

I'm Alright

by

Michael Lushington

For my family, without which, none of this would be possible.

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I'm Alright was first performed at the little theatre at Canyon Middle School on November 20, 2008. It was directed by Michael Lushington

The cast was as follows:

ERIN	Erin Ardito
DANA	Dana Deras
EMILY	Emily Highstreet
JILLIAN	Jillian Davis
OLIVIA	Olivia Shelvy
CLARISE	Clarice Velardo
ERICA	Erica O'dell
ANJYLA	Anjyla Alvarado
SHANNON	Shannon Farell
MARISSA	Marissa Cuevas

*Anjyla was a part of the original script but was later moved in to a different play.

CHARACTERS

ERIN – 19 but could easily be 29. She's been taking care of her sister since she was 14. She is attractive and smart but already looks world weary.

DANA – 18, an artist.

EMILY – 18, incisively smart. Sharp with lots of hard angles and corners. Smarter than most anybody in the room and she knows it.

JILLIAN – 18, everything's a joke.

OLIVIA – 18, a closet romantic.

CLARICE – 17, wants to be a punk rocker. Intuitive and bright. She is all rock and roll attitude and energy.

ERICA – 17, fed up with high school and tired of worrying about how things will turn out.

PARIS – 19, a dancer, coming to terms with herself.

SHANNON – 17, ready to take care of herself.

MARISSA – 19, a thinker.

Time: The present.

Place: Various

(An empty stage with a white projector screen as the back wall. 10 chairs displayed in an arc with their backs to the audience. One chair is in the center.)

LIGHTS UP CENTER

(Actors walk in they are talking to each other as if before a class in High School. They all sit with their backs to us except Erin who is in the center. Erin picks up her chair and turns it around sits in it and faces the audience. As she does this the other actors stop moving.)

ERIN

Ugh...I hate this...first day of school...crap..."so let's go around the room and tell a little something about ourselves"...please!...like we don't know each other already?...why do these people act like this? All positive and smiley...what a twit...like I need to listen to this...like why don't we say something truthful about ourselves? Like why don't we talk about why that girl's always going to the bathroom all the time or that loser was out behind the dumpster getting high 10 minutes before class. How about that? How would that be? *(pause)* Or I could talk about what **I** did last night. How would that be, mmm?, let's see, well, when I got home at eight my 12 year old sister was stuck to the couch where she'd been since she came home at three. She finished her homework in an hour and managed to stay transfixed to the TV, in the same spot for the next 4 hours. I got home at 8 because I work. I work at the grocery store. It's not a great job but I make decent money so it's ok. I work because my dad left when I was 7 and my mom...well, my mom, comes and goes. Oh, don't get me wrong, it's not that she doesn't have a job and take care of us, for the most part she does, it's just that some of the time...well....she's not there some of the time. Anyway, after I got home from work I heated up a can of soup and some bread and made a salad and my sister and I had dinner. I always make a good dinner. I love food and I don't care how bad things get we will always eat well. Give me a piece of bread and some jam and I will make you a meal fit for a king. I think my cooking is one reason why my sister and I have remained close. No matter how much teenage angst she has she is never willing to risk alienating the food source.

(pause)

After dinner my sister and I are cleaning up and my mom comes home. She yells at me for using up the vegetables and opening up a new loaf of bread. I tell her the food was for dinner which she could have cooked if she'd been home and then she tells me not to be a bitch and goes into her bedroom and slams the door. I turn on the oven because I know it's going to be a long night. I pull down some flour and some corn meal and my sister gets out some blueberries. We both know where we're going now. We hear our mom crying for a bit in her room then she stops and the water is running in her bathroom then it stops and she comes out. She stops and looks at us both, my sister with blueberry stains on her fingers and me with flour in my hair. Nobody says anything, then she walks across the kitchen and reaches for the muffin pan, takes out a stick of butter and starts

greasing up the little pockets. We are all working now and no ones says anything because we all know what's true.

(pause)

Later, the timer rings and the muffins are done. We are all ready for bed now but there's just a little more to do before we call it a night. I take the pan out over to the table and we all sit and smell the good, warm muffin smell. My mom has the broken knife we use as a muffin spatula and she uses it to pull out one for each of us. She serves each one on a napkin. We don't use jam or butter right now because these first warm ones don't need it. My sister takes the first bite, then me, then my mom. When she is finished chewing my mom looks up at my sister and me and says, "I'm sorry". My sister and I look at each other and then I look at my mom and say, "We know Mom, we know."

LIGHTS FADE OUT

(The chairs are cleared and a bench is brought out center. Slides come up on the back wall. They are pictures of Dana with a boy, presumably her boyfriend. They are goofing around on a jungle gym, snuggling on a couch, etc.... Progressively the faces of Dana and the boy in the pictures look more concerned. The last picture is of Dana and the boy taken from behind. They are sitting watching the sunset. This slide stays up throughout the monologue.)

LIGHTS UP CENTER

(Dana walks out and sits on the bench facing us. In her lap she is holding a DVD in a case. She is hurting.)

DANA

He was my friend, I mean, we were friends, long before we ever started going out. He lived around the corner from me and we used to hang out; just him, his brother, a few other kids from around here and me. We would just meet at the school or something and do stuff. You know, goofy stuff, like climbing on the jungle gym or swinging or whatever, then we'd talk until it started to get dark, then we'd go home. I don't know how it started...the way it seems now it was like one day we were goofing around on the playground and the next we were messing around in his car.

(pause)

So, anyway, us being friends first and all, well it kind of made things better because we always knew how to be with each other when nothing else was going on. I mean we'd hold hands and all that but you know I don't think either of us ever really felt that desperate when it got quiet. At least not like some couples. You know, you see them there together in the quiet just getting itchy and all and then next thing you know they are all over each other because, well, they don't know what else to do. But it wasn't like that with us. We could just sit together and watch stuff without saying anything and it was fine. I remember one time we watched the wind kick this plastic bottle down the parking lot for about an hour, then all he said was "come on" and we got up and left.

(pause)

I think I meant to tell him about the pictures and my journal and all but I just never got around to it. I mean how do you explain something you don't even really understand yourself. It's just something I do like breathing or drinking water. It's a part of me and without it, well, I think I'd probably die.

(pause)

For us it started back before we were even together. I took some pictures of him and me just hanging out on the jungle gym. Some of them were funny and some of them were serious but all of them were cool. They all had this poetic quality. So I took them and started writing stories about the people in the pictures. I mean, I know it was him and me but seeing us in pictures, well, we just looked like different people, with different lives. The people in the picture were cool, they lived lives of meaning, depth and purpose. They were smart and funny and never worried about what might happen next. *(pause)* I suppose if I'd stopped with those first few stories everything would have ended different. But I didn't. ...I mean, I couldn't.

(pause)

Once we were together I started taking pictures of us all the time. I took pictures of us in his car, at the mall, in class, in his bedroom. It was easy and he thought it was kind of funny, "here's my girlfriend the photographer". Eventually I got my friends to start shooting video footage of us. I'd get him to meet me at the cafeteria or some place and then I'd say one of the lines I'd prepared and my friends would hide out and shoot the

whole thing. It was only after this had gone on for several months that I realized what I'd done.

(pause)

I was in my room looking at all the clips and pictures one night when I began to see that altogether they made up a story. It was a movie, a movie about 2 people, not us but 2 different people, they fall in love but then something terrible happens and they can no longer communicate the way they once did because the girl can no longer feel ...anything ...the way she did before and she doesn't know what to do about it.

(pause)

So, that's why I'm here. I want to leave this movie for him so hopefully he'll watch it and then...well...he'll watch it and know it wasn't me that hurt him.

(She gets up slowly, leaves the DVD on the bench walks around the bench and looks at the picture on the screen then back at us.)

It was her.

(She leaves.)

LIGHTS FADE OUT

(Bench is cleared. 2 chairs are brought out. One of them is brought to the edge of the audience and is placed center facing the stage. The second is placed center stage facing the first chair.)

LIGHTS UP CENTER

(Jillian comes out. She is in a prom dress. She is slightly frantic looking for something. She sees a garbage can and dives headfirst into the can until half her body is inside.)

JILLIAN

Uhhhh...has anyone seen my phone? ugh...oh...ugh, that's so gross ugh! *(she lifts her head out of the garbage can)* has anyone seen my phone? Hello! ...has anyone seen my phone!...No? Of course not. You don't care. What am I doing? You don't care. This is the prom for Chrissakes and I'm lookin' for my friggin phone...whatever *(she plunges back into the garbage can then comes back up)* It's an Iphone. My dad's phone really, not mine. Sorry Dad. *(She looks back in the garbage can but can't bring herself to go back in.)* Oh screw it! *(She sits down, noticing how much dress is all around her.)* Wow. Look at me, man, you know? I'm all dress. *(pause)* You know what this is? Taffeta. You know who the last person to wear Taffeta was? *(pause)* Doris Day. That's right. Doris Day...she loved Taffeta....you know she lost her top in a movie once...yup...she was swimming with Rod Taylor and he didn't even look. Can you imagine that? You think some guy would do that today? No way.

(pause)

Why am I wearing Taffeta you ask? My mom. I wanted to wear jeans. She said, "What do you want to wear to the prom honey? I said "Jeans"....and the next thing you heard was the sound of her head knocking against our imitation granite kitchen counter as she plummeted to the floor. Bam. I said, "Oh no mom, just kidding, I was hoping you'd take me shopping this weekend." I mean sometimes you just have to go with the flow you know? So there we were at the mall looking at dresses when I see this baby practically jumping at me off the rack. My mom says "Oh no honey why don't you try something more...in style." She meant, "less expensive" but hey, no jeans? Well, there was definitely going to be a price.

(pause)

I picked this dress because I've always wanted to look like Doris. I know, I'm not blonde but hell honey, nobody's perfect! She's just so sexy in that goody two shoes kind of a way, you know? I mean she could be baking chocolate chip cookies one minute and revin' up some guys engines the next. Why she even turned Rock Hudson's head in Pillow Talk and that was no easy trick as we all found out later. Wow. Doris. She was something special, original. She was both pure and impure at the same time. She was like Marilyn Monroe meets the Brady Bunch.

(pause)

So anyway, I guess its ok that I'm here at the prom and I'm not wearing my jeans. I mean my mom's happy right? And who cares that I can't find my Iphone even though my date supposedly just sent me a text to tell me he loves me. I mean who cares right? I mean, tonight? I'm Doris Day!

LIGHTS FADE OUT

LIGHTS UP CENTER

(Emily is led out by a High School counselor played by one of the other actors. The counselor gestures to the chair center stage which Emily crosses to and sits down. The counselor then walks to the chair near the audience at the edge of the stage and sits down. Emily sits upright and at a slight angle to the chair with her legs crossed. She is strong, smart and direct.)

EMILY

Calm down? Calm down? You don't know me. You don't know me at all. You wanna know why you don't know me? Because you can't possibly understand what it feels like to want to be perfect. But I do. That's what I want. I want to be perfect. No flaws, no edges, no cuts, no bruises, no blemishes. Nothing. Just perfect. And you don't know about that, do you? You want to say, "nobody's perfect" but I don't care. I want to take everything about me, everything that is imperfect and remove it. Forever.

(She stands up and comes toward the counselor.)

I want to take all my little failures and imperfections and scrub them out of me so there is nothing left but light. The brilliant white light of perfection that will lift me out of this life and show me how to breathe and make peace with myself in this ugly world. Perfection. It is there for all us dangling its promise of ease and freedom. If only we are willing to sacrifice enough. If only we are willing work hard enough, try hard enough, be enough, we will get there. There has to be a way you see because this life, this crummy, awful, existence is nothing. You, me, right now, we are doing nothing. Nothing worth living for...it is only thru aiming our lives at perfection that we stand a chance of escaping ourselves and truly finding out what it means to live. Calm down. *(long pause)*

(She turns and goes back and sits in her chair.)

I will not rest until my perfection is achieved because this is all there is, there is nothing else in this life, nothing to hold on to or hope for and you...well...you can't possibly know what that feels like.

LIGHTS FADE OUT

(Chairs are cleared.)

LIGHTS COME UP TO HALF

(In the half light cast members dressed in prom dresses walk about the stage throwing confetti. A garbage can is brought out and placed center stage. Actors exit.)

(Confetti and garbage can are cleared.)

DESIRE AND INTENT

KATE

(A girl stands center stage with a picture in her hand. She wears glasses and somewhat arty clothing. She looks and is smart. She talks with just a hint of valley girl. She likes to be funny.)

Y, in, "W?" ya "" says "Ygo and take and stand on the sculpture He looked at me for a second then I looked him right back like to say "I dare ya" or whatever and then he turns and runs over to the sculpture, tears his shirt off and stands there. So I took the picture. On the way home we looked at it on the little viewer in my camera and really didn't think too much of it. I told Darren I was going to post it on my FaceBook just to see how he'd react and he just said, "fine, whatever, I don't care." But when I put it on my computer and brought it up I changed the color to grayscale – black and white and right away you could tell something else was going on. All of a sudden what was a very ordinary picture – became something else. Somehow the shadows of the building across the sidewalk in front of the sculpture and the sunlight on this young boy's body (he no longer looked like Darren) created this whole other story. It was kind of like the picture had somehow created an opening to the boys emotional life and his whole story was just right there. It was beautiful. How did I do this? Did I do it or was it just an accident? Had I created it?

(pause)

I decided I needed to see if I could do it again. Only this time on purpose. The first guy I asked was just another friend, Ricky, an actor, he said, "sure but its going to cost ya" I said what do you mean and he said well, you want me to model for you and usually when I model I get paid" and I said, fine, sure, whatever, how much and he said 25 and I said fine. We went to this grocery store strip mall near my house. I decided we should go out in back in case anyone saw us I didn't want him (or me) to get in any trouble. When we got there he said, "so what do I do" and I said, "nothing, just take your shirt off and run over there by those dumpsters and stand" and so he did and I took another picture. When I took it and looked at it I knew right away that it was right. I knew what I was doing.

(pause)

For awhile I just asked people I knew, people I worked with or people at school but pretty soon the word got out and then instead of me asking people, people started asking me and that was how I ended up doing the one with Carl. Carl was a jock and somehow he found out what I was doing and so he came up to me at lunch one day and asked, "so, hey, I hear you're the one that's been taking all those pictures." I said, "yes". Carl was an idiot and he knew I knew he was an idiot and so we didn't spend a lot of time talking or pretending we had anything in common. So anyway, Carl says, "well how come you haven't asked me to do one?" I sat there staring at him eating my lunch. I couldn't believe it. Carl? Was I really going to take a picture of Carl?" Why not?

(pause)

We decided to do it at the mall on a Saturday morning, early, before anyone got there. Carl said the Mall would be best because then he could meet his “dudes later” and maybe I wanted to hang out too. I said no thanks.

(pause)

So when we got there Carl just starts unbuttoning his shirt and looking at me without saying anything. So I say, “you need to go over there by the sculpture” and he says “OK” and so he walks slowly over to the sculpture and just stands there staring at me while I snapped a couple of pictures. Then he says, “wait” and starts to undo his belt buckle and unsnap his jeans and then he says, “what if we did something a little different” and before I know it he is standing stark naked on the sculpture. I just stood there staring. (I couldn’t help it.) My camera was in my hand but there was no way I was going to take a picture...the word that was in my head was “pornography” this is pornography. Then he says “hey, why aren’t you shooting?” and then he starts walking towards me with this look in his eye and he says, “come here”. So I start walking toward him only when I get to his little pile of clothes I pick them up and start running. I run to my car which is just by the curb and I get in and start driving away. When I looked in my rear view mirror all I saw was Carl, naked, with 2 security guards in brown uniforms chasing him around the Mall parking lot.

(pause)

I can’t say I won’t take any more pictures or that I didn’t enjoy taking them, you know...like that...but what Carl did well that just made it seem like it was nothing. Like my intent and the boys willingness to do it just didn’t matter at all and that it was just about snapping pictures of people without clothes. Sex. That’s what Carl wanted but it made no sense (though I’m sure it made perfect sense to Carl) because those pictures weren’t about sex. They were about the place where our desire comes together with our intent and how if we’re not careful one can over take the other and then what do we have? Well I’ll tell you, nothing. Or in this case a naked, half crazed teen age boy running around the parking lot of a suburban mall looking for love in all the wrong places.

LIGHTS FADE OUT

LIGHTS UP CENTER

(Stage is cleared)

(Clarisse walks out in the blackout and is silhouetted against the screen, she is dressed like a cross between Patti Smith, Madonna and Britney Spears. The music starts, something like "American Idiot" by Green Day, she begins dancing wildly about the stage. She is playing air guitar and pretending to sing. Suddenly the music stops and she is out of breath. She is looking at herself in a mirror when she starts speaking like a punked out rocker.)

CLARISSE

What? Whadda u want? Huh? Huh man? Hey...right here man, right here...

(She holds up her right middle finger at herself in the mirror. She looks at herself in the mirror and notices her left breast then slowly brings her right hand to her left breast and begins examining it for signs of breast cancer. Slowly she turns towards us and when she speaks again, her voice has completely changed.)

My mom has breast cancer. Her doctors say it's not too bad...she won't need surgery...but she has to do Chemo. She says it's not too bad.

(pause)

She can handle it. She's strong. My mom is very strong.

(pause)

We fight a lot. We fight over just about anything at all. Like we'll be driving somewhere and she'll say something stupid or I'll say something stupid and then we'll just go at each other. My dad doesn't say much. I don't think he knows what to say. Lately, my mom and I don't even bother to try and end the fight or resolve anything, we just stop talking. Last week we got into an argument about her chemo...like, what do I know about chemo?

(pause)

We started fighting last year when one day I was getting ready to go to school and I was dressed pretty much they way I am right now. My mom said, "What are you doing?" and I said, "Going to school" and she said "Not like that you're not" and I said "Why?" and we just looked at each other and she didn't say anything but I knew what she was thinking. So I just kept looking at her in the eyes and then I picked up my bag and went to school.

(pause)

Another time we got into a fight because I said I thought the point of life was to be happy and she just smiled at me like I was a baby or something and then said, "No, the point of life is not about being happy." And so I asked her, "What is it then?" What are we supposed to do? How are supposed to be?" But she didn't have an answer and then she told me to stop yelling and that was the end of it.

(pause)

Now I know she's had a hard time of it. When she was younger she was super smart and so a lot of people treated her like she was a nerd. Then her dad died when she was pretty young and so she had to take care of her mom when she was dying of skin cancer. Then she got married and had to take care of us so I kind of understand why she thinks the point isn't to be happy. But she made things different for us. I mean that's what I was trying to tell her. I was trying to say that all her effort had made things so that we can be happy and I just wanted to know if that's what she wanted. But I guess it didn't come out that way.

(pause)

Anyway, tonight, after dinner, my sister and I were clearing the table and doing the dishes while my mom and dad sat at the table and talked. My dad sat with my mom so she wouldn't feel bad about being too tired to get up. My sister was telling us all about some theory of the universe that says that there are multiple parallel universes that operate next to ours and that in this one we could all be alive doing the dishes and in another we could all be dead. When she said this no one said anything. The water was still running and I could hear the wooden chairs my parents were sitting in creak and snap as they shifted position. Then my dad and I looked at each other and I looked at my sister and I could see that she realized what she had just said so I went over to her and said "Jen, that's amazing! I can't believe how you remember this stuff! So how many lives can we have?" She said she wasn't sure but she could show me the clip on YouTube where the guy talks about it and so we headed off towards her room to watch. As we started to go, my mom suddenly got up out of her chair and came over to me and put her hand on my arm and looked at me. She was still woozy from the pain medication but it was still my mom in there. She reached up slowly and touched my shoulder and then my hair with her hand and then she looked at me and said, "You look good babe"

LIGHTS FADE OUT

(In the blackout all of the other actors except the one playing Clarisse come out on the stage and take up positions of sleep. Erica is in the center of the group.)

LIGHTS UP CENTER

(Erica is lying on the floor in front of a chair. She is daydreaming.)

ERICA

I'm tired. I'm really tired. I know, I'm seventeen, how can I be tired right? But I am. Yesterday I woke up at 6am to get to school by 7, went to class, then after school to rehearsal for the play for an hour then cross town to my jazz class then ½ hour for dinner (a bagel and some apple juice) then back to school for Model UN until 8pm then home for homework until 11:30. My dad thinks its good, "she's busy" I heard him say to my mom, "it'll keep her out of trouble"...my mom didn't say much so I don't know what she thinks, but me? I'm just tired. I want to lie here. I want to lie here and stare at my ceiling until something occurs to me. I guess that's what my dad means by trouble. But really, what kind of trouble is that? I mean what if I don't know what I want to do. What about that? What if I don't know the answer and don't have a plan for what I'm going to do next and what if I just sit here until I do? Hm? What then?

(pause)

What if I want to be the next empress/czar of Russia? Is there such a person? Who cares, if there isn't, I'll be the first. I want to put on a body suit like the guy in Ironman and go around zapping assholes like Dennis Ferlinetti. (My last boyfriend) I want to invent something. I don't know what yet but that's why I want to lie here. It will come to me I know it will if I could just stop for a second and...and...think...no. no...No...don't want to think because then I'll think about college or the SAT or the AP Euro I haven't done or why my science teacher is such an asshole or why my hair is too short or long or why I don't have longer legs or bigger lips like "Angelina" or bigger...whatever...or Dennis....shit no...I don't want to think I just want to lie here for one god damn minute and think about nothing. I just want to breathe and hear the wind blow and smell mom's cooking and be, for just one minute, be...be...me.

LIGHTS FADE OUT

(In the blackout the stage is cleared. Paris sits in the middle of the floor.)

LIGHTS UP CENTER

(She is a dancer seated in the middle of the floor in dance workout clothes. She has just finished putting herself thru a hard work out. She is covered in sweat, flushed and slightly out of breath.)

PARIS

“” Themy back felt like it was, s,,me and “nothing” then she asked me why I was crying and I and

(pause)

motherdad and I

(pause)

I’ve heard people say that you can tell everything you need to know about a person from looking at their hands. But I would only add that you need to touch them too. My mother’s hands were gnarled. They were witches hands. You know, like the witches you see in books or movies. When you looked at them from a distance they were scary but when you got close and touched them they were unforgettable, gentle and soft, but strong enough to pull the invading roots of a tree from one her flower beds. Once when we were weeding together in one of the flower beds I dug up a long tendril that looked like it was from one of the Redwood trees nearby and started pulling hard the way I’d seen her do a thousand times when all of a sudden she reached over and grabbed my hand so hard and quick that it made me jump. “Stop” was all she said. Then she pointed and I could see that the root was actually running toward a small young Japanese maple that had been planted on the edge of one of the beds to provide a little shade for that end of the garden. She looked at me and smiled “It’s good to be strong but you have to pay attention” was all she said then she placed a little dirt back over where I was digging and moved on.

(pause)

They were all bitches, the ladies that owned the gardens where my mom worked. They were smart, educated, rich, strong and powerful and I hated them. They didn’t care about my mother or her skill and talent, all they cared about was how she made them look. I asked her once how she felt about those ladies and she said “what?” And I said, “you know, how do you make yourself work so hard when they’re so mean to you and say such awful things?” and she said “this work, you and your father are what I have, its a good life.”

(pause)

Yesterday the conservatory called me to tell me I didn’t get it. 16 years working for something that isn’t going to happen and all they could say was, “sorry”. When I woke up this morning I took a shower, got a cup of coffee and sat out on the little porch of my apartment looking at the paper and feeling sorry for myself. When I got up I went to my computer and logged on to the university site where they have the Med School applications. I started filling them out. “Screw it” I thought, at least I’ll be helping people. Then I looked out the window and saw the Azalea’s in my flower box on the window had started to bloom. When I walked over and looked in the box I saw some junk from the city air had drifted into the box. I opened up the window and carefully picked out the stuff that didn’t belong then I picked up some dirt from the box and

smelled it. It was very quiet and in the silence I heard her say it, “again” then I put on my sweats and came down here.

LIGHTS FADE OUT

LIGHTS UP CENTER

(Shannon enters. She is carrying a light overnight type bag and is dressed in a mid length black coat with a French beret. She is at the bus station waiting for the next bus. She hesitantly sits in the chair, looks around and then finally starts talking to us.)

SHANNON

During the summer of 1996 I turned 5 years old. That same summer the American Girl's Gymnastic team won the gold medal in Atlanta. I remember it because for 2 weeks in August my mom, my dad and me sat on our couch each night and watched. If you asked people today what happened during those Olympics well they hardly remember that there was a bomb and all, or Muhammad Ali lighting the torch but most people remember Kerri Strug, the little gymnast who with a sprained ankle and the whole world watching performed her final vault and stuck her landing making herself and her team champions. Now I don't remember this because of what happened that night in Atlanta. I remember this because every day since then my mother has made me watch that video of Kerri to, as she says, "remind me that life is painful and that sometimes the pain is worth it."

(pause)

At first when I was younger it was kind of comforting. It became our routine together at night. I would have my bath and put on my pj's and she or my dad would read me a story and then right before it was time to put the lights out she'd say, "OK, lets watch Kerri" and then she'd flip on the video and we'd sit together for the 2 vaults, the first one where she sprains her ankle and the second one where she asks Bela (her coach) "Do we need this?" and he says, "We need you to go one more time. You can do it" and then she does it and everyone goes crazy. After we finished watching my mom would just pick me up and put me in bed and say, "Remember honey, you can do it." and then she'd shut out the lights.

(pause)

When I got older and my friends would come for a sleepover it kind of became their ritual too, they'd say, "hey Mrs. H when you coming in to show us Kerri?" and then they'd laugh a little and my mom would come in and turn it on. It was kind of embarrassing, but I just went along with it. One night, one of my friends asked, "What does she mean? You can do it. Do what?" I said, "I don't know."

(pause)

One time I tried to ask my dad about the video and why my mom felt it was so important for me to watch it. He just said, "It's a small thing, do what your mother asks, she loves you."

(pause)

Last night my dad said my mom needed to go to the hospital. He said, "She's depressed, and she needs to be somewhere where people can take care of her." I said, "We can take care of her". He hugged me and told me it was going to be ok. I looked at him and didn't know what to say. He said he was exhausted, and he looked it. He said he was going to bed and when he turned and went upstairs, I went into my bedroom.

(pause)

When I turned on the video it was already cued up, but the sound was down. There was Kerri hobbling on her one good leg after the first vault looking like a deer that had been left behind for the lions. Her eyes reaching out seeking something she cannot name. Then Bela, her Romanian coach, is talking to her and looking at her with those strong dark eyes, his lips move but I can't hear what he's saying because I hear my own voice speaking those words, "we need you; one more time...you can do it."

LIGHTS FADE OUT

(Chair remains center. In the blackout Marisa comes out and sits in the chair.)

LIGHTS UP CENTER

(A girl, 19, is seated in a white kitchen chair that belongs to a kitchen table and chair set. She is completely soaked and dripping water from head to foot. She is calm.)

MARISA

It rained last night, a good, clean, hard rain. “Biblical” my mom said. We were all upstairs, my mom, my sister and me. We were all in our rooms. All you could hear was the rain. It was so soothing. (Pause) I tried not to think about it...but there it was...my heart beating...the clock ticking...the house creaking and me...thinking.

(pause)

I read this poem once about this girl who dreamed she was at her own funeral and how death stopped for her in a carriage and then she got on and saw her whole life and realized how quickly her life was going by.

(pause)

I got up and went downstairs. It was dark but I didn't turn the lights on. I knew the way. I went into the kitchen and opened the refrigerator. The light made everything look green. I looked at the food and thought, ‘No, no more eating’. I heard my cat and wondered what time it was...not that I cared...I was where I wanted to be. The rain picked up a bit then eased off. I looked out the window and saw a light, a flashlight. Someone was standing out in the rain. I walked around the kitchen counter and out to the front door. I opened it but there was nothing there just the rain and the street and the street light.

(pause)

I walked out across my lawn, across the sidewalk and into the street and turned and looked back at my house. A few lights were on upstairs, the front door was open but nothing moved. There was no one there or anywhere. I was alone in the street in the rain. I sat down and waited. I waited until the rain stopped. I waited until the wind calmed and I could feel the rain start to evaporate from my skin. I waited until the sun came up and the rain began to sparkle on the leaves. I waited until I knew without a doubt that it was over. Then I got up and came inside.

LIGHTS FADE OUT

THE END