

LOVE IN THE TIME OF CORONAVIRUS

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Lulu Press, Inc

Durham, North Carolina, USA

www.lulu.com

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ACT I

Scene 1

Outside High School

(CLAIRE enters stage right and crosses stage left. WILLIAM and GOODIE enter stage left and cross stage right. All three are wearing backpacks. They nearly collide and come to a halt. WILLIAM is standing upstage relative to GOODIE and CLAIRE.)

CLAIRE

Oh hi, Goodie. I just saw your painting in the library and I really like it. It's very
(pause)
exotic.

GOODIE

Thanks, Claire. It's actually a collage, not a painting.

CLAIRE

I know.
(pause)
Well, see you later.

(CLAIRE and GOODIE stare at each other without moving. WILLIAM looks at CLAIRE, then looks at GOODIE.)

WILLIAM

So what you doin' after school, Claire?

CLAIRE

Oh. I gotta go. I have to get to crew practice.

GOODIE

OK. See you in history, I guess.

CLAIRE

Bye.

(CLAIRE exits stage left. GOODIE watches her leave. WILLIAM watches GOODIE watching CLAIRE.)

WILLIAM

Can we go?

(GOODIE shrugs. WILLIAM and GOODIE turn and continue to cross stage right, at a slow pace.)

WILLIAM

Man, you sure are smooth.

GOODIE

Huh?

WILLIAM

You gonna ask her out?

GOODIE

Why would I?

WILLIAM

Girl's beggin' for it. And if you hook up with her, I can get with her friend Chelsea. That Chelsea is mighty fine and she been burnin' through half the senior class.

(WILLIAM and GOODIE turn and cross stage left at a slow pace.)

GOODIE

I'd love to help you out. But I think she just likes my collage, William.

WILLIAM

Nah, man. Itty Bitty crushin' on you.

GOODIE

If you say so.

WILLIAM

Yeah I say so! Man you think you so sensitive, so aware. But you don't know what's goin' on. You're all up inside your head worryin' about what colors you're gonna put in your next picture. When all you gotta do is look into her eyes and read the signs.

(WILLIAM and GOODIE stop downstage center.)

GOODIE

(wistfully)

Well we're kind of in different circles, wouldn't you say?

WILLIAM

Oh, sounds like my boy is down for it. That's the shit you go for, all shrimpy like that, just skin and bones?

GOODIE

When did I say that?

WILLIAM

You didn't say that. You're voice said that. It's like I was tryin' to expl...

(WILLIAM and GOODIE both look downstage and scan stage right as if watching a car pass by.)

ST. AGNES BOY

(off stage, loud)

You sure are fat, boy!

(WILLIAM, facing stage right, flips the bird.)

WILLIAM

(raising his voice moderately)

Fuck y'all!

(Automobile tires screech to a stop.)

WILLIAM

Motherfuck, they gettin' out!

(WILLIAM and GOODIE exit running, stage left. WILLIAM and GOODIE enter running upstage center. They stop, look around, and exit running, stage right. WILLIAM and GOODIE enter running upstage center. They stop and look around. WILLIAM shrugs and they continue to walk together back and forth across the stage at a slow pace.)

WILLIAM

I bet you they seen us talkin' to that white girl. You see this is exactly what racism is all about. It's because white women all want some black cock. That's what they're afraid of, that black dudes like you are gonna steal all the white pussy. 'Cause you know what happens next?

GOODIE

Everybody learns to love each other?

WILLIAM

Brown babies, that's what happens next. And they don't want no more brown babies. They only want pure white babies.

GOODIE

And here I thought racism was about slavery and Jim Crow and civil rights.

WILLIAM

Fuck no! Slavery! No one's talking about slavery. I mean, it's still here. But they try not to use that word. They got their new slavery. They just put all the niggas in jail and pay 'em a dollar an hour. So they got that solved. It's the brown babies they scared of. What do they say in their marches? "You will not replace us." 'Cause they in the minority now. That's what they shittin' in their pants about.

GOODIE

I can't say I've had a lot of white women come up to me and say they were interested in my black cock.

WILLIAM

That doesn't mean they don't want it. White girls are just like black girls; they taught by their mamas not to give it up until the dude marries you or at least spends a shitload of money on you. Why else does every supermodel marry someone worth at least a hundred million? I'm telling you, I know how pussy thinks.

GOODIE

And I take it the reason you know pussy so well is that you study it every night on your porn sites?

WILLIAM

Now that's just an ignorant thing to say to a man of my experience. I can't even respond to that.

GOODIE

Damn. We're practically back at school.

WILLIAM

Well we had to take evasive action. And look! There goes your girlfriend now. Ask her if she want you to walk her home.

(loud, waving stage left)

Hey Claire! Goodie wants to ask you something.

CLAIRE

(enters stage left)

Did you guys get lost?

WILLIAM

Naw we was delayed 'cause we got involved in some gang warfare. We had to fight off about fifty of those St. Agnes boys.

CLAIRE

Well I'm glad you didn't get hurt. What was your question, Goodie?

GOODIE

My question? Oh. I was wondering. Are you already out practicing on the river?

CLAIRE

We start rowing as soon as it thaws. But today we had indoor practice on the machines.

(pause)

Well I should get going. My parents...

WILLIAM

So you want us to walk you home?

CLAIRE

No, I'll be fine. Thanks for...

WILLIAM

But we need you to protect us from them St. Agnes boys.

CLAIRE

And how exactly am I gonna protect you?

(pause)

Well OK. Safety in numbers, I guess. Let's go, then.

(WILLIAM, CLAIRE, and GOODIE walk together back and forth across the stage at a slow pace.)

WILLIAM

Not for nuthin', but don't you need to be big and strong to row them boats?

CLAIRE

It's usually called a scull.

WILLIAM

A skull! That's deep.

CLAIRE

And I'm the coxswain, so I don't do any rowing. You see the coxs...

WILLIAM

Wait! Wait! Wait! I know what that is. You're the one who just sits there in the boat watchin' everyone else work and yells "Pull! Pull! Pull!" That's your whole job, right?

CLAIRE

(nods)

Basically.

WILLIAM

Damn! I could do that. Maybe I should try out.

GOODIE

William, if you ever set foot in a scull, it would sink immediately.

WILLIAM

So I could do it from the bridge. I got a loud voice.

CLAIRE

People say that the coxswain is the most important member of the crew team. And it's the most difficult job, too.

WILLIAM

Well it's definitely the best job. I know that.

CLAIRE

No, it's really hard. What if you had to get the three of us to walk perfectly in rhythm?

(CLAIRE positions herself between WILLIAM and GOODIE; they stop and then attempt to walk in unison.)

CLAIRE

Ready? Left foot. Step. Step. Step. Almost, Goodie. Step. Step. William, you're behind.

WILLIAM

This must be what it's like to be in the army.

GOODIE

No! It's like Wizard of Oz! Follow the yellow brick road. Follow the yellow brick road.

CLAIRE

(simultaneously)

Follow the yellow brick road.

(They link arms, marching three abreast in a line, and perform a facsimile of the step sequence from The Wizard of Oz.)

GOODIE

I'm the Cowardly Lion.

CLAIRE

Follow the yellow brick road.

GOODIE

William! You gotta do the little hop.

CLAIRE

Follow the yellow brick road.

(WILLIAM stumbles, the line falls apart, and they all laugh.)

WILLIAM

I ain't seen that movie since I was nine.

GOODIE

That's 'cause you're the youngest in your family. I see it every six weeks.

CLAIRE

Anyway, that's what it's like to be a coxswain.

(Red and blue spotlights crisscross the stage.)

PHIL

(off stage, on bullhorn)

Everything OK, Claire?

(WILLIAM, CLAIRE, and GOODIE, startled, look around and then stage right.)

CLAIRE

Oh. Hi, Uncle Phil. Yeah, everything's great.

PHIL

(off stage, on bullhorn)

Need a ride home?

(CLAIRE takes a couple of steps stage right.)

CLAIRE

No, thanks. I'm practically there already.

PHIL

(off stage, on bullhorn)

All right. Say hi to the family. But don't you dilly dally. Be dark before you know it.

(Red and blue spotlights off. CLAIRE turns around to face WILLIAM and GOODIE. GOODIE is looking at the ground. WILLIAM is staring at her, his hands on his hips.)

WILLIAM

You sure you're OK?

CLAIRE

(stammering)

He's just

CLAIRE (cont'd)

(pause)

overprotective.

WILLIAM

You think he'd be saying all that if you was out here with some white kids?

CLAIRE

I don't know. Probably. He doesn't approve of teenagers hanging out. He's super strict and super conservative. I feel sorry for my cousin Troy; he has to go to St. Agnes. And my parents are the same way. My mom's a nurse at the hospital, and she's really good at her job, but she worries about me the way she worries about her patients. They didn't even want me to do crew. I had to beg them on my hands and knees. And...

WILLIAM

(takes a step stage left)

Imma stop at the store.

(turns back to face GOODIE)

Goodrich, you comin'?

GOODIE

(shakes his head slightly)

WILLIAM

All right. But don't you get caught in the dark in the wrong part of town, boy.

(WILLIAM exits stage left.)

CLAIRE

You can go with him if you want to.

GOODIE

No, I'll walk with you.

(CLAIRE and GOODIE walk together back and forth across the stage at a slow pace.)

CLAIRE

I'm so sorry that had to happen.

GOODIE

It's not your fault. That's just how it is in this town. My Dad says it's because it used to be almost all white. But then a lot of blacks started moving here and when a big recession hit twelve years ago, the whites blamed the blacks 'cause they couldn't get jobs and the town got run down and stuff like that.

CLAIRE

That doesn't give them the right to be hostile and unkind to people.

GOODIE

Tell that to your uncle.

CLAIRE

Maybe I will. One day.

(long pause)

So are you working on any new paintings or collages right now?

GOODIE

Always.

CLAIRE

Where do you get your inspiration for what to paint? Or collage?

GOODIE

That's the easy part. It just comes to me. All I have to do is keep my eyes open. Maybe I'll do one of you.

CLAIRE

Oh I'd like that!

GOODIE

Well I've been in kind of an abstract phase lately. So you might not.

(CLAIRE and GOODIE are walking downstage, with CLAIRE on GOODIE's right. CLAIRE stops, takes a step stage right, and turns back to face GOODIE.)

CLAIRE

So

(pause)

this is my block.

GOODIE

Oh.

(takes a step back)

I guess I'm gonna head off this way, then.

(points stage left with his thumb)

CLAIRE

I mean you could walk me to my door. Or you could come in, even.

GOODIE

Oh that's OK.

CLAIRE

I mean it's just I would get a lot of questions. It's like I said. My parents are really...it's like they can't help themselves. They're so overbearing. I'm sorry.

GOODIE

(takes another step back)

No, really, Claire. There's no need to apologize. I understand.

(starts to turn away)

I'll see you...

CLAIRE

Do you wanna walk me home tomorrow? I don't have crew practice.

GOODIE

(takes out his phone)

I can check my schedule.

(looks at his phone and presses the touchscreen twice)

It seems that I'm available.

CLAIRE

(smiles)

OK then.

GOODIE

(hesitantly)

Would you like to give me your number?

Scene 2
Claire's House

(CLAIRE, DIANNE, and GERRY are sitting at a table with plates in front of them. CLAIRE is seated on the stage right side, GERRY is seated on the stage left side, and DIANNE is between them.)

DIANNE

Give it back, Gerry.

GERRY

I can't give it back.

DIANNE

Gerry, I think it's about time you figured out that you don't have to do whatever your big brother tells you to do.

GERRY

He was the one who told me to marry you.

DIANNE

Well it remains to be seen how that's gonna work out.

GERRY

What's that supposed to mean? He's just lookin' out for our best interests, Dianne.

DIANNE

Best interests! If we had listened to him, Claire would be at St. Agnes now.

CLAIRE

(horrified)

St. Agnes!

GERRY

Dianne, that public high school is not the same place that you went to when you were a kid. Phil says he's over there every other day breakin' up a fight. Let's face it, the whole town is turning into a ghetto. And there's a lot of drugs in that school. Including the hard stuff.

DIANNE

Gerry, all you ever do is complain about money. But you're gonna go and start shelling out tuition for St. Agnes?

GERRY

Well if that voucher law hadn't gotten held up in the courts, then the Catholic schools would be subsidized too.

DIANNE

And what makes you so sure that St. Agnes is a more healthy environment? What about that scandal over those photos posted by the wrestling team?

GERRY

Now that is the most ridiculous thing I have ever heard in my life: Kids getting suspended from school for making the OK sign!

DIANNE

The OK sign?

(CLAIRE raises her right hand with the thumb and index finger in a circle and the three other fingers pointing upward. With her left index finger, she traces the three raised fingers of her right hand.)

CLAIRE

W.

(tracing the thumb and index finger and down her right arm)

P. White power.

DIANNE

And one of those boys was wearing an SS arm band.

GERRY

One bad apple.

CLAIRE

Troy says he has no friends there.

DIANNE

And there's no crew team at St. Agnes. Do you realize that she's already gotten recruitment letters from three colleges?

GERRY

Oh that would be so perfect if she got a rowing scholarship from U of M! We'd have her tuition covered and we wouldn't have to pay room and board.

DIANNE

That's right! She could commute from home and we'd still have our baby here with us.

(CLAIRE looks nauseous.)

GERRY

She's gonna have to keep her grades up, though.
 (to CLAIRE)
 How're your classes goin' this semester?

CLAIRE

Good.

GERRY

How'd you do on your midterms?

CLAIRE

Fine.

GERRY

Think you'll be able to pull up that grade in history?

CLAIRE

Maybe.

DIANNE

"Good," "fine," "whatev," "ish." It would be nice to hear a full sentence once in a while. Are you planning to major in one word answers when you get to college?

CLAIRE

Why should I bother? You never listen to what I say anyway.

DIANNE

(to GERRY)

Well I know we don't have to worry about her grades in French. Gerry, she sits here reading a Victor Hugo novel, in French, as if it were

(waves her hands)

Cosmopolitan magazine.

CLAIRE

I have to look up every other word.

DIANNE

When are we going on our long awaited family vacation to France?

CLAIRE

I'd love to go to France!

GERRY

Well it isn't gonna happen this year, I can guarantee that. I'm getting sick and tired of this whole Francophile thing: French books, French movies, French cooking. You keep feeding her that cheesy French onion soup and those heavy cream sauces. She puts on ten pounds and those athletic scholarships go right out the window.

(DIANNE stands up, moves behind
CLAIRE's chair, and hugs her, placing
her chin on CLAIRE's shoulder.)

DIANNE

(baby talk)

Claire loves Mommy's French onion soup, doesn't she?

(to GERRY)

But you're right. We need to keep her small and cuddly.

(CLAIRE shrugs DIANNE off, stands up,
and raises her voice.)

CLAIRE

Small and cuddly! I'm almost seventeen years old. Just
because I'm little doesn't mean I'm still a child.

(turns stage right)

DIANNE

Please lower your voice and sit down, Claire. You have
not been excused from the table. As of now you are only
sixteen.

(CLAIRE sits back down.)

DIANNE

And in many ways you are still a child.

(DIANNE places her hands on the back
of her own chair and looks off into
the distance.)

DIANNE

(to GERRY)

Do you remember our honeymoon in Paris? Walking together
along the Seine?

GERRY

Not really.

DIANNE

Gerry! There's a picture in the upstairs hallway, the one
we got from that street artist.

GERRY

All I think of when I see that picture is how that guy
ripped us off on the price. And he made my nose too big.

DIANNE

That's because it's a caricature. Gerry, what has
happened to you? You don't remember how romantic that
was?

GERRY

No, of course I haven't forgotten our trip to France. But that seems like a lifetime ago, before I had all these bills and responsibilities

(gestures toward CLAIRE)

and mortgage payments and the store to worry about. And now this Chinese flu comin'. What's the latest at the hospital?

DIANNE

Everything is normal at the hospital right now, but I can tell you that the entire administration and staff are very nervous. If we had an outbreak here like what's going on in Seattle, it would be crazy.

GERRY

Hopefully this China travel ban is gonna nip it in the bud.

DIANNE

A lot of experts have been warning for years that eventually we're going to be hit with a serious epidemic, a virus that spreads like the SARS respiratory syndrome they had in southeast Asia. And I can tell you that we simply are not prepared. You see, the way the hospitals are being run right now, everything is as lean as possible so they can squeeze out as much profit as they can. So if there's a major health crisis, I really can't imagine how we handle it. We don't have the beds, we don't have the staff, we don't have the equipment.

GERRY

OK, Dianne, you don't have to scare us to death. Nobody likes a prophet of doom.

DIANNE

Claire, you wanna clear these dishes?

CLAIRE

No.

(CLAIRE stands up, picks up the three dishes on the table, and exits stage right.)

DIANNE

So you're gonna tell your brother "No, thank you," and give it back?

GERRY

It was a gift. I can't just give it back. He would be very insulted.

DIANNE

OK, so don't give it back. You can just put it in the trash.

GERRY

It's for our protection.

DIANNE

I do not want it in this house. It's dangerous. It makes us less safe, not more safe.

GERRY

I'll keep it locked up.

DIANNE

I'm gonna make it real simple for you, Gerry. Either the gun goes or I do.

(long pause)

Well?

GERRY

I'm thinkin'.

DIANNE

I'm not kidding, Gerry.

GERRY

Fine. I'll take it to the store. I need it more over there. That whole neighborhood's turning into a no go zone.

DIANNE

Long as it's out of this house.

Scene 3

William's Bedroom/Goodie's Bedroom

(WILLIAM is sitting in bed, stage right, with his back supported by the bedstead. GOODIE is sitting at his desk, stage left, and drawing in a notebook. WILLIAM is wearing wireless earphones. GOODIE's cell phone is on his desk and, when he speaks, he turns his head toward it as if it were in speaker mode.)

GOODIE

Is only for like two weeks.

WILLIAM

No way, dude! School year's over. We'll be online the rest of the way.

GOODIE

No!

WILLIAM

What do you mean no? We won't have to see Hasbrouck's ugly face in calc for the rest of the year! I won't have Mitch the Bitch on my ass in gym class. "How come you always in the back of the pack, Owens? You can't give me one lousy pushup, Owens?"

GOODIE

Yeah, but how are we gonna hang out? Where are we gonna hang out? My Dad's already talking about working from home.

WILLIAM

You're not thinking about this right, Goodrich. This is a dream come true. School's out! Everyone's gonna have tons of free time. We can do whatever we want and kick it wherever we want, especially when the weather gets nice.

GOODIE

What about this shelter-in-place they're talking about? What if they do like San Francisco?

WILLIAM

That's California, a crowded city in California. Minnesota's all spread out. There ain't gonna be no lockdown here.

GOODIE

I don't know. Some people's parents are really strict. I was supposed to be takin' Claire out next week.

WILLIAM

So you could go bikin' or some shit. That's outdoors. Spring is sprung, dude. Birds chirpin', flowers bloomin'; love is in the air. What more could you want?

GOODIE

I bet you anything she's gonna cancel.

WILLIAM

Man, you just love to worry about shit. You could still get with your girl. You'll be suckin' as much face as you can stand.

GOODIE

Out on the corner?

WILLIAM

You know what? What we're gonna need is some kind of secret clubhouse.

GOODIE

And where's that gonna be?

WILLIAM

I don't know. We gotta figure it out. I thought you was an artist; use your imagination.

GOODIE

Imagination? I could draw you a beautiful picture of your secret hideaway clubhouse. That don't make it real.

WILLIAM

Awright. I'm on it, Goodrich. Don't you worry. Makin' it real is what I do. I'll catch you later.

Scene 4

Goodie's Bedroom/Claire's Bedroom

(GOODIE is sitting in bed, stage right, with his back supported by the bedstead. CLAIRE is sitting at her desk, stage left, and looking at her laptop screen. GOODIE is looking at his cell phone screen. They are communicating via videochat.)

GOODIE

So what she say?

CLAIRE

She said "Stay at home means stay at home."

GOODIE

So you can never leave the house? And you don't think that's messed up?

CLAIRE

She says we all have to avoid any avoidable risk. I told you this was gonna happen. They wouldn't let me go to a party last weekend.

GOODIE

What party was that?

CLAIRE

Chelsea was goin' to a Fuck COVID party over at Sherod's house.

GOODIE

Oh that crew. Sherod and his boys all a bunch of players. Why would you wanna go there?

CLAIRE

To see friends.

GOODIE

So is Chelsea goin' out with Sherod now?

CLAIRE

Sort of.

GOODIE

William says that girl is a total slut.

CLAIRE

Why would you say something like that about my friend?

GOODIE

I didn't say it. William said it.

CLAIRE

Why would you repeat something like that about my friend?

GOODIE

I don't know. I didn't think you'd get so upset.

CLAIRE

So that makes it OK?

GOODIE

I'm sorry, Claire. It's just...that's how I am sometimes. Some people always know the right thing to say. But me, I'm always up inside my head and I'm tryin' to figure out where I'm going with some piece I'm working on and especially now when I'm cooped up in the house all day and then I open my mouth and out pops something stupid.

CLAIRE

I'll say.

GOODIE

That's the problem when you're quiet like me. Y'know I'm not like William who's so smart; he takes one look and he's got it all doped out and he's so funny and fast talking, always has a quick comeback. I don't know how he does it.

CLAIRE

Is that so? And here I thought he was just a fat slob.

(CLAIRE and GOODIE stare each other down through their respective screens for several seconds. Then they each stand up, take several steps toward each other, and address each other directly.)

GOODIE

What you pickin' on my friend for? You gone go after my mother next?

CLAIRE

I might.

GOODIE

I said I'm sorry. Aren't you gonna forgive me?

CLAIRE

I'll think about it.

GOODIE

Claire!

CLAIRE

I'm still mad and I need to think about it. I'll probably forgive you one day. That's how I am. When you're little like me you gotta stand up for yourself. Otherwise you get pushed around and stepped on.

GOODIE

So how come you let your parents walk all over you?

CLAIRE

That's different. 'Cause they're my parents, I guess. Maybe because that's the way it's always been. I've been bullied by my parents for as long as I can remember. They love telling me what to do because they worry so much and - the way they see it - everything is spinning out of control and so the more they can control me the better they feel. My mom lost both her parents when she was young and she's so clingy and suffocating and I get so mad but somehow I feel sorry for her so I can't bring myself...but anyone else, if you hit me I'm gonna hit you back. And I hold a grudge too.

GOODIE

OK, OK. I should never have said anything. I don't even know Chelsea. We don't even have any classes together. It's just I'm upset. This is hard, Claire. 'Cause I want to see you so bad.

CLAIRE

You don't think I want to see you too?

GOODIE

Didn't you say we were gonna get into some video smush?

CLAIRE

Yeah, well, not tonight, that's for sure. You're on your own, buddy.

GOODIE

All right. I'll hit you up tomorrow. You're less mad, though. Right?

CLAIRE

Maybe a little. But you're still on thin ice.
(smiles)

You better watch your step, Buster.

GOODIE

"Watch your step."

(shakes his head)

You are too much.

Scene 5

Claire's House/High School Shed

(Lights up stage right. CLAIRE is standing center stage and facing stage right. DIANNE and GERRY are standing stage right and facing CLAIRE. CLAIRE is wearing a mask and a backpack. DIANNE has her hands on her hips.)

DIANNE

No, you may not!

CLAIRE

You're being ridiculous! Kids don't even get it.

DIANNE

That's not true, Claire. And even if teenagers are more likely to be asymptomatic, that does not mean that they aren't carrying the disease and spreading it to others.

CLAIRE

(lowers her mask below her chin)

But all my friends are still getting together. They're forming pods to do online school and they have small study groups. Can't I at least go to Chelsea's house to do homework? Her mom said I can come. Why do you have to be such weirdos?

DIANNE

I don't care what other people are doing. I don't care what other people's parents think is OK. Other people's parents don't work in a hospital. They don't know what's going on over there. Chelsea's mother doesn't see what I get to see every day, another patient dying of this disease.

CLAIRE

If it's so dangerous, then why are you and Daddy still going to work?

DIANNE

Because it's our responsibility. We both perform essential services. Visiting your friends is non-essential. And if it were up to me, your father would be closing the store as well.

GERRY

We wouldn't have enough to live off.

DIANNE

You could transition to an online business, like everyone else.

GERRY

A local hardware store is dependent on walk-ins. Online they just order from Home Depot. Not that I'm getting any walk-ins, now that we've sold out every cleaning product in the store. Can't restock any inventory; everything's on back order. Place is like a ghost town.

CLAIRE

Well then after I finish my homework I'm going for a run.

DIANNE

Are you forgetting that you have an underlying medical condition?

CLAIRE

I haven't had an asthma attack in like ten years.

DIANNE

It's still a risk factor.

CLAIRE

I promise I won't eat any macadamia nuts. Can't I at least go for a bike ride? It's unhealthy to sit in the house all day and never get any exercise.

DIANNE

All right. We'll order a stationary bike.

CLAIRE

I hate you. I'm the only one in my whole school who never gets to see any friends.

(exits stage right)

DIANNE

So we found out today that administration has agreed to accept any patient who cannot be accommodated at their local Stearns County hospital.

GERRY

Are you kiddin' me? It's gonna be a zoo.

DIANNE

Don't worry. They know what they're doin'.

GERRY

Yeah?

DIANNE

Oh yeah. They've got it covered. I mean, don't get me wrong.

DIANNE (cont'd)

We still don't have enough personal protective equipment. We still don't have enough test kits. We still don't have enough ventilators. And we definitely don't have enough staffing. But they have ordered a second tent.

GERRY

Another triage tent?

DIANNE

Oh no. This one's goin' in the back. To handle the overflow when the mortuary in the basement fills up. And they've got some refrigerated trucks comin' in. Help keep the smell down in the summer. Yeah, it's gonna be quite a show.

(Lights down stage right. DIANNE and GERRY exit stage right. Lights up stage left. WILLIAM and GOODIE are sitting on a table that has a polyurethane foam pad on top of it. They are sitting at either end of the table, so they are several feet apart. WILLIAM is holding a vape pen and GOODIE is holding an unlit joint.)

WILLIAM

No, not short. Not a crew cut or a military cut. I'm talkin' bald as a billiard ball.

(holds out his free hand, palm upward)

Like the palm of my hand. That's how much hair she got on her head.

GOODIE

That's pretty radical.

WILLIAM

(takes out a lighter)

You want me to light that? I brought it so we wouldn't be vadin' on the same pen. Safety first, you know.

GOODIE

I'm already high from your second hand smoke. Not much air circulation in here.

WILLIAM

So you don't like the new headquarters?

GOODIE

Not bad. Kinda cozy. It is a storage shed. How'd you get in here in the first place?

WILLIAM

What can I tell you? Lock's broken.

GOODIE

How did it get broken?

WILLIAM

I don't know but if we put it back on the latch when we leave, it looks like the shed is locked.

GOODIE

So what's Mary gonna...

WILLIAM

Din' I tell you? Her name ain't Mary no more. Now she's M'Chelle. Michelle without an I.

GOODIE

That's what I'm gonna change my name to! Jean Michel, after Jean Michel Basquiat.

WILLIAM

Well that's very Francais, Goodrich. Not sure your momma's gonna be too happy about that.
(ignites his vape pen and takes a drag)

GOODIE

He was part Haitian. And I'd rather be named Mary than Thurgood.

(pedantic, nasal female voice)

You're named after the first African American justice of the Supreme Court, and you should be very proud of that fact.

(regular voice)

I bet Olivia's wiggin' out too.

WILLIAM

(exhales)

That's nothin'. Wait 'til my father figures out why she ain't got no boyfriends. But them two just picked up right where they left off, arguin' about the politics and the religion and such.

GOODIE

What's her major, your sister?

WILLIAM

Uhh, urban planning, I think.

GOODIE

That's a major? What do they do, sit around drawin' maps?

WILLIAM

It takes a lot of work figurin' out how to design a city.

WILLIAM (cont'd)

You know, first you gotta find a garbage dump or some toxic waste site and that's where you build the projects and then you put all the niggas there and then once you got your ghetto you need to separate it with a big highway or some railroad tracks or dig a moat around it if you have to so long as you keep 'em away from the white folks over in the nice part of town. So yeah they got a whole department just to learn how to do that.

GOODIE

Uh huh.

WILLIAM

Oh and check this out. My mom wouldn't even let her into Grandpa's room for two weeks after she got home.

GOODIE

That's like Claire's mom! No one's allowed in or out of the house. That's how freaked out she is.

WILLIAM

See now I wouldn't stand for that shit. Sounds like you got yourself a real momma's girl.

GOODIE

She said she might try and sneak out.

WILLIAM

You think she's a virgin?

GOODIE

Hey I don't mind teaching. But what difference does it make if I'm never gonna see her?

WILLIAM

(looks at GOODIE askance)

Yeah, I'll bet you're a real good teacher. I don't know what you see in that girl. Me? I need 'em with some meat on them bones. She's such a puny little thing. I bet my titties are bigger than hers.

(WILLIAM starts to put his vape pen to his mouth. GOODIE gets up, approaches WILLIAM, and tries to pull up his shirt.)

GOODIE

Oh yeah? Let's have a look.

(WILLIAM fends GOODIE off with his free hand.)

WILLIAM

Whoa! Easy boy. Jean Michel! Stoppez vous, s'il vous plait. I's only kidding. JK. JK. JK. And where's your mask? Social distancing, nigga! Safety first. Don't make me kick you out my bubble.

GOODIE

You talk too much, boy. Don't be running your mouth if you can't back it up.

(returns to the spot where he was sitting)

Speaking of safety first, is it really such a great idea to be hanging out on school grounds? What if somebody catches us?

WILLIAM

Dude, this is a good set up. It's close to where we live. And school's closed. Ain't nobody here. Just don't come in from the front. If we take the side street,
(points stage right with his vape pen)
where the community center is, no one will see us comin' or goin'.

(puts the vape pen in his mouth, ignites it, and takes a drag)

Scene 6

Claire's Bedroom/Goodie's Bedroom

(Stage right, CLAIRE is sitting in bed, her back supported by the bedstead. She is wearing a sweater, facing upstage, and holding her cell phone in front of her face. Stage left, GOODIE is sitting at his desk, facing downstage and looking at the screen of his laptop. He is wearing a pair of earphones, which are plugged into the laptop. His cell phone is on the desk next to his laptop. They are communicating via videochat.)

CLAIRE

I'm not sure I'm ready for this.

GOODIE

Really? I'm ready for a lot more than this.

(CLAIRE puts her cell phone on the bed, removes her sweater so that she is only wearing a bra, picks up her cell phone, and holds it in front of her.)

CLAIRE

Stop staring!

GOODIE

This is a big moment. I finally get to see what I've been missing.

CLAIRE

Well you don't have to sit there with your tongue hanging out!

GOODIE

OK how 'bout if I do like this?

(turns and lowers his head to the side and peeks out from under his furrowed brow)

CLAIRE

(laughing)

Oh that's much better.

(CLAIRE reaches behind her back with her free hand and unfastens and lifts up her bra.)

GOODIE

(head still partly turned)
Damn! I think William's titties really are bigger.
(chuckles)

CLAIRE

(gasps)

(Lights down stage right. CLAIRE grabs her sweater and exits stage right.)

GOODIE

Claire! Wait! I'm sorry. Let's start over.
(taps repeatedly on his laptop keyboard)
Claire! Can you still hear me? Oh no!
(types on the keyboard of his laptop, then watches the screen)
C'mon Claire. Please!
(grabs his phone, pushes a button, and taps the touchscreen)
You idiot! You fucking idiot!
(yanks the earphones out of his ears and puts the phone to his ear)

(The phone's outgoing ringtone rings once.)

CLAIRE

(off stage)
Oops you missed me. I'll get back to you as soon as I can.

(Voicemail tone.)

GOODIE

(speaking into his phone)
Claire! I'm really really really sorry. I was just jokin' around. Please call me back. Please!
(presses a button on the phone, then reads out loud as he types on the touchscreen)
You didn't block me, did you?
(looks at the laptop screen)
Unavailable.
(looks around, distraught)
How'bout Insta?
(taps several times on his phone's touchscreen)

GOODIE (cont'd)

Claire! Damn, that was quick.
(puts the cell phone down on the desk)
I...I been cancelled.
(looks at his laptop screen)
You fucking moron!
(put his face in his hands)
How could you do that?

Scene 7

Claire's House/Goodie's Bedroom

(Spotlight downstage center. CLAIRE, wearing a sweater, is standing downstage center and staring downstage as if looking in a mirror. She is holding an eyeliner pencil and fixing her makeup. DIANNE enters stage left.)

DIANNE

(loud)

Claire, have you seen my eyeliner?

(DIANNE crosses to CLAIRE and, standing behind CLAIRE and to her left, speaks to her as if addressing her reflection in the mirror.)

DIANNE

Since when do you need makeup for an online class?

CLAIRE

Everyone's doing it, out of boredom. Dying their hair, adding extensions, fake fingernails and eyelashes.

DIANNE

But you never even used to wear makeup to school.

CLAIRE

That's because I had crew.

DIANNE

Well you need to ask before touching any of my things. For all you know, I could have used that pencil at the hospital. And I hope you're not losing track of your priorities. You're still in school, even if it's not in person. I think you should be less focused on your appearance and more focused on your schoolwork.

CLAIRE

(raising her voice)

I'm not allowed to leave the house. I'm not allowed to see any friends. This is my whole social life, OK? You wanna ruin that too?

DIANNE

Young lady I do not care for that tone of voice.

(DIANNE stares pointedly, as if through the reflection in the mirror, at CLAIRE's chest)

CLAIRE

May I please have some privacy in the bathroom?

DIANNE

May I please have my eyeliner back?

(holds out her hand and shifts position so that she is looking at CLAIRE from the side)

Claire, are you w...

CLAIRE

(loud)

Leave me alone! I'm late for class.

(CLAIRE throws the eyeliner pencil at DIANNE; it strikes DIANNE and falls to the floor. CLAIRE rushes upstage stage right. Spotlight off. Lights up stage right. Stage right is CLAIRE's bed with a closed laptop on it. Sound of a door slamming shut. CLAIRE reaches under her sweater, removes two falsies, and hurls them off stage, stage right. CLAIRE sits on the bed, facing downstage, with her legs crossed. She opens the laptop in her lap and wipes the tears from her eyes.)

MS. BARNES

(off stage)

So as we move into the civil rights era of the 1960s, let's quickly review what we've learned about legal progress on the issue of integration.

(DIANNE picks up the eyeliner pencil and exits stage left. Lights up stage left. GOODIE is sitting at his desk and looking at the screen of his laptop. The desk is angled so that GOODIE is in profile, facing upstage and stage left, and CLAIRE's face on the laptop screen is visible to the audience. GOODIE is wearing dark sunglasses and he is staring at the laptop screen with his elbows on the desk and his chin cupped in his hands.)

MS. BARNES

(off stage)

We learned that in 1896, in a case known as Plessy versus Ferguson, the Supreme Court ruled that segregated railroad train cars were not necessarily a violation of the Fourteenth Amendment of the Constitution. And what was the legal principle, justifying segregation, that emerged from that decision? Spencer, you think I can't see you Googling it on your phone? Claire?

CLAIRE

Umm. The legal principle? Separate but equal?

MS. BARNES

(off stage)

Separate but equal, exactly. That's right, Claire. The court ruled that segregated facilities, so long as they were similar in quality, did not violate the Fourteenth Amendment, since they provided equal protection under the law, regardless of race. But we know that the Supreme Court reversed that decision in 1956. Can anyone tell me the name of the case that overturned the separate but equal doctrine?

(pause)

The ruling that led to school desegregation and busing. Goodie?

GOODIE

(jumps)

School desegregation? Uhh, I wasn't able to do the reading, Ms. Barnes.

MS. BARNES

(off stage)

We started the section on integration and busing three weeks ago. Are you saying you haven't done the reading for three weeks?

GOODIE

I guess I forgot, Ms. Barnes.

MS. BARNES

(off stage)

Mr. Bennet, could you please remove your sunglasses while you're in my classroom? I like to be sure you're keeping your eyes open.

GOODIE

I got pink eye, Ms. Barnes. Doctor said I have to avoid the light. That's why I couldn't do the reading.

MS. BARNES

(off stage)

Have you sent in a doctor's note?

GOODIE

Not yet, Ms. Barnes.

MS. BARNES

(off stage)

Well come Thursday it's no note, no glasses. Otherwise I'll have to mark you absent. Now who can tell me what was the landmark Supreme Court...

GOODIE

Wait! Ms. Barnes. I got it. It's Brown versus the Board of Education.

MS. BARNES

(off stage)

Well, Goodie, maybe there's hope for you yet.

GOODIE

My momma'd kill me if I didn't know that one. That was Thurgood Marshall's case.

Scene 8

High School Shed/Goodie's Bedroom

(Lights up stage left. WILLIAM and GOODIE are sitting on a table that has a polyurethane foam pad on top of it. They are sitting at either end of the table, so they are several feet apart. WILLIAM has a mask around his neck and GOODIE is wearing a gaiter above his forehead like a headband. GOODIE is wearing dark sunglasses. WILLIAM is holding a vape pen. GOODIE takes a last drag on a roach, inspects it, and flicks it stage left.)

WILLIAM

I heard Ms. Barnes was crackin' on you for wearin' shades in her online classroom.

GOODIE

(nods; pause; exhales)

Next time I'm not gone bother to sign in.

WILLIAM

Damn. You turnin' into a rebellious youth in your old age.

GOODIE

I'm just sick of it. Sick of Ms. Barnes, sick of online school, sick of this fuckin' lockdown.

WILLIAM

Look at the bright side, Goodrich. With all the hours of commuting we save, we have more time to engage in recreational activities such as this. Of course, I don't get to see my OTP, the two of yous walkin' home from school hand-in-hand every day.

GOODIE

I don't get to see her at all! She never leaves the damn house. So if I'm never gonna see her, how am I gonna get it in? Just a waste of my time!

WILLIAM

I told you. You gotta get into some of that videochat sex.

GOODIE

I'm sick of videochat sex. It's more fake online bullshit. I need the real thing!

WILLIAM

(sings)

"Ain't nothin' like the real thing, baby. Ain't nothin' like the real thing."

GOODIE

You got a good voice, William.

WILLIAM

I can dance too.

(WILLIAM stands up and does a quick break dance. GOODIE claps, without enthusiasm. Then he holds out his hand toward WILLIAM with a beckoning motion. WILLIAM takes a plastic bag out of his pocket and pulls out a joint.)

WILLIAM

And I can act.

(WILLIAM hands the joint to GOODIE with a demonstrative flourish.)

WILLIAM

"My bounty is as boundless as the sea, my love as deep; the more I give to thee, the more I have, for both are infinite."

(puts the bag back in his pocket)

I wrote that but, since you're my bud, I let you use it on Miss Claire if you want.

GOODIE

Yeah, a little sweet talk, that'll do the trick.

WILLIAM

Plus I can tell jokes.

(uses his vape pen to do a Groucho Marx imitation)

Why the other morning I shot an elephant in my pajamas. How he got into my pajamas I'll never know.

GOODIE

(frowns)

You tryin' to get me to leave? Is that it?

WILLIAM

(Groucho Marx imitation)

You can leave in a taxi.

WILLIAM (cont'd)

If you can't get a taxi, you can leave in a huff. If that's too soon, you can leave in a minute and a huff.
(normal voice)

You see? I can sing, dance, act, and do comedy. I'm a quadruple threat. Hollywood here I come.

GOODIE

'Cept you know they're not making movies now, Slim.
(brings the joint to his lips)

WILLIAM

Thas awright. I still wanna finish school. By then

(WILLIAM takes out a lighter and lights GOODIE's joint, then puts the lighter back in his pocket.)

WILLIAM

they'll be back up and running. And boom! I'll head out to Sunset Strip, get discovered, and make it big. Hollywood, baby! You should come out some time. We'll do lunch. Maybe I'll let you take a dip in the pool at my house in Bel Air.

(WILLIAM watches GOODIE as he exhales and immediately takes a second, long drag.)

WILLIAM

Y'know this is pretty good stuff. Little bit goes a long way.

GOODIE

(exhaling smoke as he speaks)
What? You think I can't handle the head?

WILLIAM

I know you can handle the head. Just don't want you smokin' up all my dope is all.
(chuckles)

GOODIE

No problem. I'll pay you right now.

(GOODIE reaches into his pocket, takes out a ten dollar bill, and holds it out toward WILLIAM.)

WILLIAM

Come on, Goodrich man. Don't be like that.

GOODIE

Go ahead. Take it.

WILLIAM

What's the matter wichoo? You all right?

(WILLIAM approaches GOODIE, ignores GOODIE's outstretched hand, and puts his hand to GOODIE's forehead.)

GOODIE

Don't touch me with those COVID infected hands. Six feet, nigga.

WILLIAM

(backing away)

You got a sore throat? How's your sense of taste?

GOODIE

Wouldn't know. I'm never hungry.
(puts the bill back in his pocket)

WILLIAM

(shaking his head)

Maybe you need a little alone time. I gotta roll out anyway. Supposed to watch the baseball game with Grandpa.

GOODIE

There's no games. It's all reruns from last season.

WILLIAM

What's the difference to him? He's senile. Here. Live it up.

(WILLIAM takes out the plastic bag with a couple of joints in it, throws it on GOODIE's lap, and exits stage left. GOODIE takes another drag on the joint, stubs it out against a leg of the table, stands up, puts the joint in the plastic bag, puts the plastic bag in his pocket, and trudges slowly stage right. He removes his sunglasses. Lights down stage left. Lights up stage right. On GOODIE's bed are a pillow, a large sketch pad and a piece of charcoal.)

GOODIE'S MOTHER

(off stage, loud)

Thurgood Bennet, you come back here and eat your dinner.

(pause)

You get back here or I'm taking you to get tested tomorrow.

GOODIE

(puts his hands to his head; low voice)

Shut. Up!

(loud)

I can't eat. I got a stomach ache.

(GOODIE takes out his cell phone, lies down on his stomach on the bed, and presses the touchscreen on his phone. Outgoing ringtone rings once.)

CLAIRE

(off stage)

Oops you missed me. I'll get back to you as soon as I can.

(Voicemail tone. GOODIE presses the touchscreen twice. Outgoing ringtone rings once.)

CLAIRE

(off stage)

Oops you missed me. I'll get back to you as soon as I can.

(Voicemail tone. GOODIE presses the touchscreen twice. Outgoing ringtone rings once.)

CLAIRE

(off stage)

Oops you missed me. I'll get back to you as soon as I can.

(Voicemail tone.)

GOODIE

Claire. Please. Just talk to me.

(GOODIE presses the touchscreen and puts the phone on the bed. He presses his face into the pillow, and pushes the sides of the pillow against the sides of his head. The phone rings once. GOODIE grabs the phone, rolls over, assumes a sitting position with his back against the bedstead, pushes a button on the phone, and puts it to his ear without looking at it.)

GOODIE

Hello?

(crestfallen; pause)

GOODIE (cont'd)

I'm not gonna have any dessert. I tole you, Ma, I got a stomach ache.

(pause)

No, not nauseous, just upset.

(pause)

But I don't have to go to the bathroom.

(pause)

I don't want any toast.

(pause)

OK leave it. Maybe after I go I'll be able to eat some.

(presses button on phone and puts it on the bed)

Now I know. This is what it's like in hell.

(Pause. GOODIE picks up the sketch pad and piece of charcoal and begins to draw.)

Scene 9

Claire's House/Sidewalk

(Lights up stage right. CLAIRE is sitting in bed with her back supported by the bedstead. There is a large screen upstage, above and behind her bed. Her cell phone, next to her on the bed, rings twice. She picks up the phone, looks at the phone's screen, presses a button, and puts the phone to her ear.)

CLAIREWhat do you want?**WILLIAM**

(off stage)

Oh hi, Claire. This is William.

CLAIRE

I know who it is. What do you want?

(WILLIAM enters stage right and slowly crosses downstage from CLAIRE's bed to downstage center. He is wearing wireless earphones. Spotlight downstage center.)

WILLIAM

Uhh, I was calling to ask you a favor.

CLAIRE

What kind of favor?

WILLIAM

(stops downstage center)

Did I catch you at a bad time?

CLAIRE

Any time is a bad time.

WILLIAM

Oh. Well then I guess it's as good a time as any. Did Goodie tell you about my Grandpa?

CLAIRE

No.

WILLIAM

No? When's the last time you talked to him?

CLAIRE

Three weeks ago.

WILLIAM

Three weeks? Did you two have a fight or somethin'?

CLAIRE

Yes.

WILLIAM

What about?

CLAIRE

(puts her free hand to her chest)

Stuff.

WILLIAM

Stuff? Three weeks ago? And he didn't tell me? This sounds serious. I knew my boy was down. Now I know why.

CLAIRE

So you're not calling for Goodie? He didn't ask you to call me?

WILLIAM

I was calling for my Grandpa. But I mean if you want me to give Goodrich a message or somethin' I'd be more than...

CLAIRE

No.

WILLIAM

(pause)

Y'know with Goodie he try to come off all tough and streetwise, but that's not him. He soft, really, 'cause underneath he's the sensitive artistic type, even though he tries to hide it, and that makes him kind of tuned out and awkward sometimes. You know what I mean? I'm always tellin' him he needs to come out of his shell, but when he does, he might mess up, 'cause he's not so good at relatin' to people. Maybe you already realize that but I'm just sayin' don't let him fool you when he's actin' all hard like he don't care about...

CLAIRE

So what about your Grandpa?

WILLIAM

Oh OK. So here's the thing. My Grandpa he got the COVID virus.

CLAIRE

(gets out of bed and stands up)

Oh no! I'm so sorry to hear that, William.

WILLIAM

So he's over at St. Cloud Hospital and the problem is that, on account of the pandemic they don't allow no visits – no relatives, no friends, no nothin'. And he got his phone with him but he forgot to bring the charger so the battery died and we couldn't even talk to him. So I wouldn't be bothering you but my mom is just losing it. I mean you shoulda heard her on the phone with the hospital operator or the nurses or I don't know who just screaming. And she's not like that. And so finally it turned out he's got a phone in his room and we were able to talk to him. But he's like eighty-three years old and mentally he's not all there. So he can't figure out why his cell phone stopped working and he thinks he's just there for his dialysis and he doesn't understand why we're not coming to pick him up. You see what I'm sayin'? And I remember you said your mom works at the hospital and I know it's a lot to ask and she's probably crazy busy with the COVID but if there was some way she could just check in on him and maybe help him charge his cell phone and maybe even let us know what's goin' on 'cause my mom is gonna drop off his charger but they don't tell us nothin' 'cept stay away you can't come up in here. And I remember how you said how your mom is so dedicated to the patients no matter what...

CLAIRE

Do you know where he is in the hospital?

(WILLIAM crosses stage right and addresses CLAIRE directly. Spotlight off.)

WILLIAM

Well first he went to that tent, y'know they got a tent set up outside in the parking lot. And after that they took him across to emergency. And then after a while he got admitted and they took him upstairs.

(CLAIRE lowers her cell phone from her ear and addresses WILLIAM directly.)

CLAIRE

Do you know if he's in intensive care?

WILLIAM

Well he's eighty-three and he's got the COVID, plus he's got kidney problems plus the senility so I would say probably no doubt they would have to be looking at him intensively.

CLAIRE

Because my mom is in the ICU.

WILLIAM

The what?

CLAIRE

The ICU: intensive care unit. So you don't have his room number?

WILLIAM

I could check.

(pause)

You know what? One second.

(takes out his cell phone and presses the touchscreen several times)

I do have his room number 'cause they said it's the same as his phone number and his extension is nine four oh eight so I bet you his room number has to be four oh eight.

CLAIRE

OK. I'm gonna give her your number. All right?

(CLAIRE lies down on the bed on her stomach.)

WILLIAM

Oh that's so nice of you, Claire. I'm not gonna tell Momma 'cause she'll get herself all worked up. So should I tell Goodie...

CLAIRE

She's still at work so I'm gonna hang up and try to reach her right now.

(CLAIRE presses the touchscreen on her cell phone twice. Lights down stage right. WILLIAM exits stage right. Lights up stage left. On the kitchen table are a box of groceries, two plastic placemats, a spray bottle, a pack of alcohol wipes, a box of plastic bags, and a wash cloth. Also on the table are a box of latex gloves and a small pile of letters. At the bottom of the pile of letters is an oversized orange envelope. DIANNE is wearing a mask, gloves, and hospital scrubs. Standing on the upstage side of the table, she gradually unloads the contents of the box onto the first placemat. Each item that she removes from the box of groceries is either

sprayed and cleaned with an alcohol wipe or else removed from its packaging and sealed in a plastic bag. Sanitized and repackaged items are moved to the second placemat. She discards the packaging and used alcohol wipes in a large trash can lined with a red plastic bag. GERRY is standing stage left of the table.}

DIANNE

Well Glen tested positive. Says he's asymptomatic, but that means he's out for fourteen days. And Candace's babysitter got sick so she took a personal day to try and find some coverage. So we're half staffed with every bed taken; plus they gave us the elective surgery beds on three and they're all full. I ended up doing a twelve hour shift and still felt guilty leaving. They're sending us nurses from radiology and neurology. It's nice to get some help and meet new people, but they don't know what they're doing.

GERRY

All I do, all day long, is tell people to put a damn mask on their face. And I don't mind so much the ones who come in without one on and I say "Please put a mask on," and they say "Oh, OK," and they take out their mask and put it on or I'll even give them a disposable if I have to. But then there're these other ones who come waltzin' in with their mask on their chin or over their lip with their noses hanging out there in the breeze for all the world to see. I mean it's disgusting. I want to smack 'em right across the face. And then they act like they're terribly insulted when I tell them that their mask has to cover their nose and mouth. But then there're the other ones who turn it into a big issue and say I'm infringing upon their civil rights by tellin' 'em to put a mask on. I mean it's the law for Chrissake. And then I get fights breakin' out between my customers over it. I almost had to call the cops today. Phil says he's dealin' with the same thing around the clock.

DIANNE

Well as far as masks go I've got great news from the hospital. From now on I'm supposedly getting my very own, fresh new N95 every day. So I won't have to bring 'em home and wash 'em at night or go with a lousy homemade substitute.

GERRY

Now that's what I call progress.

DIANNE

Of course, the regulations say you're supposed to put on a fresh mask every time you see a new patient. But we know that's way too much to ask.

(CLAIRE gets out of bed and crosses stage left to the kitchen table.)

DIANNE

But Gerry, if you've got these lunatics running around the store without any personal protection, do you really have any choice but to shut the place down?

GERRY

We'll go broke!

DIANNE

You can get one of those small business loans.

GERRY

Yeah, we'll be living out of the car by the time we see that check. Beside the fact that my job is far less dangerous than yours.

DIANNE

Either one of us could bring the virus home. Maybe it would be best if you started eating and sleeping in the basement.

CLAIRE

Mommy, your coronaphobia is ruining our lives.

DIANNE

Claire, you haven't seen what I've seen. If you had to watch a technician scrambling hysterically trying to hook up two patients to one ventilator while somebody is desperately struggling to catch his last breath, maybe you wouldn't take this disease so casually.

CLAIRE

I'm not taking it casually, but I don't see why you have to make such a huge deal out of it all the time.

DIANNE

Because it is a huge deal. The gurneys are lined up in the hospital hallways like it's a traffic pile up on I-94. The disease is spreading like wildfire and people are dying left and right. So yes I am scared, and I have every right to be.

GERRY

Uncle Phil says he got a call for some nursing home out on Ridgewood. He got there and found three corpses. The place was practically abandoned.

CLAIRE

Would the two of you stop it? You're really giving me the creeps.

GERRY

Exactly the way I feel! This whole situation, it's like we're in the middle of a real life horror movie. A silent serial killer sneakin' up on you; you know he's there but you can't see him.

DIANNE

(points to the pile of mail on the table)

Claire, you got a letter.

CLAIRE

It's probably some college looking for applicants.

DIANNE

I don't think so. Who's GB?

GERRY

George Bush, of course.

CLAIRE

(eyes widen; mouths)

Goodie Bennet.

(CLAIRE approaches the table and reaches for the orange envelope.)

DIANNE

(shrieks)

What are you doing?

(CLAIRE startles and jumps back.)

DIANNE

That mail is under quarantine!

CLAIRE

OK, OK, OK.

(CLAIRE takes two latex gloves from the box on the table, puts them on, and picks out the orange envelope from the pile of letters on the table. She turns away and takes a step stage right.)

DIANNE

Oh I finally found your friend William's grandpa.

(CLAIRE stops and turns back toward
DIANNE.)

DIANNE

He's the sweetest old man I ever met.

CLAIRE

That's nice.

(turns away, pauses, turns back)

Uh, how's he doin'?

DIANNE

Not too bad.

CLAIRE

That's good.

(starts to turn away)

DIANNE

Though he is rather elderly.

CLAIRE

(turns back)

Oh.

DIANNE

And he has a heart condition.

CLAIRE

Uh huh.

DIANNE

Plus he's on dialysis.

CLAIRE

Does that mean...

DIANNE

And he's got some memory problems.

CLAIRE

I see.

DIANNE

So he has quite a few complications.

CLAIRE

(turns away, takes a step stage right)

Well I'll tell William...

DIANNE

Yes I was planning to give him a call. Oh and guess what?

CLAIRE

(stops; raises her voice)

What?

(turns back)

DIANNE

His daughter Olivia, William's mother, we were on the same softball team back in high school.

CLAIRE

Well how do you like that?

DIANNE

I mean, she was a couple of years older than I was. She still is a couple of years older than I am.

CLAIRE

Is that it?

DIANNE

(stops unpacking and cleaning groceries)

Unless you had a question.

(DIANNE resumes her unpacking and cleaning. Lights up stage right. CLAIRE scurries stage right toward her bed, stops, and hurriedly opens the orange envelope. She pulls out the enclosed drawing. She bites her lip as she studies the drawing. Lights dim. GOODIE's drawing is projected onto the screen above and behind CLAIRE's bed: CLAIRE, in the nude, is walking through a lush Garden of Eden, full of fruit trees, exotic flowers, birds, butterflies, and tropical vegetation. Her hair hangs down so as to cover her breasts. GOODIE is imprisoned in a dungeon consisting of a cave-like rock overhang, the opening of which is barred. He is sitting on the bare ground, facing in CLAIRE's direction. He is also in the nude, and he has six arms. Two hands are covering his eyes, one hand is covering his mouth, one hand is covering his heart, one hand is covering his genitals, and one hand is grasping a bar of his prison. He is being tormented by two small, potbellied, airborne demons, one with a whip and the other with a trident. CLAIRE is oblivious to his presence.)

ACT II**Scene 1**

Goodie's Bedroom/Claire's Bedroom

(GOODIE, stage right, is lying in bed on his side, with his back mostly to the audience and his elbow on the bed so as to support his head. He is naked from the waist up and partly covered by a sheet. With his free hand, he is holding his cell phone in front of his face. CLAIRE, stage left, is sitting at her desk, facing downstage and looking at her laptop. There is a glass of water on her desk. Each of them is wearing earphones. They are communicating via videochat. CLAIRE is whispering. GOODIE is speaking in a low voice as well, but louder than CLAIRE.)

CLAIRE

Now I want to lick your nipples.

GOODIE

What?

CLAIRE

I said I'm licking your nipples.

GOODIE

Oh.

(points his cell phone at his chest)
That tickles. Can you talk louder? I can hardly hear you.

CLAIRE

(slightly louder)
I'm afraid someone might hear me.

GOODIE

It's two a.m.

CLAIRE

My parents are right next door. Now I'm licking your tummy and gently rubbing your chest.

GOODIE

(louder)

Licking my what?

CLAIRE

(laughs)

Your stomach.

GOODIE

Oh.

(points his cell phone camera at his stomach)

Oh that feels nice.

CLAIRE

This is stupid.

GOODIE

No. Keep going. You were doing good until you cracked up.

CLAIRE

All right. Now I'm unbuckling your belt and zipping down your fly. I'm still licking your belly. I'm pulling down your jeans and pulling down your underwear.

GOODIE

Just a sec. I need two hands.

(GOODIE puts his cell phone on the bed. CLAIRE picks up the glass of water, takes a drink, and puts the glass back down. GOODIE unclasps his belt, unzips his fly, and pushes down his jeans and underwear. He picks up his cell phone and points it toward his midsection.)

GOODIE

OK.

CLAIRE

(looking at the laptop screen)

I thought black guys were supposed to have big dicks.

(GOODIE puts his cell phone on the bed, quickly pulls his pants up, without buckling his belt, and shifts

into a sitting position, facing downstage, with his back supported by the bedstead. He picks up his cell phone and points the screen at his face.)

GOODIE

OK. I deserved that. But notice that I'm not hanging up. I'm upset but I'm not threatening to kill myself. I'm just politely waiting for an apology.

CLAIRE

Yeah don't hold your breath. And I never threatened to kill myself.

GOODIE

It's a lot more impressive when it's hard.

CLAIRE

How come it's not hard if you're talking to me?

GOODIE

Well I'm feeling a bit intimidated at the moment, Claire. I'm angry and scared and humiliated. And I feel very lonely right now.

CLAIRE

OK, I'm sorry. I'm sorry for being mean to you. It makes me feel bad too.

(pause)

I'm not very good at this. Do you want to start over?

GOODIE

Yeah I want to start over - in person. You're right. This phone sex is stupid. I'm gonna go get tested and bring you the results.

CLAIRE

Goodie it's not me; my mother is impossible. Her paranoia is actually getting worse. You should see her in her Hazmat suit, disinfecting the groceries. I'm talking about the grocery delivery left on the front porch, since no one is allowed to actually go to a supermarket, of course. If you came into this house, they'd call my uncle Phil and have you arrested.

GOODIE

I'll come over when they're not there.

CLAIRE

My father will probably be here. She told him he has to shut down the hardware store or start sleeping in the basement. The two of them are so bad for each other. This isn't really new.

CLAIRE (cont'd)

They have a view of the world as a terrible place where all these bad things happen so they think the only way to be safe is to stay locked up in your home. They're afraid to let me go out there in the dark and dangerous jungle, full of wild creatures and evil demons, where I'll be raped, abducted, and murdered. And now this pandemic comes along and it reinforces their insane belief that their parental duty is to never ever let their child out of their sight.

GOODIE

Well it sounds like you got 'em figured out. Now you just gotta figure out how to fix 'em.

CLAIRE

I'm afraid it's a hopeless case.

GOODIE

(moans)

For cryin' out loud! I want to be with you. I want to kiss you. I want to touch you. I'm going crazy, Claire!

CLAIRE

I want to be with you too. And it's my birthday next week. This is gonna be the worst birthday I ever had.

GOODIE

So you gotta fight back, Claire. We can't go on like this forever. It's like we're in suspended animation. You gotta take charge of your own life.

CLAIRE

I can't just run away. And it's not forever. This is only a temporary situation.

GOODIE

Temporary for how long? We're too old for our parents to be tellin' us what to do.

CLAIRE

Well I'm only turning seventeen, so legally they still can.

GOODIE

So does that mean we have to wait a year until we can elope?

CLAIRE

Is that a proposal? Should I put it in my calendar?

GOODIE

OK. What day is your birthday?

CLAIRE

The twenty-ninth.

GOODIE

May twenty-nine, two thousand twenty-one. Well at least we have that to look forward to. It's a long way off, though. We gotta come up with somethin' before then.

Scene 2

High School Shed/Hospital

(Lights up stage left. WILLIAM and GOODIE are sitting on a table that has a polyurethane foam pad on top of it. They are sitting at either end of the table, so they are several feet apart, with WILLIAM on the stage right end. WILLIAM has a mask around his neck and GOODIE is wearing a gaiter above his forehead like a headband. WILLIAM is wearing wireless earphones. GOODIE is wearing wired earphones and looking at his cell phone screen.)

WILLIAM

He ain't gonna have to go on a ventilator, is he?

(Lights up stage right. DIANNE enters stage right, crossing just a few feet on stage. She is wearing a mask, scrubs, and gloves, and she is holding a cell phone to her ear.)

DIANNE

His breathing and blood oxygen seem to be close to normal, despite the infection, so the doctors don't think any artificial support is necessary, at least for now.

WILLIAM

Well that's good.

DIANNE

They are concerned about some arrhythmias we're seeing on his electrocardiogram.

WILLIAM

Rhythmias?

DIANNE

Intervals of irregular heartbeat.

WILLIAM

He got heart problems too?

DIANNE

We're hoping that the medication he's receiving will reduce the risk of further episodes. But I called you on his phone because he wanted to speak to you, so let me hand the phone over to him now.

(turns stage right and holds out phone)

It's William, Gus.

(exits stage right)

GRANDPA

(off stage)

That you, Willie?

WILLIAM

How ya doin', Grandpa? You watchin' the game? I think it's just startin'.

GRANDPA

(off stage)

I got the softball game on.

WILLIAM

Softball? Girls' softball?

GRANDPA

(off stage)

Did you know Miss Dianne told me she played on the same softball team as your momma when they was in school? She says Livvy was the star of the team.

WILLIAM

Well how do you like that?

GRANDPA

(off stage)

I tole her she should see Livvy now. That girl couldn't run to catch a bus.

(chuckles, coughs)

WILLIAM

But Grandpa, Twins are playin' the Astros. I was thinkin' I could go home and we could sorta watch the game together. You know, over the phone.

GRANDPA

(off stage)

That game's a rerun, Willie. I already seen it. Altuve goes three for five and they chase Odorizzi in the fifth.

WILLIAM

(jaw hanging open)

How you remember all that?

GRANDPA

(off stage)

Altuve kills 'em. Five foot six. They said he'd never make it in the big leagues. But you know what he got?

WILLIAM

What?

GRANDPA

(off stage)

He got heart.

WILLIAM

He also got a hundred sixty million dollar contract.

(WILLIAM stands up and walks downstage.)

GRANDPA

(off stage)

Yeah well these girls don't get nothin'. But they love the game. And they love each other, like a good teammate should. And you know what they got?

WILLIAM

Heart?

GRANDPA

(off stage)

Yeah they got heart. But they also got self respect. Pride. You should see 'em. They all got their makeup on. All these fancy braids and hairdos.

WILLIAM

Guess they must be in that locker room three hours before game time.

GRANDPA

(off stage)

Damn right. You can't go in half cocked. Gotta give it your all. But it all starts with the self respect. That's the key. Without that you ain't got nuthin'. You know I was the first colored firefighter in Stearns County.

WILLIAM

I know, Grandpa. You the Jackie Robinson of the St. Cloud Fire Department.

GRANDPA

(off stage)

You think any of those guys wanted me in there?

WILLIAM

Probably not.

GRANDPA

(off stage)

But I had self respect and dignity and pride in my work. And I showed them respect too. By the time I retired, there wasn't a man in that firehouse wouldn't of laid down his life for me. And I'd have done the same for them. You gotta do what you love, William. That's the secret.

WILLIAM

Well I...I like doin' the comedy. I mean, sometimes you gotta make fun of yourself. But that's part of the job. 'Cause if you wanna go big time, there's a price you gotta pay. You gotta make sacrifices to get to the top of the heap. But everybody wants to see the pros, 'cause they the best in the business. Them girls, they just amateurs.

GRANDPA

(off stage)

Well if you see the way this pitcher twitch her butt on her delivery, you prob'ly think a lot different. I ain't never seen Jake Odorizzi do that.

(pause)

But what time is it, Willie? When's your mother pickin' me up? I'm finished my dalysis. Ready to go home.

WILLIAM

Miss Dianne says you can't leave yet 'cause your heart. You got some rythmias and you gotta get rid of those before you go home. But how 'bout we play some chess after your softball game? You know, over the phone.

GRANDPA

(off stage)

OK, if I'm not too tired.

WILLIAM

Maybe for once I'll win if you're tired. So I'll call you later, Grandpa. But Grandpa, is Miss Dianne still there?

GRANDPA

(off stage)

I can get her.

(DIANNE enters stage right, crossing just a few feet on stage. She is wearing a mask, scrubs, and gloves, and she is holding a cell phone to her ear.)

DIANNE

William?

(WILLIAM turns stage right and DIANNE lowers the cell phone from her ear. They address each other directly.)

WILLIAM

He sounds as feisty as ever.

DIANNE

His spirits have been up today.

WILLIAM

I wanted to ask you, Miss Dianne. You think we could set up that home dialysis once Grandpa gets out? I mean, I already know how to do his blood pressure and temperature. And this way he won't have to go runnin' in there three times a week, gettin' himself all wore out.

DIANNE

That's a great idea, William. Only problem is that the home dialysis program requires a lot of training for the patient's family, and it's done here at the hospital. So I'm pretty sure that the program has been suspended on account of all the restrictions on hospital visitors that are currently in place. But I can look into it and let you know.

WILLIAM

OK, I appreciate it, Miss Dianne. And thanks for keepin' an eye on Grandpa.

DIANNE

Happy to do it, William. OK, I gotta run.
(exits stage right)

(WILLIAM presses a button on one of his earphones.)

GOODIE

William, you need to look at this.

(WILLIAM crosses to GOODIE and stands looking over GOODIE's shoulder at his cell phone.)

WILLIAM

Oh this the guy they killed for passin' a fake twenty.

GOODIE

Allegedly passin' a fake twenty.

(GOODIE unplugs the earphone in his right ear and hands it to WILLIAM, who unplugs the earphone in his left ear

and replaces it with GOODIE's earphone.)

GOODIE

He callin' for his mama.

WILLIAM

'Cause he knows he's gonna die.

GOODIE

Twenty times he said "I can't breathe."
(long pause)

WILLIAM

There's all them cars on the street, passers by, people recordin' with their cell phones. How come nobody's tryin' to save him?

GOODIE

'Cause the other cop's keepin' guard over 'em. They're yellin' at him to get off.

WILLIAM

The dude ain't even movin'. Still he won't stop. Look at him wit his hand in his pocket. Happy Memorial Day, everyone. Don't mind me, I'm just chokin' this nigga to death.

GOODIE

They can't get away with this.

WILLIAM

They always do.

GOODIE

Well we need to do somethin' about it.

WILLIAM

Like what?

GOODIE

I don't know. Start screamin' 'til someone hears us.

WILLIAM

(soft voice)

You can yell loud as you want, Goodrich. If they deaf it won't make no difference.

GOODIE

Naw this is too much. Is right here in Minneapolis.

WILLIAM

Awright. Tell you what. Imma call my sister. She be all over this.

Scene 3

Hardware Store/Community Center/Park

(Lights up stage left. Downstage and extreme stage left is the hardware store's window display. Above the window display is a sign: "GERRY'S HARDWARE." In the window display are two signs: "Black Lives Matter" and "We're All in This Together." Upstage and stage right, relative to the window display, is a large bookcase. The top two shelves of the bookcase are filled with gallon sized paint cans. The shelf below them holds paint brushes, rollers, gloves, and aerosol spray cans. GOODIE and GERRY are standing in front of the bookcase, with GERRY positioned farther stage left. GERRY is wearing a mask and GOODIE is wearing a neck gaiter that covers his nose and mouth.)

GERRY

We pride ourselves on our wide selection of paints. So I feel confident that we've got whatever you need in order to accomplish your mission.

GOODIE

(points to the top shelf)

There's some nice colors up there.

GERRY

Uhh, yeah. Those are some of our premium brands. Whadda you say you stick with the ones on this shelf?

(points to the second shelf)

There are plenty of exterior latex paints along here that should be well suited for your purpose.

GOODIE

Oh. OK.

GERRY

(points to the third shelf)

And there are some brushes down there.

GERRY (cont'd)

How about a smock and some gloves?

GOODIE

I already got my paintin' clothes on.

GERRY

Oh! Do you think you're gonna need a ladder? I could give you a lift over there.

GOODIE

It's only a few blocks. And I was figurin' to start small with a couple of cans and work on the background. But Mr. Altschuler, I just want to say how grateful I am for your generosity to make the project possible.

GERRY

We've been part of this neighborhood for almost twenty years, so if there's an opportunity to give back a little and demonstrate our solidarity with what people are asking for in terms of racial justice, then I'm more than happy to do my part to help out. And I want everyone to see that that's who we are - project the right image, as it were. But it's not just public relations, of course.

GOODIE

(nods; uncomfortable pause)

GERRY

Claire tells me you're a very talented artist.

GOODIE

I've done a lot of painting and drawing, but I've never done anything like this before, certainly nothing as large as this. So it's going to be a challenge to my abilities.

GERRY

You know it's funny. You never see any graffiti around here. I remember when Dianne and I took a trip to Austin we went on a tour of the street art on the east side of town. I must have taken a hundred photos of all the graffiti and murals. It was really cool.

GOODIE

Mr. Altschuler, you get caught sprayin' in this town and you get locked up. At least if you're black. It's like the cops are just waitin' for you to do something.

GERRY

Ahh! Well that explains it.

(pause)

Anyway, there are some aerosol cans down there,
(points to the third shelf)
next to the brushes.

(Uncomfortable pause. WILLIAM, wearing a mask around his neck, enters stage left, but only a half step on stage. He peeks through the window display as if he wishes to remain unobserved. GOODIE sees WILLIAM and gives him a look of disapproval.)

GERRY

So how you been doin' with the remote learning?

GOODIE

The teachers, you know, they're doin' their best, I guess; but everyone I know, even people who hate school, wishes it were open again. I feel bad for the seniors who aren't gonna have a real graduation. And kids like Claire who worked so hard training with a team and then it's just taken away from them; it seems so unfair.

GERRY

There's a lot of hardship everywhere you look, Thurgood.

GOODIE

F'real. But I don't want to complain. My family's healthy, my father is able to work from home. So for me it's just a big inconvenience, you might say.

GERRY

Still, it's terrible the secondary disruption that this pandemic is causing; not only the direct effects of the illness, but the economic shutdown as well. I've had to lay people off and still I can barely stay in business. I mean, I guess Jeff Bezos is makin' out like a bandit, but everyone else...

GOODIE

Yeah, being locked down is just plain unhealthy for everyone.

GERRY

That's so true. I just saw an article about the psychological impact upon high school kids like you and Claire, who are at such a critical stage in their social development but only get to communicate online, with no opportunity for in person interaction.

(GOODIE and GERRY look at each other.)

GERRY

But getting involved in a project like this is something to be proud of. The way I see it, Thurgood, there are some things in this world that are a lot bigger than a couple of individuals like you and me.

GERRY (cont'd)

And I think it's great that, at such a young age, you're already learning the importance of making a contribution to your community.

(pause)

Well that's my speech. I got some work to do in the back, so I'm gonna get off my soapbox now.

(chuckles)

Give me a holler if you need anything.

(GERRY steps behind the bookcase, out of sight. WILLIAM puts his mask over his face and crosses to GOODIE. They converse in moderately lowered voices.)

WILLIAM

Finally! You said all you had to do was pick up a can of paint. Look to me like you and your father-in-law was just good old buddies, hangin' out and shootin' the shit. Thought I was gonna be out there waitin' a few hours while you two sucked back a coupla beers.

GOODIE

You shoulda just come in!

WILLIAM

Naw. A guy like that, one nigger in the store: OK. But you get two niggers and him all alone in here, he gone start gettin' all twitchy and stuff.

GOODIE

Shut up! He's a nice guy.

WILLIAM

Well I'm glad you two hit it off, Goodrich.

GOODIE

Yeah it was chill. But you know how when somebody wants to ask you something and it's on the tip of their tongue but they just can't get it out?

WILLIAM

Probably he wants to take a selfie wichoo but he's too embarrassed to ask.

GOODIE

I can just tell he knows something.

(takes a can of paint from the second shelf)

WILLIAM

That's because the only idea in your brain, the only thing you think about twenty-four hours a day, is bonin' his daughter. And so it sounds so loud inside your head, you think everyone can hear it. But don't worry. I mean I can hear it, but other people can't.

GOODIE

Shh! Would you lower your voice?

(GOODIE takes a second can of paint from the second shelf and hands it to WILLIAM.)

GOODIE

He was definitely lookin' at me funny, but, whatever it was, he couldn't bring himself to put it out there.

WILLIAM

In a situation like this, it's best to just be honest. What you say is, Misser Altschuler since you bein' so nice and give me all this paint and brushes and stuff, I need to be straight with you and tell you I think your daughter is hot shit and I would just love to lay some wood on her as soon as possible. Is that all right by you?

GOODIE

(shakes his head)

Sometimes I forget why it is I never listen to your advice.

(picks up a brush from the third shelf; raises his voice)

Thanks again, Mr. Altschuler. I'll probably come back around tomorrow.

(WILLIAM and GOODIE, carrying the paint cans and brush, walk slowly downstage and turn stage right. GERRY steps out from behind the bookcase, lowering his mask to reveal a deep frown on his face.)

GERRY

(mouths)

Bone my daughter!

(GERRY watches intently as GOODIE and WILLIAM walk away. Lights up stage right. WILLIAM lowers his mask below his chin and GOODIE pulls down his gaiter to his neck. Lights down stage left. GERRY exits stage left. There is a screen upstage stage right.)

(WILLIAM and GOODIE approach the screen and set down their paint cans.)

GOODIE

The building's closed. You sure we don't need a permit for this?

WILLIAM

Is the community center's damn building. They can put whatever they want on the wall.

GOODIE

We don't even have a name!

WILLIAM

Relax, Goodrich. It's all arranged. My sister set it up with them and they love her ass like it was made out of solid gold. If you want, I give her a call.

GOODIE

Well I'll get started. But why don't you check with her just to be sure?

(GOODIE opens one of the paint cans, dips the brush in the can, and applies the brush to the screen. WILLIAM takes out his cell phone, presses the phone's touchscreen twice, and puts the phone to his ear. As he speaks, he wanders away from GOODIE.)

M' CHELLE

(off stage)

What's goin' on, little brother?

WILLIAM

We're over at the community center. Just want to double check everything's cool.

M' CHELLE

(off stage)

I spoke to the director. No one's there?

WILLIAM

It's all locked up.

M' CHELLE

(off stage)

Well they're a hundred percent behind it. No need to worry. You comin' to my rally tonight?

WILLIAM

Rally for what?

M' CHELLE

(off stage)

"Rally for what?" I give you three guesses.

WILLIAM

Why you asking me?

M' CHELLE

(off stage)

I'm asking you because it's time for you to grow up and stop acting like everything's one big joke, take some responsibility.

WILLIAM

Who set up the mural? That was my idea.

M' CHELLE

(off stage)

That's great. You volunteered your friend. But what have you done?

WILLIAM

I'm helpin' him to paint.

M' CHELLE

(off stage)

OK. So now come to the rally. I need your support.

WILLIAM

I got shit to do.

M' CHELLE

(off stage)

What kind of shit? You gotta go get high with your friends? Do something meaningful, William.

WILLIAM

(shaking his head)

I don't know.

M' CHELLE

(off stage)

This is your chance to be on TV.

WILLIAM

Imma be on TV for The Voice or doin' standup on Comedy Central, not gettin' smacked on the head by the police.

M' CHELLE

(off stage)

It's a non-violent demonstration. Come on, William. This is important. You want to be a fat clown your whole life?

WILLIAM

Stop calling me that!

M'CHELLE

(off stage)

So prove to me I'm wrong. Is an hour of your time.

WILLIAM

Where's it at?

M'CHELLE

(off stage)

Over Heritage Park. Eight P.M. So you'll be there?

WILLIAM

I'll see what I can do.

(WILLIAM presses the touchscreen of his cell phone, then puts the cell phone in his pocket. He crosses to GOODIE, who stops painting and steps back from the screen.)

WILLIAM

Looks like it's comin' along.

(Lights dim. GOODIE's mural appears on the screen. At the bottom of the screen, in large block letters: "GEORGE FLOYD MEMORIAL." Above the letters is a large rectangle that is partly filled in and blank in the center so as to create the silhouette of a bust.)

GOODIE

It's a start.

WILLIAM

My sister wants us to go to some rally.

GOODIE

Let's go check it out. I need a break. It's gettin' dark anyway.

(GOODIE closes the open paint can and puts the two paint cans and brush behind the screen. The image of the mural is removed from the screen. WILLIAM and GOODIE walk slowly downstage, then turn and cross stage left. Lights up.)

M' CHELLE

(off stage, over megaphone)

It's all part of a legacy of exploitation and violent repression that has defined the black experience in this country for four centuries. It's the same system of exploitation and oppression that began when my ancestors arrived in this country in chains and were treated, not as human beings, but as a piece of property that could be bought and sold.

GOODIE

Damn! I never seen this park so crowded.

M' CHELLE

(off stage, over megaphone)

That knee has been on our necks since the seventeenth century. And to this day all you have to do is look around and you'll see a hundred different examples of racism and inequality. I'm not just talking about white cops killing innocent black men in cold blood. It's far more widespread than that, and every one of us is being affected both directly and indirectly.

(WILLIAM and GOODIE cross stage right to a position upstage center and face downstage.)

M' CHELLE

(off stage, over megaphone)

Over three hundred fifty cases of COVID at the JBS pork processing plant in Worthington, most all of them in black and Latinx workers. But they're back open, and the workers are in there packed shoulder to shoulder. Why? Because wealthy Americans want their pork chops. Because white American moms got to give the kids their hot dogs. And they don't care if low income minority workers have to die in order to put it on their table. I challenge you to take a walk around downtown – right here in beautiful White Cloud, Minnesota – and show me one black owned business.

GOODIE

William, is that your sister up on the stage? Man, she shaved her head!

WILLIAM

That's what I tole you. And she changed her name. Don't you listen?

GOODIE

Yeah, but in my mind she was still the same old Mary. Looks good on her, though.

WILLIAM

I'll tell her you like it.

GOODIE

Let's try and get closer.

(WILLIAM and GOODIE weave stage right and stage left but generally moving downstage, as if jockeying for position in a crowd, until they are downstage center.)

M' CHELLE

(off stage, over megaphone)

This is a system that is founded on inequality, exploitation, and repression. It is a system that extracts money from our community in the same way that it extracts cheap labor from our people while doing nothing to support adequate housing, educational opportunity, or decent health care. What happened to George Floyd is nothing new. How many young black men and women for how many years have been brutalized and beaten and incarcerated and murdered? What's new is that the whole world got to see it. What's new is that no one can deny it.

GOODIE

Your sister's a good speaker, William.

WILLIAM

Yeah, she sure know how to run her mouth. Everyone my family got the gift o' gab. That's why every dinner turns into a shoutin' match.

M' CHELLE

(off stage, over megaphone)

And what happens when we get upset about how we are being treated and peaceably congregate in order to voice our grievances? They send in an army of occupation. The idea is supposed to be that we pay taxes so that these officers of the peace ensure that our neighborhoods are safe and secure.

CROWD

(off stage, guffaws)

Ha!

GOODIE

(sarcastic)

Yeah, right!

M' CHELLE

(off stage, over megaphone)

Well that's the idea, isn't it?

M'CHELLE (cont'd)

I know it sounds as if I'm joking because the reality of what these law enforcement agencies actually do is so far removed from what they ought to do. Just look at them
(pause)

with their riot gear and body armor and their assault rifles and tanks.

(WILLIAM and GOODIE look stage left.)

WILLIAM

She right. Look at all them cops. Armed to the teeth.

M'CHELLE

(off stage, over megaphone)

What are they doing here when what they should be doing is arresting Derek Chauvin? Why does that murderer still have his freedom? I mean, what are they thinking? Do you want me to tell you what they're thinking?

CROWD

(off stage)

What?

M'CHELLE

(off stage, over megaphone)

They think that black lives do not matter. They think if another black or brown body is left dead in the street, it's a small price to pay to reassert their authority and domination over all of us. If another essential worker gets sick and dies, they think "So what? There are so many poor and unemployed who are available to take their place."

GOODIE

(pointing stage right)

William, check out them rednecks over there, with their confederate flags. A couple of 'em got baseball bats.

WILLIAM

S'posed to be a peaceful protest. This thing could get ugly.

M'CHELLE

(off stage, over megaphone)

That is why we need to be out here: To tell them that black lives do matter. To tell them that we demand justice for the victims of senseless police violence. To show them that we will be out here in the street until they either shoot us all down or they give us the justice and equality we deserve. Justice for George Floyd. Justice for Breonna Taylor. Justice for Ahmaud Arbery. Justice for each and every one of us. What do we want?

CROWD

(off stage)

Now!

GOODIE

(simultaneously)

Now!

(WILLIAM crosses stage right and speaks in that direction, raising his voice.)

WILLIAM

You fascist pigs should get the fuck out of here if you know what's good for you.

COUNTERPROTESTER

(off stage)

You want some of this, black boy?

GOODIE

William, he got a gun.

(crosses stage right)

Let's get outta here.

WILLIAM

(lowering his voice)

We can just jump him.

(GOODIE grabs WILLIAM by the arm and pulls him stage left.)

GOODIE

You gonna die to prove that man crazy? Anybody take one look can see that.

POLICE COMMANDER

(off stage, on bullhorn)

This park is now closed by order of the St. Cloud Police Department. Please proceed in an orderly manner to the nearest exit gate.

GOODIE

(looking stage left)

And now the cops are comin' in. We need to roll out.

(Lights dim. Red and blue spotlights crisscross the stage. WILLIAM and GOODIE exit running upstage center.)

POLICE COMMANDER

(off stage, on bullhorn)

This park is now closed by order of the St. Cloud Police Department.

POLICE COMMANDER (cont'd)

Proceed immediately to the nearest exit or you will be subject to arrest.

(WILLIAM and GOODIE enter running stage right. The stage fills with fog. GOODIE pulls his neck gaiter over his nose and mouth.)

GOODIE

They're shootin' tear gas. Put your mask on.

(WILLIAM and GOODIE separate and meander across the stage.)

WILLIAM

(coughs; stops downstage center and puts his mask over his face)

GOODIE

(crosses upstage and turns downstage; loud)

William, watch out! Cops are almost on us.

(points stage left)

And there's a bunch of St. Agnes boys right over there.

(points stage right)

Come this way!

(GOODIE exits upstage center. WILLIAM stands downstage, looking around.)

WILLIAM

Goodie! Where'd you go, man?

(looks stage right; looks stage left)

Oh shit!

(exits running upstage center)

(Red and blue spotlights off. Fog clears. Lights up. WILLIAM enters stage right. He crosses to center stage.)

WILLIAM

(loud)

Goodie!

(looks around, pause, shakes his head; crosses stage left to the window display of GERRY's hardware store)

Well what have we here? Gerry's Hardware. Another white owned business.

(Lights down. Crash of a plate glass window being smashed.)

Scene 4

Community Center/High School Shed

(Lights up stage right. There is a screen upstage stage right. GOODIE is standing in front of the screen holding a cell phone to his ear with one hand and a piece of chalk with the other. Scattered across the stage, just downstage from the screen, are numerous open and overturned paint cans, spray cans, and brushes.)

GOODIE

Well you said I couldn't visit you for your birthday and I was out of school so I decided to come over here and work on the mural. And wham! There it was.

CLAIRE

(off stage)

Is it really ruined?

GOODIE

They sure did a number on poor George.

CLAIRE

(off stage)

How could someone do that? And how can you be so calm? I'd be going ballistic. 'Cause it's just not fair. It's so hard to create something. It takes all this time and effort. And then it's so easy to destroy it. I'm really sorry for you, Goodie, if that makes you feel any better.

(Lights dim stage right. On the screen appears the image of GOODIE's mural. The words "GEORGE FLOYD MEMORIAL" are still visible at the bottom of the screen. The rectangle serving as the frame for George Floyd's portrait has been doused with a can of paint, so that individual rivulets drip down to the bottom of the screen. Above the paint splash, in letters several feet high, have been painted the words "WHITE LIVES MATTER." Elsewhere on the wall, numerous slogans and symbols have been spray painted or hand painted at random angles in random locations: "Fuck BLM," "Black CRIME Matters,"

"14," a Celtic Cross, the Othala Rune, and an unequal sign ("≠"). In addition, a number of figures, to be described by GOODIE, have been outlined in chalk either immediately adjacent to the letters of "WHITE LIVES MATTER" or in the space above them.)

GOODIE

Yeah, I got all upset when I first saw it. But, to tell you the truth, I'm really inspired now. I mean I had that portrait of George, but I had no idea where I was gonna go with it. And what I decided was that I should leave it up there.

CLAIRE

(off stage)

White lives matter? Are you kiddin' me?

GOODIE

No, I'm serious. Because it shows what we're up against. And here's my idea: I'm gonna use it as a background and add in all the martyrs. You know, like a framework. I already sketched some of it in. So like the bottom of the L

(points at screen)

will be Derek Chauvin's knee on George Floyd's neck. And on the H

(points at screen)

I'll have Breonna Taylor lying in bed. And the bottom of the A

(points at screen)

'sgonna be two arms choking Eric Garner. And I've got Michael Donald hanging from one of the Ts

(points at screen).

CLAIRE

(off stage)

Who?

GOODIE

Michael Donald. He got lynched by the Klan in 1981. They just grabbed him randomly off the street. 'Cause I want to do historical stuff too. Like the S could be the Tallahatchie River,

(points at screen)

where they found Emmett Till's body. And the T in "white" will be a burning cross.

(points at screen)

But Ahmaud Arbery and Trayvon Martin and Michael Brown and Freddie Gray and Tamar Rice, they should all be here. And I want to have a little plaque describing each one. You like my idea?

CLAIRE

(off stage)

I don't know. Sounds really powerful, but it could be kinda controversial.

GOODIE

Hey! Bring it! The more controversial the better. And up on top, looking down, I want to put some of the civil rights heroes,

(points to the screen)

like Martin and Malcolm and Medgar Evers and Rosa Parks. Although I guess Rosa Parks wasn't a martyr.

(reaches up with the chalk to reinforce the outline of Rosa Parks)

CLAIRE

(off stage)

Wow! You're really cookin', Goodie.

GOODIE

(steps back and looks up at the top of the screen)

Do you think they should be up there on a balcony or a cloud or a mountain top or maybe like a Mount Rushmore type thing?

(CLAIRE enters stage right, holding a cell phone to her ear and wearing a backpack. She stops and speaks into her cell phone.)

CLAIRE

It's kinda hard to picture when you describe it over the phone.

(crosses to GOODIE)

I'll have to come see it in person.

GOODIE

(speaking into his cell phone)

Yeah, that'd be...

(takes his cell phone from his ear and looks at it; turns to CLAIRE)

Claire! You...you snuck out.

CLAIRE

A girl's gotta do what a girl's gotta do.

GOODIE

I'm so happy to see you!

(CLAIRE and GOODIE hug each other.)

GOODIE

This day started out all wrong and it's turning out so right.

CLAIRE

(looking up at the screen)

Wow! They really did do some damage.

(GOODIE steps back and also looks at the screen. He and CLAIRE put their cell phones in their pockets.)

GOODIE

Yeah, but just the fact that these haters are trying to stop the project goes to show that maybe it has a lot of political significance and what a serious impact it might have, more than just any old painting. It makes me realize how much time we spend worrying about all our little problems – with school, our families, our relationships – when there are all these big issues that are so much more important than you and I. You know what I mean?

CLAIRE

No.

(shakes her head)

There's nothin' bigger than what I have for you.

GOODIE

Oh.

(pause)

Well, if you put it that way.

(pause)

So what are we gonna do to celebrate your birthday?

CLAIRE

I was thinkin' we should have a little picnic.

GOODIE

A picnic! All right!

(pause)

Only problem,

(looks up)

I think it's gonna rain. Matter of fact, I was just gonna close up shop.

CLAIRE

Well we can't go to my house. My father's at the store, but my mother's on the early shift, so she could be home pretty much any time.

GOODIE

And my father's workin' from home.

(pause)

GOODIE (cont'd)

Wait! I know where we can go. It's indoors and it's right nearby.

(GOODIE puts the piece of chalk on one of the paint cans and takes CLAIRE's hand; they cross stage left, with GOODIE upstage relative to CLAIRE. Lights down stage right and the image of GOODIE's mural is removed from the screen. Lights up stage left. There is a table that has a polyurethane foam pad on top of it. GOODIE stops, releases CLAIRE's hand, and extends his arm chivalrously so that CLAIRE can pass in front of him. CLAIRE walks slowly around the table, looking around.)

CLAIRE

Nice place you got here.

GOODIE

Hey, it ain't exactly the Ritz, but it's outta the rain and it's off the beaten track.

CLAIRE

(sniffs)

How come it smells like pot in here?

GOODIE

William comes by sometimes.

CLAIRE

So this is kinda like your clubhouse?

GOODIE

You could say that, pathetic as it may sound.

(CLAIRE completes her circle of the table and faces GOODIE, who is standing downstage from the table. GOODIE puts his hands on her upper arms, just below the shoulders.)

GOODIE

Thank you for coming to see me, Claire. I know you don't like to break the rules.

CLAIRE

I like to break the rules. Sometimes.

(Long, deep kiss.)

GOODIE

Ohhh. This is what I needed.

(CLAIRE starts to pull away.)

GOODIE

Where you goin'? Seventy-three days I gotta make up for.

CLAIRE

(points to her backpack)

I'd kinda like to put this down.

GOODIE

That is a big backpack you got there.

(CLAIRE takes off the backpack, puts it on the floor, opens it, and removes a blanket, which she spreads across the table.)

CLAIRE

It's a big occasion.

(puts the backpack on the table)

GOODIE

I know. It's a gigantic occasion. So what else you got in that backpack?

(CLAIRE moves to the upstage side of the table and removes a paper bag from the backpack.)

CLAIRE

Well, Jean Michel, in case you don't notice, there is a French theme to our picnic.

(GOODIE joins CLAIRE on the upstage side of the table and looks down into the paper bag as she points out its contents.)

CLAIRE

We have French baguette, saucisson sec, and Camembert cheese.

(removes a bakery box from the backpack)

For dessert, chocolate éclairs. And to drink,

(removes two plastic cups and a bottle of Orangina soda from the backpack)

Orangina.

GOODIE

Orangina?

CLAIRE

You ever had it before?

(CLAIRE hands GOODIE the two cups, opens the bottle, and pours some into each cup.)

GOODIE

I don't think so.

CLAIRE

(closing the bottle and putting it on the table)

Try it.

(CLAIRE takes one of the cups from GOODIE and they each raise their cups.)

GOODIE

Well here's to your seventeenth birthday, Claire.

CLAIRE

And here's to us.

(CLAIRE and GOODIE touch cups and each takes a sip.)

CLAIRE

You like it?

GOODIE

It's delicious!

(takes another sip)

Where'd you find it?

CLAIRE

We always have it at my house. My parents took their honeymoon in France, and they said that on the beach in Nice these vendors come by selling sodas and nuts. They say "Schweppessss. Cokey Cola. Seven ububububub. Orangina." And then they take these little tongs and throw sample sugar coated nuts onto your blanket.

GOODIE

(laughing)

That sounds so cool.

CLAIRE

And the beach there has no sand; it's covered with smooth, round stones, and everyone lies on these straw mats. So you want to go?

GOODIE

Sure. Why not? When we goin'?

CLAIRE

Summer after senior year.

GOODIE

(pause)

You're serious, aren't you? Let's do it. We'll have to save up some money. Get part time jobs. Maybe I can sell a few paintings.

CLAIRE

You know everyone goes topless on the beach there. You aren't gonna be ashamed of me, are you?

GOODIE

I would never be ashamed of you, Claire. You have a beautiful body. But I want to go to Mykonos, 'cause over there they sunbathe in the nude. I don't go for this half ass shit. I want the Full Monty.

CLAIRE

OK. France and Greece, then.

GOODIE

Sounds like a plan.

Scene 5
Hospital/Hardware Store

(Downstage and extreme stage left is the hardware store's window display. Above the window display is a sign: "GERRY'S HARDWARE." The sign is hanging at an angle. In the window display are three signs: "Black Lives Matter," "We're All in This Together," and "CLOSED." Upstage and stage right, relative to the window display, is a large bookcase. On each of the top two shelves of the bookcase is one paint can, lying on its side. On the shelf below them is one aerosol spray can, also lying on its side, and some cardboard packaging material. GERRY is standing next to a large trash can downstage from the bookcase. He is holding a broom in one hand and holding a cell phone to his ear with the other. DIANNE is standing stage right, wearing gloves and hospital scrubs. Her mask is pulled down to her chin and she is speaking into a cell phone.)

DIANNE

What did they take?

GERRY

What did they take? They took everything that wasn't either bolted down or too heavy to carry. Everything that they hadn't already smashed to pieces.

DIANNE

They get into the cash register?

GERRY

Oh they broke that wide open. Probably the first thing they went after. But there was nothin' in there.

DIANNE

Well I'm sorry you have to go through this, Gerry. I know how much the store means to you.

GERRY

It was my whole life!

DIANNE

But the reason...

GERRY

I just wish to God I had been here when those sons of bitches came through the store window. I'da busted a cap in those muthafuckas.

DIANNE

Gerry, you don't sound like yourself. What have you been watchin' on TV down in that basement? Are you OK?

GERRY

No I'm not OK. But the good news is that those looters didn't get my gun.

(GERRY leans the broom against the bookcase and, from behind one of the paint cans, takes out a pistol.)

GERRY

So I'm just here waitin' for the next little thief to show up.

DIANNE

Gerry, first of all, I don't think you should shoot anyone. And second of all, you can't stay there. This is what I was calling you about. I tried to reach Claire and she didn't pick up. She's not in the house!

GERRY

Where'd she go?

DIANNE

Well luckily, I've got the Find My Friends app, and her phone is still on it.

(looks at her cell phone, presses the touchscreen twice, then puts the phone back to her ear)

She's over at the high school, somewhere behind the athletic field.

GERRY

So she just went to school.

DIANNE

Gerry, that school's been closed for over two months!

GERRY

You think she's been kidnapped?

DIANNE

I don't know, but I do know that it was made very clear to her that she is not permitted to leave the house for any reason.

GERRY

You think I should call Phil?

DIANNE

I think you should go find her. I told you where she is. I'm trying to get off my shift early, but it's gonna be at least a few minutes.

HOSPITAL ADMINISTRATOR

(off stage, over public address system)

Code blue. Cardiac team. Four zero eight. Code blue. Cardiac team. Four oh eight.

DIANNE

Room four oh eight! Gerry, I gotta run. I'll meet you over there as soon as I can.

(DIANNE presses a button on her cell phone, puts it in her pocket, lifts her mask over her face, and exits running stage right. GERRY looks at his cell phone, puts it in his pocket, puts the pistol on the bookcase, and exits stage left. Pause. GERRY enters running stage left, takes the pistol from the bookcase, looks at it, puts it in his jacket pocket, and exits running stage left.)

Scene 6

High School Shed/Community Center

(Lights up stage right. There is a screen upstage stage right. GERRY enters stage right, looking around in every direction.)

GERRY

Behind the athletic field! There are ten different buildings back here.

(GERRY exits upstage center. Lights dim stage right. Lights up stage left. CLAIRE and GOODIE are sitting together on a table, toward the stage right end of the table. The table has a polyurethane foam pad on top of it and a blanket on top of that. CLAIRE's backpack is on the floor next to the table. CLAIRE and GOODIE are looking at their respective cell phones.)

CLAIRE

About fifteen, including the texts.

GOODIE

You're gonna be in deep shit.

CLAIRE

Hey it's my birthday! I should be able to do as I please.
 (presses her cell phone's touchscreen twice)
 I'm just gonna turn it off.
 (puts the phone in her pocket)

GOODIE

Good for you, Claire. It's about time. I'm gonna turn mine off too.
 (presses his cell phone's touchscreen twice)

Do not disturb.

(puts the phone in his pocket)

Private party in progress.

(GERRY enters upstage center, looking around, and exits stage right.)

GOODIE

I wish you had told me we were gettin' together. I feel so bad I don't have a present to give you.

CLAIRE

Y'know what I want for a present?

GOODIE

What?

CLAIRE

Another picture.

GOODIE

You don't like the one I sent you?

CLAIRE

I love the one you sent me. But I need one that's not so sad.

GOODIE

It's not near as sad as the one I'm workin' on now.

CLAIRE

Yeah, well, that's not sayin' much.

GOODIE

OK, but I'm gonna want you to pose for this one.

CLAIRE

What took you so long to ask? Finally I can get my modeling career started.

(strikes a pose)

Now where exactly is your studio?

GOODIE

(extends his arm)

You're lookin' at it.

(WILLIAM enters stage right and crosses to the screen. The image of GOODIE's mural appears on the screen. WILLIAM inspects the mural, takes out his cell phone, presses the touchscreen twice, and puts the cell phone to his ear.)

GOODIE

But you should get a present today. Today's you're birthday.

WILLIAM

Goodie, answer the damn phone. I'm over at the community center and them St. Agnes boys been messin' with your mural. You gotta come see this. Din't you say you were gonna be here today?

(looks up)

WILLIAM (cont'd)

Anyway, it's startin' to rain out here, so I'm gonna head over to the shed. Meet me there and we'll get in the proper state of mind to review the situation and develop an appropriate counterstrategy.

(WILLIAM presses the touchscreen on his phone and puts it in his pocket. He exits stage right. The image of GOODIE's mural disappears from the screen. Lights up stage right.)

CLAIRE

Don't worry. I already got myself a present.

GOODIE

What'd you get?

CLAIRE

It's a secret.

GOODIE

A secret? Tell me.

CLAIRE

I'll give you a hint. I'm wearing it.

GOODIE

You're wearing it?

(gasp)

When did you get so sexy?

CLAIRE

Maybe you bring it out.

(CLAIRE and GOODIE, in a sitting position on the blanket, embrace and kiss. CLAIRE leans back so that GOODIE is on top of her. A few seconds later, GOODIE pulls back, supporting himself with his arms.)

GOODIE

Are you nervous?

CLAIRE

Yeah I'm nervous. But it all feels right. Like it's predestined. Are you nervous?

GOODIE

I'm excited. This is a dream come true.

(GOODIE and CLAIRE resume their kissing, hugging, and fondling.)

CLAIRE's eyes are closed. GERRY enters upstage center, looks at GOODIE and CLAIRE, hides behind the stage left edge of the screen and watches them for about fifteen seconds. He draws the pistol from his jacket, emerges from behind the screen, and crosses toward the table with the pistol held in two hands and pointed at GOODIE's back. The sound of thunder. CLAIRE's eyes suddenly pop wide open and her body stiffens.)

CLAIRE

(whimpers)

GOODIE

What's the matter? That was just...
(turns his head and looks over his shoulder)

GERRY

You get the fuck offa her.

(GOODIE and CLAIRE disentangle themselves, clamber off the table, and stand next to each other facing GERRY. CLAIRE is positioned stage left relative to GOODIE, and the backpack is at her feet. WILLIAM enters upstage center and watches from behind the stage left edge of the screen.)

CLAIRE

Daddy, what are you doing?

GERRY

(to GOODIE)

You people think you can get away with anything, don't you? Steal from me, destroy my property, bone my daughter. Well not this time. I should just shoot you dead right now, and no one in this world would blame me for doing it.

(GERRY, pointing the pistol at GOODIE, edges closer to GOODIE and CLAIRE, putting WILLIAM farther out of his line of sight. GOODIE raises his hands. WILLIAM creeps forward behind GERRY.)

GERRY

Claire, step away from that man.

(CLAIRE grabs GOODIE around the waist, holding him close.)

CLAIRE

No!

GERRY

Claire, that's an order!

(WILLIAM leaps forward and tackles GERRY.)

GOODIE

Look out!

(GOODIE swings his body around so that his back is to WILLIAM and GERRY and he is shielding CLAIRE from the gun. WILLIAM and GERRY fall to the floor and GERRY drops the pistol. A gunshot goes off. When GOODIE spins around to block CLAIRE, he trips over the backpack and falls to the floor.)

GOODIE

Oh!

CLAIRE

(screams)

(WILLIAM and GERRY start to wrestle, rolling across the stage, generally center stage and stage right. CLAIRE kneels over GOODIE, her back mostly to the audience, and explores his chest and stomach with her hands.)

CLAIRE

Goodie! Goodie! Have you been shot?

GOODIE

(groans)

Ohhh. That feels so nice.

(CLAIRE suddenly leans back and stares pointedly at GOODIE's midsection.)

CLAIRE

Goodie! That is so inappropriate.

GOODIE

(lifts his head, looks at his crotch, shrugs)

Seventy-three days, Claire.

(GERRY rolls on top of WILLIAM, grabs him by the throat, sits up, and attempts to throttle him with his hands.)

WILLIAM

(choking)

Somebody wanna give me some help here?

(CLAIRE turns away from GOODIE, stands up, picks up the gun, and points it at GERRY. DIANNE enters stage right, wearing hospital scrubs.)

CLAIRE

You get off of him right now, Daddy, or I'll blow your fucking head off.

DIANNE

Claire, is that any way to speak to your father?

(GERRY releases WILLIAM's throat and stands up, stage left of WILLIAM, who remains prone.)

CLAIRE

He tried to shoot Goodie.

GERRY

I did not! This one jumped me,
(points to WILLIAM)
and the gun went off.

DIANNE

What is wrong with you, Gerry? Have you turned into a crazy, racist vigilante, waving around a gun like some Boogaloo Boy?

GERRY

Oh I'm not allowed to fight back when I'm betrayed and victimized. Everyone's screaming about justice. Where's the justice for me? I've treated people fair and square my whole life. And this is what I get in return? So some ghetto rat can come to me with his hand out, and walk away with hundreds of dollars worth of paint and equipment, and then turn around and try to bone my daughter?

GOODIE

We were just...

GERRY

(to GOODIE)

So that you and your friends can come in, claiming that you're fighting for equality, and that gives you the right to smash the window of my store, and break in, and steal everything you can get your hands on, and destroy everything that I have spent the last twenty years of my life working like a dog to build up?

WILLIAM

(standing up)

You're wrong, Gerry. It was them white St. Agnes boys broke into your store and looted it. I saw it.

(takes out his cell phone)

I can show you a video if you wanna try and catch 'em.

GERRY

(waving his hand dismissively)

You are so full of...

GOODIE

(standing up)

He's right, Mr. Altschuler. The people who vandalized my mural last night, defacin' it and puttin' racist slogans - all the paint and brushes and spray cans, I recognized 'em; they came straight from your store.

DIANNE

And besides that, Gerry, you've got insurance. You'll get the insurance money and fix it up as good as new.

GERRY

Yeah what about the deductible?

(DIANNE, WILLIAM, and GOODIE put their hands on their hips and stare at GERRY. CLAIRE continues to point the pistol at him.)

GERRY

(looks around at the others)

And the pain and suffering! It's not just the money. What about the emotional effects: the pain and suffering?

(DIANNE, WILLIAM, GOODIE, and CLAIRE shake their heads and roll their eyes. WILLIAM puts his phone back in his pocket.)

WILLIAM

Gerry, Gerry, Gerry.

GERRY

(looks around at the others)

OK I apologize for making bigoted assumptions and false accusations.

WILLIAM

It's not enough to apologize. It's not enough to put a Black Lives Matter sign up in the window when you're goin' around with an attitude that's rooted in a history of slavery and white supremacism, an attitude that forms the basis for a system of oppression that's killing people to this day.

GERRY

I'm not part of any system of oppression.

GOODIE

You're a part of it if you're not doing anything to get rid of it.

GERRY

And how am I supposed to do that?

GOODIE

There are things you could do. Have you tried hiring any of the Somali immigrants, any of the underprivileged kids from the neighborhood, and given them the training and supervision they need to make a better life for themselves?

GERRY

Somali immigrants! I'm just trying to run a business. What do you want from me? Do I have to carry this white man's burden of guilt for the rest of my life? I have to pay for sins that were committed before I was even born?

WILLIAM

Gerry, we got the burden of wearing this skin
(points to his arm)
here in America for the rest of our lives. What crime did I commit to be treated as an unwanted outsider, someone whose life has no value?

GERRY

Well I think everyone should be treated as equals, including myself and my family, which is why, no matter what, I have a right to defend my child from a sexual predator, regardless of the color of his skin.

(to GOODIE)

Does your disadvantaged upbringing give you a right to force yourself upon my daughter?

GOODIE

I didn't have a disadvantaged upbringing. And besides we were just...

CLAIRE

No one was forcing himself upon anyone. I'm seventeen years old today. A year from now I can run away and you can't stop me. I can get married without your permission and start my own family whether you like it or not. I'll be able to bone anyone I want. And no one can tell me who I bone, when I bone, where I bone, or what I bone.

DIANNE

Claire, could you please stop using that word? Women do not "bone."

CLAIRE

They don't?

(CLAIRE looks at GOODIE. GOODIE grimaces and shrugs. CLAIRE looks at WILLIAM.)

CLAIRE

William?

(WILLIAM grimaces and shakes his head.)

CLAIRE

Well duh!

(scoffs)

I...I knew that.

DIANNE

Wait a minute! You're William?

WILLIAM

That would be me. And I take it you're Miss Dianne.

DIANNE

William, have you spoken to your mother?

WILLIAM

(crosses stage right, a couple of steps closer to DIANNE)

I got a message from her that I should git home. But I been kind of tied up wrasslin' with your old man.

(During the dialogue between WILLIAM and DIANNE, CLAIRE and GOODIE are intertwined, whispering sweet nothings into each other's ear. GERRY has his arms folded and looks back and forth,

periodically, at WILLIAM and DIANNE and at CLAIRE and GOODIE. CLAIRE is holding the pistol somewhat lackadaisically, but occasionally points it at GERRY when he looks in her direction.)

DIANNE

William, your grandfather

(pause)

your grandpa

(pause)

died today. He had a fatal heart arrhythmia and we weren't able to save him. I called your mother to tell her and to express my sympathy.

WILLIAM

Oh. Thank you for doin' that and for your condolences.

(wipes eyes)

So you were there, Miss Dianne?

DIANNE

I was holding his hand, William.

WILLIAM

He say anything before he went?

DIANNE

He said

(pause)

he said "Tell Livvy I'm goin' to see her momma."

(crying)

I'm so sorry, William.

(DIANNE embraces WILLIAM.)

WILLIAM

My momma was probably glad to hear that.

(wipes eyes, voice cracking)

Don't take it so bad, Miss Dianne. Man was eighty-three years old. And he had a good life, real good.

(regains composure)

But his kidneys was bad. His heart was bad. Even his brain was bad. I mean, he still remembered his baseball, but he could barely recognize his own daughter. And once you lose your mind, what have you got? Seriously. Already he couldn't hardly get out of bed. I been reading up on the Alzheimer's. Another couple a years he wouldn't be able to dress hisself, go to the bathroom, eat. What kind of life is that? No kind of life. And I know you did your best for him, Miss Dianne. I'm just grateful it was you there with him at the end when we couldn't be.

(voice cracks)

I'm sure it was a comfort to him.

GERRY

(extends his arms)

Where's the social distancing for Chrissake?

(WILLIAM and DIANNE stop hugging and back away from each other by one or two feet. CLAIRE looks up at GERRY and points the pistol at him before returning her attention to GOODIE.)

WILLIAM

You got a point there, Gerry. You look like you come straight from the hospital, Miss Dianne. Besides, I need to git home. My momma needs me.

(WILLIAM takes a few steps stage right, then turns back to face DIANNE.)

WILLIAM

One question, though, Miss Dianne: You think I could do what you do? I mean, let's say I make it doin' the stand up. So what's that? I'm out there in Vegas, trying to get a couple of yuks out of the tourists so they'll buy a few more drinks. Is that anything to be proud of? Probably if I got a chance I could break in in Hollywood and go big time. But to be honest, it's kind of a long shot, you know? And Claire is always talkin' about you and saying how you're like a hero.

DIANNE

(elated)

About me? She said I'm a hero?

WILLIAM

Uhhh, no.

DIANNE

(dejected)

Oh. I didn't think so.

WILLIAM

I mean a heroine. But like a first responder, like Grandpa was. And I was thinking how Grandpa was saying the number one thing you gotta do is respect yourself. And I don't wanna be a fat clown my whole life.
(crying)

DIANNE

Oh, William! You're not...

WILLIAM

No. I know. That's just something my sister says 'cause she jealous. You know how brothers and sisters do.

WILLIAM (cont'd)

But if I went through the training and got my uniform. I could take care of them patients, jolly 'em up a little, make 'em feel like it ain't so bad being stuck there in the hospital. I already know how to do the blood pressure and temperature. So then I'd have to learn what's a rhythmia and how to give someone a shot. Is it true it only take two years?

DIANNE

Well, if you complete a four-year program, it'll open up a lot more options for you when you get out.

WILLIAM

Hunh. So you think I should do four.

(pause)

'Nother question: is it true nurses is ten to one female to males?

DIANNE

Actually, in Minnesota it's closer to fourteen to one.

WILLIAM

Fourteen? Is fourteen to one in Minnesota? Damn! They got any six year programs?

DIANNE

If you went through a six year program, you could be certified as a nurse practitioner.

WILLIAM

Nurse practitioner? That sounds cool.

DIANNE

Then you could have your own patients and even write prescriptions.

WILLIAM

Prescriptions? Just like a doctor?

(looks at audience)

Whoa!

(nods)

Imma have to think about this.

(exits slowly stage right, in a reverie)

GERRY

(to DIANNE)

Well that's one of 'em gone, at least.

(to CLAIRE)

Claire, is it really necessary to make such a spectacle of yourself?

CLAIRE

Yes it is, because I'm in love with Goodie and you should know that next summer we're going to France together.

GOODIE

You do? I mean you are? Do you mean that?

CLAIRE

(nods)

GOODIE

I love you too, Claire.

(CLAIRE and GOODIE long, deep kiss.)

DIANNE

(low voice, to GERRY)

She's going to France without us. For how many years have I been begging you?

GERRY

We've already been there, for cryin' out loud! Oh. Kay!
(closes his eyes, to himself, nodding his head)

It's now official.

(opens his eyes, smiling)

This is the worst day of my life.

(to CLAIRE, sarcastic)

Well isn't this romantic? Making out in the high school athletic shed while holding your parents at gunpoint!

CLAIRE

Unfortunately, it's the only way I can make you see that it's my life and I'm old enough to make my own decisions. Speaking of which, I decided if I get a scholarship to Boston University then that's where I'm going and you can come and watch me regatta on the River Charles or you can stay home. It's up to you.

GERRY

Claire, the U of M Gophers were invited to the Head of the Charles last year! Dianne, will you try and talk some sense into her?

DIANNE

All right. It's been a long day for everyone. Gerry, I know you've had a very hard day. I've had a hard day too. Take my word for it, it's rather traumatic when there's someone you care about, someone you've done everything in your power to save, and you have to watch them die right before your eyes. Just my job, you might say, but that doesn't really make it any easier. And Claire, I know it's your birthday. Yes, you're seventeen years old.

DIANNE (cont'd)

And you're right. A year from now you can run off and get married without anyone's permission. You can travel to France. You can love whoever you want and you can make love to whoever you want. You can join the army, if you want. More likely you'll be heading off to college. I know that you feel as if you're ready to spread your wings and fly, to assume your independence. And I promise that I'm going to try to accept that, even though it's a very difficult thing for me to do. I know that, one way or another, I'm losing my baby. But today is my day too, you know. Seventeen years ago I suffered in order to bring you into the world. I carried you inside me for nine months. I feel that I am deserving of some consideration here. So do you think that we can go home and I'll make the French onion soup and boeuf bourgignon I was planning for your birthday dinner? And you can invite your friend.

CLAIRE

OK, Mom. Let's do that.

(CLAIRE crosses to DIANNE and they embrace.)

DIANNE

And give me that gun.

(CLAIRE steps back and hands DIANNE the pistol. DIANNE grasps it around the barrel with her left hand, in a manner unsuited for shooting. GERRY turns toward DIANNE and extends his hand toward her.)

GERRY

Uhh, Dianne.

DIANNE

(holding the pistol up in the air)
This is going in the Mississippi River.

(DIANNE turns stage right. CLAIRE and DIANNE cross stage right, arm in arm. CLAIRE looks back over her shoulder.)

CLAIRE

Goodie, could you bring my backpack?

GOODIE

Uhh, OK. Sure.

(CLAIRE and DIANNE exit stage right. GOODIE starts to fold up the blanket that is lying on top of the table.)

GERRY

Well you comin'?

GOODIE

Yeah, I just need to fold up this blanket.

(GERRY crosses to GOODIE and grabs the blanket away from him.)

GERRY

This is my blanket, y'know.

(hugs the blanket to his chest)

She stole it from the basement!

(sniffs the blanket, then the air)

Were you smokin' pot in here?

GOODIE

Of course not.

(GOODIE picks up the backpack and GOODIE and GERRY start to cross stage right.)

GOODIE

(points with his thumb toward the screen)

Wanna go see my mural? It's right nearby.

GERRY

Wanna go see my hardware store?

(GOODIE puts his arm around GERRY's shoulder.)

GOODIE

I'm sorry, Gerry. You had it really mint in there, everything so clean and neat and organized. With that special hardware store smell. Maybe we get home you can lie down for a little bit. Relax. Have yourself a drink.

GERRY

Not a bad idea.

(GOODIE and GERRY exit stage right.)

GOODIE

(off stage)

You got any of that Orangina back at the house? That stuff is tasty.

GERRY

(off stage)

Yeah, it's good. Right?

APPENDIX I

CAST OF CHARACTERS

CLAIRE White, almost 17, coxswain of the crew team
diminutive, feisty, parentally oppressed

WILLIAM African American, 17, aspiring Hollywood star
overweight, quick witted, eloquent, cynical

GOODIE African American, 17, painter/illustrator
shy, sensitive, apathetic, false bravado

DIANNE White, early 40s, intensive care unit nurse
overprotective, anxious, altruistic, nurturing

GERRY White, early 40s, hardware store owner
cheap, some good intentions, racist tendencies

APPENDIX II

SYNOPSIS

The budding interracial romance between two high school juniors, CLAIRE (a white female) and GOODIE (an African American male), is forced online when the school is closed and the town goes into lockdown because of the COVID-19 outbreak. CLAIRE's mother DIANNE, a nurse at a local hospital, imposes a strict stay-at-home order upon her daughter. GOODIE hangs out with his friend WILLIAM, who has aspirations for Hollywood stardom, in an unused high school storage shed. When WILLIAM's GRANDPA (off stage only) is hospitalized with COVID, DIANNE agrees to monitor his progress at the hospital. WILLIAM is lectured by GRANDPA and by his politically active sister M'CHELLE (off stage only) about self respect and racial injustice. Shocked by the murder of George Floyd, WILLIAM and GOODIE, a talented artist, begin work on a memorial mural. CLAIRE's father GERRY donates paint and other supplies for the project from his hardware store. WILLIAM and GOODIE attend a protest rally that is followed by street violence in which the hardware store is looted and GOODIE's mural is vandalized. The next day, CLAIRE's birthday, CLAIRE meets GOODIE and they go to the storage shed for a picnic. DIANNE, at the hospital, uses a phone tracking app to determine that CLAIRE has left the house without permission, and calls GERRY at the hardware store with their daughter's location. GERRY, enraged by the damage to his store, goes to find her and takes along a handgun. GERRY comes upon CLAIRE and GOODIE during a moment of intimacy; he threatens GOODIE with the gun and expresses his outrage over his betrayal by GOODIE and the black community as a whole. WILLIAM arrives at the shed and tackles GERRY. The gun goes off. GOODIE falls to the ground, but is uninjured. While WILLIAM and GERRY are wrestling, CLAIRE picks up the pistol and holds her father at gunpoint. DIANNE arrives. WILLIAM and GOODIE prove to GERRY that both the looting and the vandalism were the work of white supremacists. GERRY is called out for his racial biases. CLAIRE stands up to her overprotective parents and proclaims her love for GOODIE. DIANNE tells WILLIAM that GRANDPA has died and they comfort each other. WILLIAM decides to pursue a career in the nursing profession. DIANNE invites GOODIE to the family's home for CLAIRE's birthday celebration.