

**MISCONCEPTIONS**  
A play by Stephen Wangh

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## SCENE BREAKDOWN / CASTING / DOUBLING

NOTE: Using eight actors instead of seven allows some extra flexibility.

SCENE	ACTOR 1	ACTOR 2	ACTOR 3	ACTOR 4	ACTOR 5	ACTOR 6	ACTOR 7
Phone call	HARRIET	DARCELLE	TSA / RUNNING				
Airplane	HARRIET		ATTEND		DOSTOY		
G. C. Parkway	HARRIET	DARCELLE					
Jorge's house	HARRIET			JORGE			
Fall Down 1	HARRIET	DARCELLE			ALIM		
Zoo	HARRIET			JORGE			CORA
Sophia	HARRIET		RUNNING	CHORUS	CHORUS		SOPHIA
Clinic	HARRIET	MORRISON		CHORUS	CHORUS	CHORUS	COUNSELOR
Sears 1	HARRIET		MOTHER				SEARS
Spotting	HARRIET		ALICIA	JORGE			
Men	HARRIET	TRAN. #2	TRAN. #3	JORGE	AMIGO 1	AMIGO 2	TRAN. #1
With Darcelle	HARRIET	DARCELLE					SEARS
Dr. Tiller's story	HARRIET	DARCELLE	CNN/P- CHOIC	TERRY/WALSH	O'REILLY	ROEDER	SEARS
Jorge&Darcelle		DARCELLE		JORGE			
End of act I	HARRIET			JORGE			SEARS
Interlude				JORGE			
Kissling	HARRIET	DAR/CHISHOLM	MOTHER				KISSLING
Gardner	HARRIET	GARDNER	RUNNING	CHORUS	ALIM		
With Mother	HARRIET		MOTHER	CHORUS	CHORUS	CHORUS	SOPHIA
Jorge's plea	HARRIET		ALICIA	JORGE	SINGER	SINGER	
Rape Story	HARRIET	DARCELLE					
With Lawyer	HARRIET					LAWYER	
Sears 2							SEARS
Fetus	HARRIET				FETUS	LAWYER	
Fall Down 2	HARRIET			JORGE/ABRAHAM	ALIM	ISSAC	
Kali	HARRIET	KALI	MOTHER	JORGE	SINGER	SINGER	SINGER

**PRODUCTION STYLE:** This play is about abortion, but it is also about complexity, and about the difficulty of distinguishing art from life and performance from presence. In *MISCONCEPTIONS*, the actors and the audience are present with each other. HARRIET often speaks directly to the audience, slipping in and out of real-time story-telling and remembered emotion. And all the actors can break the fourth wall.

The set should be minimal. Rather than exiting, actors should retreat to the sides of the stage or sit behind or beside the audience. The play requires a few acting levels, simple furniture, and perhaps a projection screen. Titles identifying several of the speakers may be spoken or projected on the screen.

HARRIET is a visual and performance artist. The play is being presented in her studio which contains art materials including easels, cloth and picture frames. At several locations hang lists (shopping lists, names of bombed cities, of guns, of paint colors). Ideally, the play should be performed in a studio loft space, with the audience seated on several levels. To reach their seats, perhaps the audience must walk through the studio.

We should have the sense that HARRIET is the creator of the play we are watching, so sometimes we might see her controlling, creating or influencing the production in real time. For instance, she might indicate a sound or light cue, move the furniture or hand a costume to an actor. The theatrics – the sound effects, lights, and projections – should reveal their mechanics. For instance, the chicken feathers might fall from a pillowcase.

Sometimes during the play, HARRIET works on her art-making in different media. At several moments, the “action” of the play might pause while she works. One of the works she returns to several times is a weaving or braid that becomes an umbilical in the image for the Lawyer-Fetus scene, and then becomes the Queensboro Bridge and/or the Roosevelt Island tram for the final scene.

*All Fall Down*, is a performance art piece which HARRIET has made about children during war. (The style of this work might recall Mona Hatoum’s *The Negotiating Table* [<https://vimeo.com/217220004>].) It should be updated to reference recent war scenes.

**THE CAST:** The play can be performed by four (or five) women and three men. Except for the actress playing HARRIET, all the cast members play multiple roles. The role of DARCELLE is meant to be played by an African American actress who also plays KALI. The child, ALICIA, her voice, is spoken by one of the “offstage” actors. Her presence onstage can be represented by an object (backpack, balloon, hoodie), each of which could be the same color.

**THE MUSIC:** The lyrics of the Spanish Lullaby are from *Bodas de sangre*, by Federico García Lorca. The music, by Christina Hughes, is available as an mp3.

## ACT I

*As the house lights fade, silhouetted upstage, we see the cast slowly performing a movement ritual which we do not understand. This movement continues throughout the next scene. HARRIET enters and cues the cell phone as she lies down. We hear a cell phone ringing. Perhaps we hear several phones. The sound is both a cell phone advisory to the audience before the play and also the beginning of the play. The ringing sound grows slowly while somewhere above the stage, dimly lit, we see a WOMAN RUNNING.*

*A low light reveals HARRIET, asleep. HARRIET reaches for her phone. As HARRIET swipes the phone, DARCELLE appears in another space. Behind her, we see a painting of the goddess KALI.*

*The ringing stops. The RUNNING WOMAN slowly fades from view.*

DARCELLE

You awake?

HARRIET

I am now.

DARCELLE

Did you see the new *Vogue*?

*HARRIET addresses the audience.*

HARRIET

That's how this all began: that phone call. Wait a minute...

*At this point, HARRIET interrupts the action to make any necessary House Announcements (exits, no photography, etc.) or she invites the House Manager onstage to do so.*

Okay. From the top.

DARCELLE

Did you see the new *Vogue*?

HARRIET

No, why?

DARCELLE

They got it, honey! Listen: "By juxtaposing the images of the wars in Syria and Ukraine, to which we have all become so inured..."

HARRIET

Darcelle...

DARCELLE

"...with the inescapable nakedness of the human body – her own body..."

HARRIET

Darcelle...

DARCELLE

" – Harriet Byrne's *All Fall Down* interrogates our ability..."

*HARRIET continues trying to interrupt.*

DARCELLE

Wait, it gets better. "The moment when she extracts a tampon and uses her own menstruation as the medium for her graffiti, concretizes the chasm between the male and the fem ..."

HARRIET

Stop, Darcelle. Now.

DARCELLE

They really got it.

HARRIET

We gotta postpone.

DARCELLE

Postpone?

HARRIET

The gig at MoMA.

DARCELLE

It's the day after tomorrow. It's in the contract.

HARRIET

I can't do it. There's no blood.

*The action freezes as HARRIET and then DARCELLE each speak to the audience.*

Well, she freaked – completely freaked.

DARCELLE

Damn right I did. Two years I'd spent beating on MoMA's revolving door. (To HARRIET) Honey, you do not say "no" to the Museum of Modern Art.

HARRIET

But if I'm...

DARCELLE

Don't matter if you're Georgia O'Keeffe. "MoMA" says, "Show," you show.

*We hear ALICIA calling from another room.*

ALICIA

Mommy!

HARRIET

(To ALICIA) I'm coming, 'Lissie! (To DARCELLE) But if there's no blood...

DARCELLE

We'll get you some goddamned chicken blood. The audience won't know...

HARRIET

I will. It's real, it's my blood. That's why they gasp. It's the shock.

ALICIA

Mommy!

DARCELLE

How about if we kill a live chicken, will that be shock enough?

HARRIET

Or maybe I could just cut myself...

DARCELLE

Absolutely not!

HARRIET

But if...

DARCELLE

Harriet sweetie, I'm meeting you at LaGuardia at three fifteen, and you'd better be on that plane from Des Moines.

*BLACKOUT on DARCELLE, the light fades a little more slowly on the KALI painting. HARRIET begins to pack things in a bag.*

ALICIA

Mommy!

HARRIET

I'll be right there, honey! Open your suitcase! We're going to New York for your birthday.

ALICIA

Where's my Fish?

*HARRIET tosses FISH PUPPET into bag.*

HARRIET

Got it.

*ALICIA yells from the other room, but we can only make out her last word.*

ALICIA

... party!

HARRIET

Next week, when we come back honey. Your friends are all invited. (*She turns to the audience.*) So, Alicia is screaming, I'm stuffing toys into my handbag, the toast burns, I can't find the keys... so I just didn't put two and two together. I'm always so regular, but all I could think about was: This is my big break in New York. In the TSA line is when it hit me.

*A barely audible drumbeat begins. HARRIET joins the movement ritual and now we can see it is a TSA line, with people removing articles of clothing, over and over.*

HARRIET

I'm totally scattered, right, so I forget to take off my belt, which has this big shrapnel buckle. The alarm bell rings, they pull me aside and pat me down, and I'm standing there, with my arms spread, and sweet, little Alicia is staring up at me like I'm the scarecrow from the *Wizard of Oz*. And the woman in blue is touching me up and down, and when she reaches under my arms, one finger brushes against my breast, and: Oh, my God...

*The drumbeats stop.*

I'm pregnant!

TSA WOMAN

Congratulations!

*The cast looks at HARRIET for a moment.*

You can put your arms down now, dearie.

*The cast picks up the clothes and exits. We hear a subtler drumbeat slowly building to takeoff.*

HARRIET

I don't think Alicia heard me... God, I hope not. And now my mind is trying not to think what it's thinking. So, on the way to the gate, I stop to buy *Vogue*, to see the review, right? And then, you know, gate number, take Alicia to the ladies' room, stand in line number two, walk the gangplank, find the seats... "You sit by the window, honey, here's your iPad." I lift the bag into the bin, I sit, I stop... I breathe.

FLIGHT ATTENDANT

... In the unlikely case of a loss of cabin pressure, an oxygen mask will appear above you, like magic. Place the mask on your face and then help your child who might be freaking out by now...

*The FLIGHT ATTENDANT'S voice fades under.*

HARRIET

So, we're taking off, Alicia opens her video game, and I open *Vogue* to look for my review, and right away, the table of contents stops me cold: "The World Reacts to the Overturning of *Roe*." Shit. And "My Abortion Saved My Life." No, no, no. And "Five Movies About Abortion to Watch Now." Woah! My body goes numb, my hands start to shake, the magazine falls between the seats, and when Alicia looks over and smiles up at me ... I just lose it completely. "Mommy has to go to the bathroom, honey." Thank God the toilet is open. I slide the lock, and immediately I'm shuddering and sobbing.



HARRIET (cont.)

And all I can think is: "I can't handle this, not now... I can't." (*HARRIET breathes*) And right then, the plane hits these air pockets.

*Drum beat. HARRIET'S head hits the toilet wall.*

HARRIET

"Ow!"

*An electronic bell sounds.*

FLIGHT ATTENDANT

The captain has turned on the seat belt sign. Please return to your seats and fasten your seat belts.

HARRIET

But then...

*Another drum beat. HARRIET lurches again, steadies herself.*

Art! Make art!

*Another drum beat.*

Whatever shit-storm life throws at you, you make art, right? That's what artists do. Think of all the great artists who turned their tortured lives into art: Frida Kahlo, Sylvia Plath...

*Magical sound. FYODOR DOSTOYEVSKY appears and speaks with a Russian accent.*

DOSTOEVSKY

At first, art imitates life. Then life will imitate art.

HARRIET

Dostoyevsky.

DOSTOEVSKY

Then life will find its very existence from the arts.

*Magical sound. DOSTOYEVSKY vanishes.*

HARRIET

Yes, yes! So, I wash my face, fold open the door, and walk back to my seat. And I start making lists. It's what I do.

*Either HARRIET speaks these words or we see the list that HARRIET is writing, pausing to think:*

Conception, contraception, self-deception, mis...perception,  
Pro-Choice, Pro-Life, pro-test,  
Pro-pagate, copulate, eliminate, terminate...

*An electronic bell sounds.*

FLIGHT ATTENDANT

Welcome to New York's LaGuardia airport where the local time is 3:05 pm. Be careful opening the overhead bins as your luggage and your entire life may have shifted during the flight. And thank you for flying with us. We know... you have a choice.

*An electronic bell sounds.*

*Packing up, HARRIET places the FISH PUPPET in her handbag.*

*DARCELLE enters. She and HARRIET hug.*

HARRIET

Darcelle was right there at the baggage thingy to drive us to Jorge's. She's one of those hard-core New Yorkers who keep a car on the street in Brooklyn, even though she has to move it to the other side three times a week.

*They walk silently. At first DARCELLE pulls the suitcase, while HARRIET holds the invisible ALICIA'S hand, with her backpack. Then they switch.*

Back when I was teaching art across the hall from her biology class, it was Darcelle's car that allowed us to escape on weekends.

*HARRIET and DARCELLE sit beside each other.*

DARCELLE

Seatbelt, Alicia. Glad to be back in The City, Harri?

HARRIET

Yes... and no. (*turning to us*) Actually, I've been making more work and better work at the U of I than I'd made in New York, but you don't say that to a New Yorker. As we pulled out, I put my phone on "record." This next was on the Grand Central Parkway.

DARCELLE

We can get a live chicken in Brooklyn. There's a halal slaughterhouse near me.

HARRIET

Good.

DARCELLE

Who's going to kill it during the performance?

HARRIET

Maybe you can get a butcher from that slaughterhouse?

DARCELLE

I've got 100 biology tests to grade tonight. They just made me head of the science faculty.

HARRIET

Congratulations! We can tell him it's just three days. And that we can pay for his time.

DARCELLE

A friend of mine runs a restaurant in Dumbo. He knows those butchers.

HARRIET

Thanks.

*HARRIET and DARCELLE exchange looks. They sit silently for a while. HARRIET looks back at ALICIA before she speaks in a semi-whisper.*

HARRIET

Darcelle...?

DARCELLE

What?

HARRIET

After this gig, I'm done with *All Fall Down*.

DARCELLE

After this gig, you're going to have museums crawling up your ass.

HARRIET

Shh. I'm working on a new piece. That's why I'm recording...

DARCELLE

Recording...? What new piece?!

HARRIET

About being pregnant. That's why we need the chicken blood.

DARCELLE

You're kidding.

HARRIET

And about abortion.

DARCELLE

You're not kidding.

HARRIET

So, we gotta put *Fall Down* on hold.

DARCELLE

"Hold?!" Girl, there is no "hold." I got three calls today: L.A., Oslo and Stuttgart. They read the piece in *Vogue*.

HARRIET

But this is happening to me – *in* me – now.

DARCELLE

Damn!

HARRIET

115<sup>th</sup>. We turn here... you remember?

DARCELLE

I remember. You want me to wait here so I can take you down to the studio?

HARRIET

No, you go on home before the traffic hits. I'll take a cab.

*As HARRIET begins to climb a stairway, with ALICIA'S backpack in her hand. Sound of drumming begins softly.*

DARCELLE (*turning to the audience*)

Maybe I could have stopped her right then. Probably not. When Harriet gets something in her head...

*The sound of car horns. DARCELLE exits.*

*As HARRIET walks up the stairs, the drumming sound grows louder.*

HARRIET (*to us*)

The stairway up to Jorge's apartment. (*to ALICIA*) You hear your Papi, Alicia?

*HARRIET addresses us again.*

HARRIET (*cont.*)

Colors and odors: Mottled, gray marble stairs. Stale urine, cheap marijuana, and decades of roach poison. El olor del hogar. The first four years of Alicia's life, *this* was home. So, why am I doing leaving her here with the creator of this calamity?

*More stair-climbing as the drumming grows. HARRIET knocks. More drumming. She knocks again. The drumming stops. JORGE calls from offstage.*

JORGE

¡Vengo!

*JORGE comes to meet HARRIET and ALICIA.*

JORGE (*to ALICIA*)

Hola, Chiquita. (*JORGE bends down to hug ALICIA. He looks up at HARRIET.*) Hello, Harriet.

HARRIET

Hello.

JORGE

You want to do some drumming with Papi?

HARRIET

Jorge, I gotta tell you something. Alicia, you can turn on the TV in the other room.

JORGE

No, she can't. ¡Cabrona! ¿De quién es la casa?

HARRIET

Jorge, I need to talk to you. ¡Déjala mirar la maldita televisión durante tres minutos!

JORGE (*under his breath*)

¡Qué puta!

*JORGE walks toward the "other room" with the backpack. Sound of a TV cartoon. Offstage, JORGE and ALICIA laugh. HARRIET composes herself.*

*JORGE returns.*

JORGE

Okay, what is it? Harriet? Are you okay?

HARRIET

I'm pregnant.

JORGE

¡Mierda!

*Ten seconds of awkward silence while we listen to the sound of the cartoon and canned laughter from the other room.*

HARRIET

"You." And "Probably not."

JORGE

What??

HARRIET

The answers to your next two questions: Who's the father? And: are you going to keep the baby?

JORGE

Me? You mean that night I came down to Philly to babysit while you did your gig?

HARRIET

Yes.

JORGE

That one quicky for Old Times' sake?

HARRIET

Seems like Old Time doesn't have a sake.

JORGE

¿Segura?

HARRIET

There hasn't been anybody else.... For me.

JORGE

It was good.

HARRIET

It was always good. Too bad it wasn't always me, you lying, philandering, shithead.

JORGE

Right. *(Pause.)* And what do you mean, "Probably not?"

HARRIET

Probably... I'll get an abortion. I'm trying to figure it out.

JORGE

Oh.

*HARRIET takes the cell phone out of her pocket.*

HARRIET

I hope it's okay I'm recording this.

JORGE

You're what?!

HARRIET

I'm going to keep a journal, talk to people, record interviews, for my next piece.

JORGE

What next piece?

HARRIET

I don't know yet. Pregnancy, women, abortion... death. I don't know.

JORGE

Are you fucking crazy? This is you and me, Harriet! This is our life. And you're thinking about your goddamned art?

HARRIET

My "goddamned art?"

JORGE

Isn't there enough bullshit about this in the news every day now?

HARRIET

About *Roe* and the *Dobbs* decision, and about women's rights and politics... But what just the question: How do I decide if I want an abortion?

JORGE

So, you *are* going to have an abortion?

HARRIET

I don't know. Or were you expecting me to raise another kid as a single mother?

*The TV cartoon goes off. After a short pause, JORGE and HARRIET speak quickly, under their breaths.*

JORGE

You're a single mother because you walked out that door and moved to fucking Kansas.

HARRIET

Iowa.

JORGE

Whatever.

HARRIET

When I found fishnets in your sock drawer. Damned right I did.

JORGE

*Mea culpa, okay? Mea maxima culpa.*

HARRIET

Oh, drop the dime-store Catholicism. The only Catholic ritual you respect is Mardi Gras.

JORGE

But honey, honey, if you are pregnant, that changes...



Nothing!

HARRIET

But we could still...

JORGE

You said you had a condom.

HARRIET

You were on the pill.

JORGE

Not after we split up. Why would I be?

HARRIET

JORGE

And how would I know that? You never... (to ALICIA who has entered) Hi kiddo, let's do some drumming, and then maybe you and me can make a birthday cake for you, how 'bout?

*JORGE exits. HARRIET turns to us.*

HARRIET

He didn't need to say any more. I was already beating myself up: "Artist... Feminist... Idiot." I *had* told him... I'm sure I had.

*DRUMMING begins and then fades into WAR MUSIC. Alternating flashes of light and blackouts.*

*HARRIET strips to a chemise to perform All Fall Down at MoMA. We see photos of children in the wars in Syria, Chechnya and Ukraine. Perhaps some of them are projected on HARRIET's body. They might come from sources like:*

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QiH6q571aeA>  
<https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-wales-61250092>  
<https://news.sky.com/story/ukraine-war-the-children-living-learning-and-growing-up-in-kharkivs-underground-metro-station-12604724>

*We hear children singing "Ring Around the Rosy," while HARRIET writes the names of cities and towns we recognize from recent war stories like Mariupol, Grozny,*

*Bucha, Sana'a, and Aleppo. Now they hear children's voices  
are saying things like:*

#### CHILDREN'S VOICES

I was scared. All the time I thought, "I'm going to die." I saw dogs eat Russian corpses.

I saw a man blown to pieces. I saw people running around in their underwear because a bomb had hit their house. And I thought, this is going to happen to my family, too.

They were beheading the children.

I lost my friend; she picked up a mine thinking it was a ball.

I've seen and heard everything, but I'm not going anywhere. I'm going to stay here till the very end.

*ALIM, the butcher, enters with a knife and a roll of butcher  
paper. The sounds of war, of a chicken squawking in fear.*

#### ALIM

Bismillah Allahu Akbar!

*Drawing the head and neck of a chicken from between her  
legs, HARRIET writes "help me!" in red, in Arabic in  
large letters: ساعدوني!*

HARRIET (*calling for help*)

Saeidouni!

*Blackout. The War sounds begin to fade.*

*As the images of All Fall Down begin to fade, we hear the  
sound of wind. Chicken feathers fall from above.*

*When the lights come up, HARRIET is dressed.*

#### HARRIET

At the museum, *All Fall Down* went off really well.

*She washes red color off her hands. ALIM sweeps the floor.*

#### HARRIET

The audience seemed shocked... in a good way. The *Times* came. The butcher cried.

*DARCELLE enters near ALIM, but speaks to HARRIET.*

DARCELLE

He told me he was a child when his family came from Syria. I was afraid he wouldn't return for the next show.

*DARCELLE joins ALIM. They sweep up the chicken feathers. For several seconds, we listen to the sweeping. HARRIET is cleaning the knife and rolling up the butcher paper.*

ALIM

When I was a young man, sometimes I would cry at my job. Before I understood in my heart: What I do is sacred work.

DARCELLE

But still you wanted to be a butcher?

ALIM

Butchers are two kinds: those who remember that every sacrifice requires the blessing of Allah, and those who only speak the words. Every day, I kill hundreds of goats and sheep and chickens. It is my job, so it is easy to forget. But today, when I see the stories Harriet tells, and when I see those photographs of Aleppo, I remember, I remember what sacrifice is.

DARCELLE

What do you mean?

*The sound of DARCELLE'S broom provides a background to ALIM's words.*

You know the story of Ibrahim and Ishaq? In the Qur'an, it says: "When his son was old enough to work with him, Ibrahim spoke, saying, 'My son, I have had a dream that I must sacrifice you. What do you think of this?' And Ishaq replies, 'Father, fulfill whatever you are commanded to do and you will find me patient, by the will of God.'"

DARCELLE

That is so interesting.

ALIM

Why do you say so?

DARCELLE

In the Bible version, Abraham doesn't ask. It is Isaac who asks, "Where is the lamb?" And his father just says, "The Lord will provide the lamb, my son." And I always wondered, why doesn't Abraham tell his son what he's going to do to him?

*DARCELLE and ALIM start to leave.*

HARRIET

Tell his son?? What about his wife? Why doesn't Abraham tell Sarah? After all that woman went through to have children.

*HARRIET signals a lighting change or plays the recording as CORA appears.*

Men have no idea what it is to bear a child. Not the wonder. Not the agony. None of it.

CORA

Matt was a beautiful person and really like emotionally adept most of the time huh-huh (*laugh*)... but I do remember him being much more cavalier than I wanted him to be about it.

HARRIET

Cora. She was my first interview. She had told me, when we were in college, about what she went through.

CORA

Like because as a woman...you're the one with the warm tinglies and you're the one who has to seek out the doctors and you're the one who has to deal with the shit.

HARRIET

Cora is not her real name, but she's a real person, and these are her actual words. You need to understand: A lot of this story is fiction. Even I'm a fiction. But the women who were interviewed for this piece, and all their words... they're all real.

CORA

I remember him just saying, "Well, it's just a potential life. And it seems like this isn't what we want." You know and ummm, which was really true... but shit, if you wait long enough that thing is gonna come out of your body and walk around the earth you know what I mean? But I feel bad for guys in this situation, I have to say, because I don't think there's anything that motherfucker could have said that would have been perfect. Like there's nothing that's gonna make you feel much better, actually.

HARRIET

And as I listened to her, I realized: Every pregnancy story has a man in it somewhere, right? I'm gonna need to interview men too. Shit.

*JORGE is singing the Spanish Lullaby to ALICIA at the side of the stage.*

*HARRIET picks up her cell phone and presses one button. We hear a ringing. The ellipses are pauses while HARRIET listens. When JORGE answers, he stops singing, but ALICIA keeps singing until HARRIET says "Hi 'Licia."*

HARRIET

Hi, Jorge. How's she doing?... Sure. Hi, 'Licia... No, honey, I don't know where the fish puppet is. I thought he was in your bag.... Yes, I'll look. So, where did Papi take you? ...Nice, and what kinds of animals did you...? Yeah, bears do sleep a lot... The money house...? Oh, the *monkey* house, right. And why were the people laughing?... On top of the other monkey?... Oh, to make babies. I understand.... For your birthday? So, what did you decide you want?... Oh, honey... I don't know if we can get you a sister for your birthday, it's not.... Sure, if you want to get back to your game. Let me speak with your father. Hello, Jorge. Just a sec. I'm putting you on speaker-phone.

*HARRIET tears or breaks something.*

What the fuck! What did you say to her...?!

JORGE

Nothing. I just explained to her that's the way that monkeys make...

HARRIET

Jesus!

JORGE

Then she just came up with that birthday idea. I have no idea why...

HARRIET

Oh, she's talked about that before, it's just that now.... Fuck, fuck, fucking zoo!

JORGE

It was all pretty weird, a little girl staring at a baboon, with this big, red cock...

HARRIET

That reminds me... I want to ask ...

JORGE

What reminds you?

HARRIET

When I pick up Alicia for dinner, I'm going to drop off a recorder for you.

JORGE

For me to...?

HARRIET

... to talk with men, some friends of yours maybe, about pregnancy and abortion. A recorder and some permission forms.

JORGE

You want me to help you wash our dirty laundry in public?

HARRIET

Hey, a lot of women would just say: People without a uterus have nothing to say on the subject.

JORGE

You mean I should be grateful?

HARRIET

¿Por favor?

JORGE (*shaking his head*)

¿Que locura!

HARRIET

Gracias.

*JORGE exits, HARRIET begins to cut the butcher paper.*

Half the time I think he's right. It's crazy to be doing interviews while this... is growing inside me. The other half, it just seems... ironic.

*SOPHIA appears. While she speaks, the RUNNING WOMAN appears in the distance. While SOPHIA speaks, HARRIET cuts the butcher paper.*

SOPHIA

When the pregnancy happened, I'd gotten my first professional theatre job.

HARRIET

Sophia Rose. Her story was just laced with irony.

SOPHIA

I was doing a version of *Medea* ...and that was my favorite play. That was the play that I saw when I was nine years old where I said "I'm going to be an actress." And here I was in it. I was the Greek chorus. *(She laughs.)*

*The CHORUS speaks in a declamatory style.*

CHORUS

O Earth, and the far shining  
Ray of the Sun, look down, look down upon  
This poor lost woman...

SOPHIA

I didn't tell anybody in the cast I was pregnant. I didn't tell my director, I didn't want any possibility I'd get fired, and I knew that I was going to not have the baby 'cause I had to do this—I *had* to do this thing! It's kind of ironic too, isn't it? Um, 'cause I'm like the voice of conscience in this play, you know, and trying to get *Medea* to not do what she's going to do.

CHORUS

...look, before she raises  
The hand of murder against her flesh and blood.  
O heavenly light, hold back her hand.

SOPHIA

So, then the real irony was that um, the production got cancelled. So, I could have had that baby.

*The CHORUS ends their dramatic movement and the  
RUNNING WOMAN fades.*

HARRIET *(to us)*

Theater is just so... weird, you know what I mean? So many words and emotions, and... the pretense. No visual artist would try to paint a picture using such... caustic materials.

SOPHIA

And then I met my current partner, who is the first man I have actually ever been with who I knew that I wanted to spend the rest of my life with... and he has a vasectomy.

*SOPHIA laughs for a moment. She and the CHORUS vanish.*

HARRIET

So, tell me: what is it that makes Medea so fascinating...? I mean after 2500 years, right? Is it because she's a woman who gets revenge on her macho husband? Or is it because she gets that revenge by slaughtering her own children? And why the whole *Deus ex Machina*? Why does Medea need to be saved by Apollo at the end? Is it because Euripides was a man?

*During the next few lines, HARRIET sets up or reveals a WOMEN'S CLINIC.*

Not a good story to have in my head when I went to the clinic.

COUNSELOR

So, you're clear that you don't want to raise...?

HARRIET

...another child? No, actually, I'm not clear. But my daughter is five, and my work...  
*(her voice trails off)*

COUNSELOR

I understand. Most women who seek abortions already have children.

HARRIET

Really? *(A pause.)* I didn't know that.

COUNSELOR

They know what it takes to bring up a child. The cost, and how much it takes out of you.

HARRIET

Right.

COUNSELOR

But it must be your decision.

HARRIET

Of course.

COUNSELOR

You're not under any pressure from anyone...?



No. But...

HARRIET

“But?”

COUNSELOR

HARRIET

Well, yesterday, my daughter said... she wants a baby sister.

Does she know...?

COUNSELOR

I haven't told her.

HARRIET

And what do you want?

COUNSELOR

I just need to know how long I've got to make up my mind.

HARRIET

Up to nine weeks you can have a medical abortion... with the pill.

COUNSELOR

Mefi-something?

HARRIET

Mifepristone and Misoprostol. And if the law changes, we can prescribe Misoprostol alone. After nine weeks, we perform a suction curettage up to 16 weeks. After that you'd need a D&E...

COUNSELOR

And I'm...?

HARRIET

Probably week seven. But it's important that you take the time you need to decide. The more sure you are that you want to terminate the pregnancy, the better you'll feel afterward.

COUNSELOR

*Lights dim out on COUNSELOR.*

HARRIET (*to us*)

I knew what she meant: If I'm not really, *really* sure about this, I might just feel terrible afterwards... right?

*The music stops.*

Shit, shit, shit. Make a list, Harriet. Make a list!

*HARRIET argues with herself. Other voices speak the indented lines. The slash marks indicate pauses.*

HARRIET and CHORUS MEMBERS (***Bolded lines are full-group***)

I am frightened.

Or maybe excited?

Excited?? to give up the piece I've been working on for 3 years?

You're making a new piece now.

Am I?

And Alicia will have the little sister – or brother – she's asking for.

And when will I sleep?

You'll manage. You did it before.

I was married before. /

If I have this child, I will always resent her for ruining my career.

**If you abort this baby, you'll always regret the loss.**

*HARRIET touches her belly and pauses.*

Pregnancy is nine months of bloat, and childbirth is excruciating... and I will look fat.

People on the bus will give up their seats for you.

Oh, great! /

One fucking mistake!

No, Harriet: one mistake, fucking /

This is not what I had planned!

**Life is never what you planned. Never.**

*HARRIET puts on an apron and begins to work on another art project, but can't concentrate.*

*The sound of rain. Perhaps it rains on HARRIET. While HARRIET speaks, the CHORUS turns slowly as a group.*

HARRIET

Sometimes you just can't know what's the right thing to do. One night, years ago, I was driving in the rain. It was raining so hard that the water was starting to pool on the road. And the car began to hydroplane. We're still moving forward down the road, but

HARRIET (cont.)

the car is spinning to face across the road and then backwards... Spinning in slow motion, and we just sashay down the road at 40 miles per hour. And I couldn't remember: Do you turn into the spin? No, first you pump the brakes and then you turn... And the headlights of the oncoming traffic are slicing through the rain. And there's no one to ask. And no time. But I also know it won't help to panic. That's what this was like. Life-and-death, no time, and no one to ask.

*The RAIN stops. If she is wet, HARRIET dries herself with the apron.*

Coming out of the clinic, it seemed like every other woman on the street had kids. Five years old, seven years old. Hell, there was even a man carrying twins! Then, this woman is walking towards me pushing a stroller down the sidewalk, and suddenly I'm dashing through the traffic to the other side of the street. What the hell is happening to me? Oooo...my breast: My breast is remembering that feeling of the milk dropping down. So sweet, so scary, so... (*She sobs for a moment.*) I dig into my handbag for a hankie, and ...

*HARRIET pulls out a FISH PUPPET and stares at it.*

HARRIET

Ha!! There you are.

FISH PUPPET

Pull yourself together, Harriet!

HARRIET

What?!

*Magical sound. TONI MORRISON appears.*

TONI MORRISON

There is no time for despair, no place for self-pity, no need for silence, no room for fear.

HARRIET

What the...?

FISH PUPPET

Toni Morrison.

TONI MORRISON

This is *precisely* the time when artists go to work. We speak, we write, we do language. That is how civilizations heal.

*Magical sound. TONI MORRISON disappears.*

FISH PUPPET

I thought you liked her work.

HARRIET

Oh, go jump in a lake.

FISH PUPPET

Go to work, Harriet! Do the next interview. Do it!

*HARRIET puts the FISH PUPPET away and cues a recording. JUDITH SEARS appears.*

JUDITH SEARS

I actually grew up in Wichita, Kansas in a...very Christian home. Um, we went to church every Sunday...

*HARRIET pauses the recording.*

HARRIET

This is Judith Sears. But that's not the part I wanted to play for you.

*HARRIET searches for the right bit.*

JUDITH SEARS

...if you continue to make out with someone for long enough, eventually you'll take off your clothes...

*HARRIET resets the recording to a few seconds earlier.*

HARRIET

Here.

*HARRIET pushes "play" again.*

JUDITH SEARS

I got involved with a guy my freshman year of college and I didn't know anything about the way guys thought or, you know, the difference in our sexual drives or, you know, like if you continue to make out with someone for long enough, eventually you'll take off your clothes and have sex, you know: X number of hours alone together making out and eventually it just happens, and I was really like devastated and disappointed when it did happen.

*HARRIET stops the recorder and turns to us.*

HARRIET

Judith spoke to me from the Christian pregnancy center where she was a counselor.

*HARRIET fast forwards and pushes “play” again.*

JUDITH SEARS

...and so I go into Dillon’s grocery and I buy the pregnancy test and I go into the bathroom and I pee in the stick – cuz I was too afraid to take it home. I swear the second pink line showed up before the first one did. *(she laughs)* And, like it was um, I feel so funny saying it, but I was like instantly in love with that child. Like, I was like “Oh my gosh, I have life inside of me,” like in all this denial I was just like, “I am carrying a baby” ...and I walked out of the grocery store like feeling this sense of love and protectiveness that I’ve never felt in anything, and I just went home and sat on the couch, and just put my hand on my belly and talked to the – to it – and I was just in love with it, you know. But then at the same time, I remember my mom coming in, and she was irritated about something and I was like, “Oh, man, she’s irritated about *this*,” like – *(laughs)*... That was just such a motivator, just like, I cannot talk to her about this, I can’t –

*HARRIET’s cell phone rings. HARRIET stops the record function and picks up the call. JUDITH SEARS slowly vanishes.*

*MOTHER speaks from the side of the stage.*

MOTHER

Harriet?

HARRIET

Hi, Mom.

MOTHER

That’s such a lovely review you got.

HARRIET

Thanks, Mom.

MOTHER

But they said something about a chicken? Here in St. Louis, there wasn’t a chicken. Or did I miss something?

HARRIET

No, Mom. There was no chicken at the CAM.

MOTHER

You're angry with me?

HARRIET

No, Mom. But I want to tell you something...

MOTHER

I know I shouldn't call when you're doing a piece. But I that review was so ...

HARRIET

It's okay.

*A short pause.*

MOTHER

You want to tell me something?

HARRIET

I'm... working on a new piece, Mom.

MOTHER

Oh, good. What is it, dear?

HARRIET

*(to the audience)* I came sooo close.... *(to her MOTHER)* It's about ...choice.

MOTHER

That's nice.

*A pause. MOTHER is expecting HARRIET to say more.  
The pause goes on too long.*

MOTHER

It was so good to see you when you came down to St. Louis with the show. You know we missed seeing you and Alicia at Thanksgiving. I mean, now that you're in Iowa...

HARRIET

I know, but I was teaching and preparing ...

MOTHER

Oh, it's okay. Actually, it allowed us to just take a nice anniversary weekend together.

HARRIET

Anniversary?

MOTHER

December first. We usually just skip it, so close to Thanksgiving, you know.

HARRIET

Your anniversary is December first?

MOTHER

You knew that.

HARRIET

I guess ...I forgot... I guess. Bye, Mom, thanks.

*HARRIET clicks off her phone. Though HARRIET has hung up, we hear her MOTHER say:*

MOTHER

Bye dear.

*The light starts to fade out on MOTHER.  
HARRIET counts up to six on her fingers while  
whispering:*

HARRIET

December, January, February, March, April, May...

MOTHER

I love you.

HARRIET

December, January, February, March, April, May...

*SLOW FADE TO BLACK.*

*When the lights come up, HARRIET is listening to  
MUSIC while she makes an art-work by twisting three red  
strands of cloth into a giant braid. We watch her working  
in silence. Then, we hear the sounds of ALICIA enacting a  
battle offstage.*

ALICIA

Whap! Pow! Zang! etc.

*The battle sounds stop. We hear ALICIA's voice calling from offstage – indicated by ellipses below – but we can't make out what she says. HARRIET calls back to her.*

HARRIET

... No honey, Barbie doesn't have a gun.... she just doesn't.... Yes, GI Joe has one – (damn you, Jorge).... Okay honey, we'll write to the Mattel people, tomorrow. Tonight, she'll just have to defend herself some other way. ...I don't know, Kung Fu. Just because she's in a movie now, it doesn't mean she has a superpower. Let it go, for God's sake 'Licia! Mommy's working now.... (A long complaint from ALICIA.) Well, then maybe she'll just die!

*HARRIET drops her artwork to speak to us.*

Damn, I hate it when I sound like my mother. I hate it.

*Harriet sits silently for a moment and then starts to pour herself a whiskey. She stops to think, then continues pouring. It should be unclear whether this is something HARRIET did the day she was angry with Alicia or if she is pouring herself a drink now, while she speaks to us. Then she slips one hand down inside her pants, pulls it out, looks at her fingers.*

Shit, shit, shit. It wasn't Alicia. And the phone call with my mother didn't help... but the main thing was, when I went to bed, I was spotting. Not much, but definitely spotting. And what I thought was: "Oh, it's going to take care of itself.... I should be feeling happy." But what I *was* feeling was... you know the feeling when you know you've misplaced something, but you can't even remember what you've misplaced? That feeling.

*HARRIET moans or sobs out loud. ALICIA calls from offstage.*

ALICIA

Mommy, are you...?

HARRIET

I'm okay, honey. I'll be there in a minute.



*HARRIET pulls herself together and tries to continue working on her art. She speaks to us.*

And the hell of it was, when I saw the blood, one part of me was thankful, but another part was sad. And then, in the morning, the spotting had stopped, and the two parts switched places. And I couldn't be sure which part was really me.

*HARRIET sobs.*

ALICIA

Mom!

HARRIET

I'm coming!! (*turning to us*) One sure thing about having a five-year-old: there is no time to stop and figure things out.

*HARRIET exits. The stage is empty for a few seconds. The artwork HARRIET left unfinished unravels or falls down.*

*A knock on the door.*

*JORGE and HARRIET are both offstage in different directions but call to each other across the stage.*

JORGE

Harriet!

HARRIET

It's open!

*JORGE enters.*

JORGE

I recorded my friends for you! (*turns to speak to us*) Damned if I know why.

*HARRIET reenters with a bag and several balloons apparently held by ALICIA. She lets JORGE in.*

HARRIET

Great. Did you get the releases?

JORGE

They wouldn't of talked to me like this if they knew I was recording.

HARRIET

You didn't tell them?

JORGE

It won't matter. You'll have to change it anyway. Oh, so many balloons!

*JORGE hands HARRIET the recorder. He takes the bag and the balloons.*

HARRIET

What do you mean, change it?

JORGE (*leaving with ALICIA*)

It's in Spanish.

*As JORGE exits, one balloon is left behind.*

HARRIET

Mierda. Bye, honey!... ¡Gracias!

*HARRIET looks at her fallen artwork and at the balloon.*

HARRIET

This next is from Jorge's recording.

*We hear music in the background. JORGE and his friends speak in Spanish. THREE WOMEN translate.*

*The MEN laugh. The WOMEN smile wanly.*

JORGE

¿Te acuerdas de Harriet?

TRANSLATOR #1

You remember Harriet?

SEGUNDO AMIGO

¿Ella te dejó, verdad?

TRANSLATOR #3

She left you, right?

PRIMER AMIGO

No la culpo.

**MISCONCEPTIONS**

TRANSLATOR #2

I don't blame her.

PRIMER AMIGO

Cubanos no saben cómo mantenerlos en los pantalones.

TRANSLATOR #2

Cubans just don't know how to keep it in their pants.

*Laughter among the men.*

THREE TRANSLATORS (*Flatly*)

Ha. Ha. Ha.

HARRIET

Why is that funny?

JORGE

Harriet está embarazada.

TRANSLATOR #1

Harriet is pregnant.

PRIMER AMIGO

¿Quién es el padre?

TRANSLATOR #2

Who's the father?

JORGE

Yo.

TRANSLATOR #1

Me.

*As the Spanish conversation continues under, we hear primarily the English, but the translations pause enough so that we can hear the **bolded words** in Spanish.*

PRIMER AMIGO

Nunca sabes.... **El hombre nunca sabe.**

TRANSLATOR #2

You never know.... The man never knows.

SEGUNDO AMIGO

¿Pensé que ustedes dos...

JORGE

Somos juntos una noche quando fui a cuidar a Alicia.

PRIMER AMIGO

¿Va a quedarse con la bebe?

JORGE

No sabe.

SEGUNDO AMIGO

Mi esposa no me pregunto. "**Dos es suficiente.**" Es su cuerpo. ¿Quién soy yo para decirle algo? Además ella es la que cambia los pañales.

JORGE

¿Entonces, no le dijiste a tu esposa lo que estabas pensando?

SEGUNDO AMIGO

Ella estaba llorando. Uno de nosotros tenía que mantenerse calmado, ¿Tu sabes?

*A short pause.*

PRIMER AMIGO

Mi novia, no me decía qué época del mes era, pero aun asi, es *mi* culpa. Básicamente, siempre es nuestra culpa. **De una forma u otra, no tienes voz.**

SEGUNDO AMIGO

¿Que dices?

PRIMER AMIGO

Los hombres son colocado en una trampa. ¿Donde sea que mires, qué ves? **Cuerpos sexys de mujeres, ¿verdad?** Vi un comercial la semana

TRANSLATOR #3

I thought you two...?

TRANSLATOR #1

We were together one night when I went to take care of Alicia.

TRANSLATOR #2

Is she going to keep it?

TRANSLATOR #1

I don't know.

TRANSLATOR #3

My wife didn't ask. "Two is enough." What could I say? It's her body, so who am I to say? Besides she's the one who changes the diapers, right?

TRANSLATOR #1

So, you didn't tell your wife what you were thinking?

TRANSLATOR #3

She was crying. One of us has to hold it together, right?

*A short pause.*

TRANSLATOR #2

My girlfriend, she didn't tell me what time of the month it was, but still, it's *my* fault. Basically, it's always on you. One way or the other, you got no say.

TRANSLATOR #3

How so?

TRANSLATOR #2

It's a set up. Wherever you look, what do you see? It's all sexy women's bodies, right? I seen this commercial last week for a stupid refrigerator, and

PRIMER AMIGO (cont.)  
pasada de un maldito refrigeror, y qué  
ponen, una chica moviendo las  
caderas mientras abre la puerta del  
refrigerador como si te fuese a invitar  
de una vez a su casa.... **Y ¡chasquido!**

TRANSLATOR #2 (cont.)  
damned if they didn't have some babe  
shifting her hips while she opened the  
refrigerator door like she was just  
going to invite you right in.... And:  
snap!

*The PRIMER AMIGO slams his hand on the table. Bottles  
spill. The men laugh. HARRIET turns off the recorder.  
Perhaps the laughter continues to slowly fade until we hear  
the knocking on the door.*

HARRIET

Sometimes it seems like they live in an alternate universe, men.

*In the half-light, HARRIET cleans up the stage and begins  
to paint or arrange signs for the demonstration scene.*

*A KNOCKING at the door.*

HARRIET

I'm coming.

*HARRIET lets DARCELLE in.*

Hi. Would you like some coffee or ...?

*DARCELLE enters and throws down a file folder.*

DARCELLE

Harriet, why did you want me to read this grisly courtroom testimony?

HARRIET

You didn't find it interesting?

DARCELLE

Interesting? A doctor telling a judge how he crushes the skulls of late-term fetuses and  
sucks out their brains?

HARRIET

And then the doctor testifies that the mothers want to hold the baby afterwards.

DARCELLE

It's gruesome.

HARRIET

Hey, that's what people said about the photos from Aleppo and Mariupol.

DARCELLE

You wanted my opinion, right?

HARRIET

Yes.

DARCELLE

My opinion is "no." Besides, you know those late term abortions are extremely rare, and they're only performed when...

HARRIET

I know, I know...

DARCELLE

TMI, Harriet. Let it go.

HARRIET

Okay. But, Darcelle, I really need you to hear to this one woman I talked with. Listen.

*HARRIET takes out her phone. JUDITH SEARS reappears.*

JUDITH SEARS

I actually grew up in Wichita, KS in a...very Christian home. Um, we went to church every Sunday... My parents kept me in a bubble on purpose, they wanted to protect me... We were having more dress code restrictions in high school and we were like "Why can't we wear this stuff?" And I remember the teacher saying, "Your husbands will tell you someday when you're married..." and I was like, "Isn't it too late then?"

DARCELLE

Where did you find this woman?

HARRIET

She works at a Christian pregnancy center.

JUDITH SEARS

When I was...I would have been 10...in 1992 they had what they called the Summer of Mercy at Dr. Tiller's clinic ... and so people would do life chains and would block the entrances and get arrested and I remember going with my dad, I was like "Dad, can we,

JUDITH SEARS (cont.)

you know, get arrested? Can we like sit in front of the gate?" and you know, cuz it just seemed all very exciting and it was in the news.

DARCELLE

Okay, Harriet, turn it off for a minute.

HARRIET

Listen, this next part is what I really want you to...

DARCELLE

I've got to say something ...

JUDITH SEARS

The summer between our freshman and sophomore year um, I found out that I was pregnant...

*DARCELLE grabs the phone and turns it off.*

HARRIET

What are you doing?

DARCELLE

Listen to me. Am I your friend?

HARRIET

Of course you're my friend.

DARCELLE

Good. And your friend is telling you to put this whole thing on hold until after you've decided for yourself what you're going to do. You can't be interviewing anti-abortion women and reading trial testimony about babies with no brains while you're pregnant. It's just not healthy, Harri. This is your life.

HARRIET

I know that. And if you'll excuse the expression, it's also my work, you know, my "Art."

DARCELLE

And which is more important?

HARRIET

I don't know. You tell me.

DARCELLE

Are you serious?

HARRIET

Hey, Jackson Pollock was a shithead. Virginia Woolf committed suicide. Diego Rivera was a philanderer. What matters now, their personal lives, or their art?

DARCELLE (*gesturing at the space*)

Harriet! This is not some fucking performance. This is a moment in your real life when you need to care about yourself.

HARRIET

My work *is* the way I care about myself, Darcelle. You gotta know that by now. Look at me, I'm sinking in quicksand here, and making art is the only oar I've got to paddle my way out. Besides, it's a small enough sacrifice, considering what a lot of people in the world suffer through.

DARCELLE

Sacrifice? It's... masochistic.

HARRIET

Actually, I think masochism is under-appreciated.

DARCELLE

Under-app...? Oh right, to be a *real* artist, you've got to suffer. Maybe even realer if you get your family and friends to suffer too.

HARRIET

Oh, fuck you.

DARCELLE

Harriet: you know I'm saying this because I care about you. You know that, right?

*Pause*

HARRIET

Yes. I also know you want me to keep performing *All Fall Down* so you can make back the money you put into it.

DARCELLE

No, I...

HARRIET

Really, you went out on a limb for me and I'm grateful to you. I am.



DARCELLE

Thank you, but that's not what.... Harriet, what I'm saying is your sanity is important. To me, and to your work. And to Alicia.

HARRIET

Don't bring Alicia into this. Don't.

DARCELLE

Okay, sorry. Sorry. But tell me: What are you going to do with all these words you've been collecting?

HARRIET

I don't know yet. Maybe I'll build a three-dimensional, pregnancy crossword. Or maybe a fifty-gallon uterus filled with alphabet soup. I don't know. Hey, maybe I'll make a play, a stage play.

DARCELLE

A play!?! Oh, Harriet, you don't even *like* theater. When you lived in New York, every time I took you to a play, you'd say: "I don't get it. People pretending to be other people. What is that about?"

HARRIET

Your point is...?

DARCELLE

You're a really exciting visual artist, Harriet, but you don't know the first thing about theater.

HARRIET

And why would that stop me?

DARCELLE

Right. (*She turns to the audience*) I tried, I really tried.

HARRIET

Now, will you listen to the rest of the interview?

*HARRIET holds out her hand. DARCELLE hands HARRIET the phone. HARRIET cues the lights up on JUDITH SEARS. She might also hand out ID announcements for the characters in this scene.*

*As she speaks, the lights come up on DEMONSTRATORS who carry posters with photos of a dismembered fetus, and perhaps a "Wanted" poster of George Tiller, and a banner: "Please Do Not Kill Your Baby."*

*Though HARRIET sometimes cues the action, we should feel that HARRIET and DARCELLE are also an audience to the following scene.*

#### JUDITH SEARS

The summer between our freshman and sophomore year, I found out that I was pregnant... and my immediate reaction was: *get rid of this problem*. This has to be dealt with as quickly and as quietly as possible. [But] right that same week... my mom had been at one of the rallies at Dr. Tiller's clinic and she had just put a sticker on her car that was like "Abortion Kills Children" or something, and I was so desperately afraid of disappointing her, like I couldn't imagine telling her....

*The protestors chant: "We love babies, yes we do; we love babies, how 'bout you?" and "Abortion stops a beating heart." Or they might sing hymns.*

#### MATT WALSH (*Stepping out of the crowd*)

People on the left appear to have limitless compassion for refugees and illegal immigrants yet none at all for babies.

*TITLE or ID: Matt Walsh, Live Action News dot O-R-G.*

#### MATT WALSH

I wonder if they might suddenly discover at least an ounce of humanity for the unborn if we started describing them as "fetal refugees" or perhaps "immigrants from the uterus."

#### JUDITH SEARS

As I drove to the clinic... I like took all the identifying marks off my car... because I was so afraid of being found out.

#### BILL O'REILLY (*Stepping out of the crowd*)

Another revolting situation is Dr. George Tiller in Kansas, known as Tiller the Baby Killer.

*TITLE or ID: The O'Reilly factor. March 26, 2009.*

JUDITH SEARS

I went in there for the initial exam and I anticipated a kind of chop house. Like everyone had always painted Dr. Tiller as this monster who, you know, was um, just basically walking out with the bloody-dripping meat cleaver or something.

BILL O'REILLY

If you want to kill a baby, you hire Tiller, you've got to pay him 5,000 up front, and he'll kill the baby.

*The demonstration starts to fade away.*

JUDITH SEARS

But the clinic was very tasteful. I mean there were thank you notes from women from all over the world, framed and matted on the wall and like, "this wasn't a good time for me to do this and you enabled me to go on with my life."

DARCELLE

Is Tiller the doctor that was killed at church?

HARRIET

Yes.

JUDITH SEARS

Dr. Tiller actually did my ultrasound and I remember being so nervous just to meet him and I mean, he was kind, he was gentle, like I almost wanted to go home and tell people...like "Dr. Tiller's really nice!" (*She laughs*)

*A gunshot: An actor bursts the balloon. HARRIET, DARCELLE AND JUDITH SEARS react to the sound.*

CNN REPORTER

A Kansas jury deliberated just 37 minutes before convicting Scott Roeder, 51, guilty of gunning down Dr. George Tiller, who operated a clinic in Wichita where late-term abortions were performed.

*TITLE or ID: CNN May 31, 2009.*

CNN REPORTER

A day earlier, Roeder told jurors he had shot Tiller in the foyer of Reformation Lutheran Church as Sunday services began....

SCOTT ROEDER

There was nothing being done, and these babies were dying every day.

CNN REPORTER

Testifying as his only defense witness, he said he believed he had to kill Tiller to save lives. ... He said he had no regrets.

SCOTT ROEDER

I felt that if someone did not do something, he was going to continue. The lives of those children were in imminent danger if someone did not stop George Tiller.

CNN REPORTER

Under cross-examination he said he also considered cutting Tiller's hands off with a sword, but decided that would not be effective, as Tiller would still be able to train others.

DARCELLE

Jesus!

RANDALL TERRY

George Tiller was a mass-murderer.

*TITLE or ID: RANDALL TERRY, Operation Rescue.*

RANDALL TERRY

We grieve for him that he did not have time to properly prepare his soul to face God. The bottom line is there are 30 million children who have been killed, and their blood right now is crying out from the ground for vengeance to almighty God....

DARCELLE (*interrupting TERRY*)

No, Harriet! You can't give hate that kind of platform in your work. Not now, when millions of women in this country are feeling like their bodies under attack.

HARRIET

Well, what if after Randall Terry we hear to this pro-choice lawyer I spoke with?

PRO-CHOICE LAWYER

I often feel a lot of frustration and anger that the pro-life movement uses tactics that are so dishonest and disingenuous. They build crisis pregnancy centers to tell women that first trimester abortion causes breast cancer and infertility, and that their 7- or 11-week fetuses can feel pain and fear. They tell the public that abortion facilities need hospital grade regulation. They tell judges that psychological damage from abortion is pervasive. All lies.

DARCELLE

But Harri, it's just more proselytizing on the other side.

HARRIET

And then she also said this:

PRO-CHOICE LAWYER

I will say that as a recently pregnant person I have become even more passionate about reproductive freedom, but I also now understood the emotion on the pro-life side of the argument. And I know if I agreed with them that abortion really was murder, I would also believe anything that made it rarer was absolutely justified.

DARCELLE

She actually said that?

HARRIET

Yes.

DARCELLE

And did you talk with a pro-life lawyer too?

HARRIET

He hasn't called me back.

*KNOCKING AT THE DOOR.*

That's Jorge. I've got to get Alicia up. Can you let him in?

*HARRIET exits. JORGE enters.*

JORGE

Hello, Darcelle.

DARCELLE

One hilarious group of friends you've got.

JORGE

She played the tape for you?

HARRIET (*offstage*)

Come on, honey, Papi is here. Let's get you packed up.

JORGE

So, you're helping her turn our private life into a circus?

DARCELLE

No. Actually, I was trying to convince her to drop the whole project.

JORGE

And...?

DARCELLE

No luck. Maybe she'll listen to you.

JORGE

To me? The "lying, philandering, shithead"?

DARCELLE

What have you got to lose? (*A short pause.*) I'll take Alicia down to the lobby while you talk.

*HARRIET enters with the FISH PUPPET. DARCELLE takes the Puppet.*

JORGE

Honey, you go on downstairs with Darcelle. Papi will be right down.

*DARCELLE exits with the FISH PUPPET and the invisible ALICIA. This next conversation is soto voce and hurried.*

HARRIET

What is this?

JORGE

I've been thinking... We could try one more time, and if we had a baby...

HARRIET

We did try one more time. No, *I* tried one more time.

JORGE

Oh honey, please, let's not let one stupid one-night stand ...

HARRIET

This not about your one-night stands, Jorge. Plural. This is about my life. I have my life back now, and I like that.

JORGE

¡Oh, Harri, Harri, te extraño muchísimo! It just hurts so to be without you.

HARRIET

I miss you too. I do. And it does hurt. But you know what? Being on my own is also a relief. And most days, the relief runs deeper than the pain.

*For a moment, Jorge is defeated. Then he tries one more time.*

JORGE

Last week, I was working in the city garden, and the first tulip opened, and you know what I thought? I thought: I wish Harriet was here to see that color. That's what I thought. And the shovel just fell right out of my hands. Bang, like that, on the dirt.

HARRIET

Sweet.

JORGE

It's the truth.

HARRIET

And this is my truth, Jorge: If I have another child now, for the next two years, my art-work will stop. Dead. Do you know what I painted during the first two years after Alicia was born? Four canvasses. Four.

JORGE

But those were terrific paintings, honey. You didn't even want to sell them. Remember?

HARRIET

Yes, I remember.

JORGE

So, if we got together again... Harri, it can be different this time. Believe me.

HARRIET

Why? Why would I believe you? You leave the dishes in the sink for days, you never make the bed, you don't do the laundry, and you run around with women half your age. Why would I want you to bring up my child? Why?

JORGE

How can you call it "my child," and still want to...

HARRIET

Did you hear what I just said?

JORGE

¡Maldición! It's like the real reason you're so determined to get rid of this child...

HARRIET

I am not "determined to get rid of this child."

JORGE

... is because I'm not.

HARRIET

What I'm determined is that this be my decision.

JORGE

And what about...?

HARRIET

You? ¡Cabrón! You made your decision. Twice. First when you fucked other women, and again when you didn't put on a condom with me. Those were your decisions. Now it's my turn.

*HARRIET signals the lighting board op. BLACKOUT.*

*JUDITH SEARS is alone. She speaks to us.*

JUDITH SEARS

I just remember that moment of decision and swallowing that first pill that detached the fetus from the uterine lining and just being like – *The Matrix* hadn't come out yet, but you know the red pill versus the blue pill, and just like, this is gonna change your life. And all I could think of was: "You got yourself into this, you have to get yourself out." And two days later I took the pill that basically causes you to go into labor and expelled the fetus in the toilet and um, was just like, I don't know, kind of in shock – like partially relieved that it wasn't a quote unquote problem anymore and then also like, I can't believe I'm aborting my own baby at my home while my family is at home, you know? And I just thought I cannot flush my child down the toilet. I remember thinking that: I cannot say that I flushed my child down the toilet. So I put the tissue, or whatever it was – you couldn't distinguish anything at the time, it was too small, I was only about five and half weeks – um, but I'd put it in a Tupperware container cuz I wanted to bury it, and my mom found it and asked me what it was, and I was just kind of like, "Whatever, mom..." I just couldn't think of anything to cover up my tracks and so I was just like "Leave me alone!"

*DRUM BEAT. BLACKOUT.*

**END OF ACT I - [See *Intermission Display Note* on the last page]**



## INTERLUDE: JORGE'S DREAM

*Toward the end of the intermission, while the playing area is dark, soft drumming begins. The drumming plays long enough for the audience to disregard it. Then a light comes up on JORGE. He stops drumming and stands in a spotlight.*

### JORGE

This is not part of Harriet's play. It's just a dream I had. I told Harriet about it, and she said, no. But then she said I could tell you this during the intermission if I made it clear that it's not part of her play... and if I remind you that this dream was dreamt by a man who never was and never will never be pregnant.

So, in this dream, I was pregnant. But being pregnant wasn't what I'd thought. It wasn't about a child growing inside me, or about becoming a mother... or a father. It was about my body being out of my control. Like taken over, you know, by an alien, like in the movie? And in the dream, I tried to remember who I'd... you know, if I'd had sex with someone. But I couldn't remember. And then I had the thought: maybe I was raped. And that seemed like a comfort, because if I'd been raped, then it wasn't my fault. And then I thought: That's not right; it shouldn't be a comfort to have been raped. And I heard this voice, and I knew it was the voice of my child. And the voice said: "It's too late now." And she said – it was a girl – she said: "If you didn't want a child, you should have known better."

And I said: "Should have known better about what?"

And she said: "You should have known better than to be born with a uterus." And then I woke up.

*BLACKOUT*

## ACT II

*HARRIET is listening to music. She is high on a ladder, hanging up the braid she began in ACT I. The braid is much longer now. The ladder wobbles. HARRIET speaks, soto voce, to the lighting board operator.*

HARRIET

Wait a second.

*HARRIET steadies the ladder and then cues the board op.*

Okay, now.

*As the lights come up, HARRIET speaks to us.*

My father used to say to me: Harri, don't start something you can't finish. And then, one day, when I was like ten years old, I climbed up a tall tree in our back yard, just to prove to myself I could, and to be closer to the sky — I did love the sky — but when I looked down, I got scared. I couldn't remember where I'd put my feet climbing up, so I screamed for my dad. But when he came out of the house, he just stood way down there on the ground and laughed, and he said:

*From the side of the stage DARCELLE speaks the FATHER's words.*

FATHER

If you can get up, you can get back down.

HARRIET

And then he just walked away. And I remember thinking: If I fall, he'll be sorry.

*HARRIET slips and starts to fall. The MUSIC stops. It is not clear if she is enacting the scene with her father or if she has actually slipped on stage. All the actors turn to look. HARRIET lands safely.*

I did get down. Took me half an hour, but I did it... so maybe he was right. But I don't think I've ever forgiven him for walking away like that... or for being right. And I remember thinking, I should've fallen on purpose, just to teach him.

BLACKOUT.

KISSLING

I'm a Roman Catholic. I was the president of Catholics for Free Choice.

*The lights come up on FRANCES KISSLING.*

HARRIET (*On the recording*)

And you were saying about abortion...

KISSLING

As a feminist, as a progressive person, I believe abortion should be legal; I believe that the person who gets to decide about an abortion, within a certain frame, is a woman, but I always felt that the political movement of necessity ignored the moral dimensions of this question.

HARRIET (*to us*)

Frances Kissling. Have you heard of her?

KISSLING

...the first question is, why are there people, so many people, who are so virulently opposed to abortion? It does relate, I believe, to the historic fear that men have of women's capacity to give birth. I mean, look: Men can't have babies. And this is a problem for them! They don't give life. We give life. And this has always been women's great power, and man's great anxiety. And they compensated by defining the circumstances under which we gave life. (*Speaking with a man's voice.*) "OK, so I can't give life! But I do make sure, and set the rules for how *she* gives life..."

*HARRIET's landline phone starts to ring.*

...What she can do, when she can do it, etc. And she definitely can't get rid of this."

*As HARRIET stops the recorder, the answering machine picks up and FRANCES KISSLING freezes.*

ANSWERING MACHINE

Hello, this is Harriet—and Alicia—(*together*) leave us a message, hey!

MOTHER

Harriet honey, are you there? ... I want to apologize for calling you last week after your show opened. Hello, Harriet? Well, I'm sure you're busy, and that's good. But I'm just calling to tell you I'm going to fly into The City to see your *Fall Down* show at the museum on Saturday, and spend the day with Alicia if I can. My friend Anne is out of town, and she said I could use her apartment. Isn't that lucky? And don't tell Alicia, but I found a new doll for her, for her birthday. It's anatomically correct, you know? So, I'll fly in on Friday night, okay? Love you. Bye.

*HARRIET sighs, restarts the recorder.*

KISSLING

Well, with legal abortion, women became both life giver and death giver. And we became all powerful. We decide whether there will be life or there will not be life. And nothing...

*HARRIET's cell phone rings. HARRIET stops the recorder again and picks up the phone, putting it on speaker-phone. KISSLING grimaces, but freezes again.*

HARRIET

Hi, Mom, I was...

*DARCELLE appears. KALI is visible again behind her.*

DARCELLE

Harriet?

HARRIET

Oh, Darcelle.

DARCELLE

Are you waiting for your mother to call?

HARRIET

No, she just... No, I'm listening to this... Have you ever heard of Frances Kissling?

DARCELLE

Harriet, the museum received a threat.

HARRIET

A threat?

DARCELLE

From PETA.

HARRIET

Peter who?

DARCELLE

PETA, P-E-T-A, the animal rights people. Because of the chicken. If we keep killing chickens, they're going to picket.

HARRIET

MoMA wants me drop the chickens?

DARCELLE

No, they said they would get police protection. But since it's not really a necessary part of the piece, I thought...

HARRIET

It's just two more days, Darcelle. Besides, that chicken moment is working, right?

DARCELLE

I guess.

HARRIET

Thanks to you. It was your idea. But honey, you gotta listen to this.

*HARRIET re-starts the recorder.*

KISSLING

Well, with legal abortion, women became both life giver and death giver. And we became all powerful. We decide whether there will be life or there will not be life. And nothing is more frightening than this power of women.

DARCELLE

Who is that?

HARRIET

Francis Kissling. She was the president of Catholics for Choice.

KISSLING

And so that, I think, is at the heart of much of the pro-life opposition. It's very primitive. It's very primordial.

*HARRIET turns off the recorder. KISSLING vanishes.*

DARCELLE

She sounds like Kali.

HARRIET

Who?

DARCELLE

Kali. You know, that picture I have in my living room.

HARRIET

The black woman with the red tongue and the skulls on her belt?

DARCELLE

The Hindu goddess of life and of death.

HARRIET

Hey, maybe you can get me an interview with her.

DARCELLE

Harri, I gotta say it again: It is just not healthy for you to be filling your mind with this now. You need to make a personal decision, and you're just making it more complicated...

HARRIET

Yeah, well, life is complicated.

DARCELLE

Okay, but Harri, there are times when complication is a luxury you can't afford. Honey, there's a limit to what anyone can stand.

HARRIET

You know what I can't stand, D? I can't stand the idea that the truth is soooo complicated that we shouldn't even try to face it. Remember when you and I found evidence that the resistance fighters – the “good guys” in Aleppo – might have targeted civilians on the government side, remember?

DARCELLE

I remember.

HARRIET

My first impulse was to ignore it 'cause I didn't want to hear anything that would undermine the story I wanted to hear. And then I had to remind myself that I'm an artist.

DARCELLE

Yeah. Too bad not all of us can be “artists.”

HARRIET

Oh, come on, you know...

DARCELLE

Listen to yourself, Harri, listen! Your overactive brain is just running out this highfalutin art-babble to distract you from what's going on in your overactive uterus.

HARRIET

Why are you trying to stop me at every turn?

DARCELLE

That is not what I'm...

HARRIET

You know what, Darcelle, you're a lesbian, okay, and you're never going to get pregnant by accident. So, you've got no more right telling me what kind of art I should be making than... a man or a nun!

DARCELLE

Woah! Do not go there. You have no idea who you're talking to. No idea.

*HARRIET stops her work.*

HARRIET

Okay, then, tell me: why are you so uptight about this project?

DARCELLE

I am not ...

HARRIET

You are. You are.

DARCELLE

Fine! And did it occur to you that there might be reasons for that?

HARRIET

Such as...?

*DARCELLE almost speaks, stops, starts again.*

DARCELLE

Such as that the reason you have the luxury to complexify this story of yours is because, right now, you are here, in a big city, in a blue state, where you can easily get an abortion if you want to and because you have the privilege and the money to do it. And then it might just dawn on you that this "complicated" abortion piece you're making is very *monochromatic*, you know what I mean? Very *white*! Which is bullshit because, in America, Black women have a higher abortion rate than white women do, did you know that?

HARRIET

I'd heard that, yes.

DARCELLE

And did you know that the U.S. of A is the worst place to be black and be pregnant in the entire developed world? So, maybe it's not strange that black women in America have a very different – a historically very different – relationship to contraception, and to pregnancy... and to mortality and to death!

*Magical sound. SHIRLEY CHISHOLM appears.*

SHIRLEY CHISHOLM

Any woman who has the money and the sophistication about how things are done in our society can get an abortion within the law.... But unless she has the \$700 to \$1,000 minimum it takes to travel this route, her only safe course in most states is to have the child.

HARRIET

What the f...?

DARCELLE 

Shirley Chisholm. The first black woman to run for president. 1972.

HARRIET

But how did you...?

SHIRLEY CHISHOLM

But there is a deep and angry suspicion among many blacks that even birth control clinics are a plot by the white power structure to keep down the numbers of blacks, and this opinion is even more strongly held by some in regard to legalizing abortions.

HARRIET

But you don't believe that, Darcelle. Do you?

*Magical sound. SHIRLEY CHISHOLM vanishes.  
HARRIET is about to ask what happened, but DARCELLE cuts her off.*

DARCELLE

You know my mother was an only child, right?

HARRIET

Maybe. I think you told me that.



DARCELLE

And did I tell you *why* she was an only child?

HARRIET

I forget.

DARCELLE

She was an only child because six months after she was born, her mother went into the hospital to have a benign tumor removed, and they gave her a Mississippi Appendectomy.

HARRIET

A what?

DARCELLE

They tied her tubes, hon. Like they did to a lot of black women in Southern hospitals back then. Tied their tubes without their consent. And often enough, the women didn't know until years later when they come to find out they couldn't get pregnant.

HARRIET

I didn't know that.

DARCELLE

Exactly. And probably you don't know about the history of Margaret Sanger and eugenics, or about the *Dred Scott* analogy, right?

HARRIET

Dred Scott?

DARCELLE

1857, Supreme...

HARRIET

I know Dred Scott, but what analogy...?

DARCELLE

Look it up. (*She turns to the audience.*)

*DARCELLE hangs up. As the light lingers on the image of KALI, DARCELLE turns to us.*

Hey, you could all look it up.

*BLACKOUT on DARCELLE*

HARRIET

Damn, damn. I hate being made to feel ignorant – especially when I *am* ignorant. I hate it.

*HARRIET goes to her computer.*

*As DAY GARDNER preachers, the CHORUS responds to her words.*

DAY GARDNER

In the Dred Scott case of 1857, the Supreme Court said: Dred Scott was not fully human.

*TITLE or ID: Day Gardner, President of the National Black Pro-Life Union.*

He was the property of his owner -- and therefore he had no rights at all.

HARRIET

All I remembered from high school was that Dred Scott was a slave who tried to sue for his freedom, and the Supreme Court ruled against him.

DAY GARDNER

The Court stated that because Dred Scott was not deemed "fully human", he could be bought, sold or even killed at the owner's discretion. In the *Roe v. Wade* case of 1973, the Supreme Court said the same thing: A baby is the property of her mother -- and that she is not fully human, therefore she has no rights at all.

HARRIET

It's late at night, and I can feel how my mind is racing to argue with what this woman is saying, like: "A fetus is not like a slave, and pregnancy is not ownership...." And suddenly I'm aware how hard it is for me just to listen. Just to hear what she's saying. without scrambling in my mind to defend against it? Do you know what I mean?

DAY GARDNER

The Court stated that because an unborn baby is not deemed "fully human" she can be bought, sold or even killed at the mother's whim.

*A pause. Then HARRIET begins looking through 19<sup>th</sup> Century images of slaves treated like animals: We see pictures of caged people and animals, then she looks at photos of factory farming and slaughterhouses. In the background, a HYMN plays softly. It continues under the next scene.*

*HARRIET'S cell phone rings.*

HARRIET

Hello. This is Harriet.

ALIM

They have called my home.

HARRIET

Who is this? Alim? Who called your home?

ALIM

The animal people. To my son they said, "Your father, he causes suffering." To my ten-year-old son. "Your father, he is a cruel man, he is a killer." To a ten-year-old boy they said this.

HARRIET

Oh, no.

ALIM

You have a child also, yes?

HARRIET

Yes.

ALIM

And do you think this? Do you think I am cruel?

HARRIET

Oh no, Alim, I think you are very humane.

ALIM

I do not ask you am I human, I ask you...

HARRIET

No, no, Alim "humane." I think you kill the chickens in the kindest way.

ALIM

When I cut the neck, I speak the name of Allah so that the animal can hear it and know that she is blessed. I say to her only that Allah is great; I do not say, "Allah most gracious and most merciful." Slaughter is not an act of mercy. It is an act of sacrifice.

HARRIET

You are right, Alim.

ALIM

For you, this is your art. But what do you know of Aleppo? You bring me into a museum, and now they are calling my house. Is my life also your art?

HARRIET

I am so sorry. I'll tell the museum to make sure...

ALIM

These people, they do not understand: All of us are blessed, and all of us must die.

HARRIET

You are right. (*She realizes ALIM has hung up.*) Oh, no, no... no.

*HARRIET slowly puts her phone down and turns to us.*

And after that call, my mind kept thinking: If a stranger called my house and told Alicia, "Your mother is a killer," how would I feel?

ALICIA (*Calling from offstage*)

Mommy! Mommy!

HARRIET

I'm coming, Licie! I love you.

*HARRIET exits.*

*As the Hymn swells, DARCELLE walks to the middle of the stage and addresses us.*

DARCELLE

I should have told Harriet about Margaret Garner, the fugitive slave who killed her daughter.

*The HYMN grows louder.*

*DARCELLE reveals Thomas Satterwhite Noble's picture with the title "The Modern Medea."*

This is Thomas Satterwhite Noble's painting, "The Modern Medea." Under the picture are the words Garner spoke when the U. S. Marshalls came to arrest her:

*The SINGERS speak MARGARET GARNER's words.*

MARGARET GARNER

"Before my children shall be taken back to Kentucky, I will kill every one of them."

*The lights slowly fade on DARCELLE as the CHORUS sings.*

SINGERS

De little baby gone home,  
De little baby gone home,  
De little baby gone along,  
For to climb up Jacob's ladder.

BLACKOUT.

*In the dark, we hear the MOTHER humming "Happy Birthday," When the lights come up, we see she is alone on the floor in HARRIET'S studio, picking up ALICIA's toys. While she hums, she dances ballet steps with the toys.*

*HARRIET enters behind her, silently. For a moment she stands, watching her MOTHER. Then she puts down her house-keys.*

MOTHER

Oh!

HARRIET

Hi, Mom.

MOTHER

Oh, hello, dear. Shh, she just fell asleep.

HARRIET

How did it go?

MOTHER

Lovely. She's just so clever. I gave her the new doll for her birthday, and well, at first, she said: "This isn't what I meant, Grandma." Why would she say that?

*HARRIET turns away.*

But then, after she undressed the doll, she insisted on taking the clothes off the soldier doll too.

*HARRIET smiles, wanly.*

HARRIET

Jorge gave her the GI Joe.

MOTHER

And then she said, "Why doesn't Joe have a penis?"

HARRIET

And what did you say?

MOTHER

Well first I pretended that I hadn't heard her. But she asked again, and so I said, "Maybe he's a eunuch." (Laughs) But she thought I said "Unique." So, I said, "Yes, honey, there are probably not very many other men like that." But she answered me right back, "Maybe that's why he has to have a gun and shoot people, Grandma."

HARRIET

Sounds like Alicia.

MOTHER

So, so very clever.... You know honey, I was just looking online, and the Sam Fox arts School at Washington U. is actually looking for an artist to...

HARRIET

Mom, can I ask you something?

MOTHER

Of course, dear.

HARRIET

You were with that dance company here in New York when you and Dad got married, right?

MOTHER

ABT, honey. American Ballet Theater.

HARRIET

And then, when you found out you were pregnant, you left the company, right?

MOTHER

Well, I didn't want to lose the baby.

HARRIET

But you didn't want to stop dancing, did you?

MOTHER

There aren't any roles for pregnant dancers in the ballet, dear. And your father had the job offer from McDonnell Douglas in St. Louis for the next summer, so...

HARRIET

So, then you decided to get married.

MOTHER

Well, he proposed and... What do you mean?

HARRIET

Remember last week, when you said your anniversary was in December. Well, I finally counted the months. Somehow, in all these years, I never had.

MOTHER

Which months?

HARRIET

My birthday is in June ...

MOTHER

So...?

HARRIET

That's the reason we never celebrated your anniversary, right? Not because of Thanksgiving, right?

MOTHER

What are you saying?

HARRIET

Am I why you got married?

MOTHER

No. I... One of the reasons. There were other reasons.

HARRIET

So, you didn't think about... having an abortion?

MOTHER

You remember my friend, Samantha? Did you never wonder why Samantha had no children? She had an abortion before *Roe*. Bled for a week. That was the image I had. Besides, your father wanted to have children. Right away. He had another girlfriend at the time. Did you know that? Blonde, you know, but not at the roots.

HARRIET

You were afraid he would leave you?

MOTHER

He might have.

HARRIET

But not if you were pregnant?

MOTHER

What... what are you saying?

HARRIET

You had a career.

MOTHER

Always digging, aren't you?

HARRIET

I'm just asking...

MOTHER

Always digging for more dirt. Why did I leave you with that babysitter when you were two years old? Why did I send you to camp that summer? Always digging.

HARRIET

No, I'm...

MOTHER

Yes, my dear, yes. You're never satisfied. You never were. Even when I was nursing you. You'd drink your fill, and start to drop off to sleep, but when I would try to put you down, you'd start whimpering again, wanting one more suck. Hungry Harriet, that's what we called you. So, what are you hungry for now? You want me to confess you were unwanted, is that right? That's the word, isn't it: Unwanted?

HARRIET

Is it?



MOTHER

Why are you asking this now? Why?

HARRIET

You remember, on the phone, when I told you that I'm working on a new piece?

MOTHER

About chance. You said it was about chance.

HARRIET

Not chance, Mom, *choice*. It's about a woman's choice. My choice. I'm pregnant.

MOTHER

Oh, God! (*Pregnant pause.*) Are you and Jorge getting back together?

*HARRIET turns away.*

MOTHER

I see. I ... don't know what to say. What do you want me to say?

HARRIET

I don't know. Maybe that you understand? Or maybe that this would make an interesting piece?... Or maybe just that you are happy for me?

MOTHER

Happy. You want me to be excited you are pregnant? And then if you have an abortion, how would I feel?

HARRIET

I don't know.

MOTHER

Terrible. I would feel terrible. Why would I allow myself to be excited just to experience that grief?

HARRIET

Right. Stupid of me.

MOTHER

But of course, I will support you, whatever you do. I'm your mother, even when you are... the way you are. I support you. I always have. All those years I supported your work, when no one else did. When you came home from The Loop, stoned, at three o'clock in the morning and then moped around the house the next day while I went to work? And when we paid for you to move to New York, where your art career took off

MOTHER (cont.)

like a lead balloon, and you met that good-for-nothing... But if you're a mother, you sacrifice for your children. That's what mothers do, right? Of course, nowadays, in New York, at least, you have a "choice." Well, hurrah for you. But what choice did I have? Just forget your father? Or join the Alexandra Ballet school in St. Louis and breastfeed you during my barre? After ABT? It seemed pretty clear, you know. And clarity is not a bad thing, Harriet. You might try it sometime.

HARRIET

I guess I just wondered if you were... ambivalent.

MOTHER

Ambivalent?! Oh I see, you think I wanted to get rid of you? Is that it? Is that what you want me to say?

HARRIET

I just wanted to know what you thought...

MOTHER

What I *thought*? You *think* all kinds of things. I *thought* about jumping off the Brooklyn Bridge.

HARRIET

Mom, I'm not accusing you.

MOTHER

Oh, don't lie to me! Of course you're accusing me. Fine, go right ahead! ... You'll make me wish I had!

*HARRIET gasps and looks at us.*

*BLACKOUT.*

*HARRIET is asleep and dreaming. In her dream, JORGE is playing a drum.*

*SOPHIA appears with the Medea CHORUS who step to the rhythm of the drum.*

SOPHIA

I never felt like I was really a woman until I got pregnant for the first time. There was something biological that happened that connected me really to my womb area. My womanness. I'd always felt like kind of a girl inside. But I had issues with my mother, which made me rebel against the whole idea of being a mother.

*As the rhythm builds, the RUNNING WOMAN appears. She runs more and more quickly. Sometimes she looks back over her shoulder.*

SOPHIA (cont.)

So, I did a birth workshop some years ago, where you kind of re-live your birth and the circumstances around your birth and you do healing exercises. I shared with the group that when I was little, I used to have dreams of my mother running after me with a knife in the woods, wanting to kill me. Which is also interesting, why I'd love to play Medea.

*The drumming quiets. The CHORUS stops moving.*

CHORUS

O Medea, your heart must have been made of rock or steel,  
You who can kill,  
With your own hand, the fruit of your own womb.

*The drumming grows louder and faster.*

SOPHIA

And the facilitator at the workshop said those kind of dreams usually imply that your mother was ambivalent about having you or was actually thinking about aborting you. And he said, "It's really common that if the mother has had an abortion or she's thought about aborting her child, that her daughter would dream that."

*As SOPHIA's speech ends, the RUNNING WOMAN is running very fast and JORGE's drum rhythm is loud and intricate. The RUNNING WOMAN looks back over her shoulder. She screams.*

*BLACKOUT. Silence.*

*Early morning. HARRIET is asleep on the couch. A long moment of peace.*

*A knock at the door. On the second knock, HARRIET sits up. On the third she gets up and lets JORGE in. The FISH PUPPET is hanging out of his back pocket.*

HARRIET

Shh. She's still sleeping.

*HARRIET reaches out to JORGE, puts her arm on his and leads him to ALICIA. As they look at ALICIA, JORGE takes out the FISH PUPPET which kisses HARRIET. A pause. When they separate, HARRIET looks at the Puppet and shaking her head stuffs it into her pocket.*

JORGE  
You okay?

HARRIET  
Hanging in.

JORGE  
Did she do okay with your mother?

HARRIET  
Better than some of us. My mother gave her an anatomically correct doll.

JORGE  
A what? Oh, yeah.

HARRIET  
The upshot of which was that our little genius asked my mom why G.I. Joe doesn't have a penis.

*JORGE laughs.*

HARRIET  
And the day before, she asked me why Barbie doesn't have a gun.

JORGE  
Now there's a good question. *(He laughs again.)*

HARRIET  
Why the hell did you give Alicia a military doll?

JORGE  
Ease up, Harri. I gave the kid a doll with a plastic, two-inch rifle. ¿Cual es el problema? Hey, you're thinking to kill a real, live, one-inch baby.

HARRIET  
Oh, fuck you. I just spent three years making a piece about what war is like for children, and you, you make a joke....?

JORGE

You used to like my jokes.

*An awkward pause.*

HARRIET

I'll get Alicia ready to go with you. Darcelle is coming by. She said needs to talk to me.

JORGE

¡Oh Dios! I just wish it was me.

HARRIET

What was you?

JORGE

I wish it was me that was pregnant. I wish I could go through it for you.

HARRIET

No, you don't.

JORGE

I do. You were so happy then. Even that day your painting got ruined in the rain, it didn't faze you. ¿Requerdes?

HARRIET

Yes, I remember.

JORGE

And hey, for a whole nine months you never once asked, "Am I fat?"

*HARRIET smiles a little.*

Oh, Harriet, it's just... I love you.

HARRIET

I know you do. And I...

JORGE

And you?

HARRIET

If I didn't love you, it wouldn't hurt so much.

JORGE

Ah.

*A short pause.*

What if I said I'd take care of the baby?

*HARRIET almost laughs.*

HARRIET

Oh right, you're going to give up your job and your urban gardens and move to Iowa City and transform yourself into a house-husband who spends all day cooking and cleaning and changing diapers? It's not going to happen, and you know it. And more important, I know it.

JORGE

Or you could move back here, Harri. *Vogue*, Harriet, and MoMA. The *New York Times* loves you! You don't need to hide out in Indiana.

HARRIET

Iowa.

JORGE

You still have this studio, and...

HARRIET

And I am not "hiding out."

JORGE

You're living in fucking fly-over country.

HARRIET

Well, you know what? There are some corn farmers out there who give more support to artists than a lot of Wall Street bankers do. And it turns out I do better work when I can look out a window and see open fields and the entire blue sky without craning my neck.

*A pause. We hear ALICIA waking up.*

*ALICIA (Offstage)*

¿Papi?

JORGE

¡Si! *(to HARRIET)* So, there's nothing I can do?

HARRIET

Actually, there is. I haven't decided yet, but if I do decide to... undo what we've done, will you come with me... to the clinic?

*Beat.*

JORGE

Hey, I *came* with you in the doing, right?

*HARRIET slaps him, but gently. They look at each other. Jorge grabs the FISH PUPPET from HARRIET's pocket. He speaks with a fishy voice.*

JORGE

Let me think about it.

*HARRIET smiles. The PUPPET kisses her. She takes it.*

ALICIA (*calling from the next room*)

Papi!

JORGE

¡Ven aca!

HARRIET

I'll get her jacket.

*HARRIET exits. The invisible ALICIA runs in. JORGE picks her up in his arms and swings her around in slow motion.*

*HARRIET returns with ALICIA's hoodie. She goes to JORGE and she joins him, holding the hoodie in the air, we can "see" ALICIA as both of them kiss her.*

*There is a knock at the door. JORGE exits with the bag and ALICIA. HARRIET sits down heavily.*

HARRIET

It's open.

DARCELLE

Hello, Harriet.

HARRIET

Hi.

DARCELLE

Remember when you said I was uptight about your piece? You were right.

HARRIET

You had good reason, Darcelle. I had no idea about the history.

DARCELLE

It's not about the history, Harri. (*DARCELLE turns to us*) Maybe it was a mistake, but I thought: This is mine to say and hers to hear. And maybe it's time.

*DARCELLE turns back to HARRIET*

When I was fifteen, I had an abortion.

HARRIET

Oh, no.

DARCELLE (*deliberately*)

After... I'd been raped. At this birthday party for my best friend, Charlene. By her older brother. He was back from college that weekend.

HARRIET

Her brother?

DARCELLE

Which was the reason I couldn't tell anyone – I thought. Not Charlene, not my mother, not no one. I just put it out of my mind. Like it never happened. I think I even went back downstairs to the party.

HARRIET

Jesus.

DARCELLE

Four weeks later, one morning, I felt sick. I told my mom I can't go to school. She was sure I didn't do my homework, but she let me stay. But the next morning, when it happened again, she just looked at me real sharp and said, "Get dressed!" I thought sure she was going to drag me to school, but where she drug me was Planned Parenthood. When the test came back, there wasn't no question, and Mom didn't say a word 'til we came home. But then, she just lit into me: Who had I been with? Was it some boy she knew? And where and when? But in those weeks, you know, I had buried



DARCELLE (cont.)

the whole event deep in my mind like a bad dream. And the thing was, my mom really liked both Charlene and Derek. And I thought, if she knew, she wouldn't of let me see Charlene any more.

HARRIET

Right.

DARCELLE

When I did tell her, she just hit the roof. Had I been drinking? And why didn't I call for help, and on and on like that. And all I could think was: She's right. I should 'a known better. I should'a known.

HARRIET

Oh, my god.

DARCELLE

And she just looked at me, her face like a rock, and she said: "You're going to have this taken care of tomorrow and be back in school on Monday." And that was it. Didn't say another word. But I knew – inside I knew – it was my fault.

HARRIET

Oh Darcelle, why didn't you tell me? You let me go on and on and...

DARCELLE

I never told anyone, Harriet, ever. Besides, I didn't want to lay this on you when you're struggling with your own decision.

HARRIET

I... but now...?

DARCELLE

After we spoke on the phone, I could see that my *not* telling you wasn't doing you any favors – or me. (*pause*) I thought not talking about it was a kindness. But it seems like it wasn't. And to be honest, Harriet, on this, I owe you.

HARRIET

You owe me?

DARCELLE

The first time I finally let myself feel the loss was that day, five years ago, when I drove up to see you and Alicia at the lake, when she was like two months old. And on the drive home that night, I kept seeing you there, on the porch, nursing Alicia, the love

DARCELLE (cont.)

you had for her... and that's when it hit me. Out of nowhere, I was crying so hard I had to pull off the road.

HARRIET

God. You mean you thought... you should have ...?

DARCELLE

No, no. I'm glad I didn't have that child. That's not what I mean. I'm glad I'm teaching other people's children and glad I can let them go at the end of the school day. And I don't regret having that abortion. What I regret is feeling it wasn't me that made the decision... all the years of not letting myself feel what I was going through. I can tell you, if there is one thing worse than feeling loss and grief... it's not letting yourself feel it.

*A pause. HARRIET thinks of things to say, but remains silent.*

So, all of this is just to say: you were right, Harriet, I am not a man or a nun, but I *do* know what it is to be pregnant.

HARRIET

I can't believe I said that. I am so...

*Both HARRIET's and DARCELLE's phones ring. They look at their phones, look at each other, after a few more rings they both take the calls.*

HARRIET

Hello? This is Harriet. Yes.

DARCELLE

Hi Jessica, yes, but why are you calling me here...?

HARRIET

Okay.... That would be fine....

DARCELLE

Combination?... He put her in my class closet...?!

HARRIET

Yes, I'll send you a Zoom link for ten a.m.

DARCELLE

Three-one-four-one-five. No, no, no, just get her out of the damned closet. I'll deal with him in class tomorrow.

HARRIET

Central Time. Yes.

*Both DARCELLE and HARRIET hang up.*

DARCELLE

A seventh-grade boy locked a girl into a closet.

HARRIET

The pro-life lawyer. He says he'll meet with me tomorrow morning.

*A pause. DARCELLE fetches a book.*

DARCELLE

I wanted to give you this. It's about the goddess, Kali.

HARRIET

Thanks.

*DARCELLE leaves. HARRIET is alone. A moment of silence, HARRIET sobs for a moment. She turns on some sad music. Perhaps Paul Simon's 'Slip Slidin' Away.' She stares blankly at the audience as the music ends.*

HARRIET

I just couldn't get it out of my mind, the thought of Darcelle being raped. At fifteen. And it was only then that it occurred to me that in all my "research," I hadn't dealt with the rape question. That was a long, long night.

*HARRIET turns the computer. We see a collage of rape stories: Drunken college parties, male gangs, United Nations troops.*

*As the images fill the space HARRIET puts on a blouse and a suit jacket but does not change her bottoms.*

HARRIET

The next morning, I met with the lawyer, on Zoom.

*During this scene the rape images continue in the background. Meanwhile, we see a Zoom opening page and hear a Zoom bell.*

HARRIET (cont.)

At first, he was cagey, but it turned out he'd seen *All Fall Down* when I first showed it at the U of I.

*HARRIET and the LAWYER appear in Zoom frames.*

So, do you mind if I record what you said about the rape exception?

LAWYER

It's okay.

ZOOM VOICE

This session is being recorded.

LAWYER

What I was saying is that a lot of politicians, even solidly pro-life politicians, they want to have it both ways. They want to sound tough on abortion, but they don't want to look bad to women voters. So, they write laws that have an exception for rape and incest because they think, if you don't include those exceptions, it will sound like you're forcing the woman to bear a baby that is not her fault. But of course, that's not the issue.

HARRIET

It's not?

LAWYER

No, the problem is, if you write an exception for rape into the law, you undermine your own argument that the law is based on the rights of the unborn child.

HARRIET

I don't understand.

LAWYER

Well, the rights of the unborn child to life, liberty and happiness can't depend upon the circumstances that gave rise to that life, right? One child's rights aren't greater or lesser than another's just because this one was conceived in wedlock and that one was gotten at some drunken frat party.

HARRIET

Or worse.

LAWYER

Or worse.

HARRIET

So, what you're saying is if the law contained an exception for rape...

LAWYER

... then the language of the law would imply that one child's life is more defensible than that of another child, which runs you up against the Fourteenth Amendment and the Equal Protection clause. You understand?

HARRIET

Well but then, aren't you holding the woman responsible... for her own rape? If there's no exception, the law is saying that a woman who has already been humiliated by a rape should be punished again by being forced to bear the consequences of some man's violence.

LAWYER

Exactly: Some *man's* violence, not the *child's* violence.

HARRIET

So, even if a woman was raped by her father, you think the state should condemn her to giving birth... to her own brother? Is that what you believe?

LAWYER

Well, I can tell you what I don't believe. I don't believe that the sins of the parents—either parent—should be visited upon their children. I don't believe that the child of a prostitute should be called a "bastard" all his life. And I don't believe that the child of a rapist should be condemned to die before he's born.

HARRIET

I see....

LAWYER

Besides, whatever you think about the rights of the woman and the rights of the child, the fact is, when you're trying to defend the rights of the unborn in court, you're going to be litigating with a serious handicap.

HARRIET

Handicap?

LAWYER

You can't put the plaintiff on the stand.

HARRIET

Oh.

LAWYER

You can find plenty of women who'll testify about how their abortions made them suicidal. And you can hire experts who'll quote the statistics. And you can cross examine doctors who'll present evidence about when the fetus can feel pain. But you know the pro-abortion legal team will present experts on the other side. To really make your case, what you'd need is the testimony of the unborn child, the person whose life is on the line. But you can't put him on the stand. You can't even depose him... or her. You understand?

HARRIET

I do. Thanks.

LAWYER

Glad to be of help.

HARRIET

Can I ask you one more thing? So... if you could depose a fetus, what do you imagine they would say?

LAWYER

What do you imagine?

HARRIET

I hadn't thought about it.

LAWYER

Maybe you should. Maybe you should.

*HARRIET ends the Zoom. She removes her suit jacket, and opens the book about Kali.*

*JUDITH SEARS appears.*

JUDITH SEARS

I believe that life begins at conception because I'm not sure when else would life begin? And I mean it is a mystery, and we can't know. But I do believe that those children need to be advocated for because they don't have their own voice. I think being open to the mystery is what keeps us fresh and keeps us alive and kind of assuming that we don't have the answers. But there are not very many people who are comfortable living in that zone. If you embrace the mystery and you embrace the wonder, where's your stability? Where's your foundation if you're not standing on "This is how things are

JUDITH SEARS (cont.)

and should be"? Because you know, if *you* don't have the answer, and *I* don't have the answer, then where are we?

*HARRIET places a hand on her belly and begins to sing a sweet lullaby.*

*The FETUS appears seeming to float. The LAWYER enters.*

LAWYER

Hello. I'm Christopher Charon. I'm your attorney.

FETUS

Shh. She's singing.

LAWYER

Oh. Sorry.

FETUS

She has a beautiful voice.

LAWYER

Hmm. Yes.

*They both listen. The singing stops. The LAWYER opens his briefcase and takes out a notepad.*

Well, okay now. I think we can keep this short. I don't want to be taking you away from... whatever you're doing.

FETUS

Developing, I'm developing. This week, arm-buds, see?

LAWYER

Nice. And you have a heartbeat, right?

FETUS

Last week, for a few days, I had a tail.

LAWYER

A tail?

FETUS

Are you developing?

LAWYER

Uh... no. I'm a lawyer.

FETUS

That's too bad.

LAWYER

Right. Look, I'm sorry to interrupt your, "development," but if I'm going to represent you, I have to ask you a few questions.

FETUS

Represent me?

LAWYER

I guess you don't understand the situation here. Your mother, the one whose singing you like so much...?

FETUS

She has a beautiful voice.

LAWYER

Right, and ... I don't know a polite way to put this. She's going to have you... dismembered and expelled from the womb.

FETUS

Oh, okay. And you...?

LAWYER

I've been appointed to represent your side of the case.

FETUS

That's good of you.

LAWYER

Thanks. So this is the thing: I work for the State of Iowa, where your mother lives, and our governor has signed a law saying that if you have a heartbeat, your mother can't... have you expelled. Do you understand?

FETUS

Not really.



LAWYER

Let me make it simple, if your mother tries to have you killed in Iowa, we may be able stop her from doing that. But to do that, I need you to affirm that you don't want her to do that, okay?

FETUS (*thinks*)

I don't know.

LAWYER

Kid, don't you see: If you don't speak up to defend your life, you're going to be torn limb from limb, and ... no more developing. Get it?

FETUS

You seem upset.

LAWYER

Damned right I'm upset – on your behalf. Hey, I'm trying to get you out of a bad situation here.

FETUS

That's kind of you.

LAWYER

Hey, let's forget the nice-nice, okay? All you gotta do is say a few words about the value of your life, and how you don't want to die, and we can take the heartbeat law all the way to the Supreme Court. But I can't make the case if you won't even tell me...

*As the LAWYER speaks, HARRIET sings the Spanish lullaby. After the first three or four bars of the song, the FETUS and the LAWYER resume their conversation.*

HARRIET

Que duerma mi niño que duerma  
Que calla mi niño que calla  
Ay su cuna de acero  
Ay su colcha de Holanda  
No vengas muerte  
vete a las montañas  
por los valles grises  
donde esta la jaca.

FETUS

Listen. This one is a sad song, isn't it?

*They both listen for a moment.*

FETUS (cont.)

Do you know why she is sad?

LAWYER

No.

FETUS

She is thinking she is not able to be a good mother for me.

LAWYER

Hey, believe me, I'm sorry she's sad but...

FETUS

And you think it would be bad if she were to eliminate me.

LAWYER

Bad, yeah, exactly. Because you are a person... or a potential person. You can have a life.

FETUS

And you think that life is better.

LAWYER

Than death? Well, of course...

FETUS

But before I was conceived, it was not worse.

LAWYER

What the hell is wrong with you? Life is something you gotta fight for. You're going to forfeit the whole game before you play!

*A moment of listening. Perhaps the CHORUS sings too.*

FETUS

Mmm. Beautiful.

LAWYER

Incredible! What a waste. Sad.

*As the VOICES continue to sing, the LAWYER leaves.*

HARRIET

That night, I dreamed I was floating in an ocean filled with women and children. Some of them were swimming, and some were sinking in the sea. And then Jorge was there with Alicia. He was paddling to Cuba in a pink canoe. And I said to him, "This is too far out. It's not safe to be so far out in a canoe." But he didn't hear me, and then I saw he was crying, and his tears were filling the ocean.

*HARRIET's cell phone rings. Jorge appears.*

HARRIET

Jorge?

JORGE

I thought about it... I'll do it.

HARRIET

You'll go with me to the clinic?

JORGE

I'll move to Iowa.

HARRIET

That's not what I asked.

JORGE

Te amo, Harriet.

*JORGE vanishes. HARRIET looks at us, then she looks at the other actors who are still singing.*

HARRIET.

Enough. Enough... Enough.

*We cannot tell if HARRIET is enacting a moment that happened with JORGE or if she has just stopped performing. The singing stops and the actors look at each other.*

DARCELLE (*prompting*)

"The next day was the final..."

HARRIET

No. Let's stop. You were right. I can't go on with this.

DARCELLE

Too late now, hon. Come on, let's just finish.

HARRIET

Oh, why is this so hard?

DARCELLE (*speaks with the FATHER'S voice.*)

If you can get up, you can get back down.... "The next day..."

*HARRIET pulls herself together to go on with the show. She cues the war music. As she speaks, she sometimes pauses to breathe.*

HARRIET

The next day was the final performance at the museum. All that day I watched myself going through the motions: I washed my hair. I went to the bathroom. I dressed. I walked to the subway. At the museum, I stood in front of the people.

*The CHORUS creates the SOUNDS OF WAR. The All Fall Down lights come on, war music plays, but the children sing off key, their voices overlapping or skipping.*

I could hear my own voice speaking the text. And all around me, the images of war were flashing and fading. But I wasn't there.

*We hear bleating sheep, lowing cattle and a screaming chicken. ALIM appears with a knife.*

*Two actors intone the words of Isaac and Abraham.*

ISAAC

Father.

ABRAHAM

Here I am, my son.

ISAAC

Behold, the fire and the wood, but where is the lamb for the burnt offering?

ABRAHAM

The Lord himself will provide the lamb for the burnt offering, my son.

ALIM

Bismillah Allahu Akbar!

*ALIM slices with the knife.*

*A scream. Both the blessing and the scream echo.*

*With the head and neck of a chicken in her hand,  
HARRIET writes: ساعدوني!*

HARRIET

Saidouni!

*We hear shouting in the background, followed by a police  
siren. The All Fall Down lights turn off.*

HARRIET

And just then, at the back of the audience, a group of people began a chant... about animal cruelty. And, oh God, the look on the face the butcher....

*The noises and the music end. Softly, in the distance, we  
begin to hear rain which builds slowly during the next few  
speeches. JORGE is making the rain sound on his drum.*

When the show was over, Alim came up to me, with tears running down his face.

ALIM

Cruel, again? What do these people know of cruelty?

HARRIET

I am so sorry.

ALIM

Do they grow their own food, these people? Do they plant the seeds, do they feed the lambs with their hands? Let them do so before they curse me! Sacrifice...sacrifice is holy work. What do they know? What?

*The rain increases. ALIM throws his knife which lodges in  
the wall. He walks away. As HARRIET struggles to keep  
going, we hear thunder in the distance.*

HARRIET

I left by the side door. I couldn't face the audience. It was beginning to rain, but I turned up Fifth Avenue, past Trump and Tiffany, past the Plaza and the Sherry Netherland. And then east, toward the river, I don't know why. By the time I passed Park and Lex, it was raining hard. Near Third Avenue, there was a bar, but the people inside were

HARRIET (cont.)

laughing and I couldn't... And then I saw the Roosevelt Island Tram. I wasn't thinking, I just got on. It's dark, and it's raining hard, and I'm the only one in the car.

*Lightening. Louds thunder.*

*HARRIET climbs to where RUNNING WOMAN stood.*

*Lightening.*

HARRIET

And when we are high in the air, the power goes out and the cable car stops, and I'm swinging there, like a fly in a spider web, way up above the East River. And I'm wondering – just idly wondering – is it possible to open the door of the gondola. I'm thinking – just vaguely thinking – If I die, Jorge will take care of Alicia....

*Loud thunder.*

And then I hear this voice.

*KALI's voice booms, perhaps with reverb.*

VOICE OF KALI

Like mother, like daughter, eh, Harriet?

HARRIET

What?!

*Thunder.*

HARRIET

Help!

*DARCELLE has transformed into the Indian goddess, KALI who now appears in the air.*

KALI

Yes, Harriet, I am here to help.

HARRIET

Who are you!?

*A metallic sound, like a large gong. During the next speeches, asterisks mark the gong sounds.*

KALI

I am Kali. \*

Kali Jaganmaataa,\* Mother of the World. \*

Kali Mahamari, \* the Great Destroyer. \*

Kali Nilaghana, \* Black as a Dark Cloud that has no permanent qualities. \*

And I am Kali Sarvakalodbhavodbhava: She who Gives Birth to Time Itself. \*\*

*Thunder.*

I am That-Which-Continues-to-Exist-After-the-Universe-Ends. \*\*\*

HARRIET

This is not happening.

KALI

Look at me, Harriet. \* You know me. \* All women know me. \*

I am the source of life, and the dissolution of life. \*

I make, and I unmake. \*\*

I inspire your first breath when you are born. And I draw out your final breath when you die. \*\*

HARRIET

No!

KALI

What is wrong, Harriet?

HARRIET

Wrong?! What's wrong?! I'm in a fucking funicular, hanging from a cable, a thousand feet above the East River... and some mythical Indian goddess is talking to me. But hey, nothing's wrong!

*The storm begins to lessen.*

KALI

You're having a hard time, I see,  
Making up your mind.

HARRIET

I...

KALI

And do you know why that is?

HARRIET

Yes. Because whatever decision I make... I might regret it.

KALI

That's true. But then, that's always true, Harriet.

HARRIET

It makes me feel so powerless.

KALI

No Harriet, you are not powerless.  
You are hiding from your power:  
The power all women have:  
The power to make and to unmake,  
The power to create and to destroy.  
To end what you have begun.

HARRIET

To end...to end my child? My own child?

KALI

Listen, Harriet, listen to me:  
Once upon a time, there was a woman  
With three small children, trapped within a war.  
The four of them were hiding from the soldiers  
In a ditch. But, after two long days  
And freezing nights, the woman's breasts ran dry  
And her small baby boy, her youngest child,  
Began to wail. And fearing that his cries  
Would lead the soldiers to their hiding place  
The mother clasped that child to her breast  
And held him hard, against that pillow,  
The softest pillow in the world, until  
His breathing stopped. With love, Harriet:  
She killed her youngest child with love.

*The storm is at an end.*

HARRIET

But how.... How could she face her other children after that?



KALI

With sorrow, child... and with the love that dares  
To look at directly at Death, full in the face.

*HARRIET shudders.*

Why do you turn away now, Harriet? Why,  
When every day, in every corner of  
This globe, you humans burn entire forests  
Into ash, decapitate tall mountains,  
Drain the wetland marshes, and each week  
You liquidate entire species. Why  
Do you shiver to perceive you have  
The power to make and to unmake too?

HARRIET

Ohhh, God!

KALI

Are you so blinded by your self-regard  
You cannot even see what you have lost?

HARRIET

Lost? What have I lost?

KALI

Proportion, Harriet. You've lost proportion.  
And with it lost the great relief  
that comes with witnessing:  
The vastness of your insignificance.

HARRIET

Relief?

KALI

Indeed, that seems to be a reach for you:  
The great relief... that comes with witnessing  
The vastness of your insignificance.

*HARRIET (with a moan)*

Oh, oh, Alicia! I wish Alicia was here.

*HARRIET is crying now. The cable car is rocking slowly. In another area, JORGE, speaks to ALICIA. We hear Alicia crying.*

ALICIA

Mama!

JORGE

No llores, mi hija, no llores. Mañana irás a casa. Pero vamos ahora, cantamos juntos la canción.

*JORGE and ALICIA sing the Spanish lullaby. For several seconds, there is only the sound of the wind and the song.*

*Telephone rings.*

MOTHER

Hi, darling. I know you're at your show, but I just had to say: I'm sorry for how I spoke. You have a decision to make, and all you wanted was for me to tell my story – our story, right? Maybe it's just I envy that you live at a time when you *can* make such a decision. I thought, back then, I didn't have a choice. But I can see how it might be a burden too, having such a choice.

HARRIET

Oh, oh.

*KALI (As she starts to disappear)*

The great relief...

MOTHER

I hope your show goes well. And your new piece, I hope that goes well too. I love you.

*KALI (the voice echoes in the distance)*

The vastness... of your insignificance.

*Everyone but HARRIET sings the lullaby.*

HARRIET

And then the tram began to move again.

*The Spanish lullaby continues.*

**FADE TO BLACK -- END OF PLAY**



## NOTE RE INTERMISSION DISPLAY

During the intermission, the theater lobby might display artworks that HARRIET has made during her earlier attempts to make art out of the abortion information she collected, so each might be in a different art medium. Each work contains words and/or images relating to abortion. Here are some historical words they might include, but they might also have more recent quotes:

**Margaret Sanger:** “No woman can call herself free who does not own and control her body. No woman can call herself free until she can choose consciously whether she will or will not be a mother.”

**Naomi Wolf:** “There is no easy way to deny the powerful argument that a woman's equality in society must give her some irreducible rights unique to her biology including the right to take the life within her life. - but we don't have to lie to ourselves about what we are doing at such a moment.”

**Ruth Bader Ginsburg:** “*Roe v Wade*... halted a political process that was moving in a reform direction and thereby... prolonged divisiveness and deferred settlement of the issue. [It was a] heavy-handed judicial intervention... difficult to justify and appears to have provoked, not resolved, conflict.”

**Ronald Reagan:** “I've noticed that everybody that is for abortion has already been born.”

**Chris Hedges:** “If we outlaw abortion, then what will happen is what always happened throughout history: the rich will make sure that their mistresses and their wives and their girlfriends will get safe abortions, and the poor people will die in a basement room.”

**Alveda King:** “My uncle Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. once wrote, ‘The Negro cannot win if he is willing to sell the future of his children for his personal and immediate comfort and safety.’ Defending the unborn has become the civil rights cause of this generation. The killing tools of abortionists are as aimed at blacks today as the fire hoses of segregationists 50 years ago.”

**Joycelyn Elders:** “I think there should be laws against stalking physicians who perform abortions. We don't allow people to stalk people for anything else. Why permit them to stalk doctors just because they are doing abortions? We really need to get over this love affair with the fetus and start worrying about children.”

See also: *What Can the White Man Say to the Black Woman?* By Alice Walker

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