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Have a Heart

Lisa Beth Allen
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Have a Heart

A Thesis

Submitted to the Graduation Faculty of the
University of New Orleans
In partial fulfillment of the
Requirement for the degree of

Master of Fine Arts
in
Film, Theatre and Communication Arts
Creative Writing

by

Lisa Beth Allen

B.A. Case Western Reserve University, 1983

May, 2011

Have a Heart

By

Lisa Beth Allen

Winner 2010 Kennedy Center ACTF Jean Kennedy Smith Award

Have a Heart can be performed by four actors with minimal doubling. Two additional actors are required to make prerecorded video segments.

CAST OF CHARACTERS

Daniel R. Davis	*48 year old male Wall Street tycoon. Brilliant, aggressive, once strong and formidable, now afflicted with Amyotrophic Lateral Sclerosis, Lou Gerhig's disease. His disability advances throughout the play.
Jennifer Santos	27 year old female. Exotically beautiful, although completely unaffected by it. Daniel's Executive Assistant. Relaxed, unflappable. All about getting the job done.
Laurel Fein (pronounced Fine)	46 year old female. Intelligent, attractive and charming. Daniel's life long friend and one time love. She has devoted her life to helping others, working in the non-profit human services arena.
Kenneth Davis	45 year old male. Daniel's younger brother. A successful psychiatrist. Athletic, attractive and easy going on the outside. Something uneasy churns beneath the surface.
**Vic	Off stage voice of video screening room technician.
**Addison	British female television line producer. Brash, aggressive.

*The role of Daniel can be played anywhere between 45 and 53. Adjust the ages of Laurel and Ken to maintain the established age spread. Jennifer should remain 27.

**Vic can be doubled by the actor playing Kenneth.

**Addison can be doubled by the actor playing Jennifer

Prerecorded Contestants

Lukas Simms	17 year old heart patient.
Vanessa Roberts	35 year old heart patient.

PRODUCTION NOTES

Have a Heart is written to be performed in four settings. These can range from being minimally suggested to naturalistically fully realized. If there are budgetary restrictions the piece can be altered to be performed on one unit office set. Experimentation with setting and production style is encouraged.

The actor playing Daniel will need to transform quickly as his disease progresses. This is another opportunity for theatrical experimentation. Such things as layering clothing, using oversized garments, and makeup may be done cost effectively. Ultimately, it is up to the actor to convince the audience of his character's physical decline.

Place: Here
Time: Now

Act I

Scene 1: Daniel's office.
Scene 2: A park bench.
Scene 3: A small screening room.
Scene 4: Daniel's office.
Scene 5: Daniel's office.

Act II

Scene 1: Daniel's office, next morning.
Scene 2: Screening room.
Scene 3: A simple room in Daniel's home set up for hospice care.

Note on Act II Song

The song mentioned by title in *Have a Heart* is protected by copyright and may not be used in performance without the written permission of the copyright owners. Please direct your request as follows:

Ain't No Fun (Waitn' Around To Be A Millionaire) by Angus Young, Malcolm Young, and Bonn Scott. ASCAP registration #310196311. Publisher: J Albert-Son (USA) Inc. C/O Carlin America Inc. 126 E. 38th St., New York, NY 10016, (212) 779-7977

*The playwright is a member of the Dramatist Guild of America, Inc.

ACT I SCENE 1

(An executive office that says “success.”
There is at least one door leading to Daniel’s
assistant’s office. If desired a second door
can lead to an unseen private powder room)

*Early April. Sitting at desk is 48 year-old
DANIEL R. DAVIS. Once impressive in size
and stature, now starting to look unwell. HE
is in the middle stages of ALS, just beginning
to exhibit symptoms in hands and legs. HIS
speech is not yet effected. DANIEL wears an
expensive suit.*

*HE signs papers while talking on Bluetooth.
Intermittently HE twirls a pen between his
fingers and eats Hostess HoHos from the box.*

*JEN, 27, DANIEL’S exotically beautiful
assistant stands waiting. SHE holds a syringe.*

DANIEL

(On Bluetooth) Ray. Ray... Ray! If you’ll just shut up for a minute I’ll- Ray, it’s
business! Come on Ray, there’ll be other- Nice? It’s business.

*DANIEL drops pen. HE goes to get it and
knocks papers off desk.*

JEN tries to help. HE waves HER off.

*With some difficulty DANIEL retrieves pen and
a paper or two.*

Well your “conscience” sure didn’t seem to be a problem when you were on the *winning*
side. Look Raymond, you lost this one. Give it up- *I don’t lose!* ...For Christ sake, ya’
played with the big boys and you lost...

HE twirls pen.

Come on, take it like a man... Hey, you were the guy who begged *me-* You begged Ray...
yeah, you begged. It’s business!!

JEN clears throat. DANIEL looks up and mouths "What?" SHE holds up syringe.

DANIEL offers JEN a HoHo. SHE declines.

DANIEL

I gotta go Ray. Ray. I have a meeting I've gotta' get to across town... God damn it Ray...

DANIEL drops HoHo onto papers. HE rubs chocolate deeper into papers as HE tries to clean them.

You got in over your head. It was business. I'm a business man- Don't you dare pull that *family* shit with me, Ray. Ray? You there Ray? I gotta' go. Yeah, I'll see ya', bye.

DANIEL appears smaller and weaker when off phone. During dialogue DANIEL leans over desk, lowers pants and exposes upper butt.

It's business God damn it. I don't know what the hell they want from me.

JEN gives HIM first shot.

Ow! Damn.

JEN

You're getting way worked up about this one.

DANIEL

He's a friend of my wife's sister. Never, ever, do business with

DANIEL
family or friends of family-

JEN
Family or friends of family...

DANIEL

It will always-

SHE gives HIM the second shot.

DANIEL
Shit!

JEN
Always

DANIEL
...blow up in your face.

HE pulls HIS pants up.

DANIEL

You're worse than the night nurse, and she works to make it hurt.

JEN picks up the remainder of papers from floor.

JEN

What makes you think I don't?

*JEN gives DANIEL five pills and more water.
SHE tries to clean chocolate from papers.*

DANIEL

Because, you work to get that nice fat bonus you start to smell this time of year. Unless causing me pain a few times a day is enough for you?

JEN

Hmmmm..... I'll have to think about that one.

*JEN watches DANIEL struggle with pills.
SHE gives up on papers.*

DANIEL

Crap!

(Deflecting his frustration with himself)

Damn it Jen, you really rubbed it in there. Now it'll never come out.

JEN

I'll print these two again.

DANIEL finishes taking pills.

DANIEL

Thanks. I don't want to give Heslup anything to keep him from signing tomorrow. He'd argue about an un-dotted "i," if he thought it might stall the merger.

DANIEL has a HoHo chaser after pills.

JEN moves the remaining papers to a safe place.

JEN

It would kill you if you thought he'd win the-

Beat

JEN

Sorry.

DANIEL

No, you are one hundred percent right. It *would* kill me.

JEN starts to leave.

Hey, don't get all *careful* on me. Okay?

SHE stops.

JEN

Yeah. Thanks.

JEN exits.

*DANIEL'S posture slumps. HE is fatigued.
DANIEL leans back in chair and closes eyes.*

JEN peaks in door.

DANIEL

Yes?

JEN

Laurel Fein is here to see you.

DANIEL

Was she on the schedule?

JEN

Uh, no. She was... in the neighborhood. Roger is here for his weekly lube and oil job.

DANIEL

Is he standing right there?

JEN

Of course not. He's in the can prepping his dip stick.

DANIEL

You're terrible. Remind me to give you a raise.

DANIEL twirls pen.

Yeah, okay... You're gonna' love this.

HIS hand grows stiff.

Tell Rog we have to reschedule. Tell him the Berringer Group is pulling out of the TranStar merger.

JEN

You're kidding?

DANIEL

Yes, I am. Tell him I've got to take an emergency meeting with Berringer's... uh... Granddaughter. Say "Mr. Davis is trying to get in the back door," ...then look over at Laurel.

DANIEL twirls pen, after a moment, he stiffens and it slips from his fingers.

JEN retrieves pen.

Throw in... "it might be an all day thing," or something like that. Aughta' make him nice and twitchy.

JEN looks back into unseen waiting area.

JEN

(Indicating Roger is outside door) Yes sir. *He's here* and I will relay the message, in its entirety.

DANIEL

Thanks Jen. Give me a minute, then send Laurel in.

JEN exits.

DANIEL puts suit coat on. Takes handkerchief from pocket, wipes head and face. Stretches muscles of hands and mouth.

HE clears pill bottles off desk. Pulls out paper work, looks busy.

JEN peeks back in door.

Ready? JEN

Yeah. DANIEL

Hey, wait... what did little Rog say? *JEN starts to leave.*

JEN grins.

I'll send Laurel in. JEN

SHE closes door.

DANIEL puffs up, preparing HIS public self.

LAUREL FEIN (pronounced Fine) enters. SHE is an attractive 46 year-old woman. Bright, warm and intelligent. Simply dressed. Not stylish, but not out of style.

Who was that in your waiting area? LAUREL

DANIEL, who would normally greet Laurel with a warm hug and a welcoming smile, responds without looking up from desk.

Old man Stern's Grandkid. DANIEL

LAUREL, who under other circumstances would give DANIEL a big hug and a kiss on the cheek, keeps a politely awkward distance.

He's an intern. DANIEL

LAUREL

Does he always drool like that? Or, am I just special?

DANIEL

He thought you were someone important.

LAUREL

I'm not?

DANIEL looks up.

LAUREL is visibly surprised by HIS physical appearance.

Wow, Danny.

DANIEL

What?

LAUREL

Nothing... I mean... wow, you look-

DANIEL

Oh yeah... I've been working a lot of overtime...

LAUREL

You mean overtime beyond your normal eighty hour weeks?

DANIEL

Yeah... you know me...

LAUREL

Can I... get you... do, anything for you?

DANIEL

I'm fine. As you can see I'm swamped with paperwork.

Beat

You don't mind if I don't get up?

LAUREL

Oh, no... of course not.

DANIEL

So what can I do you for today, miss bleeding heart?

LAUREL

Knock anyone off the ladder recently?

LAUREL takes a small paper bag out of purse, hands to DANIEL.

DANIEL

No one who didn't deserve it.

DANIEL pulls homemade Rice-Krispy treats with extra pastel colored mini-marshmallows from the bag.

LAUREL

Just, felt like baking.

DANIEL

Another *save the world* project? How much do you need?

LAUREL

Can't a person do something nice without having an agenda?

DANIEL

Not someone who knows your Achilles heel.

HE eats treat.

LAUREL

I'd never use inside knowledge that way.

DANIEL

Never say never. God, these are good.

DANIEL offers LAUREL a treat.

So, a new artistic genius who needs a benefactor?

LAUREL

Am I that predictable?

DANIEL

Let's call it, consistent.

HE indicates treats.

Thanks Lo. You're the only one who would do this for me.

DANIEL twirls pen.

DANIEL

So, what'll it be today? Charity or art?

LAUREL

Actually, today I have a real business proposition.

DANIEL

Right.

DANIEL'S hand stiffens. Pen is flung to the floor. HE starts to pick it up, instead gets another from desk drawer.

LAUREL watches HIM struggle. SHE bends down, gets pen.

Thanks. My back's a little stiff... rough racquetball match this morning... after, a um... all night transatlantic flight. You look great, by the way.

LAUREL

I do? Thanks.

DANIEL

So, why are you really here?

LAUREL

I told you.

DANIEL

You have a-

LAUREL

Business proposition... yes.

DANIEL

This oughta' be good.

LAUREL

I'm serious.

Pause

How have you been feeling?

DANIEL

Great. Perfect, except for this stiff back thing...

LAUREL

I stopped in about three weeks ago. They said you were out... indefinitely...

DANIEL

Yeah... It looked like, I was maybe gonna' have to... uh, run the London office... for a, uh, I don't know... a while.

LAUREL

What happened?

DANIEL

With what?

Beat

Oh, London, yeah... One of the guys from the, uh... Paris office, single guy... you know... was able to uh... Hey, I'm extra busy today Lo. What do you need?

LAUREL

I ran into your parents last week. At a brunch I set up for the Barker Foundation.

DANIEL

What a nice little surprise for you.

LAUREL

It was nice.

*DANIEL buries his face in paperwork as
THEY talk.*

Your dad looks good. I'm glad he's getting out a little.

DANIEL

Yeah, he's on some new Rheumatoid miracle cure diet thing.

LAUREL

I hope it works.

DANIEL

I'm pretty skeptical about anything with *miracle* attached to it. He might be better off seeing the village witch doctor.

LAUREL

I think it's great he's open to trying things.

DANIEL

I wish him well.

LAUREL

What, if it was you, you wouldn't try everything possible?

Silence

They told me about... I know you're, sick. I asked why you were out of the office and they-

DANIEL

Well, yeah, I've got this thing. It's not serious though-

LAUREL

You have ALS.

DANIEL

I'm in the early stages.

LAUREL

You've been sick for almost three years.

DANIEL

Two years, seven months, and somewhere between thirty to ninety days. My mother has a very big mouth.

LAUREL

It was actually your father. Your mom tried to stop him.

DANIEL

I'll be sure to give her a birthday bonus.

LAUREL

They both seemed like they needed to talk about it.

Beat

I am so... sorry Daniel, I wish I could-

DANIEL

Have you ever known me to give in to being sick?

LAUREL

Nope. You are the most stubborn person I know.

DANIEL

Tenacious.

LAUREL

It's Lou Gehrig's Disease...

DANIEL struggles to put papers in an envelope.

DANIEL

The higher the stakes the harder I fall. Something you never understood.

LAUREL

I understood it, I just didn't want to be a part of it. Especially the part about spitting on the people you've knocked into the gutter while you pass them by.

DANIEL

I can't believe you still bring that up. I just said it to-

LAUREL

How are Liz and the kids handling it?

DANIEL

Knowing I'm dying? I'm not, and they're fine.

LAUREL

Liz doesn't know?

DANIEL

Of course she does. What kind of an ass-

LAUREL

You've been sick for almost three years... Why didn't you tell me?

DANIEL

I've only known for nine months.

LAUREL

But still, you should have said... something. (Beat) The kids don't know?

Frustrated, DANIEL puts papers in desk drawer.

DANIEL
It's just for now, while I'm... working things out.

LAUREL
Does Ken know?

DANIEL works a pill bottle open.

DANIEL
Ken who?

LAUREL
Ken, your brother.

DANIEL
He's in Holland with his new boyfriend.

LAUREL
How's Dr. Ken doing?

DANIEL
As far as I know, he's having safe sex and he doesn't have AIDS.

LAUREL
That's not what I'm asking.

DANIEL
He's had three articles published in the last five months, testified before congress in September and, addressed the UN General Assembly in December.

LAUREL
Your mother mentioned that.

DANIEL
Mentioned? You mean you didn't see the billboard she rented?

LAUREL
Is this the first guy he's dated since-

DANIEL
I wouldn't know. Liz seems to think it could be the first serious one.

LAUREL
Have you guys spoken-

DANIEL
No.

LAUREL
Is he-

DANIEL
Still a lousy ass drunk? Liz keeps in contact, you'd have to ask her.

DANIEL pops pill without water.

Stop looking at me like that.

LAUREL
Like what?

DANIEL
Like "poor Danny, he's dying and can't bully or... or buy himself out of it, so... he's taking it out on everyone else."

LAUREL
Wow. I was actually thinking about the last time we were all together, you, me, and Ken.

Pill gets stuck in DANIEL'S throat. HE drinks water, HIS grip is shaky.

Let me help.

DANIEL brushes her off gruffly.

DANIEL
I got it. So, your big ass business deal?

LAUREL
I've been thinking about making a change, in careers.

DANIEL
You mean you're actually thinking about having one?

LAUREL
Very funny. Helping people is hard work.

DANIEL

I wouldn't know.

LAUREL

I'm thinking about... climbing onto that ladder myself. I'm done with saving the world.

LAUREL hadn't planned this part of the conversation. She's making it up as she goes along, working to sound convincing.

DANIEL

You don't mean that. I wish you did, but I know you don't.

LAUREL

Yeah, I do. I've been working my ass off for twenty-something years.

DANIEL

It's looking very nice by the way.

LAUREL

I'm serious.

DANIEL

So am I.

LAUREL

What do I have to show for all my effort? I don't own a home, I don't have a 401K-

DANIEL

No one else does either now.

LAUREL

Thanks to you.

DANIEL

No, no no no no, no. I had nothing to do with that.

LAUREL

Or, people like you. It doesn't matter because I didn't even have one to lose, Danny. I'm tired of taking care of everyone but me.

LAUREL puts legs up on DANIEL'S desk, leans back in chair. Really playing it up now.

LAUREL
It's Laurel's turn to get a little.

The chair tips back, LAUREL loses balance.

LAUREL
Holy moly!

DANIEL
Oh, shit!

DANIEL jumps up to help. HIS leg stiffens and contracts. HE stumbles landing on the floor.

LAUREL regains her balance.

LAUREL
Oh my gosh! Are you okay?

DANIEL
Yes.

Beat

No. Awwww, damn it.

LAUREL
Let me get some help.

DANIEL
No. I'm fine. It'll pass.

LAUREL
Please, Danny, let me help you.

DANIEL
It's just a cramp.

LAUREL
Maybe we should get someone-

DANIEL
I said I'll be fine. I will be fine.

LAUREL

You're not fine. You won't ever be fine again.

DANIEL

Fuck you.

LAUREL

I'd love to, but I'm thinking Liz won't approve.

DANIEL

If I'm dying, Her approval might not matter.

DANIEL uses desk to pull HIMSELF up.

LAUREL helps. SHE tears up.

LAUREL

Dog gonnit. I'm sorry. I promised myself I wouldn't cry.

DANIEL

I'd be disappointed if you didn't. You're my sweetheart. You have a good heart, Lo.

LAUREL

Wasn't enough though, in the end.

DANIEL

I wanted to marry you. Desperately.

LAUREL

I could never have been the kind of wife Liz is. It's just, I really wanted-

DANIEL

She never makes me Rice-Krispy treats.

LAUREL

With extra marshmallows.

DANIEL

Liz is more a personal manager and publicist with benefits, than a *wife*. I'd be lost without her.

LAUREL

You're exhausted. What are you doing at the office?

DANIEL

Pushing people over and spitting on them.

LAUREL

Water?

DANIEL

Thanks.

LAUREL hands water glass to DANIEL. SHE doesn't release her grasp until HIS hand is steady.

So, what's this business thing you're throwing your goodness away for?

LAUREL

Well, okay... I have been accepted into a young producers program at Fox.

DANIEL

Young producers?

LAUREL

I thought you'd be proud of me.

DANIEL

Young producers.

LAUREL

They think I'm younger than I am. Yeah, okay, I lied.

DANIEL

Lo, you have come over to the dark side. I am more proud of you than you will ever know.

LAUREL

Not for lying, for... Whatever. Okay, anyway... I have to pitch an idea for a new reality show in a few weeks. They're actually going to pick one from the group and green light it.

DANIEL

How much do you need?

LAUREL

I don't need money.

DANIEL

What then? A series about me? “Who wants to have an affair with a dying middle aged tycoon?”

LAUREL

Actually, it is a series about you. Okay, let me get the whole thing out before you say anything.

Beat

Silence

Okay. I know you're very sick.

DANIEL

I am not that-

LAUREL

And, I know you have about ten to fifteen months, now that your symptoms have started to show.

DANIEL

Jesus Lo. Did'ya take a tact-suppressant before coming over here?

LAUREL

I'm sorry. I'd give anything to make your reality change.

LAUREL gets choked up, but fights through it.

DANIEL

Some people live for ten years with this thing.

LAUREL

I also know that with ALS several of your organs will be completely unaffected.

DANIEL

The jury is still out on ALS and organ donation-

LAUREL

I know.

DANIEL twirls pen.

It's not a commonly accepted practice, but-

DANIEL

It's illegal to sell organs ya' know.

LAUREL

Shoosh!

DANIEL

(Laughing) Shoosh? You kill me, Lo.

LAUREL

Daniel! Don't say that, not now... please.

DANIEL

Sorry.

LAUREL

One of the organs that should stay healthy is... your heart.

She waits.

Silence.

Then, it occurred to me, that... Okay, that we, together, you and me... we could build a show around your search for someone to give your heart to.

Silence.

Okay, I'm done.

DANIEL

You are a very sick lady. Very sick, funny and still adorable. I appreciate your visit. I was actually a little down.

LAUREL

I wasn't being funny.

DANIEL

Liz'll love it.

LAUREL

We start by interviewing hundreds of people, all kinds, that need a heart. Then we do an episode on you. Your life, accomplishments, business, philanthropy, your family. Really play up the amazing person behind the heart.

DANIEL

Not the ass hole who knocks people over and spits on them?

LAUREL

For the next five episodes we bring the seven finalists together, to live in one of your houses. The “Benevolent wealthy donor, housing those less fortunate,” that kind of thing.

DANIEL

Who’s covering the Liability Insurance for “that kind of thing?”

LAUREL

Huh. I’m not sure. Network, probably. I’ll have to find out.

LAUREL makes a note.

This is all new to me.

DANIEL

You’re serious.

LAUREL

You spend time with each of them. Our audience can eMail or text in opinions.

DANIEL

No Twitter?

LAUREL

Maybe they each take us on a field trip to their lives. We meet their families, see where they work, go to school, temple or church, whatever.

SHE makes another note.

LAUREL

Tw-i-t-er...

DANIEL

Touching.

LAUREL

We watch them living together in the house, to see what they’re really like- you know, like, are they “putting us on” when they spend time with you.

DANIEL

Like, is that catheter bag hanging out of their pants a fake- sort of thing?

SHE’S on a roll now.

LAUREL

You eliminate one-

DANIEL

No pun intended.

LAUREL

...each week, until we're down to the last two. Then, we let America vote. The, end.

DANIEL

What if I don't actually die on schedule?

LAUREL

We can do a two hour special on the transplant whenever. Well, not *whenever*... But, as long as it's within a timetable that works for the person getting the heart- We can work those details out later.

DANIEL

You're not kidding.

LAUREL

No. Surprised?

DANIEL

Did this all occur to you at once, like a full blown... concept? Or, have you actually spent time planning it out?

LAUREL

I guess the idea just came to me when I was thinking about you, um... It took me about a week to come up with the *treatment*... It's right up your alley, isn't it?

Silence.

Did I tell you about all the money there is to be made in licensing? Ball caps, bumper stickers, I don't know... maybe paper weights, all with your face. It could make a fortune.

LAUREL

Well? What do you think?

DANIEL

What are you taking? Or, maybe stopped taking?

LAUREL

What do you mean?

DANIEL

This is insane. It's cruel, immoral, parasitic, and inhumane.

LAUREL

But it's not illegal. I checked. You'd still be donating your heart, technically.

DANIEL

You made your entire fortune one cruel, immoral, parasitic, act at a time.

DANIEL

That's one perspective.

LAUREL

I thought you'd be all over this.

DANIEL

Where is it coming from?

LAUREL

What do you mean? It's... it's an idea I had, and-

LAUREL fights hard now.

You've wanted fame and fortune since we were kids. Okay, you made your fortune.

Beat

Time is running out. I can give you fame.

DANIEL

Wow.

LAUREL

What do you object to Danny? The idea, or it being *your* heart?

DANIEL

The kindest, most loving and honorable person I know has just presented the most contemptible business venture I've ever heard.

LAUREL

We could-

DANIEL

Not from you Laurel. If you need money, I'd be happy to write you a check.

LAUREL

I don't want your money.

DANIEL

What is it then? What is it you really want here, Lo?

There is a tentative knock on the door. JEN looks in.

JEN

I'm sorry to interrupt, Mr. Davis, but you have a... an uh... *appointment* in thirty minutes. Do you want me to call for your car?

DANIEL

Thanks Jen, Mrs. Davis is coming. Call Dr. Frank's office and tell them I'm running late.

JEN

I'll let you know when Mrs. Davis arrives. Do you want me to get your coat?

DANIEL

Please.

JEN exits.

She's a good girl.

LAUREL

You wouldn't have it any other way.

DANIEL

I gotta' get going.

LAUREL

Sorry to hold you up.

DANIEL

I'm being interviewed for a new drug trial.

LAUREL

That's great.

DANIEL

What is this visit really about, Lo?

LAUREL

What do you mean?

DANIEL

I don't know. It's just... surprising...

LAUREL

Life is full of surprises.

DANIEL

You're telling me.

JEN enters with DANIEL'S coat.

LAUREL

Bye Danny.

LAUREL exits.

Lights fade.

ACT I SCENE 2

(A park bench. One week later.)

DANIEL sits alone, dressed casually, the kind of casual that costs a lot. HE talks on Bluetooth, makes notes.

DANIEL

So, if we take the foreign distribution including Asian markets- ...Yeah, we don't even need their domestic... Right... No, we'll just shut 'em down, auction for the stock, liquidate assets, and put it all back into opening up Africa. I know... It's never as much fun when it's this easy. Yeah, okay. Frankie's gonna' run with it. Yeah, Rog is working with him, but- ...Do we have a choice? No, do not, I repeat *do not* let Rog know about killing their domestic. The last thing we need is him leaking it. I don't want the press banging down Stern's door until it's a done deal. Then he can honestly say he knew nothing about the cuts. Yeah, I know... It'll be around the holidays so, yeah, we'll come up with something nice, some kind of bonus to make them feel better about it.

LAUREL enters carrying a paper bag and two cups.

Hey, they'll get to spend more time with their kids around the holidays. Who doesn't love that? Okay. Yeah... How's your kid? That's fantastic... They're great... Yeah. You bet. Great work... Only if there's a problem. I mean a big problem... Later.

DANIEL makes notes. HE looks up, sees LAUREL staring.

Another rung.

LAUREL

What happens when you get to the top?

DANIEL

Hire a bunch of cut-throat wiz kids to keep me there.

LAUREL sits.

LAUREL

You've got it all worked out. Always have.

LAUREL hands DANIEL a cup. SHE opens bag, takes out muffin. Drinks.

DANIEL

Apparently, not this time.

DANIEL offers cup back.

I'm not supposed to drink coffee.

LAUREL

It's not coffee.

HE tastes.

DANIEL

That's great. What is it?

LAUREL

I picked it up at Greening Max.

DANIEL

It tasted better before I knew where it came from. Thanks.

Silence.

DANIEL

I didn't like how we left things.

LAUREL

How'd the trial interview go?

DANIEL

It didn't

LAUREL

What do you mean?

DANIEL

I was three years too old and no amount of money or intimidation was going to change the policy. I couldn't even pay off the damn med student filling out the paperwork to lie about my age.

LAUREL

I'm sorry.

DANIEL

Me too. What's the world coming to when a guy can't buy his way into being a lousy guinea pig?

LAUREL

Did you offer to build them a new research lab?

DANIEL

Of course. Suddenly everyone wants to be all accountable.

DANIEL takes a piece of the muffin.

LAUREL

Wanna' go halvesies?

DANIEL

No, just a taste.

LAUREL

So, now what?

DANIEL

I'm dying, Lo. I'm fucking dying.

HE eats muffin.

DANIEL

Not bad, if you're into that whole health thing.

LAUREL

Did you tell the kids?

DANIEL tries to twirl pen between HIS fingers.

DANIEL

Dad's coming home tonight with a whole lot a presents and a little bad news.

HE is unable to make them move with any fluidity.

LAUREL

They'll be devastated.

HE tosses the pen.

DANIEL

Nick and Izzy will. I'm afraid Janna takes after Liz... She'll wanna' know that the will is all in order.

LAUREL

Liz is not like... that- I'm sure she's very upset.

DANIEL

Not so far. It's not a bad thing. The perfect rock to hold my ladder in place.

DANIEL pinches another piece of muffin.

Silence.

LAUREL

I really thought you'd love the idea. It was pretty insensitive of me.

DANIEL

Yeah, you laid some heavy shit on me. Who'd want a heart from a man who died from ALS anyway? You couldn't pay me to take it.

LAUREL

Someone whose only other option is not getting one.

Beat

DANIEL

I still can't believe you thought of it.

LAUREL

Yeah, not *me*, right? Because people like you need people like me so you can sleep at night knowing someone is being honorable and taking care of the sorry little people.

DANIEL

Lo-

LAUREL

So you can give away a fraction of your dirty money and have everyone tell you how *good* you are. It's people like me that have made people like you real heroes.

DANIEL

Come on Lo-

LAUREL

But nothing ever really changes, does it?

DANIEL

Laurel-

LAUREL

The sorry little people get sorer and needier, you get richer. And all I get, is old. I mean come on Daniel, don't you want to be that person who actually makes a real difference in someone's life? Your money can't help these people, but-

DANIEL

Laurel Grace Fein, Stop.

LAUREL

I'm sorry. I didn't come here to argue-

DANIEL

I love it.

I didn't want- You do? LAUREL

I wanna' do it. DANIEL

You do? LAUREL

Yes. Your show. Your remarkably insensitive and brilliant TV show. DANIEL

Why? Oh my Gosh. You want to do this? LAUREL

Yes. DANIEL

What changed your mind? And, and you know, it doesn't have to be *insensitive*. We can make it very, very... sensitive. You really want to do this? LAUREL

I wasn't ready to be the guy cast as the dying man, but... I made the mistake of telling Liz. Flipped over it. She has a remarkable way of putting deviant behavior in charitable perspective. DANIEL

Wow. This is great. I think. I mean, yeah... this is great. You really wanna' do this... with me? LAUREL

And (Beat), I want to be remembered. DANIEL

Of course you'll be remembered. LAUREL

Not just some dead rich guy with his name on a bunch of buildings. I want people to remember *me*. DANIEL

You're serious. LAUREL

DANIEL
Dead, serious.

LAUREL
Pun intended.

DANIEL
Absolutely.

HE eats more of the muffin.

LAUREL
Oh my gosh, I have like, I don't know twenty eight hours or something to put it all together and get the proposal in. This is incredibly exciting. We are going to do something, *good...* very *good*, together.

DANIEL
A few things.

LAUREL
Ah, here it comes.

DANIEL
All merchandising profits, I mean ALL, go to Liz's new charity.

LAUREL
Which is?

DANIEL
The Daniel R. Davis Center for ALS Research.

LAUREL
That should actually hlep the network sell advertising.

Beat

I would give anything not to even be able to have this conversation with you.

DANIEL
You leave the kids alone. They are completely off limits.

LAUREL
No problem.

DANIEL

Liz sits in on all editing sessions. She wants to make sure the version of reality they're selling is her version. I can't blame her, she's the one who's gonna' have to live with this. And you, of course.

LAUREL

That's not as easy as it sounds. Bit, I will do everything humanly possible to make it happen.

DANIEL

Liz will be happy to help you *persuade* them.

LAUREL

Okay.

DANIEL

This last one is mine Lo. You don't agree to this and the deal's off.

LAUREL

Why did my heart just relocate to my throat?

DANIEL

When the time comes that I can't stand living... in the torture chamber my body's gonna' become, you have to help me... move on.

LAUREL

You mean like a "Do Not Resuscitate" sort of thing?

DANIEL

Nope, already got one of those.

Silence.

Beat.

LAUREL realizes HIS intent.

LAUREL

No. Do not ask that of me. Do not do this.

DANIEL

You're the only one. It has to be you.

LAUREL

But I-

DANIEL

Look. With any luck the DNR will take care of... things. But-

LAUREL

I can't. I could never do that.

DANIEL

You think it's gonna' be any less awful to sit there and watch me stuck inside a living tomb. Me, Daniel R. Davis?

LAUREL

It's like... like asking me to play God.

DANIEL

Oh, and deciding who gets to have a new heart and who doesn't isn't?

LAUREL

That's different.

DANIEL

Do you not get what it is you're proposing to do?

LAUREL

We're helping someone in desperate need.

DANIEL

You're building up the hopes of seven dying people then sending six of them off to their graves. Have you actually thought about what you're getting yourself into?

LAUREL

Yes. No... mostly...

Beat.

Why not Liz? Why can't she *help* you, move on?

DANIEL

I have no doubt Liz would do it. But I will not ask her to spend the rest of her life either hiding from or explaining to her children why she ended their father's life.

LAUREL

No. There has to be someone. Please, Daniel, please don't ask me to do this.

DANIEL

You're it. I know you would never take my life if you didn't have to. And, I know that if you make me a promise, you'll keep it. You're the only one, Lo.

LAUREL

I've spent my entire adult life *saving* lives. How could I-

DANIEL

It's a deal breaker, Lo.

Long silence.

Hey, the higher you climb, the cloudier the view.

Silence.

DANIEL

That surprises you?

Beat.

What's this show of ours called?

LAUREL

"Have a Heart."

Lights fade

ACT I SCENE 3

(Two months later. June. A small screening room with two doors. One leads to a bathroom and the other to another part of the facility)

Projected onto screen is a recorded interview of potential "have a Heart" contestant LUKAS SIMMS, 17.

LUKAS

(On screen) Mrs. Carlton, is the greatest. She was real helpful and all, in getting the camera and stuff to make this video. I just wanted to say a big thank you. Thanks Mrs. Carlton. I promise to catch up with all my work just as soon as I can.

(MORE)

LUKAS (cont'd)

So, I've lived in Bigelow, Arkansas my whole life. We're a small town of 329 people. Folks's all come together ot help take care of the farm while mom and dad are here in Little Rock with me. We have some real great friends in Bigelow. Most of the rest of the family lives way over in Blevins. They got a total a' 360 folk lives there. Work in the metal industry mostly. Not all family a' course. Things aren't s'good, works been pretty slow... But... um...

LUKAS talks to someone off camera.

No, not that. Okay. Just let me- is it running? Is that still running? Oh, Lord!

HE talks back into camera.

So, uh, now that I been to Little Rock, and seen all what's out here, I really wanna' finish up high school and go on to College. I plan on studying computer information systems. I can get an Associates in Science degree. Doin' that kinda' work, I guess I can go just about anywhere in the country I can think of. I like the big city, and I was thinkin' maybe I'd give Dallas or Austin a try. I play guitar and, in a place like that, I might get the chance to play in a band or something.

So, uh, that's about all I can think to say right now. Oh, uh, this is important. I had to uh have a Kidney transplant a year ago. That's how come I'm not too high up on the list for a regular heart. (Beat) Not that yours isn't regular of nothing', but you know, gettin' it the regular way, from someone dying... normal and everything.

LUKAS talks off camera again.

Shut up! No, I did not.

Back to camera.

I really hope ya'll consider me for your "Have a Heart" show. I could sure use one.

DOG barks in background.

Rogaine hope so too.

Off camera.

No. I don't wanna' say none a that. They don't care about- Okay... okay... alright!

To camera.

LUKAS

Grandma Simms says to tell you that our Dog's named Rogaine cause when he showed up one day outa' nowhere, most all his hair was rubbed off. I was ten at the time.

Off camera.

Naw... come on... they don't care about that kinda' thing.

To camera.

(Reluctant) I went over to the Toad Suck One Stop and got some kinda' hair tonic... to make hair grow where there weren't none. I rubbed it all over him. The dog got a real bad rash. Mama give 'em a bath. When daddy got home that night, mama told 'em the story. He said I shoulda' just took me some Rogaine from Grandpa Ernie's medicine chest. Coulda' used my money on somethin' had some sense to it. Daddy started callin' the dog Rogaine... it stuck. So, that's it and I'll talk to you again, sometime... maybe...

HE looks off camera again.

OK. Cut it. No... the one on the right... yeah, that-

Lights in room brighten. LAUREL stands, paces. SHE is more professionally dressed, moving a little awkwardly in heels and a tight skirt.

DANIEL is seated. HE now uses a walker, moves with stiff legs, dragging his feet, arms are heavy and of little use.

JEN enters with drink for DANIEL. SHE places it on table in front of HIM, puts straw in, places HIS hands around bottom of cup.

LAUREL

(Calls to projection booth) Was that forty-five or forty-six Vince?

DANIEL

(To Jen) Thanks.

HE leans down, drinks.

LAUREL fusses with a shoe.

VINCE

(OS) Uh... forty-six.

LAUREL

Thanks. (About her shoes) Gosh these things suck.

DANIEL

One must suffer for one's art.

LAUREL makes notes, rubs her feet.

VINCE

(OS) I need to make a call, Laurel. Can we take ten?

LAUREL

Oh, yeah... sure.

JEN glides past LAUREL on her way to get DANIEL'S empty glass.

How do you stand in these things all day, Jen?

DANIEL

It goes with the territory.

LAUREL

What, she couldn't take care of your every need in flat shoes?

JEN

I signed a contract when I started agreeing to wear three inch heels and hemlines five inches above the knee.

LAUREL

You're kidding!

JEN

Yes. I am.

DANIEL finishes his drink.

DANIEL

(To Jen) Can I get another one? With a little gin?

SHE takes HIS glass.

Not until after 5:00

JEN

It's 5:10!

DANIEL

Tomorrow.

JEN

That's what you said yesterday.

DANIEL

Did I? Hih, I don't recall.

JEN

DANIEL

You seem to be increasingly afflicted with the same sudden memory loss as my wife.

JEN takes a TWINKIE out of its wrapper, places it in HIS hand.

JEN

Maybe I've been working with you too long.

DANIEL

That will all be corrected soon enough.

DANIEL manages to get the Twinkie to HIS mouth with great effort. HE eats.

JEN exits.

How old was that kid?

LAUREL

Lukas is...

LAUREL checks notes.

Seventeen.

DANIEL

Where'd you dig these people up, Lo?

JEN returns with another drink for DANIEL.

LAUREL

They were scattered all around the bottom of your ladder.

DANIEL

Maybe you should have dusted them off a little before you started parading them around.

JEN

Yeah, its' amazing how bad people who are sick can look.

DANIEL

You're not supposed to bite the hand that feeds you.

JEN

How 'bout if I gnaw on it slowly?

DANIEL

Much more effective.

JEN

Roger brought by a few things for you to sign. He's dying to get in here. He thinks you're working on some super-secret inter-galactic takeover.

DANIEL

Did you squash his little fantasy?

JEN

Nope, I encouraged it.

DANIEL

That's my girl!

JEN puts papers in front of DANIEL, gets pen out of briefcase, places it in DANIEL'S hand. SHE places HER hand on HIS to STEADY writing. THEY have done this often recently.

Have you been practicing my signature?

JEN

Sure have.

DANIEL

How good's it getting?

JEN

We'll know when you get your next Am Ex bill.

JEN smiles, puts pen away, takes papers, exits.

LAUREL

She's not really a *girl*. You know that's sort of insulting to most women.

DANIEL

Not this generation of women. They seem to like it.

LAUREL

That's a shame.

DANIEL

I actually find it refreshing. Mark a vote down from me for Rogain and his boy.

LAUREL looks at DANIEL.

What? I think he'll make a great heart hunter. We can all go over to the Toad Suck One Stop have a beer, shave, and rectal exam.

Beat.

What?

LAUREL

Would we be laughing with him, or at him?

DANIEL

That is not the kind of question a successful *young* producer should be asking.

LAUREL

Why?

DANIEL

There is no *why*. There's just *is* or *isn't*.

LAUREL

What are you talking about?

DANIEL

Is this *move* going to get me closer to the goal or isn't it.

LAUREL

I don't believe we have to hurt other people to get what I want.

DANIEL

That's naive.

LAUREL

He's a sweet kid who doesn't know-

DANIEL

Perfect. The less they know, the better.

LAUREL

So, if someone doesn't know they're being taken advantage of, then they're not being taken advantage of?

DANIEL

It's all about perception.

LAUREL

No. There are some boundaries that are... I don't know... absolute. Some things are just... wrong.

DANIEL

Oh boy, this is gonna' be tougher than I thought.

LAUREL

Excuse me?

DANIEL

Your job is to put together the best show possible-

LAUREL

I know that-

DANIEL

...regardless of what other people think or feel about the choices you make to get there. You have one clear objective, and you are unstoppable in the face of achieving it. It's your *job*.

LAUREL

Yeah, but-

DANIEL

You want to be good at your job, right?

LAUREL
Yes. But-

DANIEL
Win, or lose, Lo. Win or lose.

LAUREL
That's really... ugly. How do you live with the consequences of your actions?

DANIEL
Only one direction in life Lo, forward. Do you want to succeed or not?

LAUREL
Of course, but-

DANIEL
Yes or no question.

LAUREL kicks her shoes off.

Laurel?

LAUREL
I'm thinking.

DANIEL
That would be a *no* then.

LAUREL
Yes. Yes, okay? I can do that. I can move forward. From now on, what's best for the show is what's best for me.

DANIEL
Good girl. Woman.

LAUREL goes back to work.

DANIEL studies her for a moment.

LAUREL
Yes?

DANIEL
I need to take a, uh, bathroom break.

LAUREL
You don't need my permission.

DANIEL
Can you uh...

SHE looks up.

LAUREL
Oh yeah, of course.

Beat.

LAUREL
What do I, um, need to...

DANIEL indicates walker. LAUREL moves table, puts walker in front of HIM.

Okay. Now what?

DANIEL
You'll have to put my hands on the...

LAUREL
Sure. Right.

LAUREL lifts HIS arms into position placing hands onto walker.

DANIEL tries to pull HIMSELF up. LAUREL jumps in.

Oh, can you... I mean do I...

DANIEL
If you put your arms just under my ribs...

LAUREL tries to do this from the front. IT is awkward.

It's better if you come from the right side.

SHE shifts position.

Yeah, just a little to the back.

Like this? LAUREL

Yeah. DANIEL

TEHY work together to move HIM into a standing position.

That's not too tight? LAUREL

No, it's a lot less- Yeah, just hold a little firmer. DANIEL

HE is in position.

LAUREL continues to hold HIM. SHE breaths HIM in, unexpectedly overwhelmed by their closeness.

Lo? (Beat) Uh... Laurel... it's easier for me to move now if you let go.

Oh. Of course. LAUREL

LAUREL releases DANIEL.

HE slowly and stiffly moves to the bathroom.

LAUREL collects herself.

DANIEL reaches bathroom door, stops.

Would you mind, uh... DANIEL

Oh sure, yeah, yes, of course. LAUREL

LAUREL opens door to bathroom.

If you could just unbuckle my belt, the button and zipper, I can, uh... DANIEL

A little self-conscious SHE undoes HIS belt, button and zipper.

DANIEL enters bathroom. HE tries to close door, LAUREL pulls it shut.

SHE grabs her notes, pushing past feelings and focusing on the work.

LAUREL

OK... Rogain and his boy were... number forty-six. Only four more.

DANIEL

(OS) Only? Is this some kind of new therapy... you know, making me feel that death would actually be a relief?

LAUREL

Is it workin'?

DANIEL

My dick? So far so good.

LAUREL

That's good... great... (BEAT) I, uh, actually meant-

DANIEL

You need to lighten up Lo. I know what you meant.

LAUREL

Oh. Duh...

DANIEL

How many of these tapes did you get?

LAUREL

Uh... seven hundred and eighty came in. Three hundred sixty-eight met the medical criteria. One hundred and eighty-three of those met the network's criteria.

*JEN returns with glass of water and pills.
SHE watches LAUREL.*

DANIEL

Which is what exactly?

LAUREL

Sick, but not on deaths door, at least partially ambulatory, perky-

DANIEL tries to open door. LAUREL helps.

DANIEL shuffles out of bathroom with pants down around ankles. HE wears boxers.

When did you start wearing boxers? You made fun of boxers.

DANIEL

When I started needing help pulling my pants up.

LAUREL

Oh, um...

JEN

I can get that.

JEN crosses to bathroom.

LAUREL

Yeah, thanks... that would be great...

JEN pulls up and fastens pants. SHE has done this before.

I mean, not that I wouldn't be a um... you know, to uh...

DANIEL

Perky? They want people who are dying from heart disease to be *perky*?

LAUREL pulls HERSELF together.

LAUREL

What? Oh... perky, right. The Suits want perky.

LAUREL gets a text message on an outdated looking phone.

JEN

Of course. Even on the Biggest Loser, the contestants have spunk. At least, in the beginning. Ken called.

DANIEL

Speaking of biggest losers.

LAUREL

Darn it.

LAUREL sees JEN and DANIEL looking at HER.

Oh, just a little pressure from the top. Nothing I can't handle.

LAUREL gets memo. SHE reads.

“Contestants must have interesting background, be attractive, quirky, or have charming family members-”

JEN helps DANIEL to HIS seat.

DANIEL

Quirky. What does that have to do with anything?

LAUREL

The plan is to visit the families of the final five contestants.

DANIEL

Yeah?

JEN helps DANIEL hold head back. SHE places pills in HIS mouth, holds the water to HIS lips.

JEN

Don't you watch TV? You either have to be good looking or have a great personality. Who would waste their time watching an unattractive dying person with a boring personality. You might be able to get away with being ugly if you had a really nasty personality, that would probably work.

LAUREL

That sort of sums it all up, I guess. Although, we're not going for-

DANIEL

So, we're looking for ten perky, quirky, attractive and/or nasty ugly people dying of heart disease surrounded by charmingly dysfunctional families.

LAUREL

Pretty much. Although-

DANIEL

That shouldn't be too difficult.

LAUREL

Harder than you'd think.

DANIEL

I was being facetious.

LAUREL

Oh. I knew that.

DANIEL

And I'm gonna' pick one, base on what? Their looks and sense of humor?

LAUREL

No. IF they make it to the final ten, they've passed the looks and charm phase.

DANIEL

What then? The talent portion of the competition?

LAUREL

No, we-

JEN

They live together in a big beautiful mansion cannibalizing each other until only one is left.

LAUREL

Two, actually. But I don't think-

JEN

Then, America votes. It's compelling TV.

DANIEL

Maybe instead of visiting their families we should visit their place of employment.

LAUREL

WHY?D

That way I can make my decision based onw what my heart would like to do for the rest of its life.

JEN

That's cheesy. People want compelling.

DANIEL

I guess I've been out of touch with "reality" longer than I thought. Last time I checked "Hill Street BLues" was compelling TV.

JEN

What's that?

DANIEL

Ancient history, apparently. (Beat) These people are killing me, Lo.

LAUREL

That's what happens when you live your life somewhere between a boardroom and a private jet. Welcome to the world of the little people.

JEN reads.

DANIEL

What if I don't like any of them?

DANIEL drinks from cup with straw.

LAUREL is busy with paperwork.

LAUREL

Of course you will.

DANIEL

What if I don't?

LAUREL

I thought you liked Justin and Rogain.

DANIEL

For a laugh, yeah, for thw show. But what if I-

LAUREL

We're spending millions of dollars for you to like one of them.

DANIEL

Spoken like a real producer. Congratulations.

LAUREL

Thank you. I'm a quick study... and, I'm learning from the best.

DANIEL

This is my heart. I might not like any of them enough... to, you know... To spend the rest of my life with them.

JEN

You'll be dead.

DANIEL

Most of me.

VINCE

(OS) Okay Laurel, I'm back. Laurel?

LAUREL

Yeah?

VINCE

(OS) We only have about forty-five minutes left in the room.

LAUREL

Oh, fooley.

DANIEL

Fooley?

JEN exits.

VINCE

(OS) We can try to finish these last four now, or I can see if there's time tomorrow.

DANIEL

I am not doing this again tomorrow. I will kill myself and take you with me if we have to do this again.

LAUREL

Let's push through it, Vince. Thanks.

LAUREL checks voice mail messages.

DANIEL

I can't give my heart to just anybody. I'm serious. What if, yo know-

LAUREL

I think we just need to trust in the process here.

Beat.

DANIEL

Do you think about dying, Lo?

LAUREL is deeply engrossed in listening to messages.

LAUREL

The only thing I think about is dying in the ratings.

DANIEL

Yeah, you're right, that would be tragic.

LAUREL

Lucky for you, you won't be around to know.

Deafening silence. LAUREL realizes what SHE has said.

Oh, Daniel... I didn't mean that the way it sounded. I was being... I meant... Oh, gosh...

DANIEL

Good for you. Tact is a sign of weakness when negotiating.

VINCE

(OS) We ready to roll?

JEN enters.

LAUREL

Uh, yeah, in just a sec.

SHE finishes with HER messages.

JEN

Mrs. Davis called. SHE needs to know by 6:00 if you'll be joining them for dinner. Roger called, again. If you don't return his call and he calls me at home tonight I will hold you personally responsible for ruining my life.

DANIEL

Yes, ma'am.

LAUREL

You sure know how to manage him.

JEN

It's pretty simple. I just always tell him the truth.

LAUREL

Oh.

JEN

Anything else before I take off, Mr. Davis?

DANIEL

I will pay you a thousand dollars if you will sit through these last four with me.

JEN

Why?

DANIEL

Because I can say insensitive and crass things to you about the people on the screen and you won't think any less of me. I'm a desperate man.

JEN

Cash?

DANIEL

Yes.

JEN

Sold,

DANIEL

Thank you.

SHE sits with HIM.

LAUREL

Okay. We're about to see the last four.

DANIEL

(Calling to the booth) Vince?

VINCE

(OS) Yes sir.

DANIEL

Aren't there any hot babes that need a new heart?

VINCE

(OS) Well, theres a Tim Sherman, of Fairbanks, Alaska. Alan Jamal Williams from Cleveland, Ohio, Ken Cho, Orange County, California, and Vanessa Roberts, Bethesda, MD.

DANIEL

Let's give Ms. Roberts a go.

VINCE

(OS) You got it.

LIGHTS sim, video starts.

VANESSA is 35. SHE is extremely weak, talking seems an effort.

VANESSA

(On screen) Hi. I'm Vanessa Roberts from Bethesda, Maryland. I'm thirty-five and I have advanced MYocarditis. Here's a picture of me a couple months before getting sick.

SHE was a vibrant beauty. DANIEL is overcome.

DANIEL

Oh...foeey!

JEN unwraps another Twinkie, puts in DANIEL's hand. SHE take hold of HIS other hand. DANIEL squeezes JEN'S hand as best HE can.

LAUREL watched THEM.

Lights fade as video continued.

VANESSA

(On screen) It started about two years ago with the flu. Little Katie brought it home from day-care. But, um, I actually wanted to start by sharing- oh, Katherine is fine now. She got over it in just a few days. So, uh, some photos, I want to share, and stories about my life before I became ill.

SHE holds up two photos. One of HER at HER wedding dancing with husband, and one with a beautiful little girl. SHE radiates with life in both.

This is me with my husband, Cory, on our wedding day. We've been married six years. And, this is my little girl, Katherine. She was three when this was taken. Now, she's four and a half. She's been staying with my sister in Springfield since... my heart... problems...

(MORE)

VANESSA (cont'd)

When Katherine was born, she was four weeks premature, but I knew then that being a mother was my destiny. I was three months pregnant when I first got sick. I, uh, lost the baby...

SHE puts HER hand in front of HER face, waving the camera off.

ACT I SCENE 4

(Daniel's office. Three months later, late September. The room is much the same with the addition of some production equipment)

DANIEL sits at desk in motorized wheel chair. HE looks worn out. HIS eyes are closed.

DANIEL

(Moans with pleasure) Oh my God. That's amazing. I can't believe this. Oh, God. Oh... oh... ohhhhh. You are remarkable. This is remarkable. Holy shit!

LAUREL is heard off stage.

LAUREL

Anybody home? Liz said you were working late. I brought Chinese.

DANIEL

Laurel?

LAUREL enters carrying a bag of take out and a few folders. SHE is casually dressed, but now the kind of casual that says "money."

JEN, unseen under desk giving DANIEL a blow job hits her head.

JEN

Ouch, shit!

LAUREL

An I interrupting something?

DANIEL

No, of course not... Yes, actually... sort of...

LAUREL

I can come back... later...

JEN

Don't bother.

SHE crawls out from under desk.

I'm not starting all over again.

Fastens DANIEL'S pants. Gets HIM glass of water with straw. Helps HIM drink.

I'll see you in the morning.

DANIEL

Thanks.

LAUREL

Uh, yeah, we... pick up at, um... 10:30 am.

JEN

I'll be in at 8:00.

JEN and LAUREL make eye contact, JEN exits.

The number for your car is on my desk. Perhaps Ms. Fein can call when you're ready.

LAUREL

Sure, yeah. Of course. See you tomorrow.

Beat.

(To Daniel) So, I brought by the, uh, bios on the, uh, semifinalists. I thought you might want to review them before taping the interviews.

DANIEL

Are we just going to ignore this?

LAUREL

Ignore what?

DANIEL

This little moment here that we seem to be pretending didn't happen.

LAUREL

What moment?

DANIEL

You sure?

LAUREL

Yeah, of course. What d'ya think? Whatever. So... these are the photos of, uh- Did you pay her or was she a volunteer?

DANIEL

Volunteer.

LAUREL

Oh. These are of the Madson-Gables Estate, the place we'll be using for the... Did you ask or did she offer?

DANIEL

She offered.

LAUREL

Oh. It's just outside Baltimore, It's probably better than using one of yours, because of the kids...

DANIEL

And the liability.

LAUREL

It's about forty minutes from the Johns Hopkin's Robert Packard Center for MDA/ALS Research. Hopkin's has a great cardiac unit too.

DANIEL

What happened to the Jerry Lewis Center at UCLA?

LAUREL

They wanted too large a cut. The Packard Center agreed to a gratis PSA during the airing of each episode.

DANIEL

Good for them.

LAUREL

It appears that my years of *non-profiting* are serving me well in my current world of profiteering.

DANIEL

I wanted to be one of Jerry's kids.

LAUREL

Jerry's kids don't get blow jobs from their secretaries.

DANIEL

Executive Assistant. So, you *do* want to talk about it?

LAUREL puts stack of papers on desk.

LAUREL

No. Here is the rider to your contract regarding Liz and editing. Getting this was not easy. I threatened to take it to HBO and walked out.

DANIEL

And that worked?

LAUREL

No. I had to give three Executives and two Line Producers blow jobs. It was actually giving the intern a hand job that pushed them over the edge.

DANIEL

And you're sure you don't wanna' talk about this?

LAUREL

No.

DANIEL

Sure?

LAUREL

Yes.

DANIEL

Yes, you're sure you don't?

LAUREL

No. I'm sure I could care less. Liz has access to the editing room, but all of her comments have to come through me. I didn't know you were having an affair with Jen.

DANIEL

Maybe we should talk about this.

LAUREL

Why?

DANIEL

I'm not having an affair.

LAUREL

What do you call getting a blow job in the office?

DANIEL

Presidential.

LAUREL

I didn't know you could, you know... still do it.

DANIEL

Neither did I.

LAUREL

Can you?

DANIEL

Apparently, yes, with some effort on the part of... you know... It just happened. It was a one time thing.

LAUREL

What, she just buzzed and said "hey, I'm not busy now, would you like a blow job?"

DANIEL

I thought you didn't want to talk about it.

LAUREL

I don't. Go on.

DANIEL

I was sitting at my desk going over some paperwork. My feet started twitching. I asked Jen if she would mind untying my shoes so I could get them off.

LAUREL

Oh, she probably just misunderstood what it was you wanted to get off.

DANIEL

Why does this bother you so much?

LAUREL

It doesn't. Go on.

DANIEL

While she was taking care of my shoes, she asked if my, uh, *parts* still worked.

LAUREL

She asked about your *parts*?

DANIEL

No. I believe she asked if my dick worked? I said I actually didn't know.

LAUREL

Let me guess, she said, "well, lets find out."

DANIEL

That's pretty much how it went down... so to speak.

LAUREL

And?

DANIEL

And... as I said, with a little effort, it seems to be in serviceable condition.

LAUREL

Oh.

DANIEL

What difference does this make to you, Lo?

LAUREL

None. It's just that... this kind of thing, I mean if anybody found out, it could jeopardize the show.

DANIEL

No. Since signing on for this insanity, I checked the world of *reality* TV out. This kind of thing would actually send the ratings through the roof.

LAUREL

Not in my reality show. Jennifer should be ashamed of herself. How's she gonna' look Liz in the eye next time they see each other?

DANIEL

You want reality? Jennifer comes from a generation of girls that “hook up” with their best friend’s boyfriend before going out on a date with their own fiancée. And everyone’s okay with it, because the fiancée is hooking up with his not-so-pretty, but very horny, neighbor before he heads out on his date. The ugly neighbor then goes down on her brother’s girlfriend while she’s waiting for him to finish having virtual sex with his Second Life boyfriend. That’s reality.

LAUREL

And all that makes it okay for you to get a blow job from your secretary?

DANIEL

Damn it, Lo. What do you want from me?

LAUREL

Nothing. Absolutely nothing.

DANIEL

Great. You did your job here tonight. Now get out.

LAUREL

What?

DANIEL

Go home, get out, go away.

LAUREL

What are you getting so angry about?

DANIEL

This is my happy voice. You just don’t recognize it because I can’t make my happy face to go along with it and I can’t clap my hands, slap my thigh or tap my foot like most people do when they feel happy.

DANIEL begins to snicker while HE talks. Laughter builds. HE is having a Pseudobulbar Affect response. HE is unable to stop laughing.

DANIEL

So, excuse me if I’m a little difficult to read right now. I’m sure it will get easier as time goes on and I can’t get my dick up anymore so there’ll be nothing left to be happy about!

DANIEL continues to laugh.

Why didn't you ask me? LAUREL

DANIEL speaks around HIS laughter.

What? DANIEL

Why didn't you ask me... to give you a blow job? LAUREL

(Laughing) You? DANIEL

Yes. Me. LAUREL

I told you, I didn't ask. DANIEL

DANIEL tries to stop laughter but is unable.

Then, I'm offering. LAUREL

(Laughing) What? Please... excuse me. DANIEL

Laughter continues.

Why are you laughing? LAUREL

I'm not. DANIEL

You think I don't know how? LAUREL

It's not me laughing. It's... it's... it's the disease. I'm actually very depressed. DANIEL

Liar. DANIEL

DANIEL
I'm sure you give a delightful blow job.

LAUREL
Delightful?

DANIEL
Why would I lie?

HE continues to laugh.

LAUREL
Because. You don't want to deal with my offer.

DANIEL
I'm not lying. I wish... I was.

*Laughter stops as mysteriously as it began.
DANIEL catches HIS breath.*

Lo, please, get me a drink of water.

LAUREL
What? Where? Where is a-

DANIEL
There should be a bottle over there.

LAUREL gets a small bottle of water.

Where's a glass?

DANIEL
Forget it, don't need one.

LAUREL opens bottle offers to DANIEL.

DANIEL
I can't hold it.

LAUREL
I'll get a straw.

DANIEL
Never mind. Just hold it for me. Please.

LAUREL holds bottle to DANIEL'S mouth.

You have to tip my head back, just a little...

LAUREL leans HIS head back, supports it with one hand, holds bottle to HIS mouth.

DANIEL drinks.

Thank you, that's-

LAUREL leans down and kisses DANIEL on the mouth. THEY kiss. LAUREL reaches for HIS belt.

DANIEL stops kissing.

Don't.

LAUREL

It's okay. I want to.

DANIEL

Don't, Lo. Please. Don't

LAUREL stops.

LAUREL

What, I'm too old for you?

DANIEL

No. You're perfect for me.

LAUREL kisses DANIEL's face and neck seductively.

Laurel, I can't.

LAUREL

Think of it as a contract perk.

LAUREL climbs on top of DANIEL's desk, starts to do a strip dance.

DANIEL

(Sharply) Stop!

Silence.

LAUREL

I'm sorry. That was really stupid and inappropriate.

DANIEL

No, it wasn't.

LAUREL

Then what, Danny. Why not?

DANIEL

I have never cheated on Liz.

LAUREL

I walked in on you five minutes ago.

DANIEL

That's not what I mean.

LAUREL

Right, yeah, *presidential* doesn't count.

DANIEL

No, I think a blow job absolutely counts as sex. That's not it. I've never had sex with anyone, besides Liz, that I... that, meant something.

LAUREL

You've made love to me.

DANIEL

Before Liz. (Beat) I wish we'd done it more.

LAUREL

You do?

Silence

HE looks up at HER still on HIS desk.

DANIEL

That's exactly how you looked the first time I saw you.

LAUREL

Standing on a chair in the corner of the gym at the fall dance.

DANIEL

You had about ten boys around you.

LAUREL

But, I was trying to find a funny looking guy I'd seen at the football game.

DANIEL

I looked up at you, with all those other guys around and I said to myself-

LAUREL

"I want that."

DANIEL

And I got it.

LAUREL

Yes, you did. I never knew if you would tell me that because you wanted me to know how much you love me, or because you were trying to prove you always got what you went after.

DANIEL

Both.

LAUREL

Young love, its so... young.

DANIEL moves wheelchair closer to desk.

DANIEL

Miss Fein. Would you dance with me?

LAUREL

What?

DANIEL

Come down here and dance with me.

SHE gets down from desk.

LAUREL

What do you want me to-

DANIEL

Sit. On my lap.

LAUREL goes to DANIEL, tentatively sits on HIS lap.

Sit. You won't break me.

SHE sits on HIS lap.

This *thing* Lo, it's moving fast. I... I can't make it stop... I-

LAUREL

(Softly) Shhhhh.

DANIEL maneuvers chair around office as in a dance.

I'll be damned, if it's not the boy from the football game.

LAUREL notices DANIEL is getting an erection.

Why Mr. Davis, those private "parts" of yours actually do still work.

Lights fade

ACT I SCENE 5

(Two months later. Late November.
DANIEL'S office, same as in Act I Scene 4)

KEN, DANIEL'S 45 year-old brother, attractive, stylishly dressed, paces looking around the office. HE has never been here before. HE looks at HIS reflection in something shiny. Fixes hair, checks out blemish on face.

LAUREL enters out of breath looking increasingly hollywood-produceresque.

HER heels are high, her clothes are tight HER hair is all done up, and SHE walks with flair. SHE carries a bag.

LAUREL

What are you doing?

KEN

Examining the merchandise. Find what you were looking for?

LAUREL

Honey for the bear.

LAUREL shows KEN contents of bag, an array of Hostess snacks.

KEN

He still eats that stuff?

LAUREL

So, tell me about your new boyfriend.

KEN

You mean my former new boyfriend?

LAUREL

Already?

KEN

Yes.

LAUREL

What happened.

KEN

The usual... He forgot to mention that he had a wife before we set off on our little world cruise.

LAUREL

Men do that of other men, too?

KEN

My love, a penis is a dick regardless of which way it swings.

LAUREL

I'm sorry.

KEN

Since Rob died I'm not all that open to true love anyway.

LAUREL

Do you have some kind of support group that, uh... supports you?

KEN

Like what, "unwilling to love and be loved anonymous?"

LAUREL

I meant a grief support group.

KEN

I tried but truth be told, they weren't very supportive. And you? How's your live life?

LAUREL

No time... not much interest.

KEN

That's very sad. Two peas in a well decorated little pod we are.

LAUREL

You know, you and Danny are a lot more alike than either of you want to admit.

KEN makes a note on a pad of paper.

What are you doing?

KEN

Making a note. "Do not answer phone next time Laurel calls."

LAUREL

I miss you, Dr. Davis. I'm glad you're here.

KEN

I hope I can say the same.

Beat

What'd Daniel say when you told him you'd hired me? I can't believe he allowed it.

LAUREL

I don't need his permission, I'm the, *Producer*.

KEN

He doesn't return my calls, he's conveniently never there when I stop by the house and he mysteriously goes away on business just before every family gathering.

LAUREL

He's been busy.

KEN

Yes, I know. He's a very important person, or so I'm told.

LAUREL

The man has more money than... God. It's very time consuming.

KEN

Not enough to buy his way out of this one.

LAUREL

That's exactly what he said.

KEN

It must burn his gluteus ultra-maximus.

LAUREL

He's lost a lot of weight.

KEN

There's a little blessing in disguise.

LAUREL

Your brother is dying, Ken.

KEN

I'm hoping maybe hitting a wall he can't bust through will give him a little empathy for the rest of us mere mortals.

LAUREL

I think you'll be surprised. He's changing.

KEN

I'm sure you never noticed, but Danny is quite the megalomaniac. It's pathological.

LAUREL

He's driven.

KEN

Daniel makes Donald Trump look like the president of a high school entrepreneurs club.

LAUREL

He's complicated.

LAUREL takes bag from purse and touches up makeup.

KEN

I'm gay, *I'm* complicated. And, why are you defending him?

LAUREL

What happened between you two.

KEN

He stopped talking to me. He was a no-show at Rob's memorial service. Then, never came to see me after.

LAUREL

You haven't spoken since then?

KEN

Only to his voice mail. Lizzy keeps in touch.

LAUREL

What does she say?

KEN

Oh, we're all very schooled in *pretending* the gargantuan pink and purple elephant in the room is not taking a tremendously noxious dump on the floor.

LAUREL

Something must have happened.

SHE dabs her wrists with perfume.

KEN

I fell off the wagon for a month or so, when Rob first had the heart attack.

LAUREL

You still going to meetings?

KEN

Life-long member.

SHE finishes her touch up.

LAUREL

I'm glad you're taking care of yourself.

LAUREL gives KEN a big hug.

KEN inhales HER.

KEN

Mmmmmmm... "Shattered Crystal" by Fiedka Brower, you *are* coming up in the world.

KEN looks at the label under HER collar.

Isabel Marant? My, my... Très chique, Lolò.

LAUREL

Just a little something I picked up at full price.

KEN

Daniel was an idiot to let you get away. What did you ever see in him?

LAUREL

He has a really good heart.

KEN

So did Al Capone.

LAUREL heads to the door.

Ms. Fein, you wouldn't have happened to fall back in love with a narcissistic, bullheaded, dying, married man by any chance?

SHE stops.

Ah, never stopped, huh.

LAUREL exits.

KEN pulls flask from jacket pocket. HE drinks.

Noises heard from outer office. KEN slides flask back into pocket. Stands off to one side in shadow.

DANIEL

(OS) How long have we been friends? You don't know *jack*. It wouldn't be the first time.

ADDISON, "Have A Heart" British Line Producer is heard off stage.

ADDISON's lines should be delivered on top of the other dialogue.

ADDISON

(OS) Can we move that thing out of the way a bit love, and get him wheeling into the office again.

Pause

Great, yes, that should give us a proper angle. Danny darling, just continue along dear, continue with your conversation.

DANIEL enters office in motorized chair. HE is talking on voice-activated Bluetooth. HE is heard before HE is seen. A camera light shines down on HIM from off stage.

DANIEL

You're one of my closest friends... That's not the point.

ADDISON

(OS) Maybe try backing in. Yes, I think so. Could you have a go again and back yourself in this time, Danny darling?

DANIEL continues talking, spins chair around, exits, back in through door.

DANIEL

YOU can not use that information. Marcus, it's insider information... Sorry. My friend, but you're just going to have to sit on it till it hurts... I told you because I wanted you to hear it from me. Instead of reading it in the paper... You can't...

ADDISON

(OS) Brilliant!

DANIEL

Yeah, and I spent a sleepless month wrangling him free from the SEC's grip. I promise you, there ain't no more "get out of jail free" cards left. Please, don't be an ass... Jesus Christ, Marcus. Hold on a sec. (Voice command) "Hold Call."

DANIEL looks up toward off stage light as much as HE is able to move HIS head. KEN watches in silence.

(To off stage camera person) Are you getting all this?

ADDISON

(Peaks head in door) Every word. It's brilliant. Brilliant! Real reality.

SHE backs out.

DANIEL

(Voice command) "Open Line," Marcus... yeah, go ahead you dumb prick. I'm on record, Marcus Joseph Richter, I Daniel R. Davis am telling you that you may not take any action based on the information I have shared with you. Ot do so would be considered insider trading which constitutes an illegal act... yeah? Right back at ya'! Ha! I'll be dead. (Voice command) "Disconnect call." That all get down on tape?

ADDISON

(OS) Every syllable.

DANIEL

God damn arrogant bastard. That's what I get for trying to be a nice guy.

KEN moves out of shadows.

DANIEL is inside office. HE turns chair, sees KEN. Stops short.

KEN is shocked by DANIEL'S appearance.

KEN

My God. Danny...

DANIEL

(Shocked) What are you doing here?

KEN

I'm, uh... I'm... didn't Laurel tell you? Oh my God, Danny.

ADDISON
(OS) Are you getting this?

DANIEL
Turn off the camera.

Camera light momentarily goes out.

ADDISON
No. Stay on it.

Light goes back on.

DANIEL
I said turn off the God damned camera!

*LAUREL pushes her way past ADDISON and
unseen camera man, enters office.*

LAUREL
Daniel, you're early.

DANIEL
What is he doing here?

ADDISON
(OC) Get in there. You're missing it all. Bloody hell, give me that damned thing.

KEN
I'm uh, I'm working on the show.

*ADDISON enters office holding camera. It is
big and unruly, but SHE is determined.*

DANIEL
Over my dead body.

ADDISON
Fantastic!

DANIEL
(To Ken) Get out of my office.

ADDISON continues to film.

ADDISON
Ferociously entertaining!

LAUREL
I was going to tell you-

ADDISON
Primo!

DANIEL is beginning to have difficulty breathing. HE tears up, having an Affect Crying Response.

ADDISON gets in HIS face with the camera.

DANIEL
Oh, shit.

KEN
It's okay, Danny. It's really okay.

DANIEL
I'm not... crying because I'm... upset, you worthless piss-ant... and you don't call me Danny.

ADDISON
Guess who's getting a promotion!?

LAUREL
Come on Addison.

DANIEL
Please, stop the camera.

ADDISON
Not on your life.

LAUREL
(To Ken) It's an affect crying response. It can happen even when he's happy.

LAUREL'S cell rings. It's a brand new top of the line piece of electronics. SHE splits her attention between DANIEL and seeing who has called.

DANIEL

(Struggling) Please.. Stop... turn the... God damned... camera... off.

KEN observes DANIEL.

KEN

I'm not *getting* "happy" here, Laurel

LAUREL

(Into phone) Mr. Madden?

DANIEL

Brilliant... deduction... Dr. Fuck-up.

LAUREL

(On phone) We're just getting to that. (To Addison) Addison, you really need to stop filming, now.

DANIEL

(To Laurel) Please stop... them. I want them... to stop... now!

ADDISON

But it's entirely fab. This is bloody brilliant!

LAUREL

(To phone) It should be, yes. Uh... very real yes, sir.

KEN moves toward ADDISON.

I really can't talk now.

ADDISON films as KEN back HER up.

(To Ken) I'll take care of it, Ken.

DANIEL still trying to catch HIS breath.

KEN

He needs you to stop the camera now.

LAUREL

Kenneth!

ADDISON

Now, we move in for the gut wrenching close-up.

LAUREL

(To phone) I gotta' go.

KEN charges ADDISON.

Ken, don't-

HE tackles ADDISON. This can be done on or off stage.

KEN

Bastards! Get the camera out of my face!

DANIEL continues to cry.

ADDISON

You stupid bleeding maniac.

LAUREL goes to DANIEL.

LAUREL

I'm sorry.

ADDISON

I don't know who you are, but I am going to sue your bloody ass to Hell and back.

KEN

Sociopathic Hollywood sycophant!

LAUREL

Addison, I will take care of this. (To Ken) Are you insane?

LAUREL gets oxygen from back of DANIEL's wheelchair.

ADDISON

I am so done working with amateurs and gimps. I am finished with you and your freak show.

ADDISON storms out.

ADDISON

(OS) I'll be back for the nearly dead contestant interviews tomorrow. Bloody unprofessional wankers!

LAUREL

(Calling off to Addison) Okay, uh... thanks. (To Ken) Did you break the equipment?

KEN nurses wound on hand.

KEN

No. I broke the heel of her Olivier Theysken knock-offs.

LAUREL holds water with straw for DANIEL.

KEN wraps bleeding hand with something found in office.

Silence in room.

So, Laurel dear, I'm guessing that Daniel here, didn't actually know you hired me as the "Have a Heart" psychiatric consultant.

LAUREL

I wanted it to be a surprise.

KEN

I think you succeeded.

DANIEL

Why did you do this?

KEN

I should go. I appreciate you trying to reconcile the obviously un-reconcilable, no matter how ill conceived it was.

HE moves toward door.

Lines overlap as desired.

DANIEL

I need to know why you did this.

LAUREL

Because, I thought it would be a good thing.

DANIEL

For me, or the ratings?

KEN stops.

KEN

Danny, don't SHE was just trying to help-

DANIEL

Don't call me Danny.

LAUREL

Why would you ask that?

DANIEL

Because I need to know.

KEN

It doesn't matter. It's done. I'm leaving. Goodbye, Daniel.

LAUREL

I did it because, I thought it was the right thing... to do. For you and Ken.

DANIEL

Ms. Fein, I'm asking the producer not the person I thought was my friend.

KEN

Knock it off, Daniel.

LAUREL

I told you, I did it because-

DANIEL

Lo?

LAUREL

I thought it would be good, for the...show, and, you and Ken. That's the truth.

KEN

What?

LAUREL

I thought it would create some tension, some excitement, a moment of truth caught on tape. Reality.

Beat.

LAUREL looks to both.

LAUREL

What? Don't look at me like that.

Pause

I thought it would... liven things up a little *and* get you two talking again.

KEN

You told me you'd discussed it with him.

LAUREL

Daniel told me to think like a producer, so I-

DANIEL

I'm sorry my performance has disappointed you, Ms. Fein.

LAUREL

That's not what I said.

KEN

Why would you use me like that?

LAUREL

(To Daniel) You said it didn't matter what other people thought about my choices as long as-

DANIEL

(Snaps) Other people, not me!

KEN

You lied to me. Why?

LAUREL

There is no *why*, just *is* or *isn't*. (To Daniel) That's what you said.

KEN

Just is or isn't?

LAUREL

Getting closer to your goal or-

DANIEL

There are some lines you don't cross!

LAUREL

Where are those lines, Danny? Because I don't see them drawn out very clearly in *this* office.

KEN

I can't believe you set me up.

DANIEL

If you had said something Ms. Fein, I'd have tried to be a little mor entertaining.

LAUREL

That's not what I-

KEN

You manipulative bitch!

LAUREL

What? But, I-

DANIEL

I know. We could do a shot of me drooling when I eat. Or how about a nice close up of Liz wiping my ass. That's a real exciting moment in my day.

KEN

(To Laurel) You, of all people.

DANIEL

Quick, get the camera. Let's do the big scene where the brothers give each other a bear hug and make up. Oh wait, one of the brothers won't be able to participate in that activity.

KEN

(To Daniel) We get it, Okay?

LAUREL

You're going to make yourself sick.

DANIEL

Make myself sick?

LAUREL

You're working yourself up again.

DANIEL

There is no *up* for me, Laurel!

LAUREL

I know.

DANIEL

The older, more successful brother's tongue and lips and mouth are starting to fail him so pretty soon he won't be-

KEN

You've made your point! Enough!

DANIEL

...able to eat or drink or tell his younger brother how much he hates him.

KEN

Shut up!

LAUREL

Stop it, Ken

DANIEL

Yes, I will. I'll sit here perfectly shut up and still while the vultures circle-

KEN

Self-righteous son of a bitch!

DANIEL

...waiting for me to die so they can pick my heart out on national TV. What's left of it, anyway, after my friends and family have eaten their share.

KEN

(Clapping) Bravo. Emmy-winning performance.

LAUREL

Please stop, both of you.

DANIEL

Isn't this what you wanted?

LAUREL

I just did what you told me to do.

DANIEL

Last time I checked you were over eighteen, you make your own damn choices!

KEN

(To Laurel) You're as narcissistic as him.

LAUREL

(Crossing to Ken) I'm sorry.

KEN

Sorry's not good enough!

LAUREL

It was thoughtless, selfish and stupid. Now please, go, before someone really gets hurt.

LAUREL tries to take KEN to the door. As HE pushes HER away, HE inadvertently hurts her.

Oh, God!

KEN

Oh my God. Are you okay? Oh my God!

DANIEL

Go get 'em slugger!

KEN

I didn't mean to-

LAUREL

Get away from me.

DANIEL

Two for two. You're a real lady killer!

KEN

I'll get some ice. Where's some ice?

KEN looks for ice.

DANIEL

Now this is what I call compelling TV.

LAUREL

(To Daniel) You can be a real pain in the ass!

KEN gives LAUREL ice.

DANIEL

Yeah, dying people can be so annoying.

KEN

(To Daniel) What the hell is your problem?

DANIEL
My *problem*?
LAUREL
Just go, Ken.
DANIEL
YOu wouldn't know anything about it. Neither one of you!

LAUREL
Anything about what?

KEN
Being a jack ass?

DANIEL charges KEN with HIS chair. HE pursues HIM throughout dialogue.

DANIEL
You've had it easy your entire life, you God damned sissy-ass mama's boy.

LAUREL
Stop, Daniel.

KEN
Oh, yeah, a thirteen year old kid getting a hard-on in the boys locker room, that's real easy.

DANIEL
Oh, boo-hoo! Little Kenny got beat up by the big scary seventh grade boys.

LAUREL
Leave it alone.

KEN
Losing my best friend, my life partner-

DANIEL
There are plenty of big strong homely men at Rikers, where you'll end up if you keep proving your masculinity by assaulting women.

KEN stops.

KEN
You are remarkably cruel.

HE starts to leave.

You win.

DANIEL

Good riddance!

LAUREL

Both of you, just stop.

KEN stops.

KEN

Why didn't you come to see me when Rob died?

Silence

I asked you a question.

DANIEL

I was at the service.

KEN

No, you weren't.

DANIEL

I was there, at the service.

LAUREL

I didn't see you.

DANIEL

That's me, Mr. Invisible.

LAUREL

What?

KEN

You should have been there with me.

DANIEL

Liz was with you. Bye-bye.

KEN

Liz is not my brother.

DANIEL

I was at the service, in the back.

LAUREL

I looked, I didn't see you.

DANIEL

(To Laurel) You wore a dark blue and purple dress with a black sweater. Your hair was up and you had those thick rimmed red glasses on.

LAUREL

What? How do you-

DANIEL

I was there.

KEN

After, back at the house?

DANIEL

I was a little busy keeping some big mouth drunk out of jail.

KEN

That's your excuse.

LAUREL

You remember what I wore.

DANIEL

(To Ken) You really don't wanna' do this.

KEN

You were busy helping one of your rich criminal buddies avoid a probably well-deserved prison term?

DANIEL

You ignorant bastard!

LAUREL

Daniel!

DANIEL

(To Ken) I was helping *you*.

LAUREL
What?

DANIEL
It's called insider trading.

KEN
What?

DANIEL
Buying or selling securities of a-

KEN LAUREL
I know what it means. Why would you I don't understand.
even think I would-

DANIEL
(To Ken) Not you, the stupid *ass* you were fucking, while Rob was lying in the hospital
dying.

KEN LAUREL
What are you talking about? What?

DANIEL
When Rob was in the hospital dying, you started screwing around with one of the nice
young Residents.

KEN
I did not... I don't think...

LAUREL
Kenneth Davis, what did you do?

DANIEL
Just before the Coastal Pacific technology buyout by Tech-Tonics closed, our little
Resident's father, a nobody day-trader got the idea to buy up Coastal Pacific's tanking
stock.

LAUREL
What does that mean?

DANIEL
It means that a week later, when the buyout went public Mr. day-trader made a small
fortune.

KEN

Good for him. So what?

LAUREL

(To Ken) What did you do with that Dr?

DANIEL

I shared my good news with you, you shared it with your little fuck-friend, and he shared it with daddy.

LAUREL

When Rob was dying?

KEN

The read head? The short red headed-

LAUREL

How could you? Tell me you didn't.

KEN

He took me out for a drink.

LAUREL

Oh God, Ken.

DANIEL

God had nothing to do with it. It took big brother all his favors, and a couple of IOU's, to keep us both out of jail.

LAUREL

Rob.

You betrayed Rob, the love of you life! Please, tell me you did not betray

KEN

(To Laurel) Betrayal seems to be a common theme around here, doesn't it sweetheart!

LAUREL

What are you saying? I did not do anything-

DANIEL

No, "good girls" like Laurel never do anything to hurt anyone. It just sort of *happens*.

As if slapped in the face.

LAUREL

That was unfair.

Silence.

SHE exits.

DANIEL

So, there you have it, you God damned son-of-a-bitch!

KEN

That's why you hate me?

DANIEL

No, that's why I'm pissed off at you. I *hate* you for much more personal reasons. You gonna' thank me now.

KEN

For what?

DANIEL

You owe me.

KEN

I *owe* you?

DANIEL

Yes, you do.

KEN

For what? Beating the shit out of me when you saw me kiss Roland Jaffrey in the 8th grade? Telling dad I trashed the car when it was you?

DANIEL

I'm sitting here, and I'm telling you , I saved your ass!

KEN

I don't see it that way.

DANIEL

I'm telling you there is no other way to see it. You screwed me, I saved you!!

KEN

Hah!

Are you even sorry?
DANIEL

No.
KEN

Get out of my office!
DANIEL

Make me.
KEN

What?
DANIEL

Make me! Come on! Kick me out of your office.
KEN

You self-righteous son-of-a-bitch!
DANIEL

Bring it on, *big* brother.
KEN

I'll kill you!
DANIEL

Come on. Take your best shot!
KEN

My best shot'll be your last shot!
DANIEL

Big brother, you don't even have a shot. Look at you.
KEN

I don't have a brother!! YOU'RE DEAD TO ME!
DANIEL

Good, we'll be even then real soon.
KEN

DANIEL
Everything was great until you came along. YOU'RE NOTHING, YOU NEVER
WERE! Zero, ZILCH, ZIPPO!!!

KEN
Zippo?

DANIEL
Zippo, brother!

KEN snickers.

KEN
Zippo.

DANIEL snickers.

DANIEL
Yeah! ZIPP-O!

KEN
You're such a spazz!

DANIEL
No, *you're* the spazz. I'm the Raspberry Ripple.

KEN
What?

DANIEL
(Rapping) Raspberry Ripple as in Daddy's now a cripple.

KEN laughs.

Hey, up yours butt-sniffer.

KEN
Butt sniffer?

DANIEL laughs.

DANIEL
Butt sniffer... licker, kisser...

KEN
Douche bag!

DICK BREATH!
DANIEL

LARD ASS!
KEN

ASS WIPE!
DANIEL

Cracking each other up.

(Trying to rap) WIPE MY ASS OR I'LL-
KEN

I CAN'T EVEN WIPE MY OWN ASS LITTLE BROTHER!
DANIEL

THEY catch their breath.

I'VE MISSED YOU.
KEN

YEAH, WELL YOU'RE STILL AN ASS WIPE THAT I DON'T WANT AROUND.
DANIEL

IT'S GOOD TO SEE YOU.
KEN

GOOD TO SEE YOU TOO. BYE BYE.
DANIEL

I WORSHIPED YOU.
KEN

YEAH, HOW ABOUT NOW?
DANIEL

I HAVE SOMETHING.
KEN

GOOD. I HOPE YOU DIE A SLOW AND PAINFUL DEATH.
DANIEL

I HAVE SOMETHING, FOR YOU.
KEN

DANIEL

Unless it's a new pair of legs and arms I ain't interested.

KEN

There are drug trials.

DANIEL

I got shot down with fifty grand in my pocket and the promise of a five million dollar endowment, and you're gonna' get me in?

KEN

I'm a doctor, I know other doctors.

Beat.

DANIEL

You know I'm a mother fucker. I don't want the placebo.

KEN

Of course not.

DANIEL

That's illegal, you know.

KEN

I guess it wouldn't be the first time, would it?

KEN takes DANIEL'S hand, hold it.

I am sorry. I don't care how shitty a brother you've been, I love you.

DANIEL

I seem to have that affect on people.

LAUREL enters charged up.

KEN

No one should have to go this way, not even an ass hole like you. Don't push me away, Danny.

LAUREL

Okay. This is it! You both just shut your mouths, stop fighting... and... listen...

LAUREL sees them holding hands.

KEN

(To Daniel) Let me help you.

Did I miss something? LAUREL

Yeah, a little lively reality. DANIEL

I need a drink! KEN

HE pulls out HIS flask and drinks.

Want one?

Black out.

END OF ACT I

ACT II SCENE 1

(Daniel's office next morning.
(MORE))

(cont'd)

Little has changed but the addition of pizza boxes, scattered liquor bottles, open boxes of Hostess snacks and three very drunk people.)

LAUREL is upside down in the wheelchair, HER back on the seat, legs slung over chair back, and head hanging down. SHE cruises the room.

DANIEL is propped up in a big chair. HE has been decorated with post it notes, and garlands made out of office supplies.

KEN is lying on DANIEL'S desk.

THEY sing "Ain't No Fun Waiting 'Round to Be a Millionaire" by AC/DC The BOYS drop out and LAUREL continues.

LAUREL

BUT I'VE GOT A MOMMA WHOSE A **HAMMER** WHOSE KEEPING ME ALIVE WHILE I'M IN THE BAND DOING DRINKING WITH BOYS.

DANIEL

Lo.

SHE continues to sing.

(Louder) Lo. (Yelling) Lo!

LAUREL

What?

DANIEL

It's *hammer*.

LAUREL

What is?

KEN

The lyric, in the song.

LAUREL

It's *hammer*.

DANIEL

Hummer.

KEN

Hammer doesn't make sense.

LAUREL

Of course it does.

KEN

I've got a Momma whose a *hammer*? What does that mean?

LAUREL

What do you mean what does it mean?

DANIEL

It doesn't mean anything.

KEN

It doesn't make sense.

LAUREL

Of course it does. It means... My mother is... a tough lady who beats me over the head over and over and over again... and It keeps me in line so I do whatever she tells me and... I'm a good... boy.

KEN

It's *hummer* and it means his woman gives a good blow job.

DANIEL

My secretary's a real *hummer*.

LAUREL

That's ridiculous. Why would anybody write a dong about a blow job?

KEN

Lolo's awfully cute, isn't she?

DANIEL

Yeah... in a rip-your-heart-out sort of way... She really is.

KEN holds up last Hostess Snowball.

KEN

Last Snowball, going once... going twice... going-

DANIEL

I'll pay you ten thousand dollars for that!

KEN

Sold!

KEN tosses package to/at DANIEL.

We used to beg mom for these things. Why?

LAUREL

My friend Darcy used to pull the pink part off and stretch it across her face.

KEN

How come a guy who can afford to fly the best pastry chefs of France in for a snack, eats Twinkies?

DANIEL

Because I can, and it makes me happy.

LAUREL

If you were my husband, I'd bake you fresh Hostess HoHos every day.

KEN

Let's get married, Lolo. I forgive you everything.

LAUREL

You're gay.

KEN

We'll get a twenty-eight year old bi house-boy. I think I could be faithful forever to tthe both of you.

LAUREL

Okay.

DANIEL

Be careful, Lulu, he doesn't share well. When you're out buying new bras and tampons, he'll steal your bi-guy away.

KEN

It's true.

LAUREL

That's okay. As long as I have you, Danny...

DANIEL

Especially don't let him near your mother.

LAUREL

My mother's dead.

DANIEL

He'll steal her away too. He's very sneaky.

KEN

I have no idea what you're talking about.

DANIEL

You know when I really started hating you, little Kenny?

KEN

When I was born?

DANIEL

No, that's way too psych 101.

LAUREL

I thought we were all passed all that hating and all in love again...

KEN

When I made tennis all-stars and you didn't?

DANIEL

I had the flu.

LAUREL

I made tennis all-stars too...

DANIEL

I had the flu.

KEN

Of course you did...

LAUREL

Practically everyone made tennis all-stars. When did you start hating me, Danny?

DANIEL
Very recently.

LAUREL
And him?

DANIEL
When he came out of the closet.

LAUREL
I was never in a closet.

DANIEL
Him. Ken... Kenny... Kenneth!

LAUREL
You hate your little brother because he's gay?

KEN
I can go back in... for a little while, if it'll make you feel better.

DANIEL
No. I think you make a very nice gay man.

KEN
Thank you, Daniel. That means a great deal coming from you.

DANIEL
When you came out of the closet I thought, finally, mom'll freak and she'll come running to me. She'll finally see, me.

LAUREL
That's why you hated baby Kenny all these years?

DANIEL
But, she didn't. She loved you best anyway.

Beat.

What kind of a mother does that? I was devastated.

LAUREL
That's ridiculous.

DANIEL
I know.

LAUREL

If you know, then why didn't you stop.

KEN

Is that when you quit selling windows and came to New York?

DANIEL

Yes.

KEN

And you got those lawyers to buy you the seat on the Gold Exchange.

DANIEL

And a few doctors, yes.

KEN

And you were the youngest man ever to have a seat of gold.

DANIEL

Yes, I was.

KEN

ANd, you're where you are today because of that, terminal illness excluded, of course.

DANIEL

Yeah, I guess that opened some doors.

KEN

That and your determination not to be invisible.

DANIEL

Yes, Dr. Freudenstein, I guess so.

KEN

Well then, that being true, you wouldn't be where you are today if it wasn't for me.

LAUREL

What?

DANIEL

I don't follow.

KEN

The whole time you were hating me, I was actually your greatest motivation.

LAUREL

I missed something... Could you say that again...

KEN

Maybe, you don't have to hate me anymore?

DANIEL

(Drifting off) I'll tell you what. If you give me mom between now and when I die, I'll stop hating you.

KEN

Done! Let's drink to it.

KEN holds bottle up to drink. What's left inside runs down HIS face onto shirt.

Damn! I have to go strait from here ot my Wednesday night AA meeting.

KEN takes shirt off, exits.

DANIEL sleeps.

LAUREL

It's hot in here. Is anybody else hot?

Silence.

SHE takes off top and pants. Cuddles up on DANIEL'S lap, sleeps.

KEN returns holding dripping wet shirt. HE hangs it somewhere and cuddles up to DANIEL and LAUREL.

KEN

(Drifting off) I love you Danny, for ever and ever and ever...

KEN sleeps.

Lights come on in outer office. A knock on the half-closed office door. A second knock.

JEN opens door.

JEN

Mr. Davis?

KEN

Huh?

DANIEL

Yes?

KEN shifts position. Neither wakes.

JEN enters office, looks around. SHE gets blanket and gently covers the trio. Starts a pot of coffee.

SHE makes call.

JEN

(On phone) Addison Stiller please... Yeah, Addison, this is Jennifer Santos, Mr. Davis's assistant... He asked me to call and let you know he's had a, uh... an... unexpected meeting and he- Yes, I know the interviews have been scheduled for weeks... he'd like to push back the start time... I'm sorry, but you'll have to- ...good idea, why don't you give Ms. Fein a call.

JEN cleans up office.

LAUREL

Maybe it's *humour*... I gotta' mama who's a *humour*... He has a funny mother... that would make sense...

LAUREL'S cell phone rings as JEN continues to clean up mess.

Lights fade

ACT II SCENE 2

(Five months later, April. One year from the time LAUREL proposed the "Have a Heart" concept to Daniel. Screening room.)

JEN has an open file and sorts through papers, as SHE talks on Bluetooth.

JEN

I'm telling you he's not dead... Roger, I can't put him on because he's not here right now... If he were dead don't you think there might have been some kind of corporate announcement? A memo? Obituary? ...okay, you caught me. I'm lying. He is dead. Yes, you're very clever. You can't tell anybody this. Promise? I'm trusting you with this information... He is currently on ice... Yeah, Cryogenics... Yep.

SHE sets papers aside and freshens makeup.

This is actually classified, got it? He is scheduled to go up on the next Shuttle mission.... The Space Shuttle... NASA. They want to study the effects of weightlessness on Cryogenics.Yeah, then the plan is to send his body... yes, it's still frozen... ...to Pluto... Of course it makes perfect sense... ...it *was* very sad when it lost planet status. Yes, prior to his death, they were using "operation Max Factor," Phase two is called... I think I overheard the President say.... Yeah, of the United States... No... by phone. I think I heard him call it "project May-Bel-Line" I'm sure that's exactly what it means...

DANIEL, in chair, and KEN enter.

KEN wears a "Have a Heart" ball cap. HE carries HIS drink and bag of food for JEN.

KEN

It was th bottom of the fifth, not the sixth.

JEN gives them the sign to be quiet.

JEN

(Bluetooth) I actually don't know who knows... And, of course, they would probably deny it anyway.

DANIEL'S speech is slower and sometimes slurred.

DANIEL

It was the bottom of the sixth.

JEN

...because of the classified nature, yes. I'm trusting you. Please, Roger, don't let me down.

KEN

It was the fifth.

JEN

(Bluetooth) Yes, I'm sorry I tried to keep it from you. Okay, bye.

JEN disconnects call.

DANIEL

I know it was the sixth.

KEN

I know I'm right.

DANIEL

Wanna' place a little wager on it?

KEN holds drink up for DANIEL.

KEN

Absolutely. A hundred bucks.

DANIEL

How'bout five hundred.

KEN

Let's do a grand. Because while the older more successful brother has cash coming out his ass, the younger and better looking brother has always had a far greater passion for sports and knows he's right.

DANIEL

Let's do five grand then. That way when you lose you'll have something really big to remember me by.

JEN

Boys will be boys.

KEN

Aren't we grateful for that.

Ken reads a magazine.

DANIEL

Any calls while we were out?

JEN

Laurel. She sounded a little amped up.

DANIEL

Anyone else.

JEN

No one that matters.

DANIEL

Roger called.

JEN

Yes. Again. He's convinced you're dead.

DANIEL

I'm sorry, but I couldn't keep it from him any longer.

KEN

Keep what? I love secrets.

DANIEL

Why else would you be a psychiatrist?

KEN

Access to good drugs.

JEN

I told him all about projects "Maybelline and Max-Factor."

KEN

You're buying makeup companies?

JEN

It's the plan to freeze Mr. Davis's body, send it up on the Space Shuttle for observation, then on to Pluto.

DANIEL

Can we do that?

JEN

No.

DANIEL

Did he believe it?

JEN

I think so. I told him that he was not to say anything about it do anyone.

DANIEL

You think he's shot his mouth off yet?

JEN

Oh, yeah.

DANIEL

You bring me such comfort in these trying times.

KEN

You really are as loathsome as the Bloggers say.

KEN hands bag to JEN.

Here's lunch.

DANIEL

I come by it honestly.

KEN

Mostly.

DANIEL

I have *never* crossed that line.

KEN

Dancing ever so closely...

JEN

Thank you, gentleman.

*LAUREL enters dressed to the nines
Hollywood-exec style. SHE fully owns HER
current station in life. SHE is angry.*

JEN eats.

*KEN Gets Hostess cream filled cupcakes out.
HE shares one with DANIEL, alternately
eating HIMSELF and feeding DANIEL.*

KEN

Do you remember the year we saved up all winter to get tickets to buy a pass to the Planetarium?

DANIEL

Yeah, we were like ten dollars short or something.

LAUREL

I'd like to speak with Daniel.

KEN

You were really furious with mom because she made you spend your savings on black dress shoes for ninth grade graduation.

DANIEL

I hated those stupid shoes. I think I-

KEN

Sold them to Frankie's little brother-

DANIEL

For his graduation the next year...

KEN

Yeah, for twice what you paid for them.

DANIEL

At twice what I paid.

LAUREL

I hate to break up this romp down memory lane, but I-

KEN

I stole the money to buy the pass.

DANIEL

You did not.

KEN

I did. I stole Mrs. Krasner's milk money.

DANIEL

Mrs. Krasner? From two doors down? Why?

KEN

You were so excited about taking me.

LAUREL

Guys?

KEN

I'd have done just about anything to impress you. Proud of me?

DANIEL

No. That's terrible. She was a sweet little old lady living on a fixed income.

JEN

Should I call the cops?

LAUREL

Lovely story. I need to talk-

DANIEL

Life is full of surprises.

LAUREL

Yes, it is.

DANIEL

What else did you-

LAUREL

Hey! I need to talk with Daniel. Now! This minute.

DANIEL

Yes ma'am boss lady.

KEN

Fine. Don't get all dragon lady on us.

LAUREL

I'm sorry. I have some... really important things to... discuss...

JEN

(Indicating papers on table) I've signed all these. You just need to look them over.

DANIEL

Thanks, Jen.

LAUREL

(To Jen) I'm sorry.

JEN takes food, exits.

KEN

(To Laurel) You'll have to finish dessert.

KEN hands LAUREL the cupcake.

DANIEL

I've had enough.

KEN

She's looking a little rabid. (To Laurel) Hidden camera rolling somewhere?

KEN holds papers up for DANIEL.

DANIEL

A little lower.

KEN lowers papers.

LAUREL

I just need to speak to Daniel. I'm sorry.

DANIEL reads papers.

DANIEL

I'll be done in a minute.

LAUREL

Now! ALone.

KEN

Sounds serious,. Call me if you need a psychological consult.

KEN exits.

DANIEL

(Calling after Ken) Don't steal anything out there. They got cameras everywhere.

Silence.

Congratulations. The ratings are huge. (Beat) Looks like you have a hit.

LAUREL

We're a big success.

DANIEL

I loved the rough cut we saw this morning of Justin's home visit. I can't believe how much I like that kid.

Silence.

LAUREL glares at DANIEL.

DANIEL

Too bad about Rogain, running out into the street... might buy him some sympathy votes. (Beat) What do ya' think? Is he the head of the pack at the moment? (Beat) I could live with him, I think. (Beat) Get it? I could *live* with him.

Silence.

LAUREL holds the tension.

I'm thinking of setting up a college fund. He's a good kid. (Beat) You've been holding out on me all these years.

Silence.

You never told me what a pisser it is to give my money away. It's actually... fun... Feels good.

Silence.

Tension grows.

I mean it. Watching the faces of people... in need... light up... It's remarkable actually, we're really making a difference here.

Silence.

LAUREL waits for an admission of guilt from DANIEL.

For a person who needed to talk so badly, you're very quiet.

Silence.

I can smell your ass burning, Laurel. Something you wanna' say?

LAUREL

You seem awfull chipper today. Anything special happening, partner?

DANIEL

Can't a guy be in a good mood for no good reason?

LAUREL

Generally, not a dying man. (Beat) Anything you want to share, Comrade?

DANIEL

I've got a bet with Ken for five grand that's a sure thing.

LAUREL

You two are thick as thieves these days.

DANIEL

It's good to have him back in my life. Not to mention that he feels he owes me big time. I'm milking it for all it's worth.

LAUREL

Yeah, I bet he'd do just about, anything, to help you out.

Beat.

DANIEL

What is it you think you know, Lo?

LAUREL

The head of Fox TV called. Apparently there's a rumor going around that the star of "have a Heart" is on a new miracle drug treatment. I assured her it was just a rumor because, for one, he doesn't believe in *miracle* cures.

DANIEL

Sure don't.

LAUREL

And two, he wouldn't do anything without clearing it with me. Because, we're doing this... *thing*... together.

DANIEL

Rumors. There's another one going around that I'm cryogenically frozen on the Space Shuttle heading to Pluto.

LAUREL

How could you do this? After everything I have done to make this a success for us?

DANIEL

It's a rumor.

LAUREL

Your mother confirmed it.

DANIEL

You called my mother?

LAUREL

What have we been doing here? Was this all just some big hoke to you? A way of passing the time until you die?

DANIEL

Nice.

LAUREL

I don't have to be nice. It's business!

DANIEL

Touché. (Beat) What difference does it make?

LAUREL

You're not serious.

DANIEL

I think I am. Let me check in with the one part of me that still works. (Pause) Yes. I am.

LAUREL

Cut the "poor me" crap. It's lost it's charm.

DANIEL

So has this conversation. What difference does any of this make?

LAUREL

The difference between... between, life and.. and... death.

DANIEL

Don't worry, Lo, I'm still gonna' die.

LAUREL

We're all going to die, Daniel. It's a matter of when. You signed a contract. We had an agreement.

DANIEL

I didn't realize it was with the Grim Reaper.

Silence

It's a very promising drug trial, Lo. You have to know what that means to me.

LAUREL

We're supposed to be a team.

DANIEL

I don't see how it'll effect the show.

LAUREL

Then, why didn't you tell me?

DANIEL

In business, information is shared on a *need-to-know* basis.

LAUREL

I needed to know. I'm your partner! America is about to vote on one of two people who you have promised your heart to.

DANIEL

So? They'll get it.

LAUREL

It would be good if that happened before the winner dies.

DANIEL

What are you saying?

LAUREL

I'm saying that... that if this treatment... thing.. Works, and... and you live a lot longer than anyone expected, we're... I'm... screwed.

DANIEL

I think your'e being a little selfish.

DANIEL

Me? Selfish?

LAUREL

Yes. I think you're being completely selfish.

DANIEL

If wanting to live is selfish, then you bet I am.

LAUREL

You can't put it that way. That's not-

DANIEL

Look, Lo, in the words of a very successful producer, "lets just stick with the process here, and-"

LAUREL

Don't.

DANIEL

What? I think it's great advise. You've lost some perspective here, Laurel.

LAUREL

If the person America picks does before they get your heart, because you... broke you contract by deciding... deciding, to live. What am I supposed to do?

DANIEL

As my producer, or my friend?

LAUREL

Your producer, damn it!

DANIEL closes HIS eyes, sits in silence.

Don't ignore me.

DANIEL

I'm not.

LAUREL

What are you doing?

DANIEL

I'm willing my arms to move so I can applaud you.

LAUREL

Why?

DANIEL

Because, I'm proud of you. Welcome to the pariahs club. Like the view?

LAUREL

This is not about me.

DANIEL

No. It's not.

LAUREL

It's about keeping promises. You keeping your promise to me. You made me a promise!

DANIEL

Oh, I see.

LAUREL

It's about... *us*, helping people. *Us* doing *good*... together.

DANIEL

Doing *good*?

LAUREL

Yes! What else? About you feeling what it's like to do some... real... good.

DANIEL chuckles.

Why not?

DANIEL

Because, doing *good*, "helping people" is a lie.

LAUREL

What lie?

DANIEL

The big fat one.

LAUREL

What are you saying?

DANIEL

You're living a lie, Lo. You came to my office ranting about the dirty money people like me throw at charities.

LAUREL

I did not rant. I never rant. I said, I wanted to-

DANIEL

Each time you take money, Laurel, from *my kind*, and hand it out to your sorry little people-

LAUREL

Don't call them that.

DANIEL

You're the one that called them that. Each time, Lo, you paid interest on the lie.

LAUREL

What lie?

DANIEL

That good and caring people like you use my questionable money to lift the forsaken masses out of their unfortunate circumstances. Wanna know a little secret?

Beat.

No one really wants them lifted up.

LAUREL

What are you saying?

DANIEL

You need them down there as much as I do.

LAUREL

That's sick.

DANIEL

Sick, and very real! "Nothing changes. The sorry little people get sorrier and needier." Isn't that what you said?

LAUREL

Yes... but-

DANIEL

But nothing. If they actually stood up and thrived, where would that leave us? How would we be heroes then?

LAUREL

I told America they were going to be a part of giving someone anew shot at life, and they have tuned in faithfully every week.

DANIEL

Yes, they have. And that's line your pockets with dough.

LAUREL

That has nothing to do with it.

DANIEL

That has everything to do with it! Ya' think the network went for this to make people feel good, or to save a life?

LAUREL

Well, that's what I was doing.

DANIEL

That Chanel suit you're wearing says otherwise. "It's Laurel's turn to get some..." How you enjoying the feast sweetheart?

LAUREL

I was just... trying to speak... your language! You have to dress the part.

DANIEL

Tell me, then, what has this all really been about?

Silence.

Say it! What is it you really want Laurel?

LAUREL

Now what, I have to tell them that... that plans have changed. "We really don't have a... a heart for you, thanks for playing?"

DANIEL

It happens.

LAUREL

Not to me.

DANIEL

I'm glad we've cleared upw who this is all about.

LAUREL

Don't you dare make jokes now.

DANIEL

You didn't answer my question. What is it you want?

LAUREL

I want you to... stick to our plan. You made me a promise. You said you'd always... no matter what... You made me a promise. This time I want you to keep it.

DANIEL

What d'you expect me to say Laurel? "Yeah, you're right, I'll die now for you?"

LAUREL

Yes. No. (Beat) Why didn't you talk to me about this?

DANIEL

For the same reason you didn't talk to me about bringing Kenneth on board.

LAUREL

I was doing my job. I said I was wrong.

DANIEL

I'm doing *my* job, even though it may seem wrong... to you.

LAUREL

What am I supposed to do?

DANIEL

That depends on who you wanna' be?

LAUREL

I wanna' be someone who doesn't have to deal with this... this pile of... shit...

DANIEL

I'm sure your old job is waiting for you. There will always be starving masses to lift up.

Silence.

I made my choice Laurel. I'm willing to live with the consequences. How about you?

Lights fade.

VITA

The author was born in Cleveland, Ohio. She obtained her Bachelor's degree in music and theatre performance from Case Western Reserve University in 1983. She joined the University of New Orleans Film, Theatre and Communication Arts graduate program to pursue a MFA in creative writing with a concentration in playwriting. *Have a Heart* is the 2010 winner of the Kennedy Center ACTF Jean Kennedy Smith Award.