

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

**Representaion:**

Rachel Ellicott

(845)568-7775

rellicott@paradigmagency.com

## **Characters**

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

## **Setting**

*The past and present.*

## **Author's Notes**

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

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

The ages of the actors don't need to be uniform. I would actually encourage an ensemble of all different ages. As we play with time in this play, this will open us up to possibilities that extend beyond realism. In that vein, I'd encourage projecting the scene titles, locations, and ages ahead of each scene. This fulfills the episodic nature of the play and also allows the actors to think less about having to "perform" age in a distracting way.

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

- J.



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

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

## A Beginning

*Darkness.*  
*We hear wind chimes echoing in the distance.*  
*Waves crash.*  
*Children laugh and play.*  
*Lights slowly begin to come up on the space.*  
*Four figures are revealed.*  
*They sing to us.*

ALL

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

*Music fills the space and picks up where the actors left off.*  
*They begin to dance.*  
*They move together, lose each other, find each other again.*  
*The dance is sweet at times. Violent at others.*  
*They grab, hug, push, pull, kiss, hit.*  
*The dance ends.*  
*The music ends.*  
*They face each other.*  
*They face us.*  
*Lights fade.*

# 1. "We Don't Like Crowds" A Wedding- Age 10

*A kitchen.*

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

*Music plays in the distance.*

*Music you'd hear at a wedding reception.*

*The Cha-cha Slide, The Electric Slide, the Cupid Shuffle.*

*Eddie enters slowly, in a hand-me-down suit, and looks around.*

*The coast is clear.*

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

*He shakes flower petals out of his jacket.*

*He spots the cake.*

*He carefully picks it up and sits on the floor.*

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

*It's the best thing he's ever tasted.*

*Suddenly, he hears someone else entering the kitchen.*

*He looks for a hiding spot.*

*There's nowhere stealthy enough.*

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

*Max enters, wearing a suit that actually fits him.*

*He dusts flower petals off his clothes.*

*He immediately spots Eddie under the table.*

MAX

Hey.

EDDIE

Hey.

MAX

Whatcha doin'?

EDDIE

Hiding.

MAX

That's a bad hiding place.

EDDIE

I know.

*Beat.*

MAX

You can come out from under there now.

*Eddie doesn't move.*

MAX

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

EDDIE

I like it under here.

MAX

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

EDDIE

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

MAX

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

EDDIE

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

MAX

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

EDDIE

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

MAX

What's a "sell out"?

EDDIE

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

MAX

Oh.

EDDIE

Yeah.

MAX

*(beat)* Why are you in here? Shouldn't you be out there celebrating?

EDDIE

Celebrating?

MAX

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

EDDIE

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

MAX

What?! Dancing is fun!

EDDIE

Not for me.

MAX

Why not??

EDDIE

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

MAX

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

EDDIE

I disagree.

MAX

It is! Watch.

*Max begins to dance.*

*It's less dancing and more flailing of limbs.*

EDDIE

That's not dancing.

MAX

Yes, it is!

EDDIE

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

MAX

All dancing *is* moving! Dance with me.

EDDIE  
What?

MAX  
Come out from under there and dance with me!

EDDIE  
No, thank you.

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

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

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

EDDIE  
No, you won't.

*Max immediately bursts into tears.  
He makes a spectacle.  
Eddie comes out from under the table and tries to stop him.*

EDDIE  
Shhh! (*he doesn't stop*) Please! (*he keeps going*) Please stop! (*he stops*)

MAX  
Will you dance with me now?

EDDIE  
I don't know.

MAX  
I'll cry again.

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

MAX  
*I cry.*

*Beat.*

EDDIE  
Me too.



MAX  
Dance with me.

EDDIE  
I'm scared.

MAX  
Good!

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

MAX  
Come on! You can do better than that.

EDDIE  
I'm not really sure that I can.

MAX  
Here!

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

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

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

EDDIE  
My Mom and Dad got a divorce.

MAX  
What's a divorce?

EDDIE  
The worst thing ever.

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

EDDIE  
My Dad drinks too much.

MAX  
Oh.

EDDIE  
Yeah.

MAX  
Wanna sit under the table and eat more cake?

EDDIE  
Yeah.

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

*Charlotte enters.  
She wears a dress and a blazer.  
She shakes flower petals out of her hair.  
She spots them immediately.*

CHARLOTTE  
Hey.

EDDIE & MAX  
Hey.

CHARLOTTE  
Whatcha doing?

EDDIE  
Hiding.

CHARLOTTE  
That's a bad hiding place.

MAX  
We know.

CHARLOTTE  
I'm Charlotte.

MAX  
I'm Max.

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

MAX

It's short for Maxwell. Like the singer. *(sings a bit of "This Woman's Work". Badly.)*

CHARLOTTE

That wasn't good.

MAX

It never is.

CHARLOTTE

*(to Eddie)* Who are you?

EDDIE

I'm Eddie. Like Eddie Murphy.

CHARLOTTE

I love Eddie Murphy!

MAX

Dr. Doolittle!

CHARLOTTE

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

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

CHARLOTTE

Why are you in here?

MAX

We don't like crowds.

CHARLOTTE

Yeah, me either.

EDDIE

Why are you wearing that suit jacket?

CHARLOTTE

What do you mean?

EDDIE

Girls don't wear suit jackets.

CHARLOTTE

*I do.*

EDDIE

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

CHARLOTTE

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

MAX

What’s a compromise?

CHARLOTTE

Bullshit.

*Max and Eddie gasp.*

CHARLOTTE

What?

EDDIE

You cussed.

CHARLOTTE

So what? Don’t you?

EDDIE

No.

MAX

I do!

CHARLOTTE

Yeah?

MAX

Yeah! All the time.

CHARLOTTE

Then do it.

MAX

*(pretending not to have heard her)* Hm?

CHARLOTTE

Do it. Cuss.

MAX

Now?

CHARLOTTE

Yeah. Now.

MAX

You ain't said nothin' but a word!

*Silence.*

CHARLOTTE

Max?

MAX

Hm?

CHARLOTTE

Are you gonna do it or not?

MAX

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

CHARLOTTE

Fuck!

MAX

What?

CHARLOTTE

Say "fuck". It's the best one.

MAX

Alright. *(beat)* Here it go. *(a deep breath and then a whisper)* fuck!

*Eddie gasps. Charlotte slow claps*

CHARLOTTE

Wow.

MAX

Told you. Ain't nothin' but a word.

CHARLOTTE

*(to Eddie)* Your turn.

EDDIE

No, thank you.

CHARLOTTE

No, thank you?

EDDIE  
I'd rather not.

CHARLOTTE  
Why?

EDDIE  
My Mom and Dad got a divorce and my Mom is always taking me to church now. Almost every day. She used to cuss all the time. Not anymore. Every time I cuss she finds out. I don't know how, but she does. I said "Damn" one time when I tripped on the stairs at school. When she picked me up, I got in the car and she said "I know you been up in that school cussin'! I can feel it!" So, I don't cuss no more. It ain't worth the trouble.

*This makes Charlotte giggle.*

CHARLOTTE  
Okay. Can I have some cake?

EDDIE  
/Sure.

MAX  
Yes!

*She joins them under the table.*

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

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

MARIGOLD  
What are you doing?!

MAX & EDDIE & CHARLOTTE  
Hey.

MARIGOLD  
What. Are. You doing??

CHARLOTTE  
We don't like crowds.

MARIGOLD

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

MAX

Your Mom is the one who got married?

CHARLOTTE

*(re: Marigold)* She was the flower girl.

MAX

I remember!

EDDIE

*(to Marigold)* You did a good job.

MARIGOLD

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

MAX

They let everyone have some.

MARIGOLD

*Some!* Not all!

CHARLOTTE

It's not all gone.

MARIGOLD

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

EDDIE

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

MARIGOLD

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

*Marigold bursts into tears.*

MAX

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

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

EDDIE

My Mom and Dad got a divorce.

MARIGOLD

Mine too.

*He holds the cake out to her.*

*She takes it.*

*He goes back under the table.*

*She follows.*

*They sit in silence for a while.*

MARIGOLD

How do you know my Mommy?

EDDIE

I don't. My Mom brought me.

CHARLOTTE

Me too.

MAX

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

MARIGOLD

Thanks.

CHARLOTTE

What's your name?

MARIGOLD

Marigold.

MAX

Wow. Even your name is a flower.

*They sit and eat.*



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

*A vineyard.*

*Pre-wedding.*

*Eddie stands alone, holding a wine glass.*

*He stares out at all the mingling guests.*

*Fucking crowds.*

*A wedding playlist plays in the distance.*

*90’s RnB.*

*Perhaps “All My Life” by K-Ci & JoJo.*

*Marigold enters.*

MARIGOLD

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

EDDIE

Hey, Marigold.

MARIGOLD

What’s your name again?

EDDIE

What?

MARIGOLD

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

EDDIE

Marigold-

MARIGOLD

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

EDDIE

Eddie. Like Murphy.

MARIGOLD

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

MARIGOLD (cont...)  
And he never ceased being kind.

EDDIE  
Whatever happened to him?

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

*Silence.*

*They take each other in.*

EDDIE  
It's not your fault.

MARIGOLD  
I know.

EDDIE  
I don't hate you.

MARIGOLD  
You better not. *(re: Eddie's wine glass)* What do we have here?

EDDIE  
Sparkling grape. Keeps my hands busy and lets me pretend. Technically, you're not supposed to. According to the program. They advocate for a clean break. No mocktails, no pretending. But...this is where I'm at today.

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

EDDIE  
Fuck no.

*They share a laugh.  
An inside joke.*

*Marigold moves close to him.  
They embrace.*

EDDIE  
I'm sorry.

MARIGOLD  
Shhh.

*Silence.*

MARIGOLD  
Where you been, man?

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

MARIGOLD  
I'm sorry, love.

EDDIE  
It's okay. Ya know, it actually...I learned a lot. I learned all of it the hard way but...I learned it.

MARIGOLD  
I'm happy that you did.

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

MARIGOLD  
Why aren't you?

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

MARIGOLD  
I'm sorry.

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

MARIGOLD  
We tried calling the facility. We tried writing you. We could never get to you.

EDDIE  
We?

MARIGOLD

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

EDDIE

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

MARIGOLD

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

EDDIE

I know I ain't.

*Beat.*

EDDIE

I was sorry to hear about the divorce.

MARIGOLD

Who told you?

EDDIE

I read it in one of your letters.

MARIGOLD

You read them?

EDDIE

Every single one.

*Max enters.*

MAX

Yo, Marigold-

*He sees Eddie and freezes.*

*He takes in the sight.*

*He moves to Eddie.*

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

*Max wraps Eddie in an embrace.*

EDDIE

I'm sorry.

MAX

It's okay.

EDDIE

I've been-

MAX

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

*They come out of the embrace.*

*Max can't take his eyes off him.*

MAX

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

EDDIE

I'm sure there will be time for both.

MAX

*(re: Eddie's wine glass)* What's this?

EDDIE

Sparkling grape.

MAX

How long?

EDDIE

Seven hundred and twenty days.

MAX

Well done, brotha. Proud of you.

EDDIE

Thank you.

*A beat.*

*The three of them take each other in.*

*It's been too long since they were together.*

MAX

Well, here we are! Another wedding.

EDDIE

What do we know about this person?

MARIGOLD

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

EDDIE

Seems fast.

MAX

That's what we said.

EDDIE

How are they? You know...together.

MARIGOLD

Really good, actually. They really love each other.

EDDIE

That's good to hear.

MAX

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

EDDIE

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

MAX

Has Charlie seen you since you got back?

EDDIE

Nope.

*Beat.*

MAX

This should be fun.

*Charlie enters.*

CHARLIE

Yo, we're gonna-

*Charlie sees Eddie.*

*The world stops for a moment.*

*Charlie steels themselves.*

CHARLIE

*(to Max and Marigold)* We're gonna get started in ten minutes or so. Better grab your seats now.

MARIGOLD

Okay, love.

EDDIE  
Charlie-

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

*Charlie begins to exit.*

EDDIE  
Charlie, wait-

*Eddie tries to grab Charlie's arm.  
They shake him off,  
Turn around,  
And take his chin in their hand.*

*They level a cold glare at him.*

CHARLIE  
Don't.

*They exit.  
Silence.*

MAX  
See? Fun.

*Max exits.*

MARIGOLD  
Let's go get our seats.

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

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

*Eddie nods.*

MARIGOLD  
Let's go sit down.

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

MARIGOLD  
You sure?

EDDIE

Yeah. I'll be right behind you.

MARIGOLD

Okay. I love you.

EDDIE

I love you too.

*Marigold exits.*

*Eddie stares into the distance.*

*He inhales deeply,*

*Exhales,*

*Downs his sparkling grape juice,*

*And exits to find a seat.*



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

*A parking lot.*

*Charlotte reads a book.*

*Eddie enters holding a flask.*

CHARLOTTE  
Hey dude.

EDDIE  
Hey.

CHARLOTTE  
You good?

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

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

EDDIE  
Malibu Coconut from my Dad’s place.

*He hands her the flask.*  
*She takes a pull and coughs.*

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

EDDIE  
It tastes like heaven.

CHARLOTTE  
Agree to disagree. Yo, check this out.

*She reads aloud.*

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

CHARLOTTE (cont...)  
**Let others have  
the privacy of  
touching words  
and love of loss  
of love.**

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

Brilliant, right?

EDDIE  
I hate holding hands.

CHARLOTTE  
What??

EDDIE  
Yeah, I don't like it.

CHARLOTTE  
Are you crazy?

EDDIE  
Nope, I just don't like it.

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

EDDIE  
Agree to disagree.

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

EDDIE  
M&M?

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

EDDIE  
They aren't a couple.

CHARLOTTE

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

EDDIE

Gross.

CHARLOTTE

Hey, I'm just reporting the facts.

EDDIE

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

CHARLOTTE

Already what?

EDDIE

...you know.

CHARLOTTE

I can guarantee I do not.

EDDIE

*(whispers)* Had sex.

CHARLOTTE

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

EDDIE

Could you please??

CHARLOTTE

You seriously gotta lighten up, Edward.

EDDIE

Why you gotta use my full government?

CHARLOTTE

Names are important. Gotta take pride in them.

EDDIE

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

CHARLOTTE

You got it, Mr. Murphy. *(beat)* I think I'm gonna start making people call me Charlie.

EDDIE

Why?

CHARLOTTE

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

EDDIE

I ain't never really thought about it.

CHARLOTTE

Call me Charlie.

EDDIE

Like, now?

CHARLOTTE

Yeah.

EDDIE

Charlie.

*Charlotte inhales deeply.*

*Exhales.*

*It suits her.*

CHARLIE

I like that.

EDDIE

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

CHARLIE

Gross.

*They share a smile.*

EDDIE

You really think they're having sex?

CHARLIE

Positive.

EDDIE

Like, right now?

CHARLIE

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

*Eddie lowers his gaze.*

CHARLIE  
Your time shall come, little one.

EDDIE  
In this lifetime?

CHARLIE  
And in the next.

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

CHARLIE  
What?

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

CHARLIE  
You've never kissed anyone?

EDDIE  
Whaaat? Pfft. Of course, I have!

CHARLIE  
That's not what you just said.

EDDIE  
Could you please not tell anyone?

CHARLIE  
How in Jesus' name have you not kissed anyone? I thought everyone passed that mark in middle school.

EDDIE  
Not me.

CHARLIE  
You haven't even had the opportunity?

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

CHARLIE  
God, that sucked.

EDDIE

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

CHARLIE

What??

EDDIE

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

CHARLIE

No!

EDDIE

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

CHARLIE

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

EDDIE

Bingo.

CHARLIE

Damn, dawg. That sucks.

EDDIE

You can say that again.

CHARLIE

Damn, dawg. That sucks.

*Eddie smiles.*

EDDIE

I hate you.

CHARLIE

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

EDDIE

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

CHARLIE

Do you want to?

EDDIE

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

CHARLIE

I'll do it.

EDDIE

What?

CHARLIE

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

EDDIE

Woah, I don't know, dude.

CHARLIE

What?

EDDIE

You don't think that'd be weird?

CHARLIE

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

*A beat*

EDDIE

You won't tell Max?

CHARLIE

No.

EDDIE

What about Marigold?

CHARLIE

I won't tell her either.

EDDIE

You tell her everything.

CHARLIE

No, I don't!

*Eddie gives her a look.*

CHARLIE

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

*They share a smile.*

*Charlie steps into him.*

CHARLIE  
You ready?

*Eddie nods.*

*She gently takes his chin in her hand.  
She kisses him.  
It's stiff at first, but eventually they relax.*

CHARLIE  
How was that?

EDDIE  
Not as weird as I thought. *(beat)* But still a little weird.

CHARLIE  
Yeah, just a little.

*They laugh.*

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

*A moment.*

CHARLIE  
How's this?

EDDIE  
Not as bad as I remember.

CHARLIE  
*(kisses her teeth)* Best feeling ever.

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

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

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



MARIGOLD

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

CHARLIE

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

*She makes a baby bump gesture.*

MARIGOLD

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

CHARLIE

Bitch, you know I don't dance.

MARIGOLD

Tonight, you do! Let's go!

*She pulls her inside.*

MAX

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

EDDIE

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

MAX

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

EDDIE

You head in. *(re: flask)* I'mma finish this off, and then I'll join.

MAX

Fine. Get loose, but not wobbly!

*Max begins to exit.*

EDDIE

Can I ask you a weird question?

MAX

Always.

EDDIE

Do you love Marigold?

MAX

So much.

EDDIE

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

MAX

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

EDDIE

Totally.

MAX

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

*Eddie nods*

MAX

Remember: Loose, but not wobbly.

*Max exits.*

*Eddie looks off after him for a while.*

*He takes a long pull from the flask.*

*It goes down the wrong pipe.*

*He starts coughing.*

*Softly. Then violently.*

*He coughs something into his hand.*

*He holds it in his fist.*

*He opens his hand and reveals...*

*A flower.*

*He examines it.*

*He looks toward the dance.*

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

*A magical space.*

*Charlie stands before us.*

*Music.*

*Charlie explores her body.*

*It's part dance, part investigation.*

*It takes as long as it takes*

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

*To belonging solely to the spirit housed inside.*

*As it comes to an end,*

*Charlie takes a deep breath*

*In*

*And Out.*

*A moment of expansion.*

*From “she”*

*To “They”.*

*They step into the next scene.*

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

*A backyard.*

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

*Marigold and Charlie sit in lawn chairs.*

*They’re in the midst of a rousing game of “Would You Rather”.*

CHARLIE

*(laughing)* Okay, okay. Would you rather always be choking or always be having diarrhea?

MARIGOLD

Oh, God.

CHARLIE

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

MARIGOLD

None of the above.

CHARLIE

That’s not an option.

MARIGOLD

I hate all of them.

CHARLIE

That’s the point! Answer the question.

MARIGOLD

*(beat)* Always be having diarrhea.

CHARLIE

What?! Are you kidding me?

MARIGOLD

What?

CHARLIE

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

MARIGOLD

Yeah, well it’s better than always choking!

CHARLIE  
In what respect?

MARIGOLD  
*(can't think of a logical reason)* Ah, fuck, I don't know! I just feel like I'd rather breathe than-

CHARLIE  
Than what? Have a dry asshole?

MARIGOLD  
Whateva, bitch.

CHARLIE  
*(clutches pearls)* Why I gotta be all that??

MARIGOLD  
My turn.

CHARLIE  
Alright, go ahead leaky butt.

*Marigold flips Charlie off.*

CHARLIE  
*(playfully gasping)* The attitude this evening!

MARIGOLD  
Would you rather eat a-

CHARLIE  
Oh God.

MARIGOLD  
What?

CHARLIE  
Nothing. Keep going.

MARIGOLD  
No, Charlie, what?

CHARLIE  
You always do some stupid shit about eating something.

MARIGOLD  
So what?

CHARLIE

Just sayin.

MARIGOLD

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

CHARLIE

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

MARIGOLD

Okay fuck it. I'll do something else.

CHARLIE

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

MARIGOLD

Nah, nah! Already came up with something else.

CHARLIE

Great. Let's hear it.

MARIGOLD

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

CHARLIE

Christ.

MARIGOLD

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

CHARLIE

Really?

MARIGOLD

What?

CHARLIE

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

MARIGOLD

Why not??

*Charlie gestures to the banner.*

MARIGOLD

Ah, shit. I forgot.

CHARLIE

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

MARIGOLD

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

CHARLIE

*(laughing)* Lightweight.

MARIGOLD

So?

*Silence.*

*They stare into the night sky.*

CHARLIE

How does it feel?

MARIGOLD

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

CHARLIE

Not the gummy, stupid! The divorce.

MARIGOLD

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

CHARLIE

Very unlike him.

MARIGOLD

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

*A beat*

CHARLIE

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

MARIGOLD

*(laughing)* I hate you.

CHARLIE  
I'm just saying!

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

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

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

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

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

MARIGOLD  
How's Eddie?

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

MARIGOLD  
How long has it been?

CHARLIE  
Six months.

MARIGOLD  
When does he get out?

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

MARIGOLD  
And how are you?

CHARLIE  
Honestly? *(beat)* Relieved.

*Silence.*  
*Marigold gets up and moves to Charlie's lawn chair.*  
*She lays down next to them.*  
*They hold each other.*



*Max enters holding an envelope.  
He watches them.*

CHARLIE  
**(singing) Each night before you go to bed, my baby.  
Whisper a little prayer for me, my baby.  
And tell all the stars above.  
This is dedicated to the one I love.**

*Marigold kisses Charlie.*

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

*The kiss ends.  
They lay in each other's arms.*

MAX  
The Mamas and the Papas.

*Charlie and Marigold jump out of their skin.*

CHARLIE  
/JESUS CHRIST!

MARIGOLD  
/FUCK! MAX!

MAX  
WHAT?? WHAT'D I DO??

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

MARIGOLD  
Seriously! Announce yourself!

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

MARIGOLD  
I almost peed my pants.

CHARLIE  
I *did* pee my pants.

*They look at Charlie.*

CHARLIE  
Only a little bit.

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

*He holds up the envelope.*

MARIGOLD  
Right. We still have to do that.

CHARLIE  
I'll get out of your way.

MARIGOLD  
You're way too high to drive home.

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

MAX  
Just stay in the guest room.

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

MAX  
You sure?

CHARLIE  
I'm positive.

MARIGOLD  
Fine. Come here.

*Charlie and Marigold hug.*

MARIGOLD  
I love you.

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

MARIGOLD  
See you soon.

*Charlie goes to Max.  
They hug.*

CHARLIE  
Love you, Maxwell.

MAX  
Love you, Charlie.

CHARLIE  
See you soon.

MAX  
Absolutely.

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

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

MAX  
What?

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

MAX  
Typical.

CHARLIE  
Ain't it?

*Charlie exits.*

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

MAX  
You ready?

MARIGOLD  
*(she nods)* You?

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

MARIGOLD

Please.

*Max sits and signs.*

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

*Marigold sits.*

*She starts to sign, but hesitates.*

*She looks to Max.*

*They lock eyes for a long moment.*

*She looks back to the forms and signs.*

MAX

Well.

MARIGOLD

Yes. Well.

*She moves to his chair.*

*They hold each other.*

*Max chuckles.*

MARIGOLD

What?

MAX

Even your name is a flower.

*Silence.*

*They stare into the night sky.*

*Charlie re-enters.*

CHARLIE

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

*Max and Marigold laugh.*

MARIGOLD

/Absolutely.

MAX

Anytime.

CHARLIE

Ya'll cuddling?

*They make room.*

MAX

Just come on. We already know what you want.

CHARLIE

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

MARIGOLD

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

*Charlie smuggles in.*

CHARLIE

I love ya'll.

MARIGOLD

We love you too.

*The stars swallow them whole.*

**“Very Handsome. Very Charlie.”**  
**Senior Prom-Age 18**

*A high school hallway.*

*Outside a “Teachers Only” bathroom.*

*Max stands in front of the bathroom door, knocking.*

MAX

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

*Marigold rushes on.*

MARIGOLD

Any luck?

MAX

What does it look like?

MARIGOLD

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

MAX

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

MARIGOLD

What'd you say to her?

MAX

Nothing.

MARIGOLD

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

MAX

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

MARIGOLD

I don't know everything about you?

MAX

Not even close.

MARIGOLD

Tell me. What don't I know?

*Silence.*

MARIGOLD

What did you say to her?

MAX

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

MARIGOLD

*(kisses her teeth)* You know it ain't that.

MAX

Do you wanna know what happened or not?

MARIGOLD

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

MAX

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

MARIGOLD

What?

MAX

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

MARIGOLD

Oh.

MAX

Yeah.

MARIGOLD

That's all you said?

MAX

Swear to God.

MARIGOLD

You must've said something else.

MAX

I'm telling you!

MARIGOLD

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

MAX

Now you understand my confusion.

*Silence.*

MARIGOLD

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

MAX

What do you care?

MARIGOLD

I don't.

*Eddie rushes in.*

*Wobbly.*

EDDIE

Yo! What's up??

MARIGOLD

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

EDDIE

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

*Marigold and Eddie kiss.*

*Marigold is aware of Max's gaze.*

*She makes a meal of it.*

MARIGOLD

*(licking her lips)* Ooh, you taste like rum.

MAX

Of course, he does.

EDDIE

*(to Max)* What'd you do?

MAX

Nothing.



EDDIE

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

MAX

I don't know, man.

MARIGOLD

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

EDDIE

Aw, cute.

MAX

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

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

CHARLIE

Stop calling me that!

MAX

Calling you what?? Beautiful??

CHARLIE

Stop calling me "girl"!

MARIGOLD

*(to Max)* Yeah, stupid! She's a WOMAN!

CHARLIE

Not that either!

MAX

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

CHARLIE

I DON'T KNOW! *(beat)* I don't know. Just...just go back to Prom and leave me alone.

*Max starts banging on the door.*

MAX

Come on, Charlie! Open the door!

*Eddie stops Max.*

EDDIE

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

MAX

Just go away, man.

EDDIE

Let me try to talk to her.

MAX

You're drunk.

EDDIE

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

MAX

Fuck off, Eddie.

EDDIE

Just let me try.

MAX

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

EDDIE

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

MAX

You don't know everything, Eddie.

EDDIE

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

*A moment.*

*Max moves away.*

*Eddie approaches.*

*He leans up against the door.*

EDDIE

Hey, Charlie it's me. Can I come in and talk to you real quick? (*silence*) Dope, I'mma take that as a "no". Can I come in and *listen* to you real quick? How's that? (*silence*) I got your back, dude. You know that, right? (*silence*) Yo, check this out:

**Give me your hand**

**Make room for me  
to lead and follow**

**you**

**beyond this rage of poetry.**

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

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

Brilliant, right?

*Silence.*

EDDIE  
For me. Unlock the door.

*A moment.*

*We hear the door unlock.*

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

*We hear the door lock.*

*Max presses his ear to it.*

MARIGOLD  
What are they saying?

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

MARIGOLD  
Move.

*She pushes Max aside.*

MAX  
Any better for you, Dumbo?

*She flicks him off.*

*A moment as she tries to listen.*

MARIGOLD  
I can't hear shit!

MAX  
Told you, stupid.

MARIGOLD  
Don't call me stupid, stupid.

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

MARIGOLD  
Well, believe it.

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

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

MAX  
(*kisses teeth*) Whatever, man. Poetry ain't shit. Anybody could do it. I could be poetical if I felt like it.

MARIGOLD  
Oh yeah? Show me.

*A beat.*

MAX  
I don't feel like it right now.

MARIGOLD  
Chicken.

MAX  
Fuck you.

MARIGOLD  
Fuck you, too.

*Silence.*

MAX  
So, you like being with him?

MARIGOLD

What do you care?

MAX

I don't.

*We hear the door unlock.*

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

*Charlie steps out wearing Eddie's tux.*

MAX

Yo, Charlie I-

*Charlie raises their hand to stop him.*

CHARLIE

There's something happening to me. I've been feeling this way for a long time. For as long as I can remember. I don't know how to talk about it. I don't know when I *will* know how. But...here's what I know for now: I'm not a girl. I'm not a woman. I don't think I ever have been. I'm just...me. I don't know a lot of things, but I know one thing for sure. I'm. Just. Me.

*A moment.*

*The group looks to each other.*

*They process.*

MARIGOLD

What should we call you, then?

CHARLIE

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

MARIGOLD

Okay, Charlie. I can do that.

*Charlie looks to Max.*

MAX

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

*Charlie smiles.*

*They look to Eddie.*

EDDIE

How do I look?

CHARLIE

Gorgeous. How about me?

EDDIE

Very handsome. Very Charlie.

*The group looks to each other.*

*They smile.*

*They laugh.*

*They make a memory.*

**“Like I know who you are”  
A Wedding- Age 28**

*A hotel room.*

*Max is pacing back and forth, analyzing a wrinkly sheet of paper.  
He’s half-dressed.*

*In a tux from the waist up, boxers and dress socks from the waist down.*

*Eddie watches him pace.  
Fully dressed.*

EDDIE

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

MAX

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

EDDIE

You did.

MAX

Why do people even do this shit?

EDDIE

Get married?

MAX

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

EDDIE

She does.

MAX

Could you please stop answering my rhetorical questions?!

EDDIE

Could you please put your pants on?

MAX

I have to figure this out first.

EDDIE

We gotta be out there in ten minutes.

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

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

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

EDDIE  
Give it here.

MAX  
No.

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

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

EDDIE  
Give it here.

MAX  
No.

*Eddie stands up and moves to Max.*

EDDIE  
Come on.

MAX  
No!

*Max moves away.  
A chase ensues.*

EDDIE  
Dude, stop playing.

MAX  
Get away!

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



MAX

You ain't entitled to shit!

*Eddie catches Max.*

*They struggle over the paper.*

*They fall to the ground and the struggle continues.*

*Eddie finally wrestles the paper away, stands, and reads.*

MAX

Come on, dude. Give it back.

EDDIE

Shut up. I'm in it now.

*Silence as Eddie reads.*

*Max watches intently.*

*Eddie finishes and looks to Max.*

MAX

Well?

*A beat.*

*Eddie rips the paper into bits.*

EDDIE

Yeah, that was terrible.

MAX

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

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

EDDIE

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

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

*He cries.*

EDDIE

God dammit.

*Eddie moves to Max.*

*He takes him in his arms.*

MAX

I'm not good at this.

EDDIE

Sure, you are.

MAX

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

EDDIE

You know how Marigold is. She loves this shit.

MAX

Well, I hate it.

EDDIE

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

MAX

*(laughing)* We were disgusting.

EDDIE

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

MAX

What'd I say?

EDDIE

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

MAX

I said that??

EDDIE

You did.

MAX

That's pretty damn good.

EDDIE

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

MAX

I'm sorry.

EDDIE

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

MAX

Yes. Yes, it did.

*A moment*

EDDIE

Alright, my friend. Let's go.

*He starts to get up.*

*Max stays in his lap.*

MAX

Wait! Let's sit here a little longer.

EDDIE

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

MAX

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

EDDIE

*(a beat)* True.

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

MAX

How's Charlie?

EDDIE

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

MAX

How's that other thing?

EDDIE

Better. Working on it.

MAX

Good. *(a beat)* Does Charlie know about your first kiss?

EDDIE

They *were* my first kiss.

MAX

No, they weren't.

EDDIE

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

MAX

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

EDDIE

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

MAX

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

EDDIE

We were ten years old.

MAX

So, you remember?

EDDIE

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

MAX

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

EDDIE

That's right.

MAX

It was mouth to mouth contact.

EDDIE

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

MAX

Same thing.

EDDIE

Absolutely not.

MAX

So, in your mind, we have never kissed?

EDDIE

Correct.

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

MAX

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

EDDIE

What are you talking about?

MAX

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

EDDIE

We certainly are not.

MAX

Why not?

EDDIE

I'm dating Charlie.

MAX

I *used* to date Charlie.

EDDIE

You're with Marigold.

MAX

You used to be with her, too.

EDDIE

You're about to marry her.

MAX

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

*Eddie stares at him dumbfounded.*

EDDIE

You're ridiculous.

MAX

Yes, I am. May I kiss you now?

*A beat*

EDDIE

You may.

*They share a proper kiss.*

MAX

How was that?

EDDIE

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

*Max nods.*

*They stand.*

*Max checks the time.*

MAX

Holy shit! We're so late!

EDDIE

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

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

*Charlie enters.*

CHARLIE

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

EDDIE

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

CHARLIE

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

*They start to exit.*

CHARLIE

Max, where are your pants??

MAX

Shit!

EDDIE

Told you.

MAX

Shut up!

*Max locates his pants and puts them on.*

MAX

How do I look?

CHARLIE  
Late. Now go.

*Max exits.*

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

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

CHARLIE  
Sucker.

*They kiss.*

CHARLIE  
Hm.

EDDIE  
What?

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

EDDIE  
What did they taste like?

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

EDDIE  
What do they taste like now?

CHARLIE  
Like I know who you are.

*They gently take his chin in their hand.  
They kiss again.  
They smile.*

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

*A magical space.*

*Max and Marigold enter from opposite sides.  
They wear the clothes they were married in.*

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

*It's a dance about never being on the same page at the same time.  
The moment one wants to be close, the other wants distance.  
The moment one wants to move quickly, the other opts for a slower pace.*

*There are tiny moments when they move in perfect unison.  
Moments our eyes barely catch before, suddenly, it vanishes.  
Like it never happened to begin with.*

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

*The violence is not indicative of abuse,  
It's the embodiment of their frustration and heartbreak.  
A manifestation of all the things they don't know how to say.*

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

*They face each other.  
They take a deep breathe  
In  
And Out.*

*A moment of expansion.*

*From “Us”  
To “I”.*

*They face us.  
They enter the next scene.*



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

*Split scene.*

*Eddie and Marigold in a bathroom.*

*Charlie in a shitty hotel vending machine room.*

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

*Charlie would kill for a Dr. Pepper.  
Like, seriously commit homicide.*

*They put the required amount into the machine.  
They make their selection.  
We hear the machine begin dispensing.  
Then a loud thud.  
Charlie looks to where a can should be.  
There is nothing.*

**CHARLIE**  
Give me a fucking break.

*They pound on the machine.  
Nothing.  
They shake the machine.  
Nothing.  
They get on their knees and try to reach up inside.*

*Eddie finishes puking.*

**MARIGOLD**  
What the fuck, Eddie?

**EDDIE**  
I'm sorry.

**MARIGOLD**  
Keep it. I don't want your fucking “sorry”.

**EDDIE**  
I'm sorry.

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

EDDIE

I don't need a parent.

MARIGOLD

Oh, you don't?

EDDIE

No. I have it under control.

MARIGOLD

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

EDDIE

Not a lie.

MARIGOLD

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

*Max enters the vending machine room.*

MAX

Charlie-

*Charlie doesn't look at him.*

*They continue trying to retrieve the can.*

CHARLIE

Go away.

MAX

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

CHARLIE

I was thirsty.

MAX

There's an open bar in the ballroom.

CHARLIE

I wanted a soda.

MAX

There's soda at the bar!

CHARLIE

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

MAX

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

*A beat.*

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

CHARLIE

That's correct.

MARIGOLD

I can't keep doing this.

EDDIE

I know.

MARIGOLD

You need help, Eddie.

EDDIE

I know.

MAX

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

CHARLIE

What?

MAX

You're fucking selfish, Charlie.

CHARLIE

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

MARIGOLD

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

*A beat.*

EDDIE

I can't.

MARIGOLD

Can't or won't?

MAX

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

CHARLIE

And what is it for me?

MAX

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

CHARLIE

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

*Charlie starts to exit.*

*Max starts to follow.*

CHARLIE

Don't. Follow me.

*Charlie exits.*

*A beat.*

*Max punches the machine.*

*The lost can falls loose.*

*Max reaches in and takes it out.*

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

CHARLIE

Thanks.

*Charlie re-exits.*

MARIGOLD

Just say you will. *(beat)* Please. *(beat)* Even if it's a lie. Just say you'll let me take you and we'll deal with it in the morning.

*A painful silence.*

*Marigold stands and starts to leave.*

EDDIE

Hey. *(she turns to him)* I love you.

MARIGOLD

Not enough.

*She exits.*

*We hover in silence for a while.*

*Max sinks to the floor.*

*Charlie enters the bathroom.*

*Surprised to see Eddie.*

*But also not surprised.*

*Marigold enters the vending machine room.*

*She sees Max.*

EDDIE & MARIGOLD

Hey.

CHARLIE & MAX

Hey.

CHARLIE

On the bathroom floor again, are we?

EDDIE

*(smiling)* It sure looks that way, doesn't it?

CHARLIE

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

EDDIE

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

*Charlie sits*

CHARLIE  
Dr. Pepper?

EDDIE  
Fuck yeah.

*Charlie hands him the can.*

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

MAX  
Shouldn't *you*?

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

MAX  
Yeah, well you ain't gotta stay.

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

MAX  
There's soda at the bar.

MARIGOLD  
No, there's *Zevia* at the bar. That is *not* the same thing. *(beat. She puts money in the machine.)*  
Where's Charlie?

MAX  
No clue. Where's Eddie?

MARIGOLD  
*(making her selection)* Guess.

MAX  
Do we need to do something to help him?

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

MAX  
Here.

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

MARIGOLD

Thanks.

EDDIE

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

CHARLIE

Yeah, I remember. All you wrote was “I love you”. No “check yes if you like me, no if you don’t” or nothing.

EDDIE

I don’t think I wanted to know all that information. I don’t even think I wanted you to write me back. I just wanted you to know. I wanted you to know that I loved you. You turned around and smiled at me, and in that moment...in that moment was everything.

CHARLIE

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

EDDIE

It was everything.

MARIGOLD

What’d you do to Charlie?

MAX

I ain’t do nothin’.

MARIGOLD

Maxwell-

MAX

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

MARIGOLD

Okay.

*She begins to exit.*

MAX

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

*A beat.*

MAX

Please?

*She sits.*

*She cracks open the soda can and sips.  
She hands it to Max.  
He sips.*

EDDIE  
Charlie?

CHARLIE  
Yes, Eddie?

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

CHARLIE  
None of us do.

*Silence.  
They share a soda.*



**“...but you could’ve held my hand.”**  
**A Eulogy- Age 38**

*Eddie speaks to us.*  
*Waves crash in the distance.*

EDDIE

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

The day I found out my parents were getting divorced  
my Mother took me to the beach.  
We sat down on the sand and she told me that her and my Dad wouldn’t be living together  
anymore.  
I asked her “why”.  
Why was Dad moving out?  
Why could I only see him on weekends?  
Why couldn’t they just talk about it?  
She put her hand in mine and was silent for a long time.  
Eventually, she asked me “When was the last time you saw your Dad hold my hand?”  
I tried to remember a time.  
There must have been at least one time.  
But I couldn’t think of it.  
I searched  
And searched.  
And couldn’t find a memory anywhere.  
“The weight of my hand in your Father’s doesn’t mean anything anymore. It used to. But,  
it’s not the same. It can never be the same again. I still love your Father. And he still loves  
me. But that love doesn’t hold any weight. Not anymore.”  
I haven’t been to the beach since then.

I promised myself that I would always be there for my Mother after that.  
That I would *always* be there for her.  
I made a promise to myself.  
To her.  
But if I’ve learned anything about promises,  
It’s that they’re hard to keep.  
If I’ve learned anything about love,  
It’s that it doesn’t last.  
And if I’ve learned anything about death,  
It’s that it’s always on its way.

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

EDDIE (cont...)  
Frozen in my mouth.

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

I don't go to the beach anymore,  
But when I am alone,  
which is much more often than I'd like,  
I close my eyes and try to listen for the ocean.  
And sometimes,  
on occasion,  
I think of the words contained in a letter from my mother to my father.  
I found it in a box in her closet one day while I was trying to sneak a peek at my Christmas presents.  
"We weren't together long, but I thought it could last forever. You didn't feel the same. I can forgive you for that. But you could've held my hand, a little more often, when we were alone. To let me feel the weight. To let me know the worth."  
Thank you.

**“Will you take care of me?”  
A Funeral- Age 38**

*A kitchen.*

*An assortment of casserole dishes litter every surface.*

*No music in the distance.*

*Only silence.*

*And the occasional hushed murmur of condolences.*

*Eddie enters slowly and looks around.*

*The coast is clear.*

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

*He shakes flower petals out of his jacket.*

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

*Nothing remotely appetizing in sight.*

*Does no one eat sugar anymore?*

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

*A cake.*

*Jackpot.*

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

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

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

*But it’ll do.*

*He hears someone else entering the kitchen.*

*He looks for a hiding spot.*

*There’s nowhere stealthy enough.*

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

*Max enters.*

*He dusts flower petals off his clothes.*

*He immediately spots Eddie.*

MAX

Hey.

EDDIE

Hey.

MAX

I see you found the cake.

EDDIE

It's the only edible thing in here.

MAX

Marigold's Mom made a squash casserole.

EDDIE

Like I said, the only edible thing in here.

*They share a laugh.*

*Eddie comes out from under the table.*

EDDIE

How's it looking in there?

MAX

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

EDDIE

Thank God. Crowds are one thing, but when the whole crowd is staring at you with the grief face? (*he shivers*) If I had to hear one more "Sorry for your loss", I was gonna lose it.

MAX

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

EDDIE

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

MAX

Don't even. It sucked.

EDDIE

I bet.

MAX

Divorce is the worst thing ever.

EDDIE

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

*Eddie smiles.*

*Max doesn't.*

MAX

Eddie-

EDDIE

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

MAX

Yeah. I think you did.

*They embrace.*

*Charlie enters.*

*They shake flower petals out of their hair.*

CHARLIE

*(re: their embrace)* Sexy.

MAX

Always.

CHARLIE

Hey Eddie.

EDDIE

Hey Charlie.

*A tense moment.*

MAX

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

*He exits.*

*Silence.*

*Charlie moves in close to him.*

*A moment.*

*They embrace.*

*Stiff at first.*

*But eventually they melt into each other.*

*They sway together.*

EDDIE

Thank you for coming.

CHARLIE

Of course.

EDDIE  
I'm sorry about-

CHARLIE  
You broke my heart.

EDDIE  
I know.

CHARLIE  
You could've called.

EDDIE  
I know.

CHARLIE  
Why didn't you?

*A long beat.*

*They sway.*

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

CHARLIE  
Everything?

EDDIE  
Everything.

*They stroke his face and take him in.  
They gently take his chin in their hand.*

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

EDDIE  
Thank you.

CHARLIE  
*(a beat)*  
You doin' alright?

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

CHARLIE

Good. You don't need it.

EDDIE

No, I don't.

CHARLIE

How does it feel? Being clean for so long.

EDDIE

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

*They share a smile*

EDDIE

I was sorry to hear about...*(can't think of the name)*

CHARLIE

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

EDDIE

Rigorous honesty? No.

*They laugh.*

CHARLIE

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

EDDIE

How you feeling?

CHARLIE

Rigorous honesty? Relieved.

*Max and Marigold enter.*

*Marigold has her shoes in her hands.*

*She shakes flower petals out of them.*

MARIGOLD

The room has been cleared!

EDDIE

Marigold! Killing it with the crowd control!

MARIGOLD

Fuck crowds!

EDDIE  
Agreed!

CHARLIE  
Me too!

MAX  
Me three!

*They take each other in.*

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

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

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

*Marigold punches his arm.*

MAX  
Ow!

CHARLIE  
You think you'll ever try it, Eddie? Marriage?

EDDIE  
I don't know. I can't think of one person I'd want to spend the rest of my life with. *(beat)* But I can think of three.

CHARLIE  
*(kisses their teeth)* Corny.

EDDIE  
Maybe. But it's the truth.

MARIGOLD  
I'd marry you guys. *(re: Max)* Even that dummy. If we could all be together.

MAX  
Me too.

EDDIE  
Yeah? You compared it to taking a bullet earlier.



MAX

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

CHARLIE

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

EDDIE

Hm. Good to know.

*Eddie goes to Marigold.*

*He gets down on one knee.*

MARIGOLD

What are you doing?

EDDIE

Shh. Listen. *(beat)* Will you take care of me?

MARIGOLD

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

EDDIE

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

*A beat.*

MARIGOLD

I will.

*They kiss.*

*Eddie goes to Max.*

*He gets down on one knee.*

EDDIE

Will you take care of me?

MAX

I will.

*They kiss.*

*Eddie goes to Charlie.*

*Eddie starts to go down, but Charlie stops him.*

*Charlie gets down on one knee.*

CHARLIE

Will you take care of me?

EDDIE

I will.

*They kiss.*

*Marigold goes to Max.*

*She gets down on one knee.*

MARIGOLD

Will you take care of me?

MAX

I will.

*They kiss.*

*Max goes to Charlie.*

*He gets down on one knee.*

MAX

Will you take care of me?

CHARLIE

I will.

*They kiss.*

*Charlie goes to Marigold.*

*They get down on one knee.*

CHARLIE

Will you take care of me?

MARIGOLD

I will.

*They kiss.*

*Silence.*

*They take each other in.*

*They sing.*

MARIGOLD (*sung*)

**While I'm far away from you, my baby**

MAX (*sung*)

**I know it's hard for you, my baby**

EDDIE (*sung*)

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

CHARLIE (*sung*)

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

*Music fills the space.*

*They begin to dance.*

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

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

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

*The dance ends.*

*The music ends.*

*They face each other.*

*They smile.*

*They laugh.*

*They sit under the table and eat cake.*

*Flowers fall from above.*

*Lights fade.*

**END OF PLAY**