

A Collection of  
MONOLOGUES

by

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# MONOLOGUES FROM BRUTE FARCE

Dark Comedy/Farce. Set in London. Four vengeful, narcissistic actors, with the assistance of a brutish stage manager and a cynical stagehand, kidnap and hold hostage a theater critic notorious for shutting down productions and ending careers through his malicious reviews. To confound matters, they intend to carry their plan out during a performance of a show they're all currently appearing in. Less than an hour before the curtain is due to rise, their scheme begins to quickly unravel as we discover that none of the conspirators are familiar with the actual plan or its designed outcome. The results are at once dark and hilarious. Brute Farce is a satirical commentary on the perpetually symbiotic, oftentimes dysfunctional, and occasionally turbulent relationship between actors and reviewers.

## KILLIAN

(Middle-aged male, stage actor, controlling, determined, unyielding.)

You see... This mustachioed Billy no-mates right here is, without equal, the single largest threat to the continued existence of the whole Actors' Guild of Great Britain. He has been relentless in his efforts to undermine and, at times, completely shut down any production that doesn't suit his impossible standards. And he's been particularly vicious as it relates to various actors in those productions, repeatedly castigating them in his reviews, and thereby ultimately putting an end to their stage careers. And because of that, we all agreed - I know you agreed, Fiona, because you were in the room when it was all decided - we all agreed

that this fucking bastard right here is finally going to get his comeuppance!

KILLIAN

(Middle-aged male, stage actor, controlling, determined, unyielding.)

We need to face facts. We are all of us nearing the end of our theatrical careers. And indeed, some of us have already surpassed our expiration date. And surely none of you - and let's be honest with ourselves here - not *one* of you could possibly be ignorant to that indisputable truth. I mean, we can all certainly *pretend* that there *might be* - hidden somewhere in the splintered cracks of the deeply worn floorboards upon which we have tread many times over - a tinder of hope for a reignited career; for a final chance to shine; for an opportunity to go out on top. But it's only just that... *pretend*. Otherwise, we're just putting off the inevitable, aren't we? So, this is it, folks. This is our time. As a collective. This is how we're all going out. We will make our way to the stage and we will put in the best performances of our lives. And by the end of act one, this bloated twat right here will have met his untimely demise.

KILLIAN

For those of you who aren't the least bit interested in what's taking place *onstage* when you're not in fact *standing on it*... At the end of act one, *my* character and *Quinn's* character have a bit of a tussle, during which Quinn, who has been fitted with a burlap sack over his head and strapped to a wooden chair with a length of

rope, manages to free himself by throwing his body to the floor. At which point, I come after him brandishing a horseman's pick. And, after a carefully choreographed series of head slams, hair pulling, punches, kicks, slaps, grappling, and falls, both Quinn and I crash through a breakaway door. Then, after a count of five, I return to the stage and reach for the horseman's pick, which had been cast-off during the fight. I then pick it up and turn back to the door at the same moment Quinn reappears, still wearing the sack over his head. I then lunge at him, thrusting the pick through his midsection. Quinn falls backwards out the door again and expires offstage. *Except... Except tonight...* When Quinn reappears in the doorway with the sack still over his head, it won't be Quinn. It'll be Alistair *dressed* as Quinn. Or, more precisely, dressed as Quinn's *character*.

#### VIVIAN

(Middle-aged female, stage actor, self-centered, insular, demanding.)

Honestly, darling. Don't you think this is all a bit much? I mean, I suppose I get it. We're all actors. We love drama. And we all have a shared hatred for this mound of tainted cabbage over here. But it all seems problematic and perhaps even a bit convoluted, don't you think? I mean, couldn't you just kill him *now* and get it over with? Because frankly, I'm just bored to tears with the whole situation. I'd be content to step away for a few minutes while you do whatever it is you need to do. I could freshen up in the loo, do some vocal warmups... Just let me know how

much time you need, darling. In any case, I don't want to be here when you put this old dog down. And yes, darling. I understand. You're in charge. But if this show gets shut down for any reason - and especially if that reason happens to be that this colossal sack of fetid lard over here has been skewered to death in front of an audience on stage - I can assure you, you will not hear the end of it from me.

## MONOLOGUES FROM COLD RAIN

Dramedy. Set in Western, PA. Carly Weekes is a witch. And so too are her older sisters, Lolly and Shirley. Determined to find Carly a mate, the three cast a circle to summon a popular recording artist from Colorado named Joe Rekowski. During the incantation, however, Shirley, critical of Carly's witching abilities, hijacks the proceedings and casts a dubious and possibly deadly spell. Worried that Carly and her intending husband & offspring might now be cursed, Lolly endeavors to reverse the hex, but fails dramatically, resulting in her expulsion to an alternate world. Years later, twin sisters Tina and Rose Pacheco mysteriously drown. And though the case goes cold, many believe that Carly's oldest son, Johnny, may have had something to do with their deaths. COLD RAIN is an account of a family bound by black magic, a dark and sometimes comical tale of ill-conceived machinations, misdirected resentment, and repressed desire.

### LYDIA

(Forty something female, weary, heavy drinker, straight talker, a bit trashy.)

Okay, look. It's a little hard to keep track of two teenage girls when you're working all hours and don't have a man around to pick up the slack. You know what I mean? So, I don't appreciate your assertion that I'm somehow responsible for what happened at Flat Rock that night. Tina and Rose are dead. Okay? And there ain't nothin' I can do about it. But I damn sure ain't gonna take the blame. They had no business bein' there and I sure as hell didn't give 'em permission to go. So, you can just cut the shit with that line of questionin'. And why do you

keep bringin' me back in here anyway? Huh? You know, because every time I sit in this chair and I have to talk to a detective or a cop or some other idiot, I gotta relive the night my girls drowned. So, what? So, you keep tellin' me it wasn't an accident. And you keep tellin' me that someone did this to them. And you want justice. For who? For me? For two dead girls? Well, you can just fuck right off with that nonsense. You're all useless. Every last one of you. Hell, I could do a better job. That's right. Drunk ol' Lydia Pacheco could do a better job than a bunch of dimwitted, degenerate dicks. Hey, listen. I'm pretty sure I'm gonna be sick. So, I'm gonna go. And I guess I'll see you at Marie and Leroy's wedding next weekend?

CARLY

(Forty something female, a witch, mother of two boys, adrift, disheartened.)

Hey, now hold on. I wouldn't call my life a mess. And don't go pattin' yourself on the back, Shirley. You didn't quite give me what I wanted. Okay, granted, things haven't turned out the way I'd hoped they would. But all in all, my life is all right. Yes, Johnny's been a handful, to say the least. He's awful to other kids and he's downright horrible to most adults, but he always treats me with kindness. He's sensitive. I don't know. Maybe too sensitive. I just think he feels like he doesn't belong in this world. He's so aware and he feels so much that, at times, I think he either acts out or shuts down as a way to survive. He loves me. I know that. Or at

least he trusts me more than anyone else. And that's enough for me.

LYDIA

(Forty something female, weary, heavy drinker, straight talker, a bit trashy.)

I always worried that Tina and Rose might take after me. And I don't mean with their looks. They got lucky. Took after their dad in that department. Us homely girls, though... We had to rely on our personality if we wanted to snag a man. And since I had no personality and wasn't much to look at, I was desperate to make myself attractive in whatever way I could. So, bein' one of the few girls in high school whose legs were more accommodatin' than a No-Tell Motel, I hit the jackpot with a husband and a set of twins by the time I was eighteen. Ken married me because he had to. Obviously. You'll never understand what it's like to be in a man's arms and to know deep down that he'd rather be anywhere else than there with you... To feel his loathing in the way that he touches you and to hear it in the way that he breathes when he's lyin' next to you.

JOE

(Forty something male, Carly's husband, a crooner, loving, lost, contrite.)

You know, as much as I'd like to blame the three of you, the truth is, if I hadn't been so weak to start, things would've turned out a lot different. But that's what I've always been. Weak. Selfish. A coward. And that's why I walked away from Vera all those years back. Not because

of you, Lolly. Not because of you and your fuckin' voodoo. I was a coward long before you and I ever met. You just took advantage of it. All I ever really wanted was to be alone. No commitments. No obligations. My life on my terms. And I never wanted recognition. I was afraid of it. Afraid of what it might bring me. Or of what it might take from me. I just wanted to make music. I wanted to make music and then share it with whoever felt like listenin'. All I wanted was to be able to express myself in a way that was familiar and safe. So, what happens next? Well, I'll tell ya. I'm gonna get my two boys and get the hell outta here. And we're gonna get as far away from all of this as possible. So that the three of us might have a regular life somewhere together.

BRYSON

(Male teenager, Carly's son, belligerent, confused, resentful.)

I'm tired of bein' scared all the time. You know? And I'm tired of feelin' like I have to explain myself to everyone; of feelin' like I need to apologize to people for who I am. And fuck it, Donna. I really hate my mom sometimes. I mean, like really hate her. And yeah, maybe my dad's the good guy, maybe he's not. Doesn't matter anyway because we got nothin' in common. And the only reason I need him around is because he makes me feel safe sometimes. So, my Aunt Lolly's back. So what? She can't protect me. She couldn't even protect herself. You're my family, Donna. I'm not afraid when I'm with you. Of anything. And, you know, even when you're not

around and I'm feelin' overwhelmed, I just take a deep breath and remind myself that you exist and that you're a part of my life.

JOHNNY

(Twenty-three-year-old male, Carly's son, autistic, unfiltered, loving.)

Do you remember the time Mike Davies fell out of the back of his granddad's speed boat? It wouldn't have been so bad, except it was parked in their driveway at the time. Knocked his head pretty good. Broke his arm too. I think he was out cold for like five minutes. Everyone thought it was an accident, but it wasn't. He was a douchebag. Nobody liked him. Always braggin' about his family's money. And about how they'd go out to their lake house every summer. And how he'd ride around all day in that stupid fuckin' boat. The day he fell, I was walkin' past their house. Saw him climb up into the boat. He was in a hurry too. Probably because there were three kids chasin' after him and threatenin' to kick his ass. But before they could get their hands on him, Mike's granddad came out of the house carryin' a huntin' rifle. He fired a warnin' shot into the air and told them to get the fuck outta there. So, they did. And then he turned to Mike and told him to get his faggoty ass out of the boat and into the house. I'd already picked up a rock and was rollin' it around in my fingers. And as soon as his granddad went back in, Mike started to climb out of that boat. Our eyes met. And that's when Mike lost his grip and fell backwards onto the gravel. There was a lot of blood. I willed him to fall. I wanted him

dead. I think bad thoughts all the time, mom. I'm afraid I might hurt someone. Or that maybe I already did.

#### FISHER

(Male teenager, angry, closeted, complicated, pained.)

My dad was just sittin' there on the back porch; on the glider when we found him, me and my mom. His eyes were open, and I could see he was tryin' to breathe, though he wasn't movin' much. And my mom didn't do anything. He was all purple, like a goddam eggplant. And then all of a sudden, he started makin' this weird noise, kinda like he was snorin'. And then he puked all over himself. I remember gettin' some of it on my shoes. And my mom just stood there. Lookin' at him. Doin' nothin'. Like she was just waitin' for him to die. And I could tell she just wanted it to be over. And the sooner the better. And then he was gone.

#### LOLLY

(Forty something female, a witch, imprudent, driven, garrulous.)

I only needed one of the twins. And since Rose was furthest out in the water, I went after her. I waited for Johnny to get back to the rocks before I cast the spell. I wanted to make sure he was out of harm's way. But somethin' didn't go quite right and Rose... well, she started to panic. It was supposed to happen in an instant, but I don't know, I must've missed somethin', because she was able to struggle against it. And when Tina realized what was goin' on, she swam

to Rose and reached out for her. But it was too late. So, I just hung there, helpless, as Rose wrapped herself around Tina, dragging her down. And there were others. Anthony Benedetti. Damn klutz fell and nearly bled out from the head. And then along came Fisher. Angry, vengeful, scared. A perfect brew. And with him, I was determined to succeed. And I did. Because I'm here. And life is good.

## MONOLOGUES FROM PRONE

Dark Comedy. Set in Brooklyn Heights, NY. Prone is an account of the tumultuous relationship between two lovers with starkly contrasting childhoods; one who grew up in an environment of inconceivable support and praise and one who grew up in an environment of intense abuse and neglect. Ben, a struggling actor with no financial or emotional resources available to draw upon, finds himself trapped in a seemingly loveless relationship with Alan, an affluent and calculating man with a mysterious profession and an even more mysterious friend, David. When Ben reaches his breaking point, he calls upon his colorfully wicked friend, Anne, to assist him in hiring a hit man to eliminate Alan. Caught in the middle of all this chaos is Alan's sister, Sarah, an emotionally wrecked individual whose addiction to prescription medications might likely be the cause of her wild imaginations and, later, an ill-fated deed. Rounding out this bizarre cast of characters is Ed, the man hired to take Alan out. Alliances shift as the plot progresses and not until the astonishing finale do we ever really discover who has the upper hand.

SARAH

(40-year-old female, unbalanced, medicated, unpredictable.)

Alan...? Alan, are you okay...? I heard something. Sounded like a gunshot. But I'm thinking that's ridiculous, right? I mean, not in this neighborhood... Christ, Alan. Is it essential that you lock your fucking door? What if something happens to you? How do you expect me to help you? You could be lying in there bleeding to death for all I know. Alan...? Alan...! Great. Great. Do you know how incredibly selfish you're being right now? Is this entertaining for you...?

Fine. Don't answer. I'm going back to bed. So, no more loud noises. Ok...? You know, this might not be a suitable time to mention this, but I can honestly say that I'm in no mood to be scrubbing vomit and blood out of the hardwoods. Do you hear me...? I'll just have it all torn up and thrown out. I'll have that entire room stripped bare and there will be nothing left to remind me of you. Is that clear...? I knew it was only a matter of time before you'd overdose on the myriad of fucking drugs you take. I hope you're still breathing. I hope you can hear me, you selfish, son of a bitch.

SARAH

(40-year-old female, unbalanced, medicated, unpredictable.)

I dreamt I was flying again. Almost the same as usual, except this time, I didn't have any trouble getting off the ground. Usually, I have to struggle a bit. You know, get a running start, and actually move my arms up and down like a bird. But not this time. I just relaxed a little. Closed my eyes. And off I went. Weaving in and out of trees, pulling leaves from the branches as I went. Over the row of buildings on our street. That fat, old queer, next door, was sunbathing nude on his roof deck again, but even that didn't stop me. Up over the skyscrapers downtown. And I just kept on going. Higher and higher, passing jetliners on the way, until... Well, the oxygen... The air got thin. And I had a little trouble breathing. But I wasn't afraid. I wasn't worried. I kept flying higher. I remember how cold it was. But I didn't close myself off.

I opened my arms wider. I was taking shallow breaths at this point. But I didn't turn back. And it wasn't a nightmare. Nightmares are designed to frighten people, to expose them to their worst fears. I wasn't scared at all. In fact, I felt... Well, I have to admit, Alan.. I felt liberated in a way and, well... a little aroused. I mean, my head was so light. I wasn't entirely sure that it was still attached to the rest of me. I was completely aware of every inch of my body. But none of it was connected, you know? From one moment to the next, I was my ankle, and then my arm, and then my little toe, and then my belly button, and then my breasts, my nipples... But I wasn't my vagina. I wanted to be my vagina. But I wasn't. And do you want to know why? Because I heard a gunshot. I heard a gunshot; gravity took hold and I was hurled back to earth. To my bed.

#### ANNE

(43-year-old female, British, audacious, obnoxious, egocentric.)

Listen, darling.. Where did you and Alan meet? I mean, seriously. Think about it. Did you really believe you'd just stroll into some nightclub, toss back a few drinks, take some mood-altering drug and then find the man of your dreams? Did you really imagine you'd find love in a sea of plastic tank tops and rubber hot pants? We know all too well how rubber and plastic do not breathe. And relationships that are cultivated in bars can be as suffocating as the clothing you wear.

BEN

(35-year-old male, an actor, ostensibly naïve, on the verge.)

My mother passed away when I was twelve. I had no idea there was anything wrong until my father ushered the three of us into the car one morning to drive her to the hospital. She was running a high fever at that point and had been feeling tired for weeks. You'd think my father was driving us to Lake Wissota State Park for a camping trip the way he and my mother were carrying on in the front seat. Making jokes. Teasing each another. Singing songs. I was convinced that everything would be okay. When we got there, a nurse took my mother down this long hallway, through a set of doors, and into a room where she disappeared for what seemed like an eternity. My father took me out for an ice cream and a movie while they ran tests. But by that time, the cancer had spread throughout most of her body. My mother wasn't keen on suffering. So, after a brief and courteous review with the doctor of all the medications and therapies available, she and my father respectfully declined treatment. It would only prolong the inevitable. And then my parents politely thanked what appeared to be the entire hospital staff and off we went home. Laughing and singing the entire way. She died on a Saturday. Two days later, my father dropped me off at school on his way to work. My teacher, Mrs. Halverson, asked me why I was in class that day. I told her my mother's funeral wasn't until Thursday and apologized to her for having to miss a half day

so that I could attend. She urged me to go home immediately, but I refused. It just wasn't an option. My father never grieved, so I would never grieve. My mother was gone, and we would simply move on without her. It was as if, without any thought or effort, my father and I had both expanded to fill the empty space that my mother left behind.

ALAN

(43-year-old male, intelligent, aloof, calculating.)

I never stopped it. I just sat there in the doorway of my room, watching... helpless. Too petrified to say anything, too weak to stop him. And I didn't protect Sarah either. I could hear her in her room. She'd pull the sheets and blankets from her bed, wrap herself in them, and then squeeze herself into the toy-box in her closet. And she'd sing. To try and block out my mother's screams, I guess. But instead of leaving her there, safe in her cocoon, I pulled her out of that box and dragged her into the hallway. And do you know why? Because I was furious at her for leaving me out there alone. I refused to be the only witness to my mother's undoing. And even though I knew there was nothing I could do to stop my father; I was convinced that Sarah and I owed it to her to be there and to watch it unfold each time. I thought maybe she would be in less pain if her children were there to share it with her. I thought maybe she'd hate us less if we watched from the shadows in the hall instead of hiding away in boxes in our rooms.

BEN

(35-year-old male, an actor, ostensibly naïve, on the verge.)

Do you really want to know what upsets me? I'm upset that the blinds in my windows don't hang straight. I'm upset that, no matter how careful I am, I always spill the coffee grounds onto the countertop when I try to spoon them into the filter. I'm upset that I still have to drag myself to my therapist once a week, even though I always feel better afterwards. I'm upset that I'm good at a lot of things, but great at nothing. Mostly, though, I'm upset that I'll never be enough. Not for anyone or anything. Everything upsets me, Anne. So, don't flatter yourself.

BEN

(35-year-old male, an actor, ostensibly naïve, on the verge.)

There's a man who I see every day on the Q Train as I go back and forth to and from work. He's always there. Without fail. What are the chances do you think? That in a city of 8.3 million people, I would wind up sitting across from the same guy every single day. No matter what train I get on and no matter what seat I sit in, there he is. In his left hand, a cup of coffee that he never drinks but just continually blows on to cool it off and, in his lap, a copy of the New York Daily News. And he just sits there, his eyes blinking like hazard lights on a car, scanning every page and every word of that ridiculous publication. And as he reads the

paper, he maneuvers his coffee out of harm's way while he quickly turns the pages with his right hand. And he turns those pages so abruptly that it makes the most aggravating sound I've ever heard. Like a flock of pigeons taking off. And no matter how often he turns those pages, I'm always startled. I can never get used to it. I imagine killing that man. I imagine shredding that newspaper and shoving the pieces down his throat. And, as he suffocates, I imagine pouring the hot coffee into his crotch. I imagine him trying to scream with the bits of paper jammed in his throat as the hot liquid burns away at his balls. Some people believe that when life is done with you, that's when you die. I believe, when you're done with life, that's when you live longest.

## MONOLOGUES FROM RADIATOR

Dramedy. Set in Hunts Point, NY. Lou Brunazzi & André Cooper live across the hall from each other in the basement of a shabby apartment building in the Bronx. In the space between their units stands a noisy Radiator, which is connected to a deteriorating boiler. Determined to stop the whistling, hissing & banging that's keeping him awake at night, André endeavors to turn the thermostat off, but is cut short by Lou who is determined to keep the radiator running at all costs. What begins as a battlefield between two seemingly inconsolable men evolves slowly into a makeshift sitting room where the pair begin to form a unique and lasting bond.

### ANDRÉ

(46-year-old African American male, analytical, earnest, humorous, but has trouble connecting with others.)

Lou... Come on, man. Open the door. I didn't mean anything by it... Lou. Seriously, Lou. I don't care. Whatever you got going on with this Ziad guy, it doesn't matter to me. I'm not judging you. It came out wrong... Yeah, okay, what I said sounded insensitive, but I didn't mean for it to come out that way. I'm sorry. Hey, listen, I get it. Okay? I do. I'm lonely too. And I'm a little lost. Just fucking hanging out here in limbo, stuck. And waiting for my life to start up again. You know? And I don't even have a fucking clue what that's gonna look like. And I can tell that whatever it is you're going through right now, I can tell it's a million times worse than anything I've ever gone through. I can see it. I can feel it. And I'm here if you need someone to talk to. Okay...? Lou?

ANDRÉ

(46-year-old African American male, analytical, earnest, humorous, but has trouble connecting with others.)

I don't know. I guess I like to think of myself as heteroflexible. I mostly prefer women. And by that, I mean I'm generally attracted to what's been programmed into my brain as a traditionally feminine woman. You know, like curves and a soft voice and long hair and smooth legs and nice tits. And yeah, sometimes I'm attracted to men. And I've been with a few. But with men, it doesn't matter to me what they look like. You know? It's different. With men, I need to feel like we can connect on a level that's more than just two dudes getting together to talk about last night's game or about scoring pussy. You understand? As long as we have an emotional connection. An intellectual connection. Does that make sense?

LOU

(53-year-old Italian American male, frank, forward, comical, cynical.)

About a year ago, me and Ziad, we were at the Vertex Theater in Dallas. And we were out front after a show. Hangin' out on the sidewalk. Just standin' there, talkin' with a group of friends, when this van pulls up outta nowhere. Nearly comes up over the curb, tires squealin'. And out pops what turns out to be a bunch of fuckin' ICE agents. And they just take Z away. They cuffed him, pushed him into the van, and then they hauled ass outta there. And do you wanna know

what this tough talkin', cocky paesano did to stop 'em? Nothin'. I mean, what could I do, huh? Except just stand there like a gutless idiot.

LOU

(53-year-old Italian American male, frank, forward, comical, cynical.)

Hey, I got an idea. Let's mix things up a bit today. Whatta you think, huh? How about we skip the part where I gotta answer all of your stupid boring questions and then just move ahead to the part where you fill out this here RFC form? And then put your fancy little signature at the bottom of it here? Okay? And, you know, just let the SSA know that I'm still a fuckin' nut-job and that my prognosis ain't changed one fuckin' iota! And then I'll be on my merry way to collect my disability. Thoughts? Suggestions? Suck my dick? Aw, for fucksakes, doc. Why do you gotta put me through this every goddam time? Nothin's changed. I'm the same guy I was a month ago. And the month before that. And the month before that. I ain't sleepin' right. I'm puttin' on more and more weight. I'm angry most of the time. And I just wanna get the fuck outta here so's I can go mill around my apartment for hours on end like a regular depressed person oughtta do. So, like I said, "Nothin's changed." Well, okay, except that maybe I punched my neighbor in the face a coupla weeks ago. And busted his nose. Other than that, though, it's been business as usual. So, I guess you're just gonna sit there, huh...? All right. How much time we got left here...? Looks like forty-five minutes maybe, give or take... Okay, well then let me regale you

with a little anecdote. Whatta you say? Huh? A literary analogy if you will... Jesus Christ... Okay, here we go... The other day, I was sittin' at home thinkin' long and hard about Peanut M&Ms. I mean, I fuckin' love Peanut M&Ms. Who don't, right? Peanut M&Ms first, followed by Peanut *Butter* M&Ms and then by the always trusty Milk Chocolate M&Ms. All o' them other M&Ms - you know the ones I'm talkin' about - them crispy ones, the pretzel ones, caramel, mint... they're all bullshit. They're awful. Fuck those M&Ms. Am I right? Anyways, so I finally decided to get up off my ass and go to the corner store to get some. And since I don't get out much - what with my life bein' a never-endin' flow of emotional sewage - I settled on the Family Size bag of M&Ms. So, I got five of those and then I hightailed it outta there. And wouldn't you know it? I just get through the front door of my apartment buildin', and who do you guess is shufflin' in right behind me...? Mrs. Ostrovsky... the chatty, old Russian widow who lives in the apartment above me. So, I'm doin' my best to get away from her. You know? I mean, all I gotta do really, is to make it to the stairwell, which is about fifteen feet from the front door. And I'm thinkin', "There ain't no way she can outrun me. She's old. And she ain't that nimble." But fuck me if she didn't keep up with me the whole way. So, there we both were. Standin' there at the top of the stairs. And her mouth's goin' a mile a minute and I can hardly understand a fuckin' word she's sayin'. And I'm thinkin' I got only one option here. Right...? I gotta push this bitch down the steps, and then just tell the cops she

fell. But I can't do that, now can I? I mean the only prison I really wanna be in is the one of my own makin'. You see? So, I just hung out there, quiet and resigned. And I let the old widow ramble on and on until she felt like she got everything she needed to get off her chest that day. But you know, the whole time, all I kept thinkin' about was them Peanut M&Ms. And about how I just wanted to go back to my apartment, away from Mrs. Ostrovsky, away from the entire fuckin' world. And just sit there, alone, with nobody tellin' me what to do, or where to go, or how to feel... how to grieve. And just fuckin' eat as much of that candy as I damn well pleased. Because at that moment, it was the only thing that was gonna bring me some joy. It's all I had.

#### ANDRÉ

(46-year-old African American male, analytical, earnest, humorous, but has trouble connecting with others.)

Fannie and me. We missed out. You know? Two black kids dropped in the middle of rural PA. Hemmed in by a bunch of corn-fed white kids. And not too young to understand what it meant to be black at that time and under those conditions. Fannie was scared. I was a little scared too, but mostly just sad. Sad that Mom and Pop took us away from where we belonged. Northview Heights had its share of problems, yeah. But it was home. You know? And at least there, we knew what the dangers were. We knew how to stay out of trouble. And if we did get into trouble... well, we knew our limits. We were good kids. And

no amount of money was ever gonna give me and Fannie what we really needed... community. We needed community way more than we ever needed security. We lost that. And then somewhere along the way, we lost a part of ourselves.

## MONOLOGUES FROM SYD

Drama. Set in New Orleans, LA. Between 7:53 PM and 8:19 PM on Sunday, June 24th, 1973, thirty-two men perished in a fire at The Upstairs Lounge, a sanctuary bar for working-class homosexual men in New Orleans. On that same evening, just several blocks north, nearly a dozen women, including a gifted young nursing student named Sydney (Syd) Trahan, were taken into custody and charged with lewd and lascivious conduct for dancing together at Brady's, a notorious lesbian bar in the French Quarter. Hopeful that the deadly fire and the controversy surrounding its multiple victims might overshadow Syd's arrest, Bud, a reputable blacksmith, and Helen, a God-fearing woman, do everything in their power to curtail the impact of their daughter's transgression on their seemingly near perfect lives.

### BEVERLY

(Early forties female, housewife, pious, opinionated, passionate.)

Let me speak plainly with you, Helen. And this is very difficult for me, because I prefer not to discuss private family matters. And I do not like to use this kinda language, especially as it relates to my first-born son, but Roscoe is a faggot. And that's all there is to it. It's true. And I ain't gonna be one of those Mothers who pretends it's not, who spends sleepless nights beatin' her chest and prayin' to God, and beggin' Him to save her son's soul, tryin' to figure out what she's done wrong. Because I've done nothin' wrong. Roscoe has a disease. A disease of the mind and of the body. He's got the Devil in him. And I want nothin' to do with the Devil.

## BUD

(Early forties male, blacksmith, loving, liberal, softy.)

My old man was a police officer when my Mama died. He kept crazy hours. Nearest relative was my Aunt Minnie on my Mother's side, but she wasn't able to take care of me. She ended up in an institution after a while. So, when my Daddy would go out on patrol, he'd sometimes leave me with one of the neighbors. And when there wasn't anyone around to watch me, he'd drop me off at the local bar. He was good pals with the barkeep. And I didn't mind. Plenty of stuff to keep me entertained. Jukebox, pool table, all sorts of characters comin' and goin'. So, there was this one guy who'd swing by late afternoons. Leroy. He was in his forties, never married, worked part time as a roofer, hardly had two nickels to rub together. And oh boy, he was a talker. Always flappin' his gums, never knew when to keep his mouth shut. On this one particular day, I was lookin' for somethin' to do, so I offered to clean all the cue sticks. I was at the back of the bar when Leroy came stumblin' through the front door. Usually, he'd come in sober and then leave drunk, but on that day, he was already half in the bag. So, he goes to the bar and he orders a double whiskey neat. He downs that pretty quick and then he orders another. After that, he makes his way back to me. He pulls a bar stool over, sits down on it, leans into me, and asks me what I'm doin'. I mean to tell you, his face was all swollen, his teeth were dirty, and his breath smelled god-

awful. So, I backed off a little. And when I did, I could see that he got real sad. I felt bad for him. So, I bolstered myself, moved closer to him, and answered, "I'm just cleanin' these cue sticks, Mister." That's when he smiled, leaned in again, and whispered to me, "I gotta secret that I ain't never shared with no one. Do you wanna hear it?" I gotta tell you, Beau, I did not wanna hear it and I wanted to tell him so, but instead I just said, "Sure, Mister." And this is what he said to me... "Lucifer has put a thorn in my flesh. And God is dead." Then he reached out his hand. It was all cracked and dry and red. I wanted to run or at least call out, but I just couldn't. Then he grabbed my hand real tight and pulled me in to him. He put his other hand around the back of my head and he... he buried his face into my hair. And he breathed in real deep. He stank so bad I thought I might be sick. But before anyone saw what was happenin', Leroy all of sudden just let go of me. He stepped back, his eyes wellin' up with tears. And then he turned and walked backed to the bar, paid his tab, and left. Some things can't be fixed, Beau. And some things are worse than others.

#### HELEN

(Late thirties female, housewife, conflicted, well-meaning, rigid.)

Your Daddy and me didn't raise you that way. The sarcasm. And the spite. The hate. You have no idea what I've had to put up with over the years. The things that've been said to me. The things I've overheard. In church, at social

events, on the street, at card club in my own home. The awful things people have said about you. About my daughter. My flesh and blood. The terrible names they called you. Tomboy, lesbian, dyke. And the nasty stories they told. And God help me, I defended you every single time, even though I expect that some of what I was hearin' was quite possibly the horrifyin' truth. And I did that by callin' it what it was. Trash talk and gossip. "She's a good, Christian girl", I'd remind 'em. "She'll grow out of it; it's only a phase", I'd say. "As a matter of fact, she has her eye on that Landry boy down in East Riverside; I half-expect they'll be married one day". And I'd just repeat them same things over and over, until either they believed me, or they just stopped talkin' about it. And that's what I did. To protect you.

BEAU

(Mid-forties male, unsophisticated, intolerant, conservative.)

When we found out Beverly was pregnant the first time, we prayed to God every day for a healthy baby boy. That's all we wanted. We never thought to ask for more than just that. Roscoe never caused us much trouble. Hardly ever cried. Made a little pig of himself when he ate. Only fussed a little when Beverly put him down for naps. Almost always slept through the night. All the time smilin', curious, sharp as a tack. And, in a lot of ways, he was just a normal kid. A good boy. But I guess that wasn't enough for us. Roscoe was just barely six years old when we found him playin' dress up with his cousin,

Delia. And not even five minutes before that, we had to break the two of 'em up because they was fightin' over who got to play with what baby doll. The rest of the family tried to laugh it off. But not me and Beverly. We knew somethin' wasn't right. So, we got back to prayin'. We prayed hard that Roscoe would turn out okay. We thought that maybe our son's behavior was in some way a message from God; His way of lettin' us know that we'd somehow gotten off track. We needed to get back into God's good graces if Roscoe was gonna grow up and be a proper man. So, we went to church every Sunday and sometimes durin' the week. Prayers every night and every mornin'. Stopped drinkin', stopped goin' out, stopped cursin', stopped gamblin', stopped every goddam thing. But nothin' changed. Roscoe just got more and more peculiar. And the harder we pushed him, the harder he pushed back. When Roscoe was about twelve, thirteen maybe, Beverly caught him messin' around with that Rodger Nunez boy out in the shed in our back yard. She got so mad she locked him in the basement. When I got home that evenin', she was outta her mind; wouldn't give me the key to let him out. So, I had to force the door open with a crowbar. When I finally got to Roscoe, I found him huddled up between the washer and dryer. He was covered in welts and bruises, blood all over the floor. Beverly had dragged him down the stairs by his feet and then beat him bad with one of my belts. His head was twisted somethin' awful and he had dried snot all over his face. Didn't look like he was breathin'. I thought maybe he was dead. I

hoped he was. And that's when I prayed to God to make it so.

SYD

(19-year-old female, nursing student, lesbian, strong-willed, mouthy, wounded.)

I'm angry. A lot. I know it. And I just can't figure out what to do with all that rage sometimes. And you know, when you're angry all the time, you start to forget what it's like to actually be happy. Or you start to question whether you've ever been happy to begin with. It's a hard thing to shake. And some days, I feel like I'm so far gone that I ain't ever gonna be able to find my way back. If there is a way back. And back to what? I can't change who I am. And I suppose that even if I could change, I wouldn't. I don't know why. Maybe it's because I'm stubborn. Or because I'm selfish. Or maybe I'm just plain spiteful and stupid. Or maybe it's because I'm so damned fed up with bein' judged all the time. I mean, if God is love, then why is the world so filled with hate? I haven't done anythin' wrong. Or at least what I have done, it don't feel wrong. Not to me anyway. I just wanna be loved is all.

BUD

(Early forties male, blacksmith, loving, liberal, softy.)

When I found out your Mama was pregnant, I told her I didn't want no girl. But the very first time I held you in my arms and saw your chubby little face and looked into your beautiful brown eyes, I thought differently about 'em. I love

every piece of you, Syd. Which means I love this piece of you, too. I mean, we're all made up of pieces, right? You know, but if we just keep chippin' away at the pieces we don't like, then there won't be anything left. And that don't sound good to me at all.

BUD

(Early forties male, blacksmith, loving, liberal, softy.)

By the time Beau and I made our way over to Iberville Street, there wasn't much left of that buildin'. Just a stack of bricks and broken out windows. The fire was almost out, but we could still feel the heat of it. Lots of smoke and ash in the air. And as we made our way around the corner, we saw a crowd of people carryin' on and pointin' upwards. I heard one guy say, "The only good faggot is a dead faggot." And that's when Beau and I looked up. Took us a few seconds to figure out what everyone was starin' at. Beau was the first to see him. It was Roscoe. He was hangin' out the second-floor window, one arm danglin', the hair on his head completely burned away, his eyes and mouth wide open. It looked like one of the glass panes came down on him, trappin' him there. Beau begged 'em to pull Roscoe outta there; he even offered to do it himself. But they just left him up there for almost two hours. And them folks on the street... they just kept pointin' at him and mockin' him. And I wondered to myself, what must it be like to have to hide who you are from the world? To have to somehow take that burden of pain and grief and to put it up over your shoulder. Up on

a shelf somewhere in the dark. Way up high. And to just leave it there. Because if you don't tuck it away outta reach, you might not make it through another day.

SYD

(19-year-old female, nursing student, lesbian, strong-willed, mouthy, wounded.)

I think maybe it was a Monday, because I remember the smell of red beans cookin'. I grabbed the wash basket off the couch, and I went out back. And as I was headin' to collect the laundry, I saw this yellow-rumped warbler fly out of a shrub, dive into the grass under the Cyprus tree, and then shoot back up and settle down on the clothesline. She just perched herself there at the far end, a few inches from the post, facin' away from me. So, I moved in closer. And when I did, she turned 'round real quick. Looked me dead in the eye. Cocked her head. And that's when I spotted a caterpillar in her beak. It was bright orange. Tiny little thing. And so I thought to myself... what if... what if I could get my hand on the clothesline? And tug at it? Well, I just might surprise that warbler. You know? And maybe cause her to drop the caterpillar. Give it a chance to get away. So, I reached up real slow. But before I could get my hand in place, she bent her head back and swallowed that caterpillar whole. And then she flew off. And you know, it made me real sad, Mama. Sadder than I oughta've been, considerin' it was just some grubby old bird and a stupid little bug. So, I set the basket on the ground and turned to see one of Daddy's work shirts

hangin' there. I pulled the pins from it, took it down, and I put it on. Then I took a step forward and pressed my forehead against the clothesline. Leaned into a bit to check the tension. Then I rose up on my toes and rested my chin there. Nodded my head a few times. And then walked myself forward until the rope met my neck. I remember breathin' in real deep before I let my knees fall forward and my heels kick up. I dropped quick. Felt a sharp pain in my throat and then flipped backwards on to the grass. I laid there for a long while until I could stop coughin' and catch my breath. And when my nerves settled, I got up, dusted myself off, pulled the rest of the wash from the line, and brought it into the house to fold.

