrived that he had left one prison for another.

SARAH

People should not apologize for who they are.

EVA

Yes, child. But they usually disappoint.

SARAH

Like Joshua.

EVA

Joshua has troubles.

SARAH

Everybody has troubles. Even the people you would never suspect. *(beat)* Why did you disobey your mother?

EVA

“When a foreigner resides among you in your land, do not mistreat them. The foreigner residing among you must be treated as your native-born. Love them as yourself, for you were foreigners in Egypt.”

*EVA continues sewing.*

EVA (cont.)

My mother hated Damien. She hated everyone. She used to lock me up for weeks at a time. Made me stay up on my bed. She thought Satan would rise up from the floor and enter me.

SARAH

That’s wicked.

*SARAH writes in her book.*

EVA

I have believed that my God is gracious and forgiving and kind. Her God was full of hellfire and damnation. I heard this every Sunday.

SARAH

We still hear that.

EVA

I suppose that is something that will never change for those some who follow the Lord’s book.

SARAH

“The Lord preserveth all of them that love him: but all the wicked will he will destroy.”

*EVA stares at Sarah again.*

EVA

Only the righteous will live.

SARAH

Why is Joshua a Christian?

EVA

I taught him. I said it was up to him to prove that there is a place for him and those like him. I told him he needed God on his side. He needed to be able to defend his father.

SARAH

I guess that's brave.

EVA

Not brave enough. I thought he found Jesus but apparently, he did not.

*EVA stands.*

SARAH

Cade Maddox is the same. Not on the surface, but deep down.

EVA

Both boys are grieving for something. Cade cannot accept the death of his mother. Joshua cannot accept the cruelty of man.

*SARAH sits, unmoving. EVA takes her hand.*

EVA (cont.)

Children are a gift from God. We cannot control their hearts. They witness things they should never see. We cannot protect them. We can only love them for who they are.

*EVA kisses SARAH on the forehead.*

EVA (cont.)

“The name of the Lord is a strong tower; the righteous run into it and are safe.” *(beat)* I pray that it is not too late.

*The lights fade on EVA and SARAH. SARAH stays seated, isolated in light.*

## **Scene Eight—Brimstone.**

*SARAH writes.*

SARAH

My father holds onto some beliefs of his old faith. Girls are raised by their mother. They keep the home. Boys are raised by their father. They go out into the world and continue the family name. Christians believe a lot of things that Muslims do. They just pretend they have no idea what the other is talking about. Joshua told me their bible says that wives should submit to their husbands. It's the same rules. Different books. My father doesn't suffer for what he believes. He suffers for what he represents. The world is an old place. We will never be able to tell a completely original story.

*SARAH stops writing. JOSHUA appears in the light beside her.*

SARAH (cont.)

Elizabeth believes that women have power. She told me it's just too bad most of them don't believe it. I know it never ends well when they do. Sometimes they get burned at the stake. Sometimes they get run out of town.

JOSHUA

Usually, it's about sex.

SARAH

Men think so.

JOSHUA

Some of them.

SARAH

That's what happened to Elizabeth. She decided the only way to get any attention besides the hateful kind was to give herself to guys at school. Boys don't care who it is that gives it all up.

JOSHUA

She is trying for Queen of Halloween.

SARAH

She is. *(beat)* Do you know what happened?

JOSHUA

She told me about Roy Mitchell.

SARAH

He has three brothers.

*SARAH closes the book.*

JOSHUA

Mother says the bible is the absolute word of God, but it's a very human book. God did condemn those who pointed out the faults of others. While they ignored their own.

SARAH

He proclaimed. "Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself. There is no commandment greater than these." That does not leave a lot of room for discussion.

JOSHUA

I know she comes from a difficult past. Not like daddy. Just different.

SARAH

Her mother believed the earth was in a constant battle to keep hell from consuming it. Brimstone I think it's called. Sulfur.

JOSHUA

How can you live a life of happiness with that fucking smell filling your lungs?

*SARAH writes in her book for a moment.*

JOSHUA (cont.)

My greatest wish is to live without any past. Just start over and decide for myself who I am and what I want.

*SARAH stops writing. CADE appears sitting in light. He has been swimming.*

SARAH

Remember the way we used to go to the park and seesaw all the time.

JOSHUA

I would get mad at you in the middle of the ride and jump off the seat.

SARAH

It would send me crashing back to the ground.

JOSHUA

That's what it's like with Cade. We are like two opposing countries that somehow end up at the table together.

SARAH

With bombs.

JOSHUA

Mother says the day I was born, they didn't know I was a boy until it happened. She says when daddy realized this, he felt complete. Like his life finally meant something. I think daddy and I might be the same person.

SARAH

Except one of you is still running and the other is waiting for life to hit you square in the face.

### Scene Nine—Great Losses.

*CADE drinks. He stops and lies back in the grass.  
JOSHUA enters from the lake.*

CADE

I have played baseball my entire life. It was my father's idea. I remember when I was eight years old, I ended my strike out streak and finally hit the ball. The sound of the ball hitting the bat shocked me. It cracked. I knew I should run. When I did, I ran the wrong way around the bases. I still remember my father yelling my name and I thought he was urging me on. I ran as fast as I could. When I finally made it all the way around, I started jumping up and down like I was the greatest ball player who ever lived. Then I found out what he was yelling about. My mother told me that I was the fastest kid on the team. I should be proud. My father didn't speak to me for days.

*CADE stands.*

CADE (cont.)

When I was fourteen, it was in the middle of a game. I was up to bat. The pitcher was Roy Mitchell. He was on a team called the Sliders. They were our biggest rival. He hated me because my father had thrown his brother in jail for assaulting his girlfriend. He was a big guy.

JOSHUA

I bet he has a small dick.

*Both BOYS laugh. Joshua dries off.*

CADE

He threw the ball at me hard. It hit me in the head. I hit the ground. Everything went dark. When my eyes opened my mother was standing over me. I had a knot the size of the baseball on the side of my head. Everything was muffled. Like I was tuned into some bad radio. *(beat)* She helped me stand up. I saw my father running toward the pitcher's mound screaming at Roy like he had done it on purpose. Maybe he had. My father was more concerned about the pitch than he was about me.

*JOSHUA lights a cigarette.*



CADE (cont.)

When I told him afterwards that I didn't want to play baseball anymore he got really angry. He said, "great losses are great lessons." I had no idea what lesson he was talking about. All I know is that from that point on, I was afraid of the ball.

JOSHUA

But you're a pitcher now.

CADE

That gives me power.

JOSHUA

What about when you bat?

CADE

I hit the ball at the pitcher. As hard as I can.

JOSHUA

Isn't that against the rules?

CADE

As long as you don't aim for his hands, it's fair game. Great lessons are great losses.

JOSHUA

Are you still afraid of the ball?

CADE

It scares the shit out of me. I get dizzy sometimes.

*CADE sits next to JOSHUA.*

JOSHUA

My father doesn't care about what I do. He's just afraid of the attention.

CADE

You are memorable.

JOSHUA

When I was sixteen years old, my father and my mother got into this terrible fight. We had made a plaster imprint of our hand at school for Christmas. She wanted to hang it on the wall. He didn't want to celebrate Christmas. This was new because he hadn't really had an opinion about it in the past and we always had a tree and everything. Exchanged presents. Not that year. Suddenly, he had changed his mind about his faith.

CADE

What do you mean?

JOSHUA

My mother had converted him to Christianity, and I guess he just decided he didn't believe it anymore. He went back to the Muslim faith.

CADE

He stopped believing in Jesus?

JOSHUA

In chapter 5 verse 6 of the Qur'an, God says, "Surely Allah gives you good news with a word from Him of whose name is the Messiah, Jesus, son of Mary." In Islam they believe in Jesus too. That He was the Messiah. Jesus' name is mentioned in the Qur'an more times than Muhammad.

CADE

How do you know what the Qur'an says?

JOSHUA

I stole my father's copy from a box in his closet. He thinks my mother hid it.

CADE

I think how you are raised is what you are expected to believe.

JOSHUA

Muslims don't believe Jesus is the son of God or that Jesus died on the cross and rose to the heavens. They believe he died a natural death and that he will not return to Earth. *(beat)* When my father decided to renounce his Christian faith, my mother tried to make him feel terrible. The church was how they met.

CADE

I guess I should believe in something.

JOSHUA

Believe in yourself. You are the only person you can trust.

CADE

My father has my entire life planned out for me. College. Baseball. He wants me to go into law enforcement.

JOSHUA

I hope you like donuts.

*CADE laughs. After a moment he sits down next to JOSHUA.*

CADE

So, what happened with your mother and father?

JOSHUA

The Christmas of the Plaster Hand. *(beat)* My father started drinking. The argument continued.

JOSHUA (cont.)

He got louder and louder and started talking about his father and how he would be ashamed that he had ever changed his faith. My mother asked him “what if God is different than you thought He was? What if His true nature is love and peace?” She said, “you can’t live your life the way God has intended if you don’t believe that.” My father told her she knew nothing. He said that “people automatically think Muslims are unholy and savage people without giving them a chance to tell the real story.”

*CADE moves closer to JOSHUA*

JOSHUA (cont.)

The more he drank the more she quoted bible verses. In the end he grabbed a shotgun and fired three holes into the wall. I remember sitting in my room listening to him scream at her. I still hear all three blasts. *(beat)* That’s when I stole the book. I read the entire thing.

CADE

I think when we die our bodies are not aware of it. We just become stiff. We don’t hear any of the things that are said about us or feel any of the sadness. We are lowered into the ground in a big box and covered with dirt. When we are left alone our bodies fall apart and all that is left are our bones. Eventually the bones break into pieces and become part of the ground. Finally, our dust gets blown from the earth into the water and onto plants and animals and people and eventually into the sky. We rise into nothing. There is no life after. Everything stops. We are just dust and we become part of everything without even knowing it.

*JOSHUA puts his arm around CADE.*

JOSHUA

What if part of us is left behind? What if part of us becomes something new?

CADE

I think when we die, we die. There is just blackness.

JOSHUA

I have to believe there is more than just this life. Too many shitty things happen to us for that to be all there is. There has to be a reason for us being born and living and making choices. Good or bad. God has a path for us. *(beat)* I don’t know what happens when we die either. But then I look up into the sky at night and I see all the stars. I realize they are all suns and each one may have its own circle of planets. I think about us not being alone. I realize it’s all just constantly expanding and moving outward. Like black water.

JOSHUA (cont.)

We are just insignificant ants riding on a tiny circle. There has to be a reason your mother lived and died. That we all live and die. If that's not true, then fuck this shit.

*CADE leans his head onto JOSHUA'S shoulder. DAMIEN  
And EVA enter at the dining room table.*

CADE

Will I see my mother again?

JOSHUA

*(after a beat)*

Maybe we become something new. Something equal.

CADE

Or nothing.

JOSHUA

It's important to make sure you are remembered.

CADE

What do you mean?

JOSHUA

In this life. It's important to do everything you can to leave a mark on everyone you come into contact with. Good or bad. Before you move on.

CADE

*(he smiles)*

Well, you are definitely leaving a mark.

JOSHUA

I want to be infamous.

CADE

You mean famous.

JOSHUA

What's the difference?

CADE

One of them means you are afraid of the ball.

*JOSHUA lies down in the grass and leans his head  
On CADE's leg. The lights fade on both of them.*

## Scene Ten—An Act of Gratitude.

*Lights isolate EVA and DAMIEN. THEY are drinking tea. DAMIEN stands apart from her. The other chairs are pushed away from the table.*

DAMIEN

The only thing I remember about my family's boat ride to America was the smell. I was four years old. There were hundreds of people confined in a small space below the main deck. There were other families. There were single men and single women. There were even some children my age and older by themselves who I guess had someone waiting for them when we arrived.

EVA

Four years old. You must have been terrified.

DAMIEN

To me it was a great adventure.

EVA

I don't think I could put a child through that.

DAMIEN

Because you're weak.

*DAMIEN takes EVA'S tea glass from her and takes a long drink. He places the glass back on the table right in front of her.*

DAMIEN (cont.)

My father held us all close as the mass of people swayed and the ship made its journey across the water. I remember the smell of urine and sweat and stale food. It was inescapable. There was no fresh air. It seemed like it took months to make the passage. There was one bed for all three of us. My father slept on the floor. I heard him say over and over to my mother that this was all worth it. That America was a place for a new beginning. We had to leave our home behind.

EVA

If not, you would probably be dead.

DAMIEN

Yes. All of us.

*DAMIEN begins moving each seat against the table.*

DAMIEN (cont.)

When we arrived in America we were taken by my uncle to Jacksonville, on the northern coast of Florida.

DAMIEN (cont.)

He told us a year earlier that the Rosewood massacre had destroyed a black town and killed about 150 people. That was two hours away. Every night I looked east across my uncle's fields and imagined the glow of flames in the distance. This was my introduction to America.

EVA

Our history is just as violent as yours.

DAMIEN

In this country we were immediately surrounded by people who mistrusted us. My mother was shoved to the ground while leaving a grocer's. I was spit on. I could not understand what we had done to make people so angry. My father would not discuss it with me. He just said some people dislike themselves so much they take it out on others. At the time it made no sense. It does now.

EVA

There is ignorance everywhere.

DAMIEN

When we finally settled, we lived across the street from the Maddox family. They were poor. Les was a year younger than I was. In high school he was one of the best athletes. We hardly ever spoke. His father did not want us around each other. I remember one day walking through the field to our house and I passed Les. I started walking faster because I knew I wasn't supposed to talk to him. As we met, he smiled at me and said hello. He said he had always wanted to meet me. Then he just looked at me for a moment and walked away. It meant a lot to me.

*DAMIEN is finished moving the chairs. He stares at the table for a moment.*

EVA

He is a good man.

DAMIEN

I have seen so much hate, Eva. When you are small you trust everyone. You don't know the difference. Your life is slow and filled with daily discoveries about people and who they are and what they mean to you. As you grow older you begin to see what everything actually means. The hate behind the smile. The pity behind the handshake.

EVA

Mistrust is all that Joshua knows. As a child he when he was mistreated, he pushed back.

DAMIEN

He is lost.

EVA

We are what we are taught.

DAMIEN

Now he spits in the face of everything I have gone through to start our life here. When we met and started out on our own, somehow it didn't surprise me that we ended up across the street from Les and Catherine Maddox. It seemed an odd coincidence but so natural. Joshua and Cade became friends and played together for hours. Catherine was so kind and so gracious.

EVA

She invited us over for Thanksgiving dinner. Asked if you were allowed the holiday.

DAMIEN

She knew somehow that I had renounced my Christian faith.

EVA

There are no secrets in this town.

DAMIEN

I told her Muslims are allowed to celebrate Thanksgiving because it is an act of gratitude towards God. At least that's what I believe.

EVA

The Lord shows us the true path. I've always told you that.

DAMIEN

So, I can only be a proper father if I am a Christian?

*There is a pause. JOSHUA and CADE are revealed in light. They have been swimming again. THEY drink. JOSHUA smokes*

EVA

A man should live so that everybody knows he's a Christian. At least his family ought to know.

DAMIEN

What difference does it make? Muslims believe that family is the foundation of our lives. We just want what's best for our children.

EVA

Joshua has been baptized into the Church. Or did you forget.? *(beat)* Did you know Cade says he is an atheist? Since his mother passed.

DAMIEN

What does that have to do with anything? Cade and Joshua drifted apart in high school.

EVA

Now they spend almost every day together. Outside of school. You don't even know this. He tells me they talk about a connection between them. It goes past faith. But Cade still doesn't want anybody to know they are friends.

DAMIEN

He is afraid of what will happen to Joshua if the town finds out.

*HE lights a cigarette.*

DAMIEN (cont.)

He has a reason to be afraid.

## Scene Eleven—Spiders

*JOSHUA shoves CADE's leg with his foot.*

JOSHUA

I guess I am an alcoholic. That's what you call it when you drink every day. If my mother knew this, she would bring down a hail of stones on my head.

CADE

*(laughs)*

She would if she could.

JOSHUA

I talked to Mr. Carter about it one time when I was in jail. He's what you call a lifetime alcoholic. Remember when I got caught stealing clothes from Miller's five and dime?

CADE

Yeah. And why the hell would you steal from that place? That's a grandmother store.

JOSHUA

Just to see if I could.

CADE

Fair enough

JOSHUA

Anyway. I briefly shared a cell with Mr. Carter. He knows all about Alcoholics Anonymous. He said we have to admit to God and to another human being the exact nature of our wrongs. The only other person I would admit anything to is you.

CADE

And I have as many things to hide as you do. Maybe I need to be an alcoholic.



JOSHUA

He also said to make direct amends to people for what we have done wrong. I guess that's good advice. Which is worse, being forced to tell your truth or telling it in your own time?

CADE

Both ways put you in a corner.

JOSHUA

There's just a greater price to pay if you get caught.

CADE

I don't think Mr. Carter gave very good advice.

JOSHUA

Your mother did.

*JOSHUA puts his cigarette out.*

JOSHUA (cont.)

When people die, we say "She's in a better place" or "God has a plan for her." Maybe she is in a better place but we're not.

CADE

Why is it that some people think they know exactly what God's plan is? Like there *is* a plan.

JOSHUA

I have faith. I have read the bible and the Qur'an, but I can't tell you for certain at any given time what any God's true intent would be. Faith is just trust.

CADE

Maybe a better place is just the end of pain.

JOSHUA

I'm surrounded by all these people that are trying to tell me what to think and how to behave.

CADE

They want control.

JOSHUA

Well, I hate Roy Mitchell. That's something I can control. I'm going to fuck him up.

CADE

Sarah told me what he did to your sister.

JOSHUA  
You talked to Sarah?

CADE  
Who doesn't?

JOSHUA  
Alien.

CADE  
Is Elizabeth alright?

JOSHUA  
No.

*THEY sit for a moment.*

CADE  
Remember when were growing up your house had a that shed behind it?

JOSHUA  
It had two rooms full of the junk we couldn't use in our house. Christmas decorations. Furniture. Piles of toys.

CADE  
We decided to turn it into a clubhouse.

JOSHUA  
The back room was stacked so high with trash that there were hundreds of spiders everywhere. They would run across the stack of old books and magazines and clothes. My mother never threw anything away.

CADE  
Yeah. We rearranged the old furniture and dusted it off.

JOSHUA  
We piled everything into that back room so we could have the front room to ourselves. It took forever to keep the spiders from crawling out of the cushions of the furniture and up the walls to the ceiling.

CADE  
That was an amazing room.

JOSHUA  
We were both equal. Well, the spiders and us.

*CADE stands, leaving JOSHUA isolated in light.*

## Scene Twelve—A Normal Life.

*DAMIEN, EVA, ELIZABETH, SARAH, CADE and LES appear in light behind JOSHUA. He sits, quietly, as they speak.*

CADE

A week ago, I finally did the Preacher Seat dive. I felt kind of guilty since I don't believe in the God thing. Last night I saw my father sitting at the kitchen table drinking out of the glass my mother always used. It was like in that moment he felt nothing. It was the funeral service all over again. I went to my room. A little later he opened my door and just stood there. It was weird. He just looked at me. Watching something that wasn't really there.

EVA

Damien has never raised his hand to me, but he makes me feel insignificant in very clever ways. When I met him and fell in love with him, I had no idea that was inside him. Ephesians, Chapter five verse twenty-two says "Wives, submit to your husbands, as to the Lord." So, I submit. In our marriage. In the raising of our children. In the way our lives are unfolding. What happens when we are no longer capable of affection? Are we withered up like a flower on the vine that has no water? I think most people just close their mouths and accept what they're given.

LES

When I ran for sheriff all I wanted was a better life for my family. I wanted a better life than I had as a child. I wasn't aware most of the time that we had nothing, but occasionally I caught glimpses of the sacrifices we all were making. It wasn't until Cade was born that I realized what my father must have gone through. All a parent wants is what is right and good for their child. Catherine was the best thing that ever happened to me. And to Cade. People say they don't deserve the things that are given to them in life, and I guess that's probably true. I just don't know what would have happened if I didn't have that grace that came my way.

DAMIEN

When I first saw Eva, I thought she was the most beautiful thing I had ever seen. I felt free.

ELIZABETH

Prostitutes are referred to as "harlots" in the bible. A woman who sells her body for sexual use. There are three female prostitutes in the bible, and each served God in a specific way. Rahab, Mary Magdeline, and Gomer. Mary was best friend to Jesus. Maybe I still have a chance.

SARAH

I write stories in my book. I see everything around me. Someday I am going to write a novel. I am going to include every single person in this town. I'll bet they buy it.

ELIZABETH

I had to run away. I had no choice.

DAMIEN

You have a responsibility to live up to what other people expect you to be. We're all meant to shine. *(beat)* My son is dangerous.

LES

I have arrested Joshua for shoplifting, assault, burglary, and theft. Every time it was the easiest arrest I have ever made. It's like he wanted it to happen. He certainly has made a lot of enemies in this town.

EVA

When Joshua was a boy, he always got a gift from Santa for Christmas. He truly believed in him. There was always a gift under the tree on Christmas morning. One year his father decided he was too old to believe in Santa and we did not get him a gift to leave under the tree. Damien did not talk to him about it, and he would not let me discuss it with him. On Christmas morning Joshua came running down the stairs and there was no gift. We never spoke about it. I believe it was at that moment his life changed.

CADE

Joshua believes that from the moment we are conceived our life is already planned out for us. Every single day. Every single accomplishment and defeat. We make choices that keep us on that path. But we stray. I say if this is the case, and God is handing out lives, does He decide who flourishes and who gets the shitty end of the deal?

JOSHUA

I just want to be forgiven. I just want a normal life.

*The lights fade to black.*

**INTERMISSION**

## ACT TWO

### Prologue—The Rocks

*Lights reveal JOSHUA. He is standing, in cut-offs, wet from swimming. There is quite a pause as he stands looking at the water. His arm is bruised near the shoulder.*

JOSHUA

There are rocks in the water. They are all hidden beneath the surface in this crazy pattern. I could map it without looking. One tiny wrong move and *bam*, you open up like a gutted fish. Mama says I'm a fool for taking the risk. I tell her it's because I have faith enough to know where the danger is. I think if I've learned anything about the world it's to hang on to what you believe. Fight for your place. Let people fight with you. Your hardest times could be the greatest moments of your life. So dive right in. If the rocks don't kill you, something else will. I guess we all take the bait in our own way.

*CADE is revealed in light. He's sitting in the grass, alone. He throws rocks into the lake.*

Sometimes I wish my father had stayed behind in Syria. I do think about how my life could have been so different. Maybe my family could have survived the conflict. Maybe I could have been a hero instead of disappointment. Our lives are a series of important events. One is a reaction to the other. Wrong choices set off these ripples that you can't stop. *(beat)* I love my family. I love my father. He has this ballsy heart. It's stupid. He's trusting. That's rare. *(beat)* When he came to this country he was lost. My mother saved him. Her faith held him together.

*JOSHUA lights a cigarette.*

One time, when we had first moved into our house, I saw my mother and father sitting with each other on the front porch. They were looking at the sky. He was slumped in his chair. She had her head on his shoulder. Her hand in his. When I saw this, I thought: "We are home. We are finally home."

*CADE lies back into the grass.*

JOSHUA

What the fuck happened?

## Scene 1—A Rare Breed.

*Joshua moves to sit next to Cade. They are at the lake.  
JOSHUA is drunk. CADE is not. They have been there all  
afternoon. A storm is building.*

CADE

Do you remember the Vallone sisters?

JOSHUA

Of course I do. They lived across the alley from my house.

CADE

I think they are the only Catholic people I have ever known.

JOSHUA

The Catholic is a rare breed in these parts.

CADE

I think you had a thing for the older sister.

JOSHUA

I wouldn't call it a thing.

CADE

You wanted in her pants.

JOSHUA

Her parents wouldn't let her wear pants.

CADE

We would roller skate with them.

JOSHUA

Yeah. You can't skate.

CADE

Neither can you. *(beat)* Remember when you got mad at them?

JOSHUA

They said some nasty things about my father.

CADE

You wrote "the Vallone sisters suck" with drywall chalk on the wall of your garage.

JOSHUA

When mother found it, she was furious. She had invited Mrs. Vallone to go with her to the store. When they went to get in the car, there it was.

*JOSHUA lights a cigarette.*

JOSHUA (cont.)

The middle sister did suck.

CADE

Was she any good at it?

JOSHUA

She felt guilty.

*THEY sit for a moment*

CADE

My father says you got into another fight in town yesterday.

JOSHUA

Yeah. With Mr. Mitchell.

CADE

The guy whose son hit me in the head with a baseball.

JOSHUA

I am surprised you can remember that.

CADE

Asshole.

JOSHUA

Roy assaulted Elizabeth at the drive-in. She tried to tell everyone at school what he did.

CADE

Do your parents know?

JOSHUA

She didn't tell them. She told me. *(beat)* When I saw Mr. Mitchell, I told him his son was a predator. He said my sister was a slut. So, I hit him.

CADE

I do wish I had seen that.

JOSHUA

I can do it again if you want.

*There is a moment.*

CADE

Why is it when guys have lots of sex people just think it's natural?

JOSHUA

Because guys think with their dicks. And we seem to be in control. How fucked up is that? *(beat)* It doesn't matter. She told me she's leaving town anyway. The night of the Queen of Halloween.

CADE

Where is she going?

JOSHUA

Chicago.

*CADE moves to sit next to JOSHUA who is drinking another beer.*

CADE

Are we still going to the pageant together?

JOSHUA

Fuck this town.

CADE

My father will kill me.

JOSHUA

You don't have to go.

CADE

I want to.

JOSHUA

Good.

*THEY drink. JOSHUA smokes.*

CADE

Do you remember that Polaroid camera my mother got for Christmas?

JOSHUA

Yes. The one that spits out the pictures.



CADE

I stole it from the drawer in the living room. We took those pictures in the clubhouse. I found some of them the other day.

JOSHUA

The one with you and your boner?

CADE

No. The one of us sitting on that old sofa with our Halloween costumes on.

JOSHUA

Batman and Robin.

CADE

Elizabeth took the picture.

JOSHUA

That was before girls were banned. Can you believe our parents let us sleep out there by ourselves? It's full of junk again.

CADE

That's too bad.

JOSHUA

*(quite drunk)*

You just want to take more naked pictures.

CADE

No. I don't. And that was *your* idea.

JOSHUA

It was.

CADE

Everything is always your idea. Even who got to be Batman and who got to be Robin.

JOSHUA

Robin with a boner.

CADE

*(suddenly)*

Shut up, Joshua.

JOSHUA

*(laughing)*

If you're upset about the pictures, you can get take some of me.

CADE

What does that even mean? We were kids. We're not anymore.

JOSHUA

Let's go to the pageant. The two of us. I'll even hold your hand.

CADE

*(shaking his head)*

Jesus. Never mind.

*JOSHUA puts his hand on CADE'S head. There is a moment. CADE seems defeated. It begins to rain.*

JOSHUA

And to be clear, I'm not the one hiding.

CADE

What does that mean?

JOSHUA

I think you are ashamed of me.

CADE

There's this image that people have of me. My father. Everybody. I'm supposed to be this person that people look up to. Son of a sheriff. Jock. *(beat)* I've spent my whole life pretending to be someone who is nothing like me.

JOSHUA

What you do should be your choice.

*THEY sit for a moment. JOSHUA takes CADE'S hand.*

JOSHUA (cont.)

If you spend your whole life caring what everybody thinks of you, you forget who you really are.

*Another pause. They sit unmoving.*

JOSHUA (cont.)

I had sex with Marcie.

CADE

I know.

*The lights fade on them. ELIZABETH is revealed pacing back and forth. EVA stands near her. ELIZABETH wears a cheap gown.*

## Scene 2—Apology.

ELIZABETH

Why did they do that? This is so embarrassing.

EVA

You need to calm down.

ELIZABETH

It's bad enough that they were here together. Why did they get up and walk out? In the middle of my talent. There's no way I can win now.

EVA

You did carry on. I am proud of you.

EIZABETH

I hate Joshua.

EVA

You don't hate him, Elizabeth. He just made a bad choice. They thought they were making a point.

ELIZABETH

About what?

EVA

About their friendship. About making amends. I don't know. A lot of things.

ELIZABETH

I should have never done any of this.

EVA

When I met your father and married him, this town turned against me. It's not fair, but that's the way it is. And you children had no control over what happened or the choices we made. I thought this pageant was a way to show that you are trying to fit in. That you want to fit in.

ELIZABETH

We just don't belong here.

EVA

The truth is that you *do* belong here, Elizabeth. You might have to compromise. You might have to work harder. But it's true. I want you to prove that you are no different than any of these girls.

ELIZABETH

But I am.

*CADE suddenly appears. EVA smiles at him.*

CADE

Hi, Elizabeth.

ELIZABETH

Hi.

EVA

Hello, Cade.

CADE

Hello, Mrs. Faizan.

*There is an awkward moment.*

EVA

We thought you left.

CADE

I did. We did.

ELIZABETH

You came back?

CADE

Not to the pageant. Just to apologize. I can't speak for Joshua, but we weren't supposed to walk out and make a scene. I know it wasn't his intention to upset you.

ELIZABETH

*(sarcastically)*

Right. That would never be Joshua's intention.

CADE

We wanted to support you.

*The room is silent.*

EVA

*(changing the subject)*

How is your father, Cade?

CADE

He's doing OK. It's been difficult for him.

ELIZABETH

*(to CADE)*

Joshua said you told your father about my beer.

CADE

That was Marcie.

*ELIZABETH shakes her head and laughs.*

CADE (cont.)

He decided it would be easier if you thought it was me.

EVA

*(to Elizabeth)*

You're drinking?

ELIZABETH

Everybody drinks. What else is there to do?

*Another awkward silence.*

EVA

Cade, I am glad that you and Joshua are still friends.

CADE

We just wanted people to know. That's all.

ELIZABETH

Perfect timing.

EVA

Elizabeth, some things are not that easy.

ELIZABETH

*(to EVA)*

Why are you taking his side?

EVA

I'm not. I just understand their point. Even if it was misdirected.

ELIZABETH

My night is ruined.

CADE

*(softly, to ELIZABETH)*

Did you really think that you have a chance? *(beat)* Everybody at school is talking about you. And Roy. And all that you said happened.

ELIZABETH

It did happen.

CADE

Nobody believes you.

EVA

What are you talking about?

ELIZABETH

Roy Mitchell attacked me.

EVA

What does that mean?

ELIZABETH

We had sex, but I didn't want it.

*There is a pause. CADE looks at the floor. EVA's eyes well up with tears. LES is revealed sitting at the desk.*

EVA

“For I will gather all the nations against Jerusalem to battle, and the city will be captured, the houses plundered, the women ravished, and half of the city exiled.”

CADE

*(to Elizabeth)*

I know you think Joshua doesn't care about your feelings, but that's just not true. He defends you. He gets in trouble defending you. Something terrible happened to you. I am the son of the sheriff. If I support you and your family it might make a difference. Joshua walked out because he couldn't stand the comments he was hearing. About you. About his family. And I followed. I'm sorry it hurt you.

ELIZABETH

You're just like them.

*EVA touches CADE'S arm.*

EVA

Cade, an apology helps, but changing your life is even better.

CADE

I'm trying.

*ELIZABETH looks at CADE.*

ELIZABETH

They're waiting on me.

*ELIZABETH walks out of the light. CADE and EVA stand in silence.*

### **SCENE 3—Choices.**

*LES sits at the desk. DAMIEN enters.*

DAMIEN

I need to talk to you.

LES

OK. Have a seat.

DAMIEN

No thank you. I won't be long.

LES

How is Eva?

DAMIEN

That's not what I came here to talk about.

LES

What can I help you with?

DAMIEN

It's about Joshua. And Elizabeth.

LES

I see.

DAMIEN

Why are you harassing my son?

LES

I am not harassing anybody. Certainly not your son.

DAMIEN

From what I see you are looking for reasons to single him out.

LES

Look, we both just have to agree that he continues to break the law.

DAMIEN

Lots of people in this town break the law. He's a kid. He does stupid things. If he were a white boy, we wouldn't be having this conversation.

LES

I acknowledge that things are sometimes unfair.

DAMIEN

It's your job to make sure they are.

LES

That's what a judge is for. What I do is black and white.

DAMIEN

Joshua hit Mr. Mitchell because of the things he said about Elizabeth.

LES

I am aware of that.

DAMIEN

Do you know his son attacked my daughter? At a public place. Surrounded by people. And yet nobody has come forth to defend her.

LES

She needs to file a police report.

DAMIEN

And what good would that do? It's her word against his and everybody knows who people will believe. It's already all over town. They are saying that she asked for this. That the boy who did it was "just acting like everyone else." That his life could be ruined by her.

LES

Mr. Faizan, she has to come forward for me to help her.

DAMIEN

Joshua attacked Mr. Mitchell because he was defending his sister.

LES

That's not the way to go about it.



DAMIEN

He is the only boy in my family. I know you can understand this. I had such expectations for him. I thought he could be an example. Born in America. The son of people who had gone through such hardship. Such a violent past. Where is this part of America that opens its arms to everyone in need? It's not here. *(beat)* I cannot control my son. He speaks his mind. He is vain. He is difficult. Just like this country.

*There is a long pause. DAMIEN considers his words carefully.*

DAMIEN (cont.)

Since last summer Joshua and Cade have spent almost every day together.

*Les sits.*

LES

I'm going to choose my words very carefully because I don't want to be misunderstood here. Cade is all I have. We have planned out his life. Together. We have made choices. His friendship with your son is distracting him from that. I can see it. *(beat)* I need Joshua to stay away from my son.

DAMIEN

*(defeated)*

I see.

LES

Let me make sure you do. Your son is in trouble. We both know that. I will not let Cade go down that path.

DAMIEN

*(quietly)*

What path is that?

LES

They are too close.

DAMIEN

Then tell my son yourself. You explain it to him. I can't.

*There is a significant pause. DAMIEN finally speaks.*

DAMIEN (cont.)

You and I grew up across the street from each other. I would see you, but we rarely spoke. I always assumed was your father would not allow it.

LES

He wouldn't.

DAMIEN

And now here we are another generation later and nothing has changed.

*EVA is revealed in light. She is sitting.*

LES

I don't care where your son comes from or how he got where he is today. I don't care about the color of his skin. Or his religion. Or what it teaches him. I am here to help you, but you have to understand what my job is and what I have to do because of it. Control your son. God knows what will happen if you don't.

DAMIEN

This is not about control. It's about wanting to own something. Talk to your son. Ask him what path *he* wants. You might be surprised by the answer.

LES

When you lose things, you hold on tighter to what you have.

DAMIEN

In that respect, we are the same.

*DAMIEN walks out. The lights fade out and up on EVA.*

## **SCENE 4—Dunked**

*EVA is revealed in light, sitting.*

EVA

The day Joshua was baptized into the church it was raining. We got soaked in the dash from the parking lot to the sanctuary. Joshua made a joke that he had already been dunked. He asked if that counted with God. I've never known a boy as precocious as he is. He doesn't just question the world. He demands answers. My mother submerged me in water as a baby. To give me to God. Joshua was much older when he accepted the Lord, so he already had questions.

*EVA stands. She holds a bible.*

EVA (cont.)

We all have difficult reasons for what we do. Sometimes our hearts just can't reconcile our minds. Joshua was born questioning everything, so faith would obviously be something difficult for him. He doesn't understand the sin of mocking God. He told me to let those who believe, believe. And to let those who doubt, doubt. But I know we can change.

*EVA moves downstage toward us and holds up the bible.*

EVA (cont.)

“Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth that shall also he reap.”

*EVA lowers the bible. There is a pause.*

*JOSHUA and CADE are revealed lying in the sun.*

*EVA moves to sit back down.*

EVA (cont.)

Nothing about my life even resembles what I thought it would be. I guess that’s true for a lot of us. Doubt creeps in. Defenses are built up. We misunderstand each other. The most comforting thing is forgiveness. If we are capable of that. I’m not sure I am. It could all end in redemption or disaster.

*The lights fade on EVA as she opens her bible.*

## **SCENE 5—Bad Cop**

*Joshua smokes.*

JOSHUA

She wasn’t very good.

CADE

Who?

JOSHUA

Marcie. What did you think?

CADE

I just got a hand job.

JOSHUA

It’s hard to mess that up.

CADE

Your sister really did disappear.

JOSHUA

She said she would. And she took the crown with her.

CADE

We should run away. Just go.

JOSHUA

You have your life here. Your plans.

CADE

Most of me is already gone.

JOSHUA

Life hands us some pretty shitty things.

CADE

It does.

JOSHUA

If that's what you want to do, then do it. Your mother is gone, Cade. You're not.

CADE

Come with me.

*LES suddenly appears. All three are quiet. We have no idea how long he has been listening.*

CADE (cont.)

What are you doing here?

*JOSHUA puts his cigarette out.*

LES

We need to talk.

*JOSHUA stands up.*

JOSHUA

I'll go.

LES

All of us.

*Both BOYS are silent.*

LES (cont.)

I have given you the benefit of the doubt, Joshua. I know your family. I know your circumstances. But I also know you continue to break the law. *(beat)* I have no idea what your relationship is with my son, but I am going to have to ask you to back away from him.

JOSHUA

Back away. That's an interesting way to put it.

CADE

What are you doing, dad? It's none of your business.

LES

*(to JOSHUA)*

What is it that you think you know about my son that I don't?

JOSHUA

I know he desperately misses his mother. And he can't talk to you about it.

*CADE stands between the two of them.*

CADE

Please don't, Joshua.

JOSHUA

Ask him. Listen to him.

LES

Do not disrespect me.

JOSHUA

Or you'll what? You'll take me back to jail?

CADE

We are friends, dad. We talk...

LES

*(interrupting)*

Shut up, Cade.

JOSHUA

Nice conversation, Mr. Maddox.

LES

Joshua, I have given you so much grace. More than you even know. But I have seen the influence you have over my son, and I can't allow it.

JOSHUA

The only person that has changed, Mr. Maddox, is you.

CADE

Joshua.

JOSHUA

Cade tells me all these things you want for him. That *you* want. Maybe he wants a different life. Maybe he wants to get away from you.

LES

*(to JOSHUA)*

You need to stop talking.

JOSHUA

I thought were having a conversation.

LES

You know *nothing* about my son.

JOSHUA

You have to listen to someone to know them.

CADE

*(suddenly)*

I know I love both of you and this needs to stop.

JOSHUA

You hear that, Mr. Maddox? Love. I bet you never considered that.

*LES lunges at JOSHUA. They scuffle briefly. LES shoves JOSHUA to the ground. CADE grabs his father from behind and subdues him. JOSHUA remains on the ground.*

JOSHUA

Is that bad cop? I guess good cop didn't work.

*LES releases himself violently from CADE'S grasp. HE stands over JOSHUA. CADE finally speaks.*

CADE

*(to LES)*

When I was a child, I watched everything you did. I followed you everywhere. I remember wishing I could be you. I saw how you looked at my mother. You taught me love and you didn't even know it. But now there is this space between us that we can't fill. Nothing you want for me is going to do that. But I found someone who can. Don't take that away from me.

*JOSHUA stands up and looks LES right in the eye. LES touches CADE'S shoulder. CADE drops his head.*

*EVA and DAMIEN are revealed at the dining room table. There is a moment where everyone is silent. Finally, JOSHUA speaks.*

JOSHUA

People just need to feel safe. They need to know that whatever life throws at them that they can stand up against it. I don't know what you think I have done to get between you and your son. But you are wrong, Mr. Maddox. Pushing people away is not the answer. And no matter what you think of me, that's what you are doing. This is not a contest. It's survival.

*LES stares at JOSHUA. We are not sure what is about to happen. Finally, LES removes his hand from his son and speaks quietly in his ear.*

LES

Come home.

*LES walks away. CADE looks at JOSHUA and then walks away.*

## **Scene 6—Rebuked**

*The lights fade up fully on EVA and DAMIEN at the kitchen table.*

DAMIEN

So, what did the note say?

EVA

Two words. "I'm leaving."

DAMIEN

She ran.

EVA

She has no money. She can't have gone far.

DAMIEN

Far enough.

EVA

Do you have any idea what this means? To lose a child like this. To be rebuked.

DAMIEN

I know what it's like to lose a father.

EVA

"It is better to listen to the rebuke of a wise man than for one to listen to the song of fools."

DAMIEN

God doesn't have influence over our children just because you want Him to.

EVA

Then we have different Gods.

DAMIEN

Which one will protect her? Which one will understand her? That's the God I want.

*EVA stands for a minute in silence.*

EVA

She was attacked, Damien. By a boy in the town.

DAMIEN

I know. Joshua told me. She was raped.

*EVA speaks, suddenly.*

EVA

There is no light but Jesus. There is no way to salvation except through him.

DAMIEN

I don't think either one of them was thinking about salvation.

*Suddenly, JOSHUA enters.*

DAMIEN

*(To JOSHUA)*  
Elizabeth is gone.

JOSHUA

That will make Marcie happy. She got runner up.

EVA

*(to JOSHUA)*  
What do you know about this?

JOSHUA

She said she was going to Chicago.



EVA

Lord, protect her.

JOSHUA

*(To EVA)*

You should pay more attention to your purse.

EVA

What did that boy do to her?

JOSHUA

She has a reputation.

DAMIEN

Joshua. Don't.

*JOSHUA looks at his MOTHER.*

EVA

*(beginning to break down)*

All I want for my children is their happiness. How can I provide that when they won't confide in me?

DAMIEN

We have failed them, Eva.

EVA

*(to DAMIEN)*

Maybe *you* have. All our children have learned from you is regret. You think because this life has been so hard for you that it must be passed on for generations. Elizabeth is injured, Joshua is jaded, and Sarah has no compassion. These are *your* faults. God will judge *you* for them.

*DAMIEN stands.*

EVA (cont.)

“For if we go on sinning deliberately after receiving the knowledge of the truth, there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins.”

JOSHUA

What *truth*? All you have tried to teach us are the beliefs found in a book written by men. Like me. Men with faults who try to scare us into believing that no matter what we do, no matter how hard we try, that if we don't accept their version of the truth then we perish. Both of your books are guilty of this.

EVA

Do not speak this blasphemy in my house.

JOSHUA

*(to EVA)*  
I do believe in God.

JOSHUA (cont.)

*(to DAMIEN)*  
I do believe you were wronged.

*DAMIEN sits. EVA stands, staring at JOSHUA.*

JOSHUA (cont.)

But I also believe that the choices we make follow us for the rest of our lives. The choices *we* make. *(beat)* Elizabeth was looking for a place to belong. Nothing about her life here would ever make her truly happy.

*There is a long pause. EVA finally speaks. Something about her has shifted. She sounds grim.*

EVA

What do you mean she has a reputation?

JOSHUA

*(after thinking)*  
Boys only like her for one thing.

DAMIEN

We don't have to speak of this.

EVA

What did she do?

JOSHUA

When you lose respect for someone it's easier to hurt them.

EVA

*(to JOSHUA)*  
I have spent all my life believing that God has a plan for us. That as long as we follow His will and repent of our sins that He will save us. This is what I taught you.

JOSHUA

Save us from all sin or save us from each other? No God could ever justify what Roy did to Elizabeth. Even if he thought she wanted it.

*EVA covers her face with her hands.*

DAMIEN

Stop this.

JOSHUA

You only get one life, and you get what's thrown at you. You can live in faith, or you can live in chaos. But we choose. Elizabeth made choices based on what she thought she wanted. It changed her. Who's to say that's not what was intended.

DAMIEN

If you can't teach your children right from wrong, you have failed. Not God, not religion, but all of us. I am ashamed of you both. My children should be grateful for the lives that have been given to them. You do not want for food, or shelter, or even love.

JOSHUA

I am grateful for what I have.

*DAMIEN lowers his head.*

DAMIEN

You think we do not love you?

*EVA speaks, but her voice has changed.*

EVA

In the morning we will call the sheriff and report her missing. We will also ask him to charge Roy Christopher with assault. We will find her. And we will bring her home.

*A pause. She speaks directly to JOSHUA.*

EVA (cont.)

You will not speak of this again. You will obey me and your father and repent of the many sins you have committed that have brought dishonor to this family. You will sever your relationship with Cade Maddox as your father has asked you to do. You will do all this or face the wrath of God.

*SARAH is revealed in light. She is writing in her book.  
EVA finally speaks to DAMIEN.*

EVA (cont.)

When we met, I thought instantly that I wanted to spend the rest of my life with you. You were full of wonder at the thought of starting your life over. Seeing you give in to the same hate that drove you here has been the most difficult thing I have ever had to witness. The past will never be completely gone. How we choose to live with it says more about us than anything else. I choose God. I choose salvation at the hands of Jesus. This is all I know.

*There is a pause. JOSHUA finally speaks.*

JOSHUA

Is that enough?

*The lights fade on all of them.*

## Scene 7—Air

*SARAH stops writing.*

SARAH

Sometimes broken pieces fit together perfectly. There are two kinds of people in the world. There are those who uncover their hearts and tell us everything they feel. And there are those who stand there with their mouth open, and nothing comes out but air.

*SHE writes again. LES is revealed in a chair.*

SARAH (cont.)

I thought I wanted to be the Queen of Halloween, but I've changed my mind. There are too many eyes on you. Elizabeth wanted everything, but in the end, got nothing. Just like mother. One used sex. One used religion. I like for everything to be in the open. That will never happen here. On the surface it looks like heaven. Something's going to happen. I can feel it.

*The lights fade on her.*

## Scene 8—Baseball

*We see LES fully. After a moment Cade enters and crosses to him room. He has come from the creek. As LES speaks, CADE stops walking. The conversation is very quiet.*

LES

I'm sorry if what I said hurt you.

CADE

It didn't.

LES

If we don't talk, there's no way we can work this out.

CADE

There's nothing to work out. I'll do what you want and that's the end of it.

LES

I'm not going to apologize for trying to protect you.

CADE

Why couldn't you just leave us alone? *(beat)* Have you ever wanted something so bad that it's all you think about? You spend the best parts of your day trying to figure out why you think your life depends on it. So you step out of this damned shadow you have been hiding in. Like you found some precious light and you can see everything clearly.

LES

You're going to have to explain.

CADE

I hate who I am.

LES

What are you trying to tell me?

*CADE stares at his father.*

CADE

Joshua saved my life.

LES

There is nothing about your life that needs saving. Is this about the church?

CADE

No, dad. I don't believe in God. And that's not what I am talking about.

LES

None of this makes sense.

*There is a pause.*

CADE

Please don't make me say it.

LES

Tell me.

*CADE looks away.*

CADE

I tried to hurt myself.

*There is a long pause. LES cannot figure out what to say. HE finally speaks.*

LES

I will not give up my son.

*CADE turns to LES. Finally angry.*

CADE

Is that what you think this is about? *(beat)*. I remember the first time I saw you and mom really fight. Do you remember that? It was about me. I wanted to quit baseball and you yelled at me. “You can’t be afraid. Don’t be a pussy.” That’s what you said. I had just been hit by a baseball going 70 miles an hour. I couldn’t breathe. I could barely see. What the fuck did you think I wanted at that point? I didn’t step in front of that ball. It was thrown *at* me. I was *afraid*.

LES

I know what happened.

CADE

No. You don’t. But I know what you expected. Get back up and face another pitch. Another ball screaming right at me. That’s my *life*, dad. All I feel like doing is running.

LES

That’s nothing to be ashamed of.

CADE

I’m ashamed of who I am.

*CADE sits on the floor. Very quiet.*

LES

What did you do?

CADE

I took mom’s pain pills that were still in the bathroom. With all her other stuff that you refuse to get rid of. Joshua found me. He made me throw up. He stayed with me. He held me.

LES

I don’t understand why you would do this to yourself.

CADE

I can’t live up to your expectations. And now that mom is gone, I have no one here talk to. Except Joshua.

LES

Has he put these ideas into your head?

CADE

I love him.

*A pause. LES speaks quietly.*

LES

What has he done to you?

CADE

He's done nothing. You are the one that shut me out. When mom went away, so did you.

*ELIZABETH is seen in light apart from them. LES speaks grimly.*

LES

You will not do this. You are still my son. I forbid it.

CADE

Throw the ball, dad. Throw it as hard as you can. See what happens.

*The lights fade on them both*

## Scene 9—Fear

*Lights fully reveal ELIZABETH. She is dressed nicely. She looks different, more mature.*

ELIZABETH

The night I was crowned Queen of Halloween I saw Marcie crying in the corner. I tried to talk to her, but she pushed me away and walked out of the room. It was all just stares and whispering. I had accused one of the most popular boys at school of forcing himself on me. Did I ask for it? Maybe.

*SHE moves downstage toward us.*

ELIZABETH (cont.)

People think that once a woman agrees to sex that if she changes her mind, she has no voice. Like it's some binding contract impossible to get out of. The one thing I do know is that my body is my body, and I can change my mind about how I use it. Roy Mitchell didn't see a person. He saw a thing. Isn't it amazing how self-destructive we can be just because we want to be accepted?

*JOSHUA is revealed in light. He has been swimming. HE smokes.*

ELIZABETH (cont.)

Small town people don't see racism because they only know a tiny corner of life. There is fear of the unknown. It's all passed down from generation to generation.

ELIZABETH (cont.)

We should celebrate our differences, not be afraid of them. Go all in. My mother's bible says, "Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you." Around here those words are true only if they're convenient.

*CADE stands upstage. Looking at JOSHUA. He is very still.*

ELIZABETH (cont.)

We are such a product of how we were raised. Of how we were taught. My father was very distant and haunted by a past that I didn't understand. My mother was so wrapped up in Jesus that she only saw our mistakes. Nothing else. *(beat)* We sin. We do things we know we shouldn't. Parents should just want their children to be happy. To grow up and have lives that they cherish.

*CADE walks toward JOSHUA.*

ELIZABETH (cont.)

This is why Joshua is so rebellious. This is why I ran away. No one really taught us acceptance. And without that, there's only regret.

## Scene 10—Hands

CADE

Where have you been?

JOSHUA

Running from the law.

CADE

I haven't seen you in almost two weeks.

JOSHUA

I've been thinking about what your dad said. He's right. You can't just throw everything away.

CADE

Haven't you always told me it's my life? I should do what I want with it?

*CADE sits next to JOSHUA.*

CADE (cont.)

I make my own decisions.



JOSHUA

Sometimes I tell people to do things because I really want them for myself but can't admit it.

CADE

Then let's talk.

JOSHUA

I won't watch you go through this.

*There is a pause. CADE moves closer to JOSHUA.*

CADE

When I took those pills, I was calm.

JOSHUA

Stop.

CADE

*(continuing anyway)*

This feeling came over me. It felt like hands. They were moving over my body. They lifted me up off the ground. They laid me down in a field. It was snowing. But it wasn't cold. Everything went dark. No sounds. Just these warming hands. I wanted to sleep. Then I realized it was your hands. Holding me. Right here where we're sitting. I saw you and I wanted to come back.

JOSHUA

Why did you do it?

CADE

I thought I didn't have a choice. At that moment it seemed like the only thing to do. All I could see was a life spent trying to please my father because I just couldn't admit who I am.

JOSHUA

What's wrong with who you are? What's wrong with trying to please your father?

CADE

He wants my life to be different than his.

JOSHUA

Is that so bad?

CADE

I just want to decide for myself.

JOSHUA

At least you wouldn't be stuck in this shithole for the rest of your life.

CADE

What's wrong with that? We could survive. Together. Batman and Robin.

JOSHUA

No. Listen to me. You are too beautiful to give up everything. And if I let that happen, I will never forgive myself. You can leave with your head held high and never look back.

CADE

I thought you wanted us to go somewhere and start over. That's what we talked about.

JOSHUA

We talked about a lot of things, Cade. But the reality is that no matter where we go, no matter what we do, there are some things we are never going to escape. I live in a town that is so fucking anchored in the past that I stand no chance of being accepted. Do you really think that's going to be different anywhere else? I'm poor so I can't leave. I can't go to college. I'm barely making it through school as it is. I am in trouble all the time. What kind of life is waiting for me?

*CADE and JOSHUA are staring at each other. SARAH enters, unseen by the BOYS. She listens.*

CADE

You are the best person I know. I can't imagine being anywhere without you. You are smart. You are honest about what you feel. You are brave. I think my father pushed me away because I reminded him too much of my mother. She had the biggest heart of anyone I have ever known. I feel her now. When we are together. Like she is watching me. Watching us.

*CADE leans toward JOSHUA and kisses him. After a moment, SARAH exits quietly. The kiss ends. JOSHUA stares at CADE.*

JOSHUA

What was that?

CADE

I thought...

JOSHUA

Why did you do that?

CADE

I thought that's what you wanted.

JOSHUA

*(simply)*  
That's not me.

CADE

*(to himself)*

Fuck.

JOSHUA

I don't care about the kiss. It was nice. But if that's what you think this is you are wrong.

*CADE moves away from JOSHUA. He is starting to come apart.*

CADE

But we talk. We are together all the time. You hold my hand.

JOSHUA

You are my brother, Cade. I care about you more than you know. But this is not a relationship.

*CADE's eyes fill with tears.*

CADE

I am so stupid.

*JOSHUA grabs CADE's hand.*

JOSHUA

Hey...

*CADE pulls away, violently.*

CADE

This is what I'm what I'm talking about. A whole lifetime of you treating me like this. Touching me. Talking about the future. Making me doubt my father. Is this about control? Is it ego?

JOSHUA

Treating you like what? I'm not the one trying to control you. This is not about me. You've just finally admitted who you are.

CADE

I haven't admitted a Goddam thing.

JOSHUA

Cade, I would do anything for you.

*CADE begins to turn on JOSHUA. His anger mounts.*

CADE

Maybe you just don't know who I am because you haven't really taken the time to fucking find out. You just want someone around to listen to you go on and on about your terrible life. Maybe you're just a fuckup. Have you ever considered that?

*JOSHUA grabs either side of CADE's face. He speaks directly into his eyes.*

JOSHUA

Hey. Hey. Look at me. Nothing has changed.

*CADE pulls away violently again.*

CADE

How can you say that? Of course it's changed. *(beat)* If you say anything about this, I swear to God I will tell everybody in town that you are a fucking faggot.

JOSHUA

I thought you didn't believe in God.

*CADE is crying uncontrollably now. He sinks to the ground. JOSHUA immediately sits next to him. He takes his hands.*

JOSHUA (cont.)

Do you really think I would talk about this? To anyone?

CADE

I don't know.

JOSHUA

I love you, Cade, but I am not in love with you. There is a difference, but it is so small it doesn't matter. I only want what is best for you. And I don't think that's me. I can't be the reason you throw your life away. It has to stop here.

CADE

It can't. Please. Don't say that to me.

JOSHUA

Our whole life me we search for someone who truly understands us. Without questions. Without doubts. Someone who we care about so much that eventually we have to sacrifice everything for them. If I thought I could let you do that. I would.

*CADE is very quiet. The tears stop.*

CADE

I don't know who I really am.

JOSHUA

I do. I wish I *was* you.

CADE

If you were, how much more could you take?

*JOSHUA pulls CADE to him in an embrace.  
CADE is lifeless.*

## **SCENE 11—Kick and Scream**

*SARAH appears again with her book.*

SARAH

When I saw Cade kiss Joshua, it wasn't odd. Or shocking. Or even awkward. I have seen them together for so long that it just seemed natural. I only saw their affection. People try so hard to make the simplest things complicated. My mother thinks two boys with that kind of bond is an abomination. I think denying what is in our hearts is a bigger sin.

*SHE sits and begins to write in her book.*

SARAH (cont.)

I know whatever happens between them it will never be resolved in this town. People will turn on them. Mostly Joshua. And blame him for whatever mistakes they think Cade makes. When we hate someone, the first thing we try to do is to force our beliefs onto them. Even if they kick and scream. We think that alone will make them change. We think that making them a version of ourselves is the only solution.

*Lights reveal JOSHUA by the creek and DAMIEN  
at the table.*

SARAH (cont.)

The truth is that the difference between love and hate is massive for a reason. We think we are all the smart ones and don't ever realize there is all this complicated space in between. You can be blinded by the darkness just as easily as you can by the light.

*The lights fade on SARAH.*

## Scene 12—Unraveled

*As DAMIEN speaks, JOSHUA smokes. They are apart from each other.*

DAMIEN

When my father told me we were fleeing to America all I could think about were things that were important to me. Familiar things. My house. My possessions. My family. As much as my father and mother begged them all to leave, they would not. They were so proud of what they had accomplished. To them leaving it all behind seemed like an admission of failure. As it turns out, it was a death sentence.

*JOSHUA puts his cigarette out and begins to strip down to go swimming.*

DAMIEN (cont.)

To those who see America from a distance, it has always represented a place of freedom and acceptance. Born of great ideas. From great conflict. There's no denying that everybody who has ever lived here has the blood of immigrants. Except for the Indians. That's another story. *(beat)*. I will never be able to understand how a country founded on these truths could stay so divided. We came here for a new life. We came because we thought we were wanted. The truth is, from the moment we stepped off the boat, we were not.

*CADE enters. He is dressed for baseball practice. HE carries a ball and glove. HE stands upstage of JOSHUA.*

DAMIEN (cont.)

I'm not saying there weren't exceptions. Just that for the most part, the experiment unraveled. The failure of America to live up to its promise is littered with the lives of so many desperate people. They never got what they were hoping for. These are our sons and daughters. They are paying the ultimate price, and they didn't even see the journey. They only see the result. To America, my son is a mistake.

*The lights fade on DAMIEN and are up full on JOSHUA and CADE.*

## Scene 13—Can't Breathe

*CADE remains upstage of JOSHUA. Both BOYS face us and make no contact. JOSHUA sits and lights another cigarette. CADE speaks with no emotion.*

What are you doing?  
CADE

Going swimming. Join me.  
JOSHUA

I have practice.  
CADE

*(smiling)*  
Seriously. Come on.  
JOSHUA

I can't.  
CADE

Ok.  
JOSHUA  
*There is a pause. JOSHUA opens a beer.*

Sarah saw us kissing.  
CADE  
*JOSHUA laughs.*

I'm sure she didn't mind.  
JOSHUA

She told me. Then she told your parents.  
CADE

Secrets are hard to keep.  
JOSHUA

She said she wanted them to understand.  
CADE

It's a good thing we weren't fucking.  
JOSHUA

Stop.  
CADE

So now we're all buttoned up and back to baseball.  
JOSHUA

CADE  
Please stop.

JOSHUA  
Go away, Cade. Go to practice.

CADE  
Do you know how hard it is to stay away from you?

JOSHUA  
Yes.

*CADE moves downstage to stand behind JOSHUA, who continues to smoke and drink.*

CADE  
You don't understand how humiliating it is to disappoint someone.

JOSHUA  
I do it every day.

CADE  
Not like this.

JOSHUA  
A father should want their son to be happy.

CADE  
Does yours?

JOSHUA  
My father knows exactly who I am.

CADE  
Good for you.

JOSHUA  
That's my choice.

*CADE drops his glove onto the ground but holds onto the ball. He begins to breathe faster. JOSHUA drops his head and speaks softly.*

JOSHUA  
Go away, Cade. Just go away.



CADE

I can't.

JOSHUA

Then you do have a problem.

*CADE kneels down behind JOSHUA.*

CADE

What if you spend your whole life knowing that what you are is hated?

JOSHUA

It depends on who hates you. Some you care about. Some you don't give a shit.

CADE

I want to know how you honestly feel about me.

JOSHUA

*(after a beat)*

How long have you known?

CADE

My whole life. Since we met.

JOSHUA

I'm just what happens when you are driving, and you hit a bump in the road. The first thing that goes through your head is "I hope that wasn't a cat or a dog." But then you just keep driving. And your life doesn't change one bit.

CADE

Please stop.

JOSHUA

I can't.

CADE

I'm trapped.

JOSHUA

Then talk to your father. He's the one that seems to have you cornered.

*CADE breaks down. He sobs. HE reaches for JOSHUA's shoulder but can't manage to touch him.*

CADE

I'm finished.

JOSHUA

You'll be OK.

CADE

I'm sorry, Joshua. I love you. I can't do anything about that. I can't look at you. I can't breathe.

*There is a long moment where neither says anything.  
CADE sobs. JOSHUA stares right at us. He finally speaks.*

JOSHUA

*(coldly)*

I'm sure it's a lot easier to be a hero than it is to be a fag.

*CADE stops sobbing abruptly and stares at the back of JOSHUA's head. Tears fall down JOSHUA's face. Without thinking, CADE raises the baseball over JOSHUA's head. The lights black out.*

## Scene 14—Epilogue

*JOSHUA and CADE are gone. DAMIEN, SARAH, ELIZABETH, and EVA sit at the dining room table. LES sits on the desk. Each character stays until the end of the scene. ELIZABETH stands and turn to us.*

ELIZABETH

Joshua had always said he wanted to be cremated, but that didn't happen. Mom's Church of Christ genes kicked in and it was full-on spectacle. There weren't many people there. A few kids from school. Les Maddox was there except he was still wearing his uniform. Like another crime was about to be committed. Cade was late to the service and sat in the back of the church. I think he was the last person to leave. It was odd he didn't sit with his father.

*SARAH stands and moves away from the table. She holds her book.*

SARAH

I wish I could say that my brother died for a reason. For a cause. But I can't. One day he was just. Gone. I know he died at the one place that made him the happiest. Not many people can say that. The day after he was found I saw Cade sitting by the creek in that very spot. I tried to talk to him, but it was like he was somewhere far away. I could tell he was never coming back.

SARAH (cont.)

When my father passed the casket at the service his knees gave way and he fell to the floor. He prayed a Muslim prayer.

*LES moves downstage of his desk. He speaks in an official voice.*

LES

Joshua Faizan's death has been ruled accidental. It was determined that he was using a rope swing he constructed to carry himself out over the water of the lake. When he let go, his head struck an object under the surface. It is believed he died instantly. The case is now officially closed.

*EVA stands. SHE holds her bible.*

EVA

My boy is now with the Lord. He will have life everlasting with His grace and goodness in abundance. Troubled souls are sometimes the easiest to find rest. Joshua found comfort in this world through his loyalty. I grieve for Cade as much as I do Joshua. He has been undone. The most precious are the most fragile.

*SHE opens her bible.*

EVA (cont.)

"Now is your time of grief, but I will see you again and you will rejoice, and no one will take away your joy." John 16:22.

*DAMIEN stands. He is very quiet.*

DAMIEN

My son did not die accidentally. He was murdered. I saw him. By the water. He wasn't accidentally stuck by a rock. There were blows all over his head and his face. There was so much blood. Les Maddox knows the truth. *(beat)* Hate is so powerful it has the ability to close minds and eyes. The Faizan family name died with Joshua. Every sacrifice we have made has been in vain.

*CADE enters and crosses directly downstage. He has been swimming. He is on the edge.*

CADE

I am being recruited for college. Several offers. Full scholarship. I hope I actually get to play. Dad has no idea how tough it will be. *(beat)* I'm dating Marcie now. Dad and I will spend Thanksgiving together with her family. I've never seen him happier.

*There is a long pause. Tears begin to fall down CADE's face.*

CADE (cont.)

None of this makes any sense to me. It can't. *(beat)* I miss him every day. I miss everything about him. My hands are still shaking. I can't get them to stop. If I believed in hell that's for sure where I would be going. Probably sooner than later. I think about trying to take my own life again. But I don't have the courage to be alone when I do it. So, in the end, I don't believe we continue on in any way. *(beat)* Jesus. *(beat)* Maybe I'm wrong. Maybe there is more. Maybe there is a place we go where we meet everyone we ever loved. I would go there now if I just knew for certain that's where he was.

*CADE sits in the same spot where he last saw JOSHUA.*

ELIZABETH

If we don't respect each other, how can we feel any kind of regret for the things that are lost?

SARAH

I love that feeling you get when you see a moment between two people that you will never forget.

LES

You can never understand anybody's sorrow but your own.

EVA

God find peace for my son.

*CADE lowers his head. DAMIEN walks toward him and stands behind him. CADE hears him.*

DAMIEN

I know your secrets.

*CADE looks directly at us. The lights fade.*

**END**