HOPE REMAINS
(A single light shines on a circular kitchen table where HOPE, a teenage African American girl, sits writing in a journal. Lights up as MOM enters stage right and puts her bag on the counter. HOPE quickly closes the journal and looks behind her.)

HOPE

You’re home early.
(Tries to cover journal with her arms)

MOM

Work ended early.
(takes off coat and sees the journal on the table)
What are you doing?

HOPE

Schoolwork.

(MOM walks towards the table and grabs the journal from HOPE. She opens it up and angrily flips through the pages.)

MOM

Have you been writing again?

HOPE

Just for a school assignment.

MOM

On racism, activism, and gun violence?

HOPE

It’s for my history—

MOM

Don’t lie to me. I know this isn’t for school.
(She slams the journal on the table and sits down in the seat to the right of HOPE and rests her head in her hands.)

HOPE

(Quietly)
I’m sorry.

MOM

I’ve told you before not to write about these things.
HOPE
I just want to tell our story.

MOM
It’ll get you killed.

HOPE
Mom, please.

MOM
Some book by a sixteen-year-old black girl from the city isn’t going to make a difference.

HOPE
(Quietly)
It’s worth a shot.

MOM
But it’s not worth the risk. After everything that has happened, how could you do this to me? To Elijah? He can’t handle losing anyone else.

HOPE
I’m doing this for Elijah. I want him to grow up in a world that’s safe.

MOM
(Picks up the journal)
So you think that if you put this out into the world things are going to be different? You’re going against a culture founded by hate and immune to change. This story will blow up on the news for a few days and be forgotten about just as quickly. The next day you’ll turn on the TV and see another innocent man killed, another church shooting, or another racist attack. This won’t make a dent on the world.

(Places journal back on the table)

HOPE
(Whispering)
I just want to be heard.

MOM
Excuse me?
HOPE

(Angrily stands)
I want our story to be heard. I want the world to know what they did to my brother. I’m sick of watching you act like everything is okay. Like nothing happened. You won’t even talk about what they did to him.

MOM
There’s nothing to say. He’s gone and I can’t do anything about it.

HOPE
You can make sure it doesn’t happen again to someone else’s son.

MOM
You need to realize that no matter what you do, nothing will change.

HOPE
Just let me try! Why can’t you support me for once?

MOM
Because I have to protect you first! Let this go already before it’s too late.

(Begins to walk away)

HOPE
Dad would want me to do this. If he were here, he’d support me.

MOM
(Stops in her place and turns around)
What happened to your father is exactly the reason why I don’t want you doing this. He’s going to spend the rest of his life in prison because he defended himself in that protest. I told him not to go, but he didn’t listen to me. Don’t repeat his mistake.

HOPE
It wasn’t a mistake. He fought for what he wanted, for equal rights, and I’m going to keep fighting for him.

MOM
You were too young to understand what happened when he got arrested. But now I expect you to realize that if you do this, you’re risking your life for nothing.
HOPE
But this could get justice for Dad and Emanuel. Dad’s in prison because he killed someone in self-defense. Emanuel’s gone because he reached for his license and the cops assumed it was a gun. Yet, no one did anything about it.

MOM
No one did anything because nothing can be done. It’s the same story over and over again.

HOPE
This will at least give Elijah the chance of growing up in a better world. If you don’t care about that, then fine. You can sit back and watch as you always do.

MOM
(Bitterly, walking back towards table)
I’ve been on this earth longer than you have, Hope. I’ve seen people try to do what you’re doing, and they all ended up dead. So don’t think that you’re the first person to try to change this messed up world, because you’re not. The sooner you realize that this is a hopeless cause, the sooner you’ll be able to live your life.

HOPE
I don’t want to live in a world like this.

MOM
You don’t have a choice. I’m not letting you go through with this.

(Rips up journal)

HOPE
Stop it!

(Tries to reach for journal)

MOM
I’m doing what’s best for you. It’s time to let this go.

(MOM exits stage right. HOPE shoves the pieces of paper off the table. She sits down and softly cries into her hands. A few seconds later, ELIJAH enters stage left with a toy police car in his hand. He starts walking towards her but stops and picks up one of the journal pages. He starts reading it.)
ELIJAH

(Looking up at her)
Am I going to die?

HOPE

(Quickly turns around)
Why would you ever think that?

ELIJAH

It says,
(reads from paper)
'People like us aren't good for anything but dying.'
(looks at her)
What's wrong with us?
(Sits down in the chair to her left and places items on the table)

HOPE

(Wiping tears from her face)
There's nothing wrong with us. It's the other people who are the problem.

ELIJAH

Is it because we look different than them?

HOPE

That's part of the reason.

ELIJAH

I think that's why people at school sometimes call me names and make fun of my hair.

HOPE

Why didn't you tell me that before?

ELIJAH

I told my teacher but she never did anything about it. It's just normal.

HOPE

Just because no one does anything about it doesn't mean that it's right. You need to let me know if it happens again, okay?
ELIJAH
It’s no big deal. I’m used to it.

HOPE
It is a big deal, and I won’t let anyone say those types of things to you again.

ELIJAH
How?

HOPE
(Smiling and grabbing a piece of paper from her bag)
Through this, of course. Who knows, maybe you’ll even be a writer one day.

ELIJAH
Nah, I wanna be a cop. A good one, not like the ones who killed Emanuel. And I’ll go around stopping all the bad guys and saving the world.

HOPE
(Crosses her arms)
Since when did you wanna be a cop?

ELIJAH
They came to school and told us about all the cool stuff they do and they gave us these new cars!
(holds up toy in the air)
It was so cool, I wanna be just like them!

HOPE
I don’t think that’s a good idea.

ELIJAH
Why not?

HOPE
Well, it’s just that... I don’t want you getting hurt, that’s all.

ELIJAH
I won’t. I’ll have a super fast car
(stands up on the chair and races toy car across the table)
and guns to shoot the bad guys.
(Makes a gun with his hand and pretends to shoot it)
HOPE

Elijah, don’t do that!
(pulls him down from chair)
Guns are dangerous. You don’t ever want to use them on someone, okay?

ELIJAH

What about the bad guys?

HOPE

(Sighs)
Sometimes it’s hard to tell who the bad guys really are. You may think someone’s bad because of how they look or act, but really, they’re not dangerous at all.

ELIJAH

That’s why we have cops to save the world! They always know what to do!
(Jumps out of chair with his hands in the air)

HOPE

(Stands up angrily)
Cops are the bad guys! And you’re never going to be one because they’re too busy killing us!

(Throws toy police car across the room. ELIJAH slowly takes a step back and wipes tears from his eyes. HOPE runs over and kneels in front of him, holding his arms.)

Elijah, I’m sorry, I shouldn’t have said that. I’m sorry. Just forget everything that I said.

ELIJAH

(Sniffing)
I-is the car ok-okay?

HOPE

(Walks over and grabs car, then brings it back to him)
The car is fine. Not even a scratch.

ELIJAH

(Takes the car and holds it close to his chest)
W-why can’t I be a cop?
HOPE
I just want you to be safe. I’m trying to protect you. No more of this guns and cop stuff, okay?

ELIJAH
(Looks down sadly)
Okay.

HOPE
Hey, look at me.
(ELIJAH raises his head)
This is for the best. Now let’s get you to bed. I’ll be there in a sec to tuck you in.

(ELIJAH runs off stage left making siren sounds and driving the car through the air with his hand. HOPE sits down at the table and puts her head in her hands. After a few seconds, she grabs a pencil and stares at the blank sheet of paper. Lights fade to black.)

END
An Unfortunate Presidency

By: Ailish Cuthbert, Raizel Demaria, Tony Gao, Hannah Marek, and Ivana Pierce
The man:

(Charlie from tik tok intro hand motions standing center stage)
This just in, the candidate who was leading in the polls, Secretary Pierce, was in a fatal accident while filming a tik tok to promote her campaign in the middle of the highway. Although this news is extremely saddening for all of her supporters, things seem to be looking up for runner up Tonee Pow!

Mr. Pow :

(to his wife, Rizzel)
What!! I don’t want to be the president! I only ran as a joke.

(A man walks with a sign that reads “2 hours later”)

The Man:
The votes have been counted, the people have spoken. Congratulations to the newly elected president, Tonee Pow!

(cheering)

Mr. Pow :

(Tiktok audio) What the hell we gon’ do now?

Rizzel:
We have 2 months until the inauguration, that’s plenty of time for us to figure out a way to get out of this.

Mr. Pow :
Okay, we will have to come up with a plan.

(The man walks across the stage with a sign that reads “Two months later”)

Mr. Pow :
In the words of Lady Gaga, this presidency can only be summed up as one that will be “talented, brilliant, incredible, amazing, show-stopping, spectacular, totally unique, completely not ever been done before, never the same, unafraid to reference or not reference”

(The crowd cheers)
Rizzel:
I don’t know how you pulled that off, but everyone loved your speech!

Mr. Pow:
What can I say, I have a way with words. Now I need to get down to business. My goal is to be impeached and kicked out of the office in less than a year.

(The lights fade)

(The lights rise to Mr. Pow is sitting at his desk in the Oval Office, with a bag of Doritos in his hand. Rizzel walks in.)

Rizzel:
So Mr. President, what’s first on the agenda?

Mr. Pow:
Well, I was just eating a bag of Doritos while trying to figure out how I can get impeached. And while I was eating, a brilliant idea came to my head. I thought to myself, who doesn’t love Doritos? I’m going to implement a country-wide ban on Doritos!

Rizzel:
That’s genius!

Mr. Pow:
I know, right? I’ll put it into effect first thing.

(Calls the man from off stage hands him a note)

Rizzel:
Great! You will be out of the office in no time!

The Man:
(standing center stage with a spotlight on him)
Attention America! The President just presented me with a new bill that will be put into effect immediately. It reads: “In light of Dorito addiction becoming a serious issue amongst our citizens, a ban on Doritos will be put into effect.” You heard me, grocery stores. Start clearing that chip isle right now!
Mr. Pow:
This is great, I’m already receiving backlash on twitter! I can’t wait to hear Jimmy Kimmel bash me on his show tonight.

(The man walks across the stage with a sign that says “2 hours later.”)

(Mr. Pow is sitting in the oval office with his air pods in while listening to his favorite artists Taylor Swift when his wife runs in.)

Rizzel:
Dear, turn on the news!

(Mr. Pow dancing to himself not noticing his wife’s presence.)

Rizzel:
TURN ON THE NEWS!

(Mr. Pow still doesn’t notice his wife.)

Rizzel:
(murmuring to herself)
For the love of all things, how did this man become president and I'm here doing all the work?

(Rizzel walks over to her husband grabs his phone from the desk and turns off the music)

Mr. Pow:
Is it vibe check time?

Rizzel:
Focus, Tonee! Look at the news! They are saying that the National Health Institute just came out with a new study on the harmful effects of Doritos. Turns out they’re the leading cause of Cancer! Your approval rate is soaring right now.

Mr. Pow:
What?? How is that even possible!

Rizzel:
Look! People are holding up signs saying “President Pow, our hero.” Listen, Tonee. I don’t want to be here any more than you do. You better figure out a way to get impeached soon or I’m out of here.

Mr. Pow:
Okay, Okay. I’m on it. Looks like we’re back to square one. What else could I possibly do?

Rizzel:
Figure it out! It will give you something useful to do other than staring at yourself in the mirror and practicing the renegade all day.

Mr. Pow:
Hey!! Wait a minute… you actually gave me a great idea. How about I send out a presidential letter to all the schools in America, public and private, saying that before taking State Tests and College Admission Tests, all students must do the renegade?

Rizzel:
That’s perfect! This way the students will all have lower test grades and America will look stupid.

(The man walks across the stage with a sign that says “2 months later.”)

(Rizzel and Tonee are sitting at the dinner table; Rizzel checks her phone)

Rizzle:
(spits out her water)
ARE YOU KIDDING ME!!

Mr. Pow:
What is going on?

Rizzel:
I guess the students taking the test were all so stressed before that it had an impact on the grades, but now because of you and you’re stupid renegade the students are testing better than ever before. Dang it! I thought for sure you had lost the approval of all teachers and parents in the country!
Mr. Pow:
I should have known that would have happened. Tik Tok makes all aspects of life better.

Rizzel:
Wait a minute! Are you thinking what I’m thinking?

Mr. Pow:
Shall we ban TikTok? Kids won’t even know what to do with themselves! Parents will be devastated that their kids won’t be able to catch them up on the newest Charlie dances and TikTok references! Schools will be furious because scores will go back down and more students will be opting out of tests!

Rizzel:
That’s genius. This has got to work. How could they possibly justify that?

Mr. Pow:
Okay, I’ll send a notice to Apple and Samsung demanding that they take down the app immediately.

(Mr. Pow types up an email to the two companies. He presses send, shuts his computer, and sits back in his seat with his legs propped up on the table. His phone starts buzzing nonstop with messages from angry teenage tweeters.)

Mr. Pow:
(TikTok audio) This is nice. This is nice. I have every student, teacher, and parent in America hating me!

(The man walks across the stage with a sign that says “2 months later.”)

Rizzel:
You aren’t going to believe this.

Mr. Pow:
My impeachment trial is scheduled in a couple of weeks. People are calling me Mussolini 2.0 for banning TikTok. DO NOT ruin this for me.

Rizzel:
Well, turn on the news and see for yourself.
(Mr. Pow turns on the news)

Tha Man:
(Standing center stage with a spotlight on him)

Breaking news. Turns out that prior to the ban, the average teenager was spending more than two hours a day scrolling through tik tok! Studies show that kids are now getting more sleep and higher grades in school! I think I can speak on behalf of the entire nation in saying that we’re sorry we ever doubted you, President Pow.

(Mr. Pow is outraged. He throws the remote across the room and punches the TV.)

(The man walks across the stage with a “2 months later” sign)

(Tonee and Rizzel are in the pool at the White House soaking in the sun. The song Shake it Off is playing on their Alexa and they are dancing.)

Mr. Pow:
This is great. I haven’t even thought about the fact that I’m the President of the United States in a whole 5 minutes. Dang it, now I’m thinking about it again.

Rizzel:
(frustrated) Ughh! I hate being the First Lady too! It’s soooo much effort. I never signed up for this, but you did. You better get us out of this.

Mr. Pow:
I say we get out of here. Let’s just hide.

Rizzel:
Hide? Hide where? Everyone knows exactly where we are 24/7.

Mr. Pow:
Exactly. That’s why we need to leave this area. Say, why don’t we go to Canada? I’ve always wanted to visit Montreal. I can finally put my French lessons to use!

Rizzel:
Hold up. We aren’t going to Montreal. I’m not going to delay this impeachment thing any longer. I have an idea.
Mr. Pow:
What’s your idea?

Rizzel:
Get out of the pool and dry off. I’ll explain when we get inside.

(Mr. Pow and Rizzel get out of the pool, dry off, and go inside.)

Rizzel:
When you mentioned going to Canada, it hit me. You should declare war on Canada! Who
would ever want to go to war with unproblematic Canada? The whole world will hate you!

Mr. Pow:
“Girl, you have done it again. Constantly raising the bar for us all, and doing it flawlessly”
(Michelle Obama quote). This plan is fool-proof! There is no good reason why anyone would go
to war with Canada.

Rizzel:
Exactly.

(Later that night, Mr. Pow is writing something on a piece of paper in his office. He
delivers the letter to the Man)

Mr. Pow:
Come here, Rizzel. I just declared war. Let’s see what the news reporter has to say about this
one.

The Man:
(standing center stage with a spotlight on him)
This just in, our President has declared war on Canada. Our troops are being sent there as I
speak. It seems that President Pow has fallen off the deep end! As of right now, we don’t
understand why President Pow wanted to take this action.

Mr. Pow:
This is great, they will never be able to find anything because there is no reason to go to war! I
think this is finally going to work.
Rizzel:
I told you this plan would work. Let’s just sit back, relax, and see what they come up with. If this plays out the way we want, I predict that you will be kicked out of office in a couple of weeks!

(One week later, Mr. and Mrs. Pow are sitting at their kitchen table sipping coffee and watching Good Morning America, their favorite program. The show is interrupted by a breaking news report from The Man)

The Man:
(standing center stage with a spotlight on him)
We have an update on the United States war with Canada. The FBI has uncovered some very important information about Canadian plans to bomb the White House and several other government buildings in Washington DC. Recent discoveries suggest that they have been working on this plan for several months and were almost ready to launch the attack. Government officials are praising President Pow for his courageous decision to fight back against this Canadian terrorism. Without him, Washington as we know it would be destroyed! Thank you President Pow! We need you more than ever!!

(Mr. Pow and Rizzel are outraged. They begin pacing around the room. Mr. Pow punches the wall and yells.)

Mr. Pow:
Are you kidding me?! I can’t do anything right, I mean wrong! What the hell we gon’ do now!

Rizzel:
I have no idea! I’m just about ready to throw in the towel. It is useless to keep trying. With our luck, you could shut the entire country down and somehow still look like a hero.

Mr. Pow:
Unless…I mean you’ll never know if you don’t try.

Rizzel:
Are you talking about shutting the country down? You know I wasn’t serious, right?

Mr. Pow:
Well I am the president. I say we shut everything down. Schools, restaurants, malls, ect. And we’ll put a ton of restrictions on travel. And better yet, we’ll demand that everyone stay home!
Rizzel:
I always thought you were crazy, and when you ran for president it confirmed my suspicion. But this, *this* is off the deep end. I want out as much as you do, but don’t you think we could take a little less dramatic approach?

Mr. Pow:
Nah. I say go big or go home. And currently our home is the White House, so I don’t think either of us want to go home.

Rizzel:
You have a point there. Go for it I guess.

Mr. Pow:
Great! I will send out the memo right away!

*(Letter is delivered to the man who looks absolutely horrified.)*

The Man:
*(standing center stage with a spotlight on him)*
Breaking News! It is with great despair that I report to you that the country will be placed in a total shutdown, effective immediately. I am every bit as shocked and confused as you are, America. I will continue to update everyone as we get more information about why the President made this radical decision.

Mr. Pow:
Ha! This is great! This is totally unexpected and uncalled for! The entire nation will be outraged!

*(Angry shouting is coming from a crown off stage. People are yelling messages such as “destroy him,” “impeach him,” “throw him out of office,” and “We want our lives back” to Mr. Pow.)*

Rizzel:
*(Pointing off stage towards the shouting)* Oh my go- *(passes out)*

Mr. Pow:
*(disregarding the fact the Rizzel passed out and stepping over her body)* This mob is insane! Is that guy using a torch to burn a cardboard cutout of me?! *(sirens)* And is that the police coming?! Oh no… I may have gone a bit too far. *(shaking Rizzel)* Rizzel! Wake up!
Rizzel:
*(she slowly wakes up and looks very confused)* Huh? What just happened?

Mr. Pow:
The police are coming! Looks like our plan worked, but this isn’t exactly what I had in mind.

Rizzel:
If anyone asks, I had no part of this, that’s all I’m saying.

*(Police storm in, handcuff Mr. Pow, and bring him to the police station. Rizzel goes to visit him in jail)*

Rizzel:
I can’t believe you’re in jail. I knew this was a crazy idea.

Mr. Pow:
I know, this is absolutely insane. I can’t believe I’m saying this, but I almost wish I could go back to being President.

Rizzel:
Woah, Woah, woah, be careful what you wish for. You’re lucky that one of your crazy plans worked for once. How about I bail you out and we move to an island far, far away from here.

Mr. Pow:
Now that’s an idea I can get behind.

*(Police officer comes onstage and unlocks the jail cell. The officer opens the door and motions Mr. Pow to come out.)*

Police officer:
Well Mr. President, I am pleased so say that you are free to go. Putting you in jail was a complete oversight on our part, and on behalf of the entire country, we extend our sincerest apologies to you and your wife. We should have known that there was a good reason for what you did. You know, doctors are saying that because of the aggressive measures you took early on in this battle, thousands of lives were saved. Allow me to escort you back to the White House so you can continue to guide our nation with strong leadership in the war against this deadly virus!
(Mr. Pow throws a big temper tantrum; he is lying on the ground, sobbing, and punching the floor.)

President Pow:
(sobbing) WHYYYY! (continues crying) why does the world hate me! I didn’t do this to protect the country from the virus! I hate my life!

Police Officer:
Don’t be modest, President Pow. I know who you are, and I know that you always do what is best for our country. Your judgment is impeccable. Now you need to get back to work, you’re the only one who knows how to bring our country out of this mess!

(Rizzel and Mr. Pow begin sobbing uncontrollably as the lights fade out)

(The lights fade on, and we see Mr.Pow standing in front of a podium with Rizzel standing beside him. He is about to give his speech of acceptance of his re-election.)

(people off stage are clapping, cheering, and yelling phrases such as “four more years” and “We love you”)

Mr. Pow:
Fellow Americans I am just as shocked to be here as you are and tonight I would like to leave you with some inspiration that can not only relate to how this presidency will go but also how I like to live my life. “Ain't nothin' gonna break my stride, nobody gonna slow me down, oh no I got to keep on moving”

(The lights fade)
“Agoraphobia”
Lili Czerniak Linder

(The play begins in AGNES’ tiny and old fashioned, but perfectly organized, apartment. The apartment only has one large room, a dusty window, and one door. The set is a box set, three walls with the front missing. Outside the door is a runner rug, emulating a hallway. AGNES sits in an antique rocking chair facing the only window, with her cat, HORACE, on her lap.)

AGNES
Are you feeling like kugel tonight, Horace? Passover starts tomorrow, you know.

(AGNES pauses, waiting for a response.)

AGNES
(Agitated)
Yes, Horace, I know I’m not Jewish, okay? But the Elderly Digest says it’s good to celebrate the small things in life as you get older. Appreciate them, ya know? And my mom didn’t let me eat many different things when I was little, she didn’t like change. So, I’m making up for it.

(Beat)

AGNES
Don’t look at me like that, I just want something to celebrate. And you know I’ll read anything I can get my old hands on. Plus, it’s Wednesday, which means we have to have a noodle dish. The Postmates man can deliver in sixteen minutes and then we can watch "Jeopardy". Does that sound good?

(Silence.)

AGNES
Okay, Horace, it’s ordered! I know you’re excited for "Jeopardy"! The winner gets $250,000. That would buy enough catnip for a lifetime! You know, Joe may be $10,000 behind the leader, but I think he has a good shot at winning.

(AGNES laughs)
AGNES
Poor Harold, on the other hand, has no idea what’s going on. And then there’s Janice, who-

(The lights in AGNES’ apartment all suddenly go out. The stage is only lit as if by sunlight. AGNES gets up and HORACE jumps off her lap.)

AGNES
It’s okay, Horace, Adam probably just turned off the breaker again. That kid really has no idea how to manage this place. I’d better give him a call.

(AGNES sits back down in the chair and HORACE promptly gets back on her lap. She reaches for the cordless telephone next to her chair and dials a number before putting the phone to her ear.)

AGNES
Oh, silly me, this phone won’t work without power. Rotary telephones at least worked when the power went out. What’s the point of all these new gadgets if the old ones worked better?

(AGNES walks around the apartment sifting through her things, and pulls out an ancient flip phone, then sits down and dials a number. As she waits for ADAM to pick up, she audibly and repeatedly taps the side of the phone with her pointer finger in groups of three. She waits a few seconds for ADAM to pick up.)

AGNES
Adam, were you fiddling with the breakers again? My power is out and "Jeopardy" starts in twenty minutes! You know I have to watch it every night or I’ll never go to sleep!

(AGNES pauses as if listening to ADAM’s response, while continuing her tapping ritual.)

AGNES
The whole building?

(Pause. AGNES starts tapping the phone again while listening to ADAM’s answer.)
AGNES

The whole city?! What happened?

(AGNES listens to ADAM intently, still tapping.)

AGNES

Mmmhmm. I see. Do you know when it will be fixed?

(Pause. After a few seconds a shocked and fearful look is present on AGNES’ face. She taps the phone faster.)

AGNES

Days?! What am I supposed to do for days?

(AGNES stops as she listens closely to ADAM’s response. She keeps tapping the phone in rapid groups of three.)

AGNES

No Adam, you know I don’t like going outside. I can’t just run down to the corner store or drive into town. I don’t even have a car anymore. Besides, there’s no time in my routine to leave.

(AGNES lets out an audible sigh.)

AGNES

(frustrated, but politely)
Just let me know when it gets fixed, please. Thanks. Goodbye, Adam.

(AGNES hangs up the phone. She walks to the counter and sets the phone down, putting both hands on the counter, continuing her tapping. She pauses for a few seconds to work through the situation.)

AGNES

What am I going to do without “Jeopardy”, Horace? I already finished the crossword and the sudoku for today!

(Beat)

(Mockingly)
Right, right, look on the bright side. (In a normal tone) At least we still have the Kugel.
(There is a knock at the door from the Postmates delivery man, arriving with Agnes’ kugel. Agnes goes to answer it. End of scene.)

(It is later that night, and Agnes gets into bed and turns the bedside light out. She tosses and turns as the stage lights fade out.)

(Cut to morning. AGNES gets up, then walks over to the fridge, tapping it three times before opening it. As soon as she opens the door, she wrinkles her face in disgust, closes the fridge, taps the door again three times, and faces HORACE.)

AGNES
Damn it, Horace, I forgot the power is out. Now all the food’s gone bad. I mean, we still have the food in the pantry, but there’s almost nothing left. On Thursdays I’m supposed to have eggs for breakfast and a quesadilla for lunch. I couldn’t possibly eat a can of soup!

(Talking increasingly quickly, rushed)

I have to call up the grocer to get the next food early. He better be in already. Now where’d I set that phone? It belongs next to my chair! Oh gosh, could this get any worse? Sorry, Horace, I guess we’re going to have a very late breakfast today.

(AGNES rushes around the apartment looking for the flip phone, until she spots it on the counter. AGNES clucks her tongue.)

AGNES
(To herself)
Now you’re really losing it.

(She picks up the cordless phone and as she goes to type a number, the phone says “Low Power” in a robotic voice.)

AGNES
Looks like I better make it quick.

(AGNES dials the rest of the number and puts the phone to her ear. She taps the side of the phone in groups of three as she anxiously waits for someone to pick up.)
AGNES
Hello, this is Agnes Harris, and I’m looking to order some-

(AGNES is cut off by a loud beeping noise from the phone, which abruptly ends after a few seconds.)

AGNES
(Into the phone, frazzled. She now taps the phone extremely fast, but still in discernable groups.)

Hello? Hello?

(AGNES jams some buttons on the phone and puts it back up to her ear. She then puts it down angrily.)

AGNES
Low power, my ass... that thing was already dead. Stupid modern gadgets. What’s the point of buying this new fangled shit if it doesn’t even work?

(Silence as AGNES waits for an answer. With her arms at her sides, she continues to tap silently. AGNES looks at Horace intently. After a few seconds she turns away from HORACE and crosses her arms, while continuing her tapping pattern.)

AGNES
(strongly)
No.

(AGNES turns back to face HORACE.)

AGNES
I’ve told you before why I don’t leave the house anymore, haven’t I? Seems like I need to tell you again...

(AGNES sits down in her chair.)

AGNES
Come here, Horace.

(HORACE jumps into AGNES’ lap. AGNES takes a deep breath. As she talks, she pets HORACE and no longer taps her finger, having her foot take over instead.)
AGNES
It seems so long ago... I guess it was. Why, you weren't even born yet. I first remember things changing when I was getting ready to go to college. I was at lunch with my mother and we were arguing. She didn't want me to go, not a lot of girls went to college back then. But I was so excited, because I got into my dream school. The Iowa Women’s Institute of Technology.

(Momentary pause.)
Don’t laugh Horace, that’s very rude. But things have really changed, I guess I am getting pretty old.

(AGNES laughs.)

AGNES
Maybe I should have listened to my mom, but I didn't, and I never looked back. I didn’t get to make it up with her before she died. Now no one from the family talks to me anymore.

(AGNES pauses, obviously emotional. She snaps out of it after a few seconds and puts on a smile.)

AGNES
Enough of this pity party. Anyways, as we argued, at some point I felt like I couldn't breathe. My hands were all prickly with those weird pins and needles and as I stood up to get some fresh air, I passed out. I went to the hospital, because this kind of thing wasn’t normal for me, but they said I was fine. But it didn’t feel right, and I couldn’t shake that weird feeling inside me. I still can’t.

(Pause)

It’s like how when you think about breathing it suddenly becomes harder.

(Reads the next line oddly as if acting it out.)

When you realize how your tongue never sits comfortably in your mouth, it’s the only thing you can focus on. It takes over everything. Like when there’s catnip in front of you, Horace, you won’t even look at me.
I went home and went on with my life after that, I mean I went across the country to college! But things just kept getting worse. I’d go out to meet friends and feel so sick I’d have to go home. I had to stop driving because I got scared I’d have a panic attack and wouldn’t be able to pull over. Eventually, I hardly left my house because I was so scared I would pass out in a public place and make a scene. Once I found a way to work from home, there wasn’t a reason to leave the house at all, especially with all the new technologies nowadays, even though today has shown this new machinery is nothing to get excited about.

I get lonely sometimes, but I have you. No cat is more handsome than you, Horace. Besides, it’s better this way. Just you, me, and Alex Trebek.

As much as the kid annoys me, maybe he’s got a point. I think it’s time I get outside.

(Beat.)

Don’t look at me like that! You should be supportive!

Oh, I almost forgot!
AGNES opens a cabinet and throws its contents haphazardly to the floor as she looks for an item.

(No longer angry)
Aha! Here they are!

Save the turtles, right Horace?

(To herself)
Open the door and you get a fresh Philly Cheesesteak.

(Long pause)

Just open the door, you wuss. It’s not that hard.

(A pained look crosses AGNES’s face. She lets out an angry huff.)

Sheesh, I really need a countdown? How dramatic.

(AGNES takes a deep breath.)

Okay...

(Slowly)
One... two... thr- You know what, I’ll be okay for a few days. It won’t kill me to have dry cereal in the morning.
AGNES walks back and tries to settle into her chair, but is obviously uncomfortable. After a few seconds, she springs up and marches towards the door, turning the knob three times before forcefully opening the door and rushing into the hallway, quickly closing the door behind her. The bright lights turn off, with only the “sunlight” remaining. AGNES spins around quickly as if trying to get away from the door before changing her mind, but she runs straight into ADAM. AGNES drops her grocery bags.

ADAM

(Bends over to pick up the grocery bags. He apologises profusely, rushed.)
I’m sorry Miss Harris! I didn’t see you there! Are you okay?

(AGNES is trying very hard to act calm and casual, but is visibly shaken.)

AGNES

(Surprised, as if she can’t believe nothing bad has happened to her yet)
Oh yes, I’m fine.

ADAM
I just wanted to stop by and give you an update on the power. They said-

AGNES

(interrupting, still with a strong facade.)
Ah, don’t worry about it, it’ll come back in time.

ADAM

(visibility confused)
You- You seemed pretty adamant that I let you know as soon as possible. I didn’t think you would be going anywhere anytime soon.

AGNES
You know, maybe this power outage was good for me. Finally made me turn off the TV, get my nose out of my sudoku, and my butt out the door. It isn’t as scary as I remember.

ADAM
Well I’m very glad, Miss Harris, and I’ll let you be on your way, but I just got word that the power should be back on in a few hours.
(The lights flicker on as soon as Adam finishes speaking.)

ADAM

... Or now.

AGNES

Oh thank God!!! It’s cold out there, and I didn’t want to ruin my new boots.

(AGNES laughs nervously, a little embarrassed then turns around, turns the door knob three times, unlocks the door, and re enters her apartment. The lock audibly clicks behind her. ADAM stands outside the door, unsurprised.)

END OF PLAY
(Two people are sitting on complete opposite ends of a couch with lots of distance between them, they’re both trying to avoid eye contact. They look very uncomfortable.)

ZEUS
So, here we are, are you sure you want to do this? We can still go home.
(He faces forward not looking at his wife.)

HERA
Absolutely not. We need to do this, if not for us then for the children.
(Suddenly a door opens and a woman enters the office, she’s carrying a computer.)

SABRINA
Excuse me, are you Zeus and Hera? I’m sorry for the informalities, there was no last name on the form.

HERA
Yes sorry about that, we’re here, and ready to get started.
(She turns her whole body to face Sabrina and forces a smile.)

SABRINA
Of course, my name is Sabrina Clark, is there anything I can get you? Anything I can do to make you more comfortable?
(She takes a seat in a chair facing the couch that Zeus and Hera sit on.)

HERA
No thank you, I think we’re ready to begin, it’s been a long time coming.

SABRINA
Alright well this is marriage counseling so let’s start easy. How long have you two been married?
(She opens her computer and begins taking notes.)

ZEUS
Gods, it feels like it’s been eons.

HERA
Hah, only a few years really.
(She gives an authoritative glance in Zeus’s direction as if he said something wrong.)
SABRINA
So what brings you here today?

(She is looking back and forth between the two.)

HERA
Well I’ll be blunt, we have had many issues throughout the years. He’s cheated more times then I can count, this man has enough children to hold his own Olympic Games.

ZEUS
Ok, no, hold on, wait, don’t pretend this is a one sided issue, you had a child without me.

(He turns to face Hera looking offended.)

HERA
Yeah and you threw him off a cliff!

(She turns to face Zeus, almost challenging him.)

SABRINA
I’m sorry, you threw a child off a cliff?

(She looks alarmed, leaning forward in her seat.)

ZEUS
Um… no you know, metaphorically.

SABRINA
Right.

(She still looks unsure but decides to move on.)

So clearly infidelity is a major issue, have you ever expressed how this makes you feel?

HERA
I mean I think I’ve gotten my message across.

SABRINA
What exactly does that mean?

HERA
Well I may or may not spend most of my time getting revenge on all his mistresses.

(She looks indifferent, tilting her head from side to side.)
ZEUS
“May or may not” you literally made one of them go crazy by stinging her with a horsefly!
(He looks exasperated, sarcastically mocking Hera’s actions.)

HERA
Well it’s not my fault you’re a sex addict that can’t stay monogamous for the length of a children’s book! And she worked for me! Her literal job description was to worship me! I can’t believe Io would betray me like that.
(Hera rolls her eyes, clearly upset with the conversation.)

SABRINA
Okay… let’s talk about this instead of yelling. Just to clarify, how did you get a horsefly to sting this woman? And how did that make her go crazy?

HERA
Um… well… you see I just put some nectar on her arm and next thing you know she’s being carted off to some insane asylum.
(Her face is uncomfortable and there is a lengthy pause where Sabrina takes in the words and eventually moves on.)

SABRINA
Alright, Zeus why exactly do you feel the need to cheat on Hera?

ZEUS
I don’t know the girls are just all really pretty, I mean not that Hera isn’t but, it’s just fun.

HERA
I mean I don’t think you find me pretty because you never turned into a bull to impress me.

SABRINA
You turned into a bull?
(She looks confused and stops taking notes on her computer so she can look at Zeus)

ZEUS
Yeah, hah, you know, we met at a… Halloween party.
(He looks to Hera, and his face seems strained.)

HERA
Ha yeah I remember, and what a lovely party it was.
(She rolls her eyes speaking sarcastically.)

SABRINA

Ok so Hera you feel as if Zeus doesn’t treat you as well as he treats his other partners, is that correct?

HERA

Yes, you see he goes out of his way to impress them and then barely acknowledges me.  
  (She crosses her arms and leans back on the couch.)

SABRINA

Have you guys ever talked about this before? Hera did you ever tell Zeus that this is how you feel?

HERA

No like I said earlier, typically I just take it out on his mistresses, or his children, whichever seems like the easier target.

SABRINA

And this makes you feel better?

HERA

Yes, watching them suffer and writhe in pain does bring a smile to my face.  
  (She sits up again and a smile appears on her face as she reminisces.)

SABRINA

Wait, you physically hurt these people?  
  (She sits up in her chair, attentively waiting for a reply.)

ZEUS

If we’re being honest there was only one time I was truly concerned about someone dying.  
  (He smiles at Hera as if he had said something helpful.)

SABRINA

I’m sorry, someone dying!  
  (She is truly concerned at this point, she tries to remain calm like a professional but she’s doing a bad job of covering up her shock.)

HERA
He never feared for his life, he’s basically immortal. Hercules is doing great now right, if anything the tasks I gave him benefited him. Now he’s loved by all.

(She put on a warm smile trying to reassure the therapist, finally realizing what she said raised serious concern.)

ZEUS
Yeah he’s alive and happy. Just back in the day you almost killed him. But you know you basically made his life better.

(He looks sarcastic and makes eye contact with the therapist to get his point across.)

HERA
Well maybe if you learned to keep it in your pants we wouldn’t have this issue.

(She looks extremely angry, hands fisted at her sides.)

ZEUS
How is this suddenly my fault? I wasn't the one that sent snakes to kill a baby in it’s crib!

(Zeus now matches his wife’s anger, raising his voice so they’re both yelling.)

HERA
How is it not your fault you’re the one that can’t control himself around anything of the opposite sex, you’re the one that wouldn’t know what loyalty meant if a dictionary hit you in the face, you’re the one that has to make me look like an idiot by staying by your side while you betray me in every way possible!

(Both Hera and Zeus are standing, faces red with anger. They’re staring each other directly in the eye and Hera takes a step closer to Zeus with every new accusation.)

SABRINA
Do you guys need a break? We can take like five minutes to cool down.

HERA
Actually I think a break is exactly what we need right now.

(She returns to her seated position on the couch.)

ZEUS
Ok do you want a coffee or something?

(He stands moving towards the door but pauses when he notifies Hera hasn’t moved.)

HERA
I don’t mean a break from therapy.
ZEUS
Well then what do you mean?

(He asks hesitantly as if he already knows the answer.)

HERA
I need a break from us, from all this. I’m tired of fighting. It’s exhausting constantly being angry, but that’s exactly how I feel. I’m angry all the time. I just can’t decide if it’s with you or with myself.

(She has her hands folded in her lap and looks stiff as she purposefully straightens her back and avoids turning her head towards where Zeus is still standing by the door.)

SABRINA
What do you mean when you say you’re angry with yourself?

HERA
I just feel like I’ve been fooling myself for years. I mean “cheaters never change” right? Who am I to think we could be the exception. If all he wants to do is have sex with other people and find new ways to make me mad is it even worth staying around?

ZEUS
Yes

(His eyes are fixed on Hera, he’s not blinking, his hand still on the door knob is the only thing that keeps it from shaking.)

HERA
Is it? Because I can’t remember the last time we were around each other for more than 10 minutes and it didn’t end in a screaming match.

(Hera takes a deep breath. Tears are forming in her eyes and she slouches into the couch she’s been sitting on. She finally turns her head to make eye contact with Zeus.)

ZEUS
So what? This is us right I mean sure all couples have their fights but we always seem to be ok.

HERA
Maybe I’m tired of just being ok. Don’t you ever think about giving up on us. Because from where I stand it doesn’t seem like you should care at all. You could walk out of this room and have 30 girls lined up in under 5 minutes.

ZEUS
I don’t know what you want me to say.
HERA
If you have nothing to say I guess all my questions have been answered.
(She laughs but there’s no humor in it, she stands up abruptly giving Zeus no time to interject, she walks straight past him and out the door.)

ZEUS
I don’t understand what just happened.
(He replaces Hera on the couch, shutting the door Hera just walked out of.)

SABRINA
Which part?
(She’s still in her chair, she remains calm and even when she speaks, she doesn’t seem to be shocked at all.)

ZEUS
One second we’re fighting like normal, still throwing in jokes every once and a while and then all the sudden she’s serious and walking out.

SABRINA
You normally fight like that?

ZEUS
I mean yeah, she’s always mad about what girls I’m with, and if I’m being responsible so normally we’ll have some disagreements like that but it’s never gotten that far. I thought this was just how we were.
(He looks confused and defeated, like this has come unexpectedly.)

SABRINA
Even healthy couples have disagreements but fighting constantly, even if you think it’s lighthearted, can take a toll on people.

ZEUS
Do you think she’s gone? Because I mean if it’s just me and you now, I can work with that.
(He flashes Sabrina a flirtatious smile and moves towards the edge of the couch.)

SABRINA
No, absolutely not. You really have no shame do you? Your wife just stormed out of here upset because you can’t keep your dick soft for more than an hour at a time, and now you are trying to
put the moves on me! I’m sorry for acting unprofessionally but seriously you just needed to hear
the truth. I mean just think for a second about why she’s upset. Is it just because of the girls
you’re with? Or is there more?

ZEUS
Am I supposed to have an answer for you? Because I don’t.

(He sits back in his seat and caves in on himself out of embarrassment.)

SABRINA
You didn’t really try to think.

(She looks at him disapprovingly, expecting more from him.)

ZEUS
I don’t know, she said it was about all the people I sleep with but it felt like more, like there was
some other part of this that I’m completely blind to.

SABRINA
There probably is more, it seems like you two have never had a real discussion about your
feelings.

ZEUS
So how do I fix this?

(He puts his head in his hands with his arms resting on his knees.)

SABRINA
There’s a chance she might not want to fix this. But if she does you need to be willing to work
for it. That means no more mistresses and sneaking off. It also means you need to start treating
her as your wife. Ask her how she feels don’t assume. If you value her as much as you say you
do then show it by treating her like an equal.

ZEUS
Thanks, should I go find her now?

(He grimaced waiting for her answer, he’s clearly nervous to go to Hera.)

SABRINA
Yes, go find her. You need to be open minded and ready to listen to her.

(She’s firm when she speaks.)

ZEUS
Ok, yeah you’re right. I’m going.

(He doesn’t move for a few seconds and finally stands looking determined.)

(He opens the door and starts to march out of the office but stops when he notices Hera in the waiting room, head in her hands.)

HERA

Hi.

ZEUS

Hey.

(Hera reaches up to wipe away tears that we’re about to fall from her eyes, her whole body is slumped, looking like she has no fight left in her.)

HERA

I uh, I went to leave but I couldn’t, I couldn’t leave it like this.

ZEUS

Thank the gods. I just talked with Sabrina. I guess I haven’t been fair to you. I’ve been so preoccupied with my own needs that I forgot to think about anyone else. I’m sorry.

HERA

Oh, um, thank you.

(She looks completely shocked like she wasn’t expecting that at all.)

I didn’t know you knew what the word sorry meant.

(She laughs with no hunohr behind it, her face is still wet with tears.)

ZEUS

I should’ve realized a long time ago that I wasn’t a good husband. I’m not saying it was all my fault, because clearly you’re not perfect either.

(Hera laughs again but this time her smile is bigger and it actually feels real.)

(Zeus is smiling too.)

HERA

That’s fair I guess.

ZEUS

But I want to try. To be better and to have a “healthy relationship” whatever that means.

HERA
Yeah, I think I would like that. One condition though.

(The smile falls from Zeus’ face.)

No more women that aren’t me, and no more children that aren’t mine.

ZEUS

You know that almost sounds like marriage.

(Zeus’ smile returns, he laughs and answers sarcastically.)

HERA

I know crazy right. You would think the goddess of marriage would be able to handle her own, but go figure it’s a mortal therapist that finally gets us to work out our issues.

(They’re smiling at each other now, they turn towards the door and walk out together. Lights fade to black.)