

KATIE & KATHLEEN

A PLAY IN ONE ACT

By

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KATHLEEN, 34, lies strewn across an arabesquely-designed fabric couch, clearly passed out from an all-night bender. She doesn't snore, she doesn't breath, she just looks dead there in a flower patterned sun dress, faded from too much something, too much everything. She is blonde, about five foot seven and heavy, way past the words heavy-set and on to a comfortable description of "borderline" obese.

It is a small studio apartment filled with faded bric-a-brac and mementos from an earlier, happier time and place. The main overarching color is pallid.

It is a long, ugly moment waiting for some movement from KATHLEEN. But nothing comes. KATIE, 21, comes on stage in a burst of activity and energy. She is blonde, about five-seven and very athletically fit in health and spirit. She is wearing a horse riding outfit sans jacket, cap and crop. Her color, her energy, her health stands in stark contrast to everything around her.

KATIE

Oh look. Look, again....Again, look at what a mess it is again.

(she begins immediately to clean, picking up the strewn papers and magazines, food wrappers, glass fifths, plastic cups and plates tossed about the apartment. She attends to the chores undisturbed, perky even)

KATIE

Every time. Every single time. It's a wonder I come. And these wrappers, it's like she hasn't been out in weeks. Look at these bottles. How *does* she amass so many.

(she notices the carton case of vodka on the floor)

KATIE – continued

Oh great, now a case of them. I guess it's fewer trips to the liquor store.

(she moves around some more, corralling)

If it's going to be like this every time, I really shouldn't come. I really shouldn't.

(a long pause, then addressing the audience)

I don't really mean that. I don't, it isn't *always* this bad. Not really. Don't tell her I said that, that it was every time, she gets mad when I exaggerate. And it's not really *every* time, not really.

(KATIE grabs wrappers off the table right near KATHLEEN's head. She rolls into a ball loudly. KATHLEEN doesn't move a muscle)

It's just been a real bad period lately, 9-11 and all. And she took it hard. I mean everyone did, I *know* everyone did, but she seemed to take it harder than others. Lately, she seems to take everything harder than others. Everything seems to just affect her more. More deeply I guess. That's why I try to clean up a bit before she wakes. Before I wake her with my cleaning is actually how it works. She's a little nicer to me when I do. Clean, that is. A little nicer when I clean.

(KATIE goes back to cleaning. KATHLEEN shuffles in her seat slowly fighting her way to consciousness)

KATIE

First bell. Don't worry, just like in high school, it takes three before she's coherent.

KATHLEEN

Drop dead.

KATIE

See what I mean! If she was fully awake, she'd have said "Drop dead Katie."

KATHLEEN

Drop dead Katie.

KATIE

Aren't we feeling spry tonight Kathleen?

(KATHLEEN only grunts in response)

Don't be fooled, it'll still take a few minutes more. It always goes this way, ebb and flow, ebb and flow, until she gets her wind. She'll be nicer eventually, but it'll take a little while yet. Everything takes a little while these days. Showering, dressing, talking, *civility*. Certainly civility does....Only one thing doesn't take awhile these days.

(she kicks a little bottle on the floor before picking it up)

It isn't a pretty picture. It's an eye-ful to be sure. But eventually she'll be civil. Of course, eventually after that, she won't be, *boy* won't she be. She will definitely not.

KATHLEEN

Stop telling lies.

KATIE

Civility!....That isn't a lie Kathleen, you know it's the truth. Every time I come—

KATHLEEN

No it isn't.

(KATHLEEN rises from the couch to a sitting position, adjusting herself, her dress, her hair. KATIE still cleans)

KATIE

Yes it is. Every time I come it always ends sour. No matter what I do, no matter what I say or don't say. It ends sourly. That's why I don't come as much. I don't want to have to go through it again and again.

KATHLEEN

You don't come as much because I don't ask you to come as much.

KATIE

That's not true.

KATHLEEN

I don't *want* you to come as much.

KATIE

That's not true! You're just saying that 'cause they're here and you want to put on a good show for them. A brave face forward, that's your motto. Show them how *strong* you are, how in *control* of me you are. That's always been a big deal for you, something you can't do without. That's the real funny thing, when you think about it. You're all about control over me, but with self-control, well, that's something different....Yes, you're good at putting on a show, but if they only knew.

KATHLEEN

(dead serious)

If they only knew what?

(KATIE stops short, doesn't respond. After as pause)

Come on Katie what, if they only knew what?

KATIE

Nothing.

KATHLEEN

No, come on now, tell them. Why don't you tell them?

KATIE

Let it be.

KATHLEEN

Tell them how I call out to you some nights. How I plead and beg for you to come. Right? Isn't that what happens?

(KATIE doesn't respond, but continues cleaning)

KATHLEEN – continued

I plead and beg for you....And some nights you don't come. Despite my anguished calls, some nights you never appear, this apparition from the past, to haunt my current pathetic state. You don't mention that, do you? That some nights I plead and beg and you just ignore it.

KATIE

I don't ignore it.

KATHLEEN

And my pleas ring out in the night unanswered, bouncing off the walls of this dingy prison, echoing back and forth only for me. And what? You don't hear them? You don't recognize the sound?....You hear them. You hear them loud and clear. You just choose to ignore them.

KATIE

I don't ignore them!....It's just that sometimes I can't do anything to help.

KATHLEEN

(long pause)

No you can't.

(KATHLEEN rises, moves to the cardboard case on the floor and pulls out a pint bottle of vodka)

Ah, something that'll help.

(KATIE watches her sadly as she opens it, takes a sip)

KATIE

It's not that I don't want to. I don't know how.

KATHLEEN

(after a long swig, softer)

I know you don't....And so recognizing that it won't help, that you can't help—I don't ask you to come as much anymore.

(they look at each other a long moment. KATHLEEN moves back to the couch, bottle firmly in hand. It's a shaky amble, more shuffling than heel toe)

KATHLEEN

You went riding today.

KATIE

I did, it was wonderful! I was on the big bay today.

KATHLEEN

General Jack.

KATIE

Yes. Oh he's so beautiful, I love riding him. It's so thrilling.

KATHLEEN

All that power.

KATIE

It's underneath you, all that weight and the strength back and forth as he strides. He's so tall, hands above the others.

KATHLEEN

You like that, do you?

KATIE

Oh very much!

KATHLEEN

The muscles flexing and rippling. That barely restrained force. You can feel it against your thighs. Your *inner* thighs as you press against it. It feels *good* underneath you.

KATIE

If you mean—

KATHLEEN

All that weight and strength, you said. I *am* quoting you correctly, aren't I?

KATIE

Please stop.

KATHLEEN

Muscles striating, engorged with long slow lengths, bulging. In and out rhythmically, forcefully. *Powerfully*.

KATIE

Are you finished?

KATHLEEN

(snickering at herself)

Yes well, enjoy it while you can. That's all I'm saying. You can't count on that forever. It's tiresome at times, to be sure, but you'll be sorry when it's gone.

KATIE

I'm not listening to you.

KATHLEEN

I have said my peace.

KATIE

I wished that were true.

KATHLEEN

(smiling, easing off)

You had a good ride?

KATIE

I did! General Jack was just such a prince today. Responding to the train, stopping with bridle, fearless at the jumps. I didn't even need the crop once. It really was so great feeling that.

(she looks at KATHLEEN who has a devilish smile)

Oh, you're impossible.

KATHLEEN

Oh come on.

KATIE

I can't stand when you're like this—

KATHLEEN

I'm only kidding. Don't get upset.

(KATIE makes as if to go in a flurry of activity)

KATIE

You know it bothers me—

KATHLEEN

I know, I know, I'm sorry. I'm just kidding.

KATIE

But you keep doing it anyway.

KATHLEEN

I won't do it anymore. I know how it upsets you. I'll stop.

KATIE

You promise? 'Cause I can go. I can, I'll go.

KATHLEEN

(affectionate)

No don't go. Please, I don't want you to go. I don't. I promise, I'll be good.

(KATIE evinces a pouting pause)

Honest Injun, my best behavior.

(she holds up fingers crossed to promise and that leads to a reconciling grin)

How's Billy? Was he there with you?

(at this point, KATHLEEN begins a project of filling scrapbooks with various pictures she has strewn around the apartment. This project she returns to intermittently throughout the rest of the play, pulling pictures off shelves, taking them out of frames, laying them into books. It is her constant, if somewhat distracted, action)

KATIE

Of course he was. He always is. Like I could ever escape him.

KATHLEEN

Was he wearing the blue cardigan?

KATIE

Of course. Again. He thinks it's going to affect me somehow but it's not. I'm not going to change my mind. I'm waiting. So I don't know why he wears it.

KATHLEEN

Because you bought it for him.

KATIE

I know but so what. It doesn't mean anything.

KATHLEEN

It means something to him.

KATIE

So.

KATHLEEN

It means something to you too. You just don't want to admit it.

KATIE

No it doesn't.

KATHLEEN

Yes it does. And you know it. Deep down inside you love seeing him wear that blue cardigan you bought for him. It's a reminder of his dedication to you and it fills you with a secret sense of security and dominion.—A testament to your beauty, your never fading monument and its power to control him....Besides it looks so good on him. It matches his eyes, those wonderful blue eyes of his.

KATIE

They're robin's eggs blue.

KATHLEEN

With his blonde hair long and ruffled, he looked like a young Brad Pitt before Brad knew how pretty he was.

KATIE

He wished.

KATHLEEN

Yes....Billy was like that then, filling out, becoming broad.

KATIE

Not yet.

KATHLEEN

No, not yet. But soon....And he's silly for you. So silly that he wears that blue cardigan every time he sees you and goes to the stables just to pick you up and drive you home.

KATIE

I can make him do anything.

KATHLEEN

And you do.

KATIE

I do! One time after I made him drive me to the stables, after he drove home, I made him drive *all* the way back again because I forgot my pink riding cap. It was the day the Local Progress was there taking photos for a story and I wanted to be the main photo instead of Sally Sensenter and I just knew that cap would be what I needed. So I called him when he

KATIE - continued

was at his father's shop and I yelled and cried until he promised to go over to the house right that instant and ask mother for it and then drive it up to me at the stables.

(she laughs child-like)

He drove me forty-five minutes up there, another forty-five back, then back to me again with the hat!

KATHLEEN

He was an idiot.

KATIE

And when he got there, I didn't even let him get out of the car to hand it to me. I just ripped the hat from his hands through the open passenger window of the car. "Give it! Give it to me!"

(she laughs)

Then I told him to go! I didn't want him there, they were taking pictures. "Go! Go away! I don't want you here when they're taking pictures. Go back home and come back in two and a half hours. Don't be late!"

(she laughs harder)

KATHLEEN

He was such an idiot.

KATIE

Oh he was so mad. But he did it. He was right there when I was done. And I was right too! That cap *made* my outfit. The photographer took my picture for three quarters of an hour. On top of General Jack, standing besides him, holding the bridle. He took only four pictures of Sally Sensenter and one of those had the both of us in it. She was *pissed!*

KATHLEEN

I don't blame her.

KATIE

Maybe not now, but then, you could then.

KATHLEEN

I didn't blame her then.

KATIE

(sarcastic)

Oh of course you didn't. You didn't blame anyone back then—*now*. Now, everyone was always sweet, everyone was always good-natured and true. Especially you.

KATHLEEN

I don't blame Billy, if that's what you mean.

KATIE

I wasn't talking about that.

KATHLEEN

I know.

KATIE

I *mean* that that wasn't my point.

KATHLEEN

I mean "*I know.*" ...I can't blame him. I never could.

KATIE

I can. And I do. I don't want to talk about it.

(KATIE turns angrily and moves away from her)

KATHLEEN

It wasn't his fault.

(turning to KATIE, watching her)

Always taking the easy route. Avoid avoid avoid, until you can't avoid any longer. Perceive a threat, recognize a hurt, then someone must pay. The predatory kicks in. Assign guilt upon someone, *anyone* but yourself. You've been wronged, someone must be to blame. Someone else, anybody else. And you make them pay.

KATIE

(pause)

How do you not blame him?

KATHLEEN

(pause)

I accept that he was right.

KATIE

He was not!

(they stare a moment. KATHLEEN moves to the table, picks up a bottle of pills, opens them, takes one and stuffs the bottle in her pocket)

KATIE

New pills?

KATHLEEN

For my sleeplessness.

KATIE

I didn't know you had trouble sleeping.

KATHLEEN

What do you call this, *really* lively REM sleep?

KATIE

(pause)

Should you be taking those and drinking?

KATHLEEN

That's what the instructions say.

(looking down at the bottle elaborately for the effect)

Yes, take several of these throughout the night with copious amounts of vodka.

KATIE

Kathleen.

KATHLEEN

It does! Look here, see.

(she holds out the bottle for inspection)

KATIE

Very funny.

KATHLEEN

Civility.

(she smiles wryly, takes a second pill and stuffs the bottle into her pocket)

No I don't blame Billy. *Things, had, changed.* That fraught phrase marks the end of so many enduring relationships. It's said as if it's a surprise that they do. As if they don't always change. That's what they do. *Things.* They change.

KATIE

It doesn't matter.

KATHLEEN

I wasn't what I had been. I wasn't what he fell in love with anymore.

KATIE

That doesn't matter!

KATHLEEN

Oh but it does, it does to them.

KATIE

But it shouldn't. It shouldn't if they truly love us. If they're what they say they are, if they're what we want them to be. The promise fulfilled. And if we're the one they've dreamt of and worked so hard for as if it was meant to be for all time. If they truly—

KATHLEEN

Shut up! Shut up! Shut up!—You're talking like a child!....And we're done with all that.

(she jams another pill in her mouth, moves to pull out another bottle of vodka. To the Audience)

He tried at first. It wasn't the good ol' college try, but what can you do. He was a boy of twenty-one. He tried....The suddenness of it surprised us both. We didn't know what to do and it scared us both. But I could see it in those eyes.

KATIE

Robin's egg blue. He could never lie to me with them.

KATHLEEN

And we both just keep looking hard at each other to see if there was an explanation there. But there wasn't.—It's amazing how a simple lack of understanding can be so painful. *Not* not understanding something, in the sense that you don't know what the words mean.—But not

KATHLEEN – con't

comprehending why something is, and why you can't change what is to something else. And you understand it, you do, you just don't understand why it has to be....Slowly, imperceptibly slipping away down.

KATIE

Then at the Paradise.

KATHLEEN

(pause)

Then at the Paradise.

KATIE

It started there.

KATHLEEN

It didn't start there. I just first noticed it there.

KATIE

There wasn't ever another girl in the room for him. It had always been me. I loved it, I loved his obsession. His watching me always. Not out of the corner of his eyes, not slyly when he thinks I'm not looking. But watching me. Full on staring. Tracking every little movement I make. As I crossed a room, as I got out of a car, as I waited on the grocery line. Always, constantly....I loved it.

KATHLEEN

Then at the Paradise we started to hate him.

(an angry pause as she slips in a pill)

What was her name? Nemiah?

KATIE

Norah.

KATHLEEN

(pause)

Norah Weldon....I knew her name.

KATIE

I know you did.

KATHLEEN

I just wanted to drag it out a bit longer. To remind you of it. To remind you of the way it felt. You do remember it?

KATIE

You know what it was like.

KATHLEEN

Yes but I have forgotten it over the years....It lessens with time.

(pause)

The nausea, the sickness inside as it dawns on you. Lights spinning, the inability to catch your breath. Isn't that what it was like?

KATIE

I'm tired. I'm going to lie down.

KATHLEEN

What, with all this fun?

(KATIE sits down on the coach)

You do that, you sleep a little. You probably think you can.

(to the audience)

It was a Friday in late May, the first night home from school. Our town, the next town, every town for five towns over, everybody went to the Paradise, it was a local tradition. We'd all meet there that first night. It was a must. And *musts* when are twenty-one, are, well—musts.

KATHLEEN – con't

(to KATIE)

That is the most offensive quality about you, isn't it? Your ability to sleep.

KATIE

It's a bodily necessity.

KATHLEEN

Don't you believe that. Ask my liver if it ever gets to sleep. It takes a long time to pass liquor through all this fat.

KATIE

You're not fat.

KATHLEEN

And you're pretty—since we're both telling lies.

KATIE

Does it help to be mean to me?

KATHLEEN

More than I can describe in words.

KATIE

(sleepy as she lies down)

Then go ahead. I am here to help you.

KATHLEEN

No, you're here to torment me.

(KATIE, lying on her back, closes her eyes)

KATHLEEN

(to the audience)

You may not have guessed it, but I wasn't what you could call "a very serious girl."—A very serious girl. I was *plenty* serious depending on what the topic was. As long as it was a topic I was serious about, I was quite serious. The three N's. Fashion, equestrian, sexual tension. A pretty girl's three Rs.

(looking at KATIE, loudly)

Are you sleeping yet?!

(back to AUDIENCE)

The young have no heart in so many ways. Where was I?

KATIE

First Friday.

KATHLEEN

Ah yes, the first Friday. Everyone was there, the old crowd, the no-crowd, all the neighboring townies and rejects. I got there late. I had been to the doctor again. Billy was already there with his friends. Same stupid morons.

KATIE

Nothing ever changed.

KATHLEEN

But something was different with him. I asked him what was wrong, but he didn't say anything was. Just shrugging and wincing like always, cracking his neck to the left and right. But the way he played with his hair, pulling it down to the side over his temple.

KATIE

He always did that when he was nervous.

KATHLEEN

And he didn't look me in the eyes. I didn't understand, normally he can't take his eyes off me.

KATIE

He was looking somewhere else.

KATHLEEN

In the corner, near ATM machine. He kept looking there. It took me a while to realize that he was actually looking there, and not just pouting like always. She was there in the corner with Sally.—Hmmp, Sally.....Yes, that's right. Norah was talking to Sally Sensenter and looking over all night.

(a long pause as KATHLEEN meanders for the scrapbook)

KATIE

I'm going to sleep now.

KATHLEEN

And he was looking over there. He was glancing back. Sneaking peeks, straining his neck, striking odd poses to put himself in position. It was ridiculous. When I talked to someone else, when I checked out the room, when I was....he was looking at someone else.

(pause)

We had the first of the *last* fights that night. Yelling and screaming in the parking lot. Or rather me yelling and screaming and he just listening and shaking his head, putting on that silly puss face he always made when he was caught doing something wrong, adding the occasional "but I wasn't," "but I didn't."....I wouldn't get in his car, I wouldn't think of it, I was so mad. I walked home from the Roy Rogers with him following behind driving five miles an hour the whole way.

(she turns to look at KATIE, sleeping)

I'm still amazed at that. We forget that there ever was a peaceful period. That at some point in our lives, we had peace. And we could sleep. Sleep like we did as a baby.

KATHLEEN – con't

(she turns to the audience)

Actually she's quite right. You've caught me on a good night, my faded Laura Ashley sundress notwithstanding. My spirits are the best they've been in months. Sometimes the fog clears and the path just rolls out before you. Psychopharmacology—it's my favorite word. Brain drugs! All these medications they've been giving me lately. Anti-depressants, anti-mood swings, anti-psychotics. Yum! Psychopharmacology, psychopharmacology, psychopharmacology. It's so fun to say! It gives you just enough strength to do something productive. Like torture!

(she pauses, then looks back at KATIE)

It used to always be that way with her. Peaceful. Easy. When I was....well, when I was.

(she moves about grabbing a picture frame)

It wasn't the disease, it was the cure. Isn't it always. And as I said it happened so fast, I couldn't stop crying. Everyday it was more and more and you could see it more and more. On my face, on my hips, on the back of my thighs, oh my god, I was crying all the time. Screaming at Mother “*Do something! Why don't you do something?!*”—But what could she do? She was crying as much as me. I guess for me but you can never be sure. I think she was sorry for herself too. The loss of her perfect child, her bright star, that brought her all this praise and acclaim. “Oh she's just precious Roslyn, just so precious!”

(she reaches into her pocket and take a pill)

So I stopped taking the pills. I did, for eleven days. But I collapsed in my dorm room and they had to rush me to the emergency room. Mother'd come into the *triage* room they had me in, crying and pleading “You've got to take the pills honey. You've got to take them.” But I didn't have to take them, I didn't have to do anything of the sort. And I didn't two or three other times after that!....But it always ended up the same. Montclair Memorial emergency room, Mother pleading and crying, nurses feeding me pills, hooking up IV bottles again. So eventually I gave into the pills. But I'd show them, I wouldn't eat anything except lettuce and bran muffins. I'd go days on end, no protein, no carbohydrates, just all this roughage and fiber. I had the prettiest little colon on God's green earth. I did. I wasn't pooping anything but these little angry green pellets....But that didn't work either. I couldn't get out of bed after a week or two of that, I was so anemic.

(she stops, turns to the audience)

KATHLEEN – con't

So I ate. I ate cause I had to. A *bodily* necessity....And I gained weight. Just like the doctor said I would.

(back to the scrap book)

I'd walk down the street and no one would look at me. I'd walk into a restaurant and no one would lift their head. In certain parts of North Jersey, they lift their head for any teased mess that struts a spandex waistband within two meatball hoagies of them. But then....What was I to do?....Lock myself up, never go out again and dream of better days.

(pause as she moves to the table for a scissor)

It seemed the easiest way. I'm a natural avoider. I'd avoided my whole life up until that point, why change when it was really working.

(suddenly serious)

There was nothing else. I didn't have anything else. When the things you've always counted on have left you, what are you?

(she stops again)

But at least I didn't lose my sunny disposition!

(KATIE awakes with a lift when this is loudly uttered)

Oh, did I wake you sunshine?

KATIE

(groggy)

I wasn't sleeping. Merely closing my eyes.

KATHLEEN

Don't worry, we didn't notice your absence at all.

KATIE

I'm sure you didn't.

KATHLEEN

(getting worked up)

I'm sure they didn't either. That's an arrogance of youth. When you're young, you think when you leave a room, that room *ceases* to exist. That people just stop, that their lives and the stories they're telling, the intrigues they're living just halt until you return. But they *don't* cease to exist, they continue, they live! They live and they persist and it goes on to whatever end, to whatever happiness or tragedy it was heading anyway. It goes on. And your leaving doesn't stop it, it doesn't make it disappear, never to be seen, never to be heard, it goes on! *It goes on!*

KATIE

I *know*, I understand that!

KATHLEEN

Do you?!

KATIE

I don't see what you're getting so worked up about.

KATHLEEN

I get worked up when you come in here and talk to me, and talk to *us*, like you matter here. Like your part in this, this *night*, like anything you do or think matters here.

KATIE

I never said it did.

KATHLEEN

But you act that way, *you act that way!* You prance around here in your outfit, *in that outfit*, believing that you matter! And pretending in front of them that the brief time that people thought about you, that people cared what happened to you at all mattered to anyone! I won't have it! I won't have you pretending that in front of them!

(a long pause as KATHLEEN paces, drinks and pops)

KATIE

Why are they here?

KATHLEEN

Why shouldn't they be here?

KATIE

(pause)

But why are they here this time?

KATHLEEN

*What?....*You know.

KATIE

(pause)

No. I don't—

KATHLEEN

You know!

KATIE

(pause)

But why?

KATHLEEN

You sound like an eight year old. *But why, but why.*

KATIE

Tell me.

KATHLEEN

(imitating)

Tell me.

KATIE

Kathleen....Kathleen tell me—

KATHLEEN

Because! Isn't that the proper response to "why?" *Because.*

(pause as she moves around)

Because it's time. Why? Because it's time. Nothing more profound. Sorry to disappoint you.

KATIE

(pause)

Can you tell me?

(KATHLEEN doesn't respond, she just staggers around taking pictures off shelves)

KATHLEEN

I got a postcard from Billy today, did I tell you?—Yes, it arrived in the mail along with the leopard-print Snuggie I ordered and two A&P circulars. One dollar off my next Pantene purchase! Very exciting. I'm a lucky gal....It was one of those picture postcards where you take pictures on your camera and you rush home from your vacation, all excited about all these *wonderful* photos you've taken, and you can't wait to turn them into a postcard by printing them up on the *laser jet* on that thick paper stock.—It was a form card, well, form writing was on it anyway. "*Aloha from the Angstrom's! Wish you Maholo from Oahu. XOXO!*"

(she starts to look for it)

KATIE

Tacky.

KATHLEEN

You should see the picture. The whole family, the two boys and the girl. I guess they left the dog back in Milburn. Everyone's smiling, wearing tank tops. He's in Bermuda shorts, she's in some caftan sundress, very pert and perky.

KATIE

She probably bought it at Penny's. She always seemed very second tier retail to me. More Willowbrook than Short Hills.

KATHLEEN

He's put on some weight. It looks good on him. Hair receding slightly, small paunch starting. The years have treated *him* well.

KATIE

They certainly haven't her. She looks like a tree twig with a head on top.

KATHLEEN

Be nice.

KATIE

Look who's talking.

KATHLEEN

She didn't do anything to us. It was years later.

KATIE

It was *four* years later. Two years after college.

KATHLEEN

She wasn't even from around here.

KATIE

Still it was too soon.

KATHLEEN

Forever would have been too soon for you.

KATIE

No *not* forever.—But longer than he waited.

KATHLEEN

You shouldn't've expected him to wait. He was that type, even before then. Even before we had him, he was meant to be led. A boy for whom a strong woman controls everything except urination and masturbation.

KATIE

Eeeuw—Not necessary.

(KATHLEEN finds the picture, lifts it up to view it above her head)

KATHLEEN

They're smiling. All sun-drenched and happy....*Healthy.*

(she puts down the picture, then moves away)

It's a great picture actually. A perfect family picture. One where you'll look back on fondly for years to come when you're old and the children have grown and left the nest, and they then only speak to you in bored tones and hurried conversations about the weather.—When you're two elderly souls alone managing the twilight together....You can look at that picture—you can look at it and say you did something right. For awhile, for a small brief moment—everything was all right.

KATIE

Nothing he can do can be that right.

KATHLEEN

Let him be.

KATIE

Why? How good was he really?

KATHLEEN

He was wonderful!

(pause)

We owe him so much. For what he gave us, for what he allowed us to feel....Special. Incredibly special.—I have had love. Known it, received it, bathed and adorned with it. How lucky, how wonderfully lucky I am. If for only then, I had it all then. It's far more than most ever do.—And it was all because of him.

(she meanders)

So he *was* that good for really so long....And with our foolish attempt in the end....

KATIE

What do you mean?

(pause as KATHLEEN ignores her)

Kathleen what?

KATHLEEN

Don't do that.

KATIE

I don't know what you're talking about so please....

KATHLEEN

You know what was in your mind.

KATIE

What are you talking about?—Tell me what you think occurred because I don't know what *you* had in *your* mind. I never do. Sometimes I'm afraid to imagine. But I'm sure I had nothing of that sort—

KATHLEEN

Stop it Kathleen—

KATIE

Nothing of *that* sort was in my mind. I don't think like you think.

KATHLEEN

You think like I thought that night.

KATIE

That's ridiculous! I didn't think anything like that! Oh you're so popped up on pills and liquor all the time you don't know what the hell you're saying! In this state you'll think anything, you possibly think—

(KATHLEEN smashes the bottle on the floor. long pause)

KATHLEEN

(fierce, yet not screaming)

Don't you do that! Don't you dare deny that night!

(a long pause as KATIE moves away from KATHLEEN)

He was so kind, and even still so very innocent then. So unawares as to how we work. I wonder if any of them ever really know. Or for that matter if we do. I don't think I did until only very recently. We aren't from different nearby planets. We're two alien species from far off different galaxies—making pops and clicking noises at each other trying to

KATHLEEN – con't

communicate—and never quite understanding what the other being's sounds mean.—But we keep jabbering on, hoping against hope that something will get through, yet stupidly stunned that nothing ever does each and every time. It's a wonder we ever get on together at all, if even for a short time.

(KATHLEEN gets another bottle of vodka from the carton)

So don't you ever do that.

(a long pause. And with this pause, a change comes over KATIE)

KATIE

(to the Audience)

It'd begun by then. It was even in full swing. The weight and the hormones, gaining every day it seemed.—And he tried hard. He was such a good boy. He almost made me believe it didn't matter to him. He almost made himself believe.

KATHLEEN

And we were so mean to him after that night.

KATIE

It was the only way at that point. I was losing him.—I couldn't imagine that. It was a thought so utterly unthinkable to me for so long. That there would be a time, when all else failed—that he wouldn't be mine.

KATHLEEN

You were saying.

KATIE

It wasn't our first time, we had been together before that night. Several times. Billy was so happy the first time. I *had* made him wait. I had made him *beg* before the first time....But we hadn't in awhile.

KATHLEEN

(to the audience)

Not because of him. *I* hadn't wanted to.—I couldn't bear to have him see me that way.

KATIE

But that night, *I* initiated. I was forceful. More forceful than I'd ever been before. I think it scared him.

KATHLEEN

It would've scared me if I hadn't planned it all out.

KATIE

I was meticulous. I made drinks, Tequila Sunrises. Or whatever I thought goes into one of those. Tequila and whatever juice you have in the frig. I even made him do two tequila shots to be sure. I picked out the right music, Prince, Purple Rain. There was even the low-cut blouse.

KATHLEEN

(again to the audience, emphasizing her breasts)

That's the only good thing to the weight gain. Now I have something to show.

KATIE

He didn't know what was going on.—But *I* was thinking. We danced slowly. Slow enough so he didn't step on me. A silly little four step to "When Doves Cry" in his dorm room.

KATHLEEN

(singing slightly, meandering)

Dig if you will a picture, you and I engaged in a kiss." Hmm mmmn. It was sweet.

KATIE

When I didn't want to use anything, he *tried* to put up a fight. "No Katie. C'mon Katie, no."—It wasn't much of a fight.

KATHLEEN

It never really is.

KATIE

I could still make him do what I wanted to then. Perhaps for the last time then.

KATHLEEN

We had no choice.

KATIE

We had always been so careful. *I* had always been so doubly careful. I'd make him use protection and still make him pull out just the same.

KATHLEEN

He was so confused.

KATIE

His mind couldn't think that way in terms of me. "Take off your shirt now. Now I'll take off mine. Don't worry about the socks—*okay*, take of your socks if you wish!"

KATHLEEN

They're so stupid when it comes to undressing. Like drunk elephants on an ice pond.

KATIE

"No, we don't need one. It's all right, it's almost my time. It'll be all right."

(laughing ironically)

Who believes that anymore? "It's almost my time." Is this the Fifties? Are they still as naive as their grandfathers? Are they really able to delude themselves *that* completely.

KATIE – con't

(pause, then to KATHLEEN)

I think he knew.

KATHLEEN

No he didn't.—He was just following what I told him to do.

(pause)

I remember his face as he looked at me. Those beautiful blue eyes. So trusting, so believing that I could never do him any real harm. It never entered his mind at that point.

KATIE

I stared directly into them the whole time. He never looked away, not for a split second. It was like we were locked together in some kind of slow motion train wreck. I can still see his head moving slowly against the pillow each time I moved on top of him. Rolling up and down, up and down, pushed passively like a dead weight as if he didn't have the strength to resist....And the expression on his face, that expression....

KATHLEEN

Fear.

KATIE

(long pause)

I think he knew.

(KATHLEEN moves away, struggling with bottle in hand)

KATHLEEN

He was risking everything. The next day, the next week, the next fifty years of his life. A crazy little gamble on chance and luck and things we didn't even understand. An arrow shot at a moving target and all the consequences nature can inflict.

KATIE

Would it have been that bad for him?

KATHLEEN

All his plans and dreams. Everything we were going to do, the things we were never going to be. All the dreams we were gonna sell out on anyway as we grew older.

KATIE

Would it have been *that bad*?

KATHLEEN

YES!....I'd've made sure of that.

(she moves with unsure steps)

Suffering, smiling through, drained and dragged, wanting to blow his brains out all over the wooden mallards on the fireplace mantle. I'd've hated him. I'd've hated him everyday and he would never've had that. It's a great luxury, hatred, perhaps the greatest luxury of all.— I'd've hated him for everything that was happening to me, every pound, every rejection, ever slight real or imagined that would've happened or not....I'd've hated him good.

KATIE

Like I hated him when it didn't work.

(pause as they look at each other momentarily)

I've never seen him so angry as he was there that moment just after. Not like that, not like from surface hurt. He'd punch walls and he'd kick car doors before, bust tires—but that was just play fighting, because he was frustrated at some little maneuver I was playing on him....But he was truly angry then. Silent angry.

KATHLEEN

It was the end.

(KATIE starts to say something, stops. pause)

KATHLEEN – con't

I didn't really want it to work. After it was over, after it didn't work—I didn't really want it to work after all, I didn't want him that way. It seemed like a good idea beforehand. It seemed like the *only* idea beforehand. But right after, as soon as we were done....

KATIE

We just laid there, it seemed like forever. Him hurting mad, and me just mad—it felt like maybe an hour but it was only a few minutes. We didn't touch, we didn't even come near each other at all. Just lying there each one on their side of the bed, staring up at the ceiling not sure what to say, not sure what to do, whether to get up and clean ourselves off or to just get up and leave....So close to each other yet nowhere near.

KATHLEEN

We didn't talk for two weeks after that. That was the longest time since we first met in the Seventh-grade Junior High orientation. I only called him to let him know he could stop worrying. I was bleeding just fine.—There was just silence.

KATIE

“Did you hear me? Did you hear what I said?”

(imitating, whiney)

Yes.”

KATHLEEN

(pause)

Yes.

(KATHLEEN staggers about the room, stuffing pills in her mouth)

KATIE

A coward! A goddamn coward!

KATHLEEN

No....He didn't run from it. Most of them would have run, run far and fast. Most would've....he just refused to fight.

KATIE

That's the same thing!

KATHLEEN

There's a difference.—Standing there with me taunting him, insulting him, coming at him ceaselessly....He wasn't coward. He knew what he was coming back to and he came back to that.

KATIE

Not in the same way!

KATHLEEN

How can you expect him to?! *Can* you've expected him to?...Even I couldn't stomach the same way anymore. When the end comes, it doesn't come at a full stop like a traffic light. It drones on and on, finished, over, but not stopped. The actual stopping comes on long after the end. Like a trail going off into the horizon, finally disappearing altogether.—Completely unworthy of all the extremes that came before.

(she puts more pills into her mouth)

And this petering out denigrates all that came before it. Diminishing what was once and before, but now seems to never've been....So blighting is the present upon the past.

(she looks at KATIE for a long hard moment. Then swallows several pills with much effort)

So you remember, and you retell it again and again to yourself, to remind yourself of it, to make it real when all it feels is so false. So other, so someone other and not yourself. It all rings so false that you no longer doubt it wasn't you. It wasn't you. You know that for certain. All doubt has been removed. It's never been you and it won't ever be you again.

KATHLEEN – con't

(she grabs the scrapbook, hugging it tightly in her arms. She reaches for a bottle but can't grasp it, then staggers around the apartment, lost)

It's time for you to go.

KATIE

It's okay, I'm not sleepy.

KATHLEEN

That doesn't matter.

KATIE

But I don't have to go, I'm not sleepy.

KATHLEEN

All I am is sleepy.

KATIE

That's okay, I'll talk. I'll talk and you'll listen.

KATHLEEN

I don't want to listen anymore. I'm tired of listening. With all the listening one has to do everyday of your life, it's amazing we all don't choose to jam pins into our ears drums and never hear again.

KATIE

But I want to hear more Kathleen. I want to hear more.

(KATHLEEN moves to the couch and lies down facing upward, clutching the scrapbook in both arms)

KATHLEEN

You will. You'll always hear more, that's your fate. More than you'll ever want to. Until someday you won't want to hear anymore.

KATIE

Katie?

KATHLEEN

And then someday you'll just lie down and they'll be no more to hear. You'll have heard all there is that's worthy to hear. And there'll be no more stories, no more memories, no more insults, no more advice, no more lies.

KATIE

Katie talk to me. Listen to me, can you talk to me?

KATHLEEN

And there will be silence. Complete and utter silence, so deep and long that you'll forget what sound was like.

KATIE

Katie?!

KATHLEEN

And it'll be good, that silence. It will be very, very good. You'll be glad for it. You'll be very glad for it.

KATIE

KATIE?!—*KATIE?!!*

KATHLEEN

When it comes, it will be good.

KATIE

KATIE?!

(KATIE standing over KATHLEEN on the couch, pauses, stares down at her earnestly. Slowly, she moves to the mess and starts to bend down to clean it, but stops mid bend, straightens stiffly and turns to KATHLEEN lying on the couch)

Lights down