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SLEEPWALK, DANCE, REPEAT

by

Brittany S. Brown

An Honors Thesis Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of

Bachelor of Arts in Philosophy

in the College of Arts & Sciences

Georgia State University

2012

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CHARACTERS:

ROSE 1&2: Mid 20s. Anxious.
MIA : Late teens. Rose's sister.
BEN 1&2: Early 30s. Rose's love interest.
CAROL: Early 50s. MIA &ROSE's mother.
DR.LAND: Early 60s. Crooked doctor.
TV PERSON: Flamboyant male, early 20s.
DEATH: Male, any age.
HOMELESS MAN: BEN 1 as a homeless man.
WAITRESS: ROSE 1 as a waitress.

Note: There are three large projection screens upstage.

The TV set in the living room should face upstage, so that the audience cannot see what is displayed on it. The couch should be placed in the center of the stage. MIA's room is upstairs with a balcony.

Neon sitcom lights are attached to the top of the stage, and the audience should be encouraged to interact accordingly. The lights say “Applause”, “Boo”, “Aww”, and “Laughter”.

At a specific point in the play, ROSE is replaced with another actress who looks similar to her (ROSE 2). The same occurs for BEN (BEN 2).

Scene 1

(Autumn. 3:00 AM. MIA, ROSE, and BEN are all sleeping.

The center screen lights up to display the rough outline of a face with very large and hollow eyes. It seems to breathe.

A loud 'thud'. MIA has fallen out of bed.

ROSE sits up in bed, thinking she just heard something. She starts to lay back down when she hears MIA screaming for her.)

MIA: (Coughing) Rose! Rose!

ROSE: (Jumping out of bed) I'm here, I'm coming!

(ROSE runs upstairs to MIA who is on the floor. ROSE picks her up and puts her back in bed.)

MIA: I had a nightmare.

ROSE: (Hugging her) It's okay, Mia. They're not real.

MIA: (Weakly, sobbing) I know.

ROSE: Shhh, nothing can hurt you now. What was it about?

MIA: I saw it and then I woke up on the floor.

ROSE: Saw what?

MIA: I don't know. I think it was a shadow.

ROSE: What did it look like?

MIA: Nothing, really. But it looked right at me.

ROSE: It had eyes?

MIA: Yeah, they went on forever.

(Beat)

ROSE: Try not to think about it.

MIA: That just makes me think about it more.

ROSE: (Kissing her cheek) Go back to sleep. Mom will be here in a few days.

MIA: I miss her.

ROSE: I'm sure she misses you.

MIA: Why did she leave?

ROSE: I don't know. Maybe when she gets here, we can walk down to the park. Just think about that. Okay, Mi?

MIA: Okay.

ROSE: Want me to turn on the television?

MIA: No, it's alright.

(The middle screen lights up. It displays an old home movie of MIA, ROSE, and CAROL, their mother, at the park.

ROSE sits with MIA, humming to her, until MIA drifts back to sleep.)

ROSE: (Whispering and getting up quietly) I'll get you some water.

(ROSE goes into the kitchen and fills up a glass of water. Now BEN is awake, and meets her in the kitchen.)

BEN: Everything alright?

ROSE: (Rubbing her eyes) Yeah, she just had a nightmare.

BEN: (Taking the glass from her) I'll take it up. Go get back in bed.

(Ben kisses her forehead. ROSE walks back into their bedroom, BEN walks upstairs.

Lights out.)

Scene 2

(Morning the next day. BEN and ROSE are in the kitchen eating breakfast. BEN starts to leave for work.)

BEN: (Holding her face and kissing her) Let me know how it goes today.

ROSE: I will.

BEN: I'm out of my meeting at twelve.

(ROSE nods her head, not looking at him. BEN kisses her again.)

BEN: Bye babe.

(Exit BEN.

(ROSE walks upstairs to MIA, holding a bowl of cereal. MIA is rubbing her eyes)

ROSE: How you feeling?

MIA: (Holding her stomach) Okay.

ROSE: Your stomach?

MIA: Yeah. I don't really feel like eating.

ROSE: (Feeling her forehead) You have to try. It's been two days.

MIA: Rose?

ROSE: Yeah?

MIA: I'm going to die.

ROSE: Mia, don't-

MIA: (Sitting up, painfully) No. I am. I'm okay with it.

ROSE: You're not going anywhere.

MIA: My skin feels heavier now.

ROSE: (Sitting down on the bed) Listen to me. Nothing is going to get you, alright? You're going to be okay.

MIA: No one is okay! How long have I been in this bed?

ROSE: (Pushing the bowl near MIA) Please just try to eat.

MIA: (Knocking bowl over) I'm not hungry.

ROSE: Stop it, Mia!

MIA: I told you I saw it!

ROSE: Saw what?

MIA: Death. That's what it was last night.

ROSE: Don't be ridiculous, you just had a bad dream.

MIA: I know what I saw.

ROSE: You can't just give up on everything.

MIA: I'm not. I'm accepting what's happening.

ROSE: You don't know what you're talking about.

(Beat.)

MIA: I know you're afraid.

ROSE: Aren't you?

MIA: A little.

(ROSE gets up, distressed. She exits MIA's

bedroom and pulls out her phone to call DR. LAND.)

ROSE: Hi Dr. Land, this is Rose. Yes, her stomach again.

(Lights out.)

Scene 3

(DR. LAND is looking at MIA in her room upstairs. ROSE is pacing back and forth, watching them.)

DR. LAND: (To MIA) Alright, take this and relax for awhile.

(He hands MIA a pill, she takes it, then DR. LAND motions ROSE outside the room. They walk downstairs. DR. LAND looks gravely at ROSE.)

ROSE: Well?

DR. LAND: (Breathing deeply) Two weeks at most.

(ROSE Nods sadly and sits down.)

DR. LAND: (Putting his hand on her shoulder) She can't eat, Rose.

ROSE: She just hasn't been hungry-

DR. LAND: (Sitting down beside her, speaking slowly) Her organs are deteriorating. I wish I knew why these things happen.

ROSE: It wouldn't make a difference.

DR. LAND: (Handing her some medicine) Here. This will keep her out of pain. I gave her a sleeping aid.

ROSE: Thanks.

DR. LAND: (Moving a little closer, touching

her leg) You're a beautiful woman, Rose.

ROSE: (Retracting, uneasy) Thank you.

DR.LAND: I know that Ben is gone a lot... you must get lonely.

ROSE: We're fine, thank you.

DR. LAND: Well see, (Taking off his glasses), my wife doesn't want it anymore.

ROSE: Um, I-

DR.LAND: I like to satisfy women.

ROSE: I think you should leave now.

DR.LAND: Come on, I'd take good care of you, Rose.

ROSE: (Edging him out the door) I'll call you if something else happens with Mia.

DR. LAND: Call if you need anything at all. I'm very generous.

(DR. LAND exits.

ROSE takes a moment to absorb what just happened.)

ROSE: Gross.

(A black spot appears on the wall and catches ROSE's eye. She walks over and wipes it, but it does not come off. ROSE calls BEN.)

ROSE: (Tearing up) Hey, babe. Yeah, he just left.

(Lights out.)

Scene 4

(5 PM. ROSE is balled up on the couch,

crying, when BEN hurriedly comes in the door. BEN walks to her and holds her on the couch.)

BEN: Aw, Rose.

ROSE: (Heaving) Tell me you're not going to die. Lie to me.

(BEN holds her tighter.

Lights fade in and out to show that time has passed. It is now 10 PM. BEN and ROSE stay in the same position on the couch.)

ROSE: He's such a creeper. Apparently his wife isn't interested.

BEN: I say go for it.

ROSE: It's not funny. I wanted to vomit. I still want to vomit.

BEN: Maybe I should talk with him.

ROSE: He's the best doctor around. I want Mia to have a chance...(Thinking about what she just said.)

BEN: Have you told her?

ROSE: No, but I think she knows anyway.

BEN: How?

ROSE: She told me she knew, this morning.

(Beat. ROSE notices the mark on the wall again.)

ROSE: Have you ever seen that mark before?

(BEN is distracted, as someone is texting him on his cell phone. He says the following without looking at the wall, instead, texting on his phone.)

BEN: I don't think so.

(They both continue to look, ROSE at the wall, perplexed, and BEN at his phone, until they are interrupted by MIA sleepwalking. They are stunned, and watch her. MIA mumbles as she slowly walks down the stairs, and continues walking until she is right in front of BEN and ROSE on the couch.)

MIA: You can't really see me.

ROSE: (Startled) Mi? You okay?

BEN: I think she's still asleep.

(ROSE gets up and slowly approaches MIA. ROSE gently walks MIA back upstairs while BEN turns on the television to watch a football game. The football game is displayed on the center screen. BEN starts to really get into the game while ROSE helps MIA back in bed.

On the right screen, DEATH is present, standing in a red hooded robe. On the left screen, the video of ROSE, MIA, and their mother CAROL appears again.)

BEN: (Clapping his hands, looking intently at the television) That's right.

BEN: (Standing up) WHAT?! Worst fucking call ever. He wasn't over the damn line! They just played it back to you, moron!

(Lights out.)

Scene 5

(Everything is dark except for the screens. DEATH, who before was standing still in a red hooded robe, is now a shadowy figure. The shadow pulsates then disappears from the right screen, leaving it blank. Instantly, a football player on the center screen gets hurt and is taken off in an ambulance. The center screen goes blank. The left screen where MIA, ROSE and CAROL are, is the only one still lit. The video appears to be distorted, then the screen goes blank.

When the lights come back up, BEN is watching the football player get hurt, and ROSE is walking down the stairs to join him. The TV can be heard but the screens remain blank.)

ROSE: (Sitting down, looking at the television) Can we watch something else?

BEN: (Sighing, handing her the remote) Sure.

ROSE: There are more important things going on right now, okay?

BEN: (Annoyed) I said sure.

(ROSE changes the channel to the news.)

TV: (Female voice)“Thousands have been affected by the disease, and the numbers still continue to rise. Researchers speculate that it could be airborne. (Male voice) “And in other news, the annual sewer rat race is just around the corner! You can get your tickets from--”

(ROSE shuts off the television. They sit in silence for a moment.)

ROSE: Do you ever think about dying?

BEN: I try not to. It's a waste.

ROSE: I can't help but think about it.

BEN: Well given what's going on right now, it's understandable.

ROSE: Yeah.

BEN: Everyone dies, babe. We all end up in the same place.

ROSE: Nowhere.

BEN: But we're here now.

ROSE: Is that supposed to be comforting?

BEN: It makes me feel better. I figure, why worry? It's going to happen.

ROSE: I know it sounds corny, but I can't help it. I see it everywhere.

BEN: Just ignore it.

ROSE: I can't put it on the shelf like that.

BEN: Try.

ROSE: I don't know if I want to. It's part of me. Do you ever think about-

(BEN's cellphone rings. He answers it.)

BEN: Hello?(He covers the phone with one hand and whispers to ROSE:) It's Dad.

(ROSE sighs, annoyed.)

BEN: (On the phone) Hey, Daddy. No, I'm not busy at all, just sitting at the house. I know, it was a bad call. Yep, yep I saw it too. He definitely was not over the line.

(BEN continues talking to his dad about the game, often saying repetitive phrases throughout the following.

The screens on the right and the left light up. The left screen displays the game BEN was just watching. The right one displays BEN, smiling obnoxiously big and giving a thumbs up. The word “Happy” is projected below his face. Next on the same screen, BEN is frowning and wiping a fake tear. The word “Sad” is projected on the screen.

The center screen displays the shadow DEATH. ROSE stares into the audience. She shakes her head to remove a thought, and the right and center screens black out. Only the football game on the left screen remains. ROSE starts to clean the house, quickly. The shadow DEATH slowly emerges back onto the center screen.

BEN catches ROSE's eye and makes a motion like he wants his dad to stop talking so he can get off the phone. ROSE gives a faint smile and continues cleaning.)

BEN: Okay, Dad. Love you too. Bye. (Hangs up. To ROSE:)He was just going on and on. Christ, when I feel like going on and on about something, he never has time for it.

ROSE: Well, you could always just tell him you were a little busy...?

BEN: (Serious) I'm not going to be rude to my *father*.

ROSE: (Laughing, rolling eyes) Whatever.

BEN: Why is that funny?

ROSE: Because you say “Father” like it has a capital “F”. I mean...we *were* in the middle of a conversation.

BEN: Well, he's my dad.

ROSE: Yeah, you said that.

BEN: Oh, don't start. You know he'll blow up my phone until I answer.

ROSE: That's a great reason to drop our conversation.

BEN: Look, that's just what we do.

ROSE: You could have called him back, Ben. You're in your thirties and still can't stand up to him about anything.

BEN: That's not really your business.

ROSE: It *is* my business.

BEN: Well we can finish our conversation now if you like.

ROSE: Unless he calls again of course. No,

thanks.

BEN: (Sighs) I'm going to bed.

ROSE: Fine.

BEN: (Yawning) I'm exhausted anyway.

ROSE: You're always exhausted.

BEN: Coming?

ROSE: Yeah, later.

(BEN exits to bedroom.)

ROSE: (To herself) Sometimes I don't know him at all.

(ROSE gets up and walks to the edge of the stage.)

ROSE: (Mocking BEN) I can't be rude to my 'Father', Rose. He IS my 'Father', after all. How dare you make such a suggestion?

(Sighs)

...Something about that makes me want to pack up and move across the fucking country.

(She walks to her mirror and stares at it up close.)

ROSE: (Laughing) Have you ever seen anything so ugly? Holes all over my skin full of grimy hairs and dirt.

(Beat)

ROSE: If death were a person...

(The center screen lights up to display ROSE looking at DEATH with a knife in her hand. She stabs DEATH viciously and stomps on his face. ROSE laughs.)

ROSE: Then we'd all be free of this 'death'.

(ROSE Sits on the couch with her head in her hands and then starts laughing.)

(Lights out.)

Scene 6

(It is still night time. ROSE is asleep on the couch. The center screen is lit up to reveal a shadow of MIA walking out onto the balcony. She continues to walk off of the balcony and fall to her death. DEATH shadow appears on all three screens. A car alarm goes off, which wakes up ROSE and then BEN.)

ROSE: (Sitting up, rubbing her eyes) Mia?

(ROSE runs upstairs as BEN is peaking his head out of the bedroom door. ROSE gets to MIA's room and then screams. BEN rushes upstairs. Lights out.)

Scene 7

(A wake at ROSE's house for MIA. The casket is massive, blown up at least five or six times the size of a normal casket. The couch remains in the center. ROSE is sitting on the couch, drinking a glass of wine and looking haggard. CAROL, BEN, and ROSE are present. Heard from offstage are people crying and an organ playing. The spot on the wall is covered up with a picture hanging over it. The “AWW” audience neon sign is lit up.)

CAROL: (Extremely overdressed, sipping her wine. Over-the-top:) Oh, my little baby girl. I'll miss her so much!

(CAROL begins crying extremely loud.)

ROSE: (Unsympathetic) Stop it, mom.

CAROl: How dare you! She was my child! And the better one, at that. Oh, how I wish I would have been here for her more!

ROSE: Nothing was stopping you. I told you what the doctor said.

CAROL: I was planning on coming next week, you know, near the end.

ROSE: You shouldn't have left her in the first place!

CAROL: Well I couldn't do it anymore, Rose! I stayed by her bed for three years! I needed a break.

ROSE: Well, now you have one. She won't be a problem for you anymore.

CAROL: (Slaps ROSE across the face) Just shut up, Rose. I can't believe you're doing this to me in front of all these people.

ROSE: (Numb to the slap) Right, that *is* what's important after all.

(CAROL gets up and looks into the casket for awhile, crying loudly and dramatically.

BEN walks over to ROSE and sits with her.)

BEN: (Rubbing the red spot on her cheek) Yikes. You okay?

ROSE: Look at their red, oily faces.

BEN: I know you hate these things.

ROSE: They all look like steak.

BEN: Well, they're here for Mia.

ROSE: How much longer before they leave?

BEN: Just a couple of hours. (Touching her shoulder) It's what Mia would have wanted.

ROSE: What are you talking about? Mia doesn't know most of these people.

(ROSE points offstage. A girl crying

violently can be heard.)

ROSE: And I've never seen that girl before in my life.

BEN: Well, people display their emotions differently.

ROSE: Not really.

BEN: (Rubbing her back) Just try to get through it today, okay babe?

ROSE: This place is making me sick.

(ROSE gets up and walks in front of the stage, close to the audience. She licks her lips.)

ROSE: My mouth doesn't taste the same anymore.

(ROSE lights a cigarette.

The picture covering up the black spot falls to the floor and breaks, revealing a bigger spot. Everyone onstage gasps and an offstage group 'gasp' can be heard as well. Then, they carry on as BEN starts to clean up the broken picture.

Lights out.)

Scene 8

(Night time. Everyone has left and the house is situated normally again. ROSE and BEN are getting ready for bed. BEN walks up behind ROSE and puts his arms around her.)

ROSE: If I told you I wanted to take off right now and go to the beach, would you come with me?

BEN: There's no beach around here.

ROSE: I know. I kinda want to pack everything and just go.

BEN: I have a job, babe.

ROSE: You can take a sick day.

BEN: I've already taken sick days.

ROSE: Never mind. I was just asking.

BEN: (Sighing) Alright, let's go then.

ROSE: No, you obviously don't want to go. Forget it.

BEN: Don't do this to me right now.

ROSE: I'm not doing anything. I just knew you wouldn't want to.

BEN: Sorry.

ROSE: You're not, though.

BEN: What do you want me to say?

ROSE: Everything.

BEN: Exactly.

(Beat)

ROSE: I feel odd.

BEN: Like how?

ROSE: (Thinks) Empty.

BEN: (Sadly) It'll pass.

ROSE: And if it doesn't?

(BEN kisses her all over her face until the lights go out.)

(The lights pulsate up and down to show a passing of time. The center screen lights up and DEATH in the hooded robe appears on it. ROSE tosses and turns in bed.)

DEATH: (Laughing) It'll pass.

(ROSE gets out of bed wearing a solid colored, smooth mask with an evil smile on it, and looks at the screen. Note this is the first time a character has acknowledged the screen behind them.)

DEATH: I'll never leave your side. Can Ben say that?

(ROSE walks in a trance towards the screen, and DEATH walks out from behind it. DEATH is wearing an elaborate, beautiful mask.)

ROSE: I'm sorry I doubted you, my love.

DEATH: Can you see me, now?

ROSE: Yes. You're beautiful.

DEATH: Will you dance?

(DEATH approaches her, and they dance.)

(BEN wakes up and turns on the living room lights. ROSE is no longer wearing the mask.)

BEN: Rose?

(BEN walks up to ROSE, shaking her. She tries to dance with him.)

BEN: Rose!

ROSE: I...what are you...

BEN: You're sleepwalking.

(BEN picks her up and carries her to bed.)

ROSE: (Disoriented) I'm not who you think I am...

BEN: It's okay, just lay down.

(Lights out.)

Scene 9

(Morning. BEN is dressed for work, and ROSE is still in bed. BEN kisses her on the head and then leaves. There is some object in the living room that is missing, and the television is now a person with a box on his head.

ROSE'S cell phone rings, waking her up. She answers it.)

ROSE: (Yawning) Hi, mom. No, I don't have time today. I'm not ready to get rid of Mia's things yet. Ok, you can come by tomorrow if you want. Love you too. Bye.

(ROSE hangs up the phone. She gets up and stretches. She walks to the living room and sits in the middle of the floor.)

ROSE: What a strange dream.

(She turns on the television. The screen does not light up.)

TV PERSON: Click. Coming up next, how to make a delicious fall cider!

ROSE: (To the television) You seem different.

TV PERSON: So do you.

ROSE: (Rubbing her head, getting up and walking away from the television) I can't place what it is.

TV PERSON: Well, I'm alive.

ROSE: (Thinking) That could be it. Were you always that color?

TV PERSON: Yup.

(ROSE starts to clean things up around the house that are already clean.)

ROSE: Did you always have this small of a screen?

TV PERSON: Yup.

ROSE: Hmm. I'll figure it out.

TV PERSON: Maybe I got a new channel. (Sighing) No one ever notices.

ROSE: Shinier buttons?

TV PERSON: Hey, they were always shiny!

(ROSE shrugs and walks over to the kitchen where she starts cleaning the clean dishes. TV PERSON gets up and sits on the couch.)

TV PERSON: I don't have anything to watch.

ROSE: You could watch me?

TV PERSON: Alright, entertain me.

(ROSE walks to the living room and starts acting like an explorer.)

ROSE: (With an Australian accent) Wow, she's a beaut! I wonder if I can get her mouth open far enough to....AGHHH, AGHH SHE'S GOT ME!

TV PERSON: (Reaching hand out to indicate a channel change) Click.

ROSE: (Imitating a work-out video) Alright, ladies! Let's get those hearts pumping! And one-two-three-four, to the left, -two-three-four, one more time!

TV PERSON: Click.

ROSE: (Imitating a trashy reality television show.) Oh my god, like, I desperately need a new outfit right now.

TV PERSON: Click.

ROSE: Okay, I can't do this anymore. It's

exhausting.

TV PERSON: Tell me about it. People are so demanding! Honestly I feel sorry for you.

ROSE: Why?

TV PERSON: You poor bastards have to convince yourselves that everything has meaning.

ROSE: (Offended) If we don't have meaning, you don't have meaning, either.

TV PERSON: Sure I do! I'm a TV, my function is pretty cut and dry.

ROSE: Oh congratulations, you're a primary cause of diabetes. How meaningful.

TV PERSON: And you? What do you do aside from feeling sorry for yourself?

ROSE: I'm a writer.

TV PERSON: Like an 'I've never written anything in my life yet identify as a writer' writer or an 'I don't really know how to do anything else' writer, or an-

ROSE: Alright, enough. I haven't written in awhile. I got busy with Mia, and...(choking up).

TV PERSON: (Sympathetic) Sorry. God, I've been in such a hostile mood lately. (Pulling out a nail file) My therapist says I need to make time in my day to take a breather. But who can afford to do that, you know?

ROSE: (Walking back to the kitchen, wiping a tear) You want some food? I could make pancakes or something.

(ROSE drops a plate and it breaks on the floor.)

ROSE: Ow, shit! (Sucking finger)

TV PERSON: (Laughing) Don't get blood on the

floor.

(The spot on the wall gets a little bigger.

ROSE walks over and sits on the couch, nursing her thumb.

TV PERSON pulls out a microphone and starts acting like the host of a celebrity sitcom. ROSE instantly goes along with it.)

TV PERSON: So tell us, how long have you felt like this?

ROSE: About death?

TV PERSON: Yes. We want all the gritty details!

ROSE: Well, I dunno. He just...touches me the right way I guess.

TV PERSON: That IS hard to find...am I right, ladies?

('Applause' neon sign lights up.)

ROSE: He's intriguing in a way I can't explain.

TV PERSON: (Reading from a note card) What does your perfect date night look like?

ROSE: I like to dance. Ben doesn't really dance with me...

TV PERSON: Well, boo to that! (To the crowd) This woman knows what she wants!

('Applause' sign lights up.)

ROSE: I do, actually. For the first time in my life, I feel something real! Something powerful.

TV PERSON:(Wiping tears from his eyes) Ah, reminds me of my youth.

ROSE: He's incredible. And he has this

perfect face with no lines or pores.

TV PERSON: Ooh, sounds dishy. How about we bring him out, ladies and gentlemen?

(The 'Applause' sign lights up. DEATH appears on the center screen. He follows ROSE.)

TV PERSON: How lovely! Would you just look at them! They're inseparable!

('AWW' neon sign lights up.)

TV PERSON: We are all just SO happy for you!

(Sitcom music comes on, ROSE curtsies and exits the stage, waving.)

(Lights out.)

Scene 10

(The house is back to 'normal'. The TV is inanimate again. ROSE is still sitting in the middle of the floor in her pajamas when BEN walks in. BEN is now a different actor. His demeanor is slightly different than the BEN before him, as this new BEN has a tendency to scratch the back of his head a lot. His posture is also worse than the previous BEN's.)

BEN: (Walking in the door) I'm home, babe. (Noticing ROSE) Rose? Rose...what did you do today, sweetheart? What happened to your hand?

ROSE: I talked about him.

BEN: What? Rose- here let's get some clothes on.

(BEN helps her get dressed. They walk out into the kitchen where he notices the broken glass.)

BEN: Shit.

(BEN gets a broom and sweeps the glass while ROSE walks over to the spot on the wall and touches it. BEN walks over to her and they sit on the couch.)

BEN: (Touching her face) I think I should take some time off.

ROSE: No, it's okay. I'm okay. You don't have any more sick days. I was going to get some writing done but then I broke a plate, and--

BEN: (Holding her, kissing her) It's okay.

ROSE: Do you see anything different about the tv?

BEN: (Looking at it) Nope. (Squinting) Wait a sec. (He gets up) I knew I saw something yesterday. It's tilted. One of the guests must have bumped it.

ROSE: That must be it.

BEN: I got you something today.

(BEN walks over to his briefcase and gets out a small box. He hands it to ROSE. ROSE opens the box to find a red metal necklace.)

ROSE: (Opening it and gasping) It's beautiful!

BEN: A homeless man was making them today out of sheet metal. I thought it was kinda cool.

ROSE: (Kissing him) Thanks.

BEN: You'll be okay.

ROSE: (Kissing his hand, distant) Yeah.

BEN: I'll stay home tomorrow. I don't know what I was thinking leaving you alone all day. I'm so sorry.

(Lights out.)

Scene 11

(BEN is now in bed with ROSE. The screen displays DEATH walking across all three screens. ROSE has been replaced with another actress, as was with BEN earlier. The new ROSE is taller with a different color hair. She wakes up screaming.)

BEN: (Waking up and calming her) It's okay, babe.

ROSE: I don't want to sleep anymore.

BEN: (Rubbing his eyes) Okay. What do you wanna do?

ROSE: I'm going to get up for a while.

BEN: I'll make some coffee.

(They get up and ROSE sits down on the couch. BEN makes coffee in the kitchen. There's a chair sticking out of the now even bigger black mark on the wall, and the rest of the furniture has moved slightly closer to the mark. Neither of them notice it.)

BEN: Did you have another dream?

ROSE: Yeah.

BEN: Wanna talk about it?

ROSE: You wouldn't understand.

BEN: Well, I'll try to.

ROSE: Let's just talk about something else.

BEN: Wanna turn on the tv?

ROSE: No. I don't want to do anything really.

BEN: Everything's going to be okay.

ROSE: But it's not. At least one of us is going to die without the other. Do you ever

think about that?

BEN: You don't know that.

ROSE: We're all being swallowed up one by one, but yet are supposed to act like everything is just fucking peachy. Or else we're considered depressed or anxious or 'not well'.

BEN: There is such a thing as optimism.

ROSE: If you like lying to yourself, there is.

BEN: Well, you have to look on the bright side to get through anything. Have some faith in humanity.

ROSE: What does that even mean?

BEN: We have to take care of each other.

(Death shadow appears on the center screen.)

ROSE: Part of me says that that is the right and sensible thing to do. But then I start thinking about all the exceptions. Margaret. She cheats on Bill constantly, and feels good about it. Brags about it. I don't want to take care of her.

BEN: Well, that's...

ROSE: Or the bank teller off of Whitefield Avenue who has these yellow, sticky-looking eyes. I fantasize about plucking them out sometimes. They're just disgusting. I mean, I do that until everyone I know is just about gone.

BEN: Well, there's Mia.

(Beat)

ROSE: Yeah, there's Mia.

BEN: And hopefully there's me too...

ROSE: Nah.

(They smile at each other and he kisses her)

ROSE: (Looking at the floor) But even you sometimes, and me...

BEN: What?

ROSE: We're these pathetic things.

BEN: You just think too much.

ROSE: Maybe you don't think enough!

BEN: I'm not the one spending all day in my pajamas on the living room floor, am I?

ROSE: What is that supposed to mean?

BEN: It means you're not well, Rose. You can't function outside of these walls right now.

ROSE: So you think because you go out into the world and play their little game, that it makes you more 'well' than I am?

BEN: Yes, because without someone doing that, we couldn't eat, Rose! We have to eat!

ROSE: That's not the point.

BEN: What is the point, then?

(ROSE walks away in a huff.)

ROSE: (Calmly) It's like no one is paying attention.

BEN: To what?

ROSE: To the fact that we're all dying and don't know what's going on.

BEN: If everyone focused on that, then we'd all be miserable.

ROSE: If we would just fucking pay attention to what's going on around us, we wouldn't be so calm. YOU wouldn't be so calm! Why do people act like everything is okay when it isn't? Who are they trying to kid?

BEN: Well what else is there to do? Please, enlighten me.

ROSE: I don't know! Tell the truth?

BEN: Just calm down, Rose.

ROSE: I can't! Why is it so wrong to feel anything? Why is it that I am unwell because I am being truly affected by something?

BEN: Well, would you want to see someone freaking out in public?

ROSE: At this point, yes, I would actually!

BEN: (Sighing) Rose-

ROSE: I can't help feeling like this! This is not a choice! It's in my mind, all the time, and I can't get away from it!

BEN: That's not good.

ROSE: Why, because I can't pretend not to see it, like you do? I've felt so alone through all of this!

BEN: (Standing up) That's not fair. I've been here for you every possible chance I've had.

(Beat.)

ROSE: I know you have. That's not what I mean, I'm sorry.

BEN: This impacts me, too. You have to remember that.

ROSE: It doesn't impact you like it does me. It's happening to me. Something is happening to *me*. Now I look at you, and I see Death. I

see it when you cough, when you eat, when you wake up in the morning! It's in your eyes! The tiny wrinkles in your skin! It's spilling out everywhere! It's like your body is this broken grocery bag and any second, the whole damn thing is just going to rip to pieces and be thrown in the trash.

BEN: (Laughing) I'm just fine. I'm not ripping or going anywhere.

ROSE: Are you not hearing me?

BEN: (Seriously) I hear you. What do you think we should do?

ROSE: I don't know.

BEN: Well, then this is the best solution we have right now. Just think of it that way.

ROSE: This is not helping me at all. I think I just want to be alone.

(Beat. BEN is hurt and confused.)

BEN: I guess I'll go to bed, then.

ROSE: I'm sorry. I-

BEN: Goodnight, Rose.

(BEN gets up and walks into his bedroom. ROSE looks temporarily upset that he left. She starts to go after him, and then stops. She sits down on the floor near the bedroom and then decides to go out. She rises, puts on a jacket, and walks out the door.)

(Lights out.)

Scene 12

(A 24-hour diner near ROSE's house. An old WAITRESS with back problems is at the cash register and a HOMELESS MAN sits at a table. The WAITRESS is the first ROSE. The HOMELESS MAN is the first BEN. ROSE walks in and

takes a seat at a table across from the HOMELESS MAN. The WAITRESS approaches ROSE with a pot of coffee.)

WAITRESS: Here ya go, hun.

ROSE: Thanks.

WAITRESS: Anything to eat?

ROSE: No, thanks. Coffee's fine.

(The WAITRESS walks away and ROSE fixates on the HOMELESS MAN.)

ROSE: (To him) Do I know you?

HOMELESS MAN: Nobody knows me.

ROSE: Sorry.

HOMELESS MAN: So why did you come here?

ROSE: I just needed to get out.

HOMELESS MAN: (Laughing) You won't ever get out, sugar.

ROSE: So what do I do, then?

HOMELESS MAN: You're asking the wrong person.

ROSE: (To herself) What do any of us *do.*

WAITRESS: (Walking up, filling her coffee) We have a great cheesecake.

ROSE: Yeah, okay. I'll have some, please.

WAITRESS: Sure.

HOMELESS MAN: It's the best in town.

WAITRESS: He's tellin' the truth.

HOMELESS MAN: Been coming here for it every night for five years.

WAITRESS: (Winking at ROSE as she sets the cake on her table) He's just sweet on me.

ROSE: (Eating her cake) Do you have a family?

HOMELESS MAN: Do I look like I have a family? No, no family. Lost everything.

ROSE: Sorry. Want some cake?

(The HOMELESS MAN walks over to ROSE's booth, and they both eat the cake.)

ROSE: Who were you before you became...this?

HOMELESS MAN: I wasn't anybody special. I worked at a jewelry store with my old man until I was about 25.

ROSE: Did you sell the jewelry?

HOMELESS MAN: I cut the stones and set them. Now I just sell them in the street.

ROSE: Did you ever love someone?

HOMELESS MAN: Ha! It's not real. None of that horse shit is worth a hair on my ass. And I have dandruff.

(ROSE is momentarily grossed out.)

ROSE: (Taking a bite of cake) It feels real sometimes.

HOMELESS MAN: Then you haven't been in it long enough.

ROSE: Is that what happened to you?

HOMELESS MAN: There's not much that hasn't happened to me.

(ROSE backs down. The HOMELESS MAN starts again.)

HOMELESS MAN: The way I see it, we're all

just waiting for something to happen. In the meantime, we distract ourselves. We talk, we eat cake. The happiest people are so good at lying, that they have nothing left of these ideas but a little anxiety every once in awhile. Just enough to remind them that something's off. Then there's people like me who know that this is what we're dealing with here. On good days, I dance. On bad days, I lie in a pile of my own filth and hope something kills me.

ROSE: (Thinking for a moment) Is today a good day?

HOMELESS MAN: (Smiling) Yes.

ROSE: Want to dance?

HOMELESS MAN: (Laughs. To WAITRESS) Hey babe, turn up the radio, would you?

(The WAITRESS turns up the radio and they dance.

Lights out.)

Scene 13

(Rewind. A 24-hour diner near ROSE's house. An old WAITRESS with back problems is at the cash register and a HOMELESS MAN sits at a table. The WAITRESS is the first ROSE. The HOMELESS MAN is the first BEN. ROSE walks in and takes a seat at a table across from the HOMELESS MAN. The WAITRESS approaches ROSE with a pot of coffee.)

WAITRESS: Here ya go, hun.

ROSE: Thanks.

WAITRESS: Anything to eat?

ROSE: No, thanks. Coffee's fine.

(The HOMELESS MAN is staring at her. ROSE starts to feel paranoid about something and stands up abruptly. The WAITRESS and the

HOMELESS MAN freeze in place. The right screen lights up to reveal DEATH.

ROSE walks around the diner. DEATH follows her on the screens, and mimics her movements during the following sequence.

ROSE walks in front of the WAITRESS and touches her face. Then, she walks to the HOMELESS MAN and sits down across from him. Less paranoid, she takes his hat and puts it on. She gets back up and walks around the diner, sitting in different positions, mimicking all of them. She first acts like the WAITRESS, moving slowly around the diner like her back hurts. She smiles faintly and sets coffee up on the table. She pretends to sweep the floor. ROSE then sits back at the table, and laughs loudly as if in a hilarious conversation.

Then, the lit-up screen catches her eye. She walks up to it and stares at it.)

ROSE: I know you're there. This is the closest I can get.

(DEATH remains on the screen, and his voice can be heard.)

DEATH: Hello my dear.

ROSE: (To DEATH) He's right, you know. That man. About life. About love. You're my love now. My one true partner.

DEATH: Of course I am.

ROSE: I won't be afraid anymore.

(Lights out.)

Scene 14

(ROSE walks into her house, hangs up her coat, and falls asleep on the couch. The screens light up. ROSE gets up with her mask on and walks behind the screens.)

ROSE: Where are you?

(DEATH is in the living room now, waiting.)

ROSE: (Coming out from behind the screens) Come dance with me!

(DEATH pulls her in and they dance around the room, knocking over furniture and laughing.)

ROSE: I can't tell him about you. He doesn't understand. It would hurt him.

DEATH: (Kissing her) He'll understand soon enough.

ROSE: I feel like I've known you my whole life.

DEATH: I've always been a part of you, Rose.

ROSE: I want to be with you always.

DEATH: You will.

ROSE: Kiss me.

(DEATH kisses her then undresses her. She is partially naked when the lights go out and her moans can be heard.

BEN gets up and turns on a light to find ROSE rolling around on the ground, alone, moaning. She is no longer wearing the mask.)

BEN: (Picking her up) Come on, babe.

ROSE: Is it you?

BEN: It's me, Ben.

ROSE: You're not him.

BEN: I'm not who?

ROSE: The one I was fucking.

BEN: What? (Putting her in bed) You're still asleep, Rose.

ROSE: He'll get you, too.

BEN: Who will?

ROSE: I don't know his name.

BEN: (Feeling her forehead) Shit, you're burning up. Stay here.

(ROSE passes out on the bed.

BEN frantically grabs the phone and dials while preparing a wet towel for ROSE's head. The call does not go through the first few times.)

BEN: Fuck, come on. Answer. Answer!!

(BEN dials again and brings the towel to ROSE.)

BEN: (Sitting next to ROSE. Relieved:) Hi, Dr. Land?

(Lights out.)

Scene 15

(BEN is pacing back and forth, waiting on DR. LAND. ROSE is still passed out in bed. A knock on the door is heard.)

DR. LAND: (Entering) Where is she?

BEN: (Walking to bedroom) In here. Thank you for coming. She's been having these sleepwalking episodes and is burning up with fever.

(DR. LAND follows BEN into the bedroom and sits down next to ROSE.)

DR. LAND: (Feeling her cheek) Looks like the onset.

(BEN starts breathing heavily and sits down.)

BEN: No.

DR. LAND: (Taking off his glasses) I'm going to be honest with you, son. You probably aren't far behind and neither am I. This thing is sweeping across the world like nothing I've ever seen. I was very sorry to hear about Mia.

(Beat)

DR. LAND: The good news is that it's early. She has time. This is the number one illness on the minds of incredible doctors and scientists. Chances are, we'll have a cure soon. Don't give up hope.

BEN: (Sitting down on the bed) Is there something, anything, you can give her to help?

DR. LAND: (Taking out a bottle from his coat pocket) I can give her this for fever. Other than that...

BEN: Okay. Thank you.

(DR. LAND starts to walk out, when BEN grabs his arm.)

BEN: I love her very much.

DR. LAND: I know.

BEN: I want her to get better. But I know what you said. I know what you are.

DR. LAND: Well, I-

BEN: (Sternly) That ends right now.

DR. LAND: Of course.

(DR. LAND sees himself out, and BEN sits on the bed next to ROSE with his head in his hands. 'Aww' sign lights up.)

(Lights Out)

Scene 16

(12 P.M. the next day. The living room is now extremely close to the black spot. More furniture is sticking out of it. BEN is sitting on the couch watching the game. ROSE wakes up alone in bed, hears the TV, gets up, and sits down next to BEN.

BEN: Touchdown! About time, man.

(He take a swig of beer. Noticing ROSE:)

BEN: You're up. Feeling okay?

ROSE: I want some cheesecake.

BEN: Want me to order some? That sounds pretty good.

ROSE: No, I'm going to go out for some.

BEN: I'll come with you.

ROSE: I'm sorry about-

BEN: It's okay. I know you're sick, and-

ROSE: Don't do that. I'm not sick. I don't *feel* sick.

BEN: But Dr.Land said that-

ROSE: Dr. Land just wants an excuse to feel me up.

BEN: There's got to be a reason why you're having these crazy thoughts and dreams.

ROSE: They're not crazy. I'll go change my clothes.

BEN: (Finishing his beer and turning off the tv) So where are we going?

ROSE: There's this little diner across the street.

(Lights out.)

Scene 17

(The same 24-hour diner near ROSE's house. It is open, with lights on, but it is completely empty. ROSE and BEN walk in. BEN sits where the HOMELESS MAN sat in earlier scenes, and ROSE gets the coffee and cheesecake from behind the counter in the kitchen.)

(Lights out.)

SCENE 18

(A month later. BEN and ROSE are at home and they look terrible. The only things left in the living room are the couch and television as the black spot has sucked in everything else. BEN is watching the game, yelling at the tv, and ROSE is writing in a journal.)

ROSE: Can we watch something else?

BEN: You're not even watching it! You're writing.

ROSE: Well you're screaming.

BEN: (Popping open another beer) Give me a break.

ROSE: That's right, just keep drinking. Why don't you lose all your hair and gain 40 pounds while you're at it.

BEN: (Slamming his fist) Is there anything I do right?

ROSE: I'm not discussing this right now.

BEN: Of course not, because you don't have an answer. You never have a fucking answer.

(ROSE walks to the bedroom.

A knock on the door is heard. It's CAROL. BEN answers.)

CAROL: Hello Ben! How's it going? I'm just here to get a few of Mia's things.

BEN: Rose is in the bedroom. (Yelling to ROSE) Rose, your mom's here!

(ROSE emerges from her room.)

ROSE: Hey, mom.

CAROL: Hi sweetie! So how are things going?

ROSE: They're terrible.

CAROL: That's great, dear. You know I saw the prettiest hair color the other day at the store, so I bought it for you. I thought it would really bring out your eyes.

ROSE: What's wrong with my hair?

CAROL: Well, you know, you just look a little... frazzled.(Handing her the box) I was just stopping by to get Mia's things.

ROSE: Mom, just leave them alone for now, please?

CAROL: No, we're having a neighborhood garage sale and I need to have something to sell! (Looking at the living room) How beautiful your house is! Love it!

ROSE: Are you completely blind?

CAROL: I'll go up and get a few things, then I'll be out of the way.

(CAROL walks upstairs to get MIA's things. ROSE walks outside and smokes a cigarette.)

(Lights out.)

Scene 19

(That same evening. ROSE is still writing and BEN is packing up a bag.)

ROSE: What are you doing?

BEN: I don't know if I can be with you anymore.

ROSE: What?

BEN: Look, Rose. I've been here for you. I've fought for you. I've taken care of you. But you're starting to pull me under with you and I just can't let that happen.

ROSE: (Chuckling) That's right, be there for someone until it really starts to effect you.

BEN: I love you, but-

ROSE: You *think* you love me. Everyone thinks they love someone until the pool of blood washes up too close to their feet.

BEN: I'm sorry, Rose. I'm not fighting you on this.

ROSE: Well, get out then.

BEN: I'm staying at Jason's for awhile. Call me if you-

ROSE: Get. Out.

(BEN exits. Lights out.)

Scene 20

(ROSE's house. There is nothing on stage, and the mark is taking up as much space as the stage will allow. The screens are not visible at all anymore.

ROSE is completely naked, staring straight into the mark. She sits down next to it. She finds a gun on the floor. She picks it up and crawls to the center of the stage, looking out into the audience.)

ROSE: (Twirling the gun) Oh my god, she's

naked. That's artistic, that's disgusting, that's risque, that's beautiful, that's wrong. What are we supposed to do? I feel glued to my seat right now. Maybe I'll look around and see what everyone else thinks of this spectacle. Maybe I won't, because I'm a free-thinker. Hopefully she won't say “fuck” again because then I'll be offended. Hopefully she'll say “fuck” again because I'm in college and I like the word “fuck”. “Fuck”. I wonder what she's going to say. It better be good. Whatever is on that stage must be art. Must be garbage. I wonder where we're going to dinner tonight, I wonder how much longer this thing is, I wonder if I'll get lucky tonight. What time is it? I'm hungry, I'm horny, I'm happy, I'm sad, I'm jealous.

(ROSE makes eye contact with many of the audience members. She laughs, softly.

ROSE brings the gun up to her face and sticks the barrel in her mouth. She takes a deep breath and closes her eyes. She pulls the trigger but the gun does not fire. She pulls the trigger several more times, but the gun does not fire. ROSE removes the gun, frustrated, and looks at it.)

ROSE: (Getting up, walking back and forth across the stage) I knew it wasn't going to happen. That would have been too obvious an ending. She's an idiot, she's lost, she's brilliant, she's mad, she's just like the rest of us.

It *is* a show, after all. I want to be entertained. Nothing she does up there is really going to reach me.

(ROSE walks US, puts on the mask that DEATH wore throughout the show, and sits back down on the stage. The lights slowly fade out as the 'Applause' light blinks.)

END.