

2006

The true story of Candice in time

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DOI: <https://doi.org/10.31979/etd.u7s6-dzc7>
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THE TRUE STORY OF CANDICE IN TIME

A Creative Project

Presented to

The Faculty of the Department of English

San Jose State University

In Partial Fulfillment

Of the Requirements for the Degree

Master of Fine Arts

by

Timothy Edgar Welch

December 2006

UMI Number: 1441134

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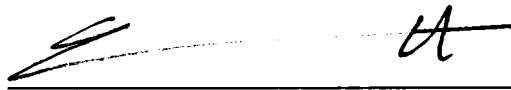
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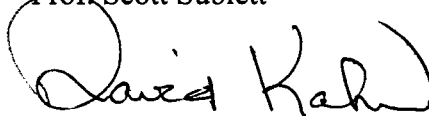
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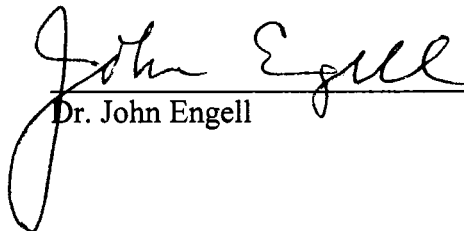
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ABSTRACT

THE TRUE STORY OF CANDICE IN TIME

by Timothy Edgar Welch

The True Story of Candice in Time is an experimental play that addresses memory and responsibility through a fractured chronology. Throughout the script, scenes from the past overtake scenes in progress. Consequences of decisions echo as those decisions are being made. While this occurs, one scene—the arrival of Candice—plays out in radically divergent iterations as her housemates struggle against their own guilt about some mysterious abuse she has suffered. Their need to deny the truth leads to the deterioration of time, place, and identity, so that not only the timeline, but also the setting of the play and the roles of the characters become confused, leading to a destabilized setting where nothing is as it seems, and the suppression of Candice’s memories through medication becomes the only stable reality. Ultimately, the characters cannot maintain that suppression, and Candice remembers enough to destroy the world of lies that has been created.

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Preface to The True Story of Candice in Time

I am surrounded by my own fabricated images, Frankenstein's monsters cut up from other people's dreams and ideas, sewn together into fragmented aberrations, the characters and concepts that populate The True Story of Candice in Time. I am apprehensive in the celebration of my accomplishment in completing this script because I cannot help noticing a knife wielded by one construct, menacing pills in the hands of a few others, apathy and guilt, and, most frighteningly, uncertainty. So many ideas, so many influences and perceptions have gone into this play, some bypassing conscious thought, that I, creator and supposed master of the script, am scared of it. Some half-worry stalks the edge of my awareness, suggesting that too much has gone into this—too many ideas and fancies about what a performance can include and what ideas are interesting. And yet, this script realizes my vision of what theatre should be. There is a chaos to it that risks overwhelming the audience in order to provide a complex spectacle, and I like it. From within me, the cautious student writer nervously eyes his construct hoping the seams hold while the playwright, emboldened by a mad aesthetic, celebrates the diverse, seemingly incompatible sources so clearly represented in this play.

There it is; that is the central struggle behind the scenes, of me, the writer: If I compare myself to Dr. Frankenstein, I have to admit to a little Jekyll and Hyde as well. In all of my work I alternate between an impassioned lunatic who revels in the wild pageantry of my disinhibited presentation of ideas, and the scientific writer who understands plot, structure, and plausibility. Both of these personae are necessary, of

course, but like Robert Stevenson's Jekyll, I enthusiastically drink from my draught, paying, it could be argued, too little heed to my sane self. I enjoy experimenting, distorting conventions and layering ideas and styles, moving my writing as far from tradition as I can, to encourage those characteristics that I find essential to a theatrical experience. Just as visual art moved to abstraction in response to photography, theatre followed this trend in part responding to the stylistic stagnation of most film. For something to be theatrical it must be performative, it must undeniably proclaim something, and for a play to do that, it must fully exploit its formal existence as a performance, as words and actions and everything they invoke. While I know all plays require certain things—internal logic, thematic components, tension—I am much more interested in hitting the audience as brutally as I can so that (hopefully) people walk away from a performance stunned, aware that they have been struck by something that could not have been projected on a flat screen. For me this is theatre, but I cannot stand confidently on that platform because it is unstable, because it is not enough for performance to be something new because it also has to work—to appeal to an audience, to entertain, to function as a complete unit delivering a complete experience and leaving people with a sense of fulfillment. Otherwise it is random crap. Disjointed. Are there fingers near my throat? Will there be a fire at the windmill?

Sifting through my insecurities (fears?), I note how my play is similar to my varied inspirations, and I recognize that I am most worried about it not so much as an expression of myself and my capabilities, but as an emissary of what I value in theatrical art. I met another writer at a conference once who told me that we write because we

desperately crave acceptance, and I think he is right, but we also write because we are desperately in love with certain formal characteristics in literature. We writers tend to enjoy well-wrought words and phrases, our own or others', and to feel immense satisfaction at the ways various mechanisms of our chosen forms and genres fit together. When we find something we like, we admire the craftsmanship, we want to present it to other readers and audiences so they too can see it and share with us our feelings of awe, and we want to emulate certain aspects of it in our own work to express a progression of those tools in the development of a style. In Candice I have done that, I have engaged in the literary dialogue I wish to be part of and in so doing have created a play that exploits much of what I value in public displays and narratives and explores ideas that have fascinated me for years. Moreover, by bringing so many influences and ideas together in a work reflecting the movement toward ambiguity that characterizes so many aspects of the last hundred years from the fine arts to the "hard" sciences, I have realized my artistic vision. The question is, does it work or is my vision merely the realization of the post-modern nightmare? Does my ideal inevitably fall apart at the seams?

This line of questioning leads me to wonder about other things. In the spirit of my own play I examine my past; I look back through my aesthetic education to consider what encouraged me to develop in this direction. Surely there was a point when I could have modeled myself after Neil Simon and written banal comedy. I own a giant volume of Neil Simon plays that I have read cover-to-cover, and I have seen every film adaptation of his work that features Jack Lemon. But something happened to me, or more aptly, some things happened to me—both literary things and intellectual things—

and I have found that whatever potential I had to be Simonesque has been siphoned off by advancements in the arts and sciences; by the ambiguity of today's intellectual concepts; by playwrights ranging from Augusto Boal who completely tears down the conventional form of theatre to Suzan-Lori Parks who subverts its content to deconstruct history. I have radicalized artistically so that innovation within traditional theatrical form does not satisfy me, and I need to attack the traditions themselves. In the realization of that radical vision, story becomes a matter of great uncertainty, characters are exposed as characters, and, in this instance certainly, time overlaps in a tangled presentation. Intellectually, I felt compelled to introduce topics ranging from speculative physics to current questions about bias in academia and media. And I have represented these ideas using a variety of modernist techniques so that while this play cannot be considered pataphysical, expressionist, surrealist, or absurd, all of these can be discovered within it. Again, this sounds suspiciously like the outer extremities of post-modernity where the artistic work risks falling apart. In recognition of this, Candice includes a meta-metatheatrical aspect that asks the audience to engage the question of whether the play can come together into a cohesive whole. I think it does, but certainly the question looms; the patchwork construct threatens. As I take steps toward animating this play, proud creator, I await the possible stones that will be hurled by its detractors, and worse, the play's betrayal of the very vision it realizes. So I think back through the bits and pieces that have driven me toward my mad aesthetic, some of them as innocuous as Neil Simon; and like a bad morality tale that starts with a cigarette and ends in overdose, the story of my corruption plays out across all the temptations of performance and literature.

I was in elementary school when my grandfather's death led me to the trailhead of my pursuit of writing. I was young enough to find mortality perplexing, and I did not understand how someone I cared for could be entirely removed from the world. If he was capable of disappearing, I thought, he was capable of doing things that I had previously considered impossible, and I realized for the first time that I knew little about him. As I tried to piece together a clearer understanding of who he had been, my grandmother noticed and offered me a few file folders that he had used to organize stories he had written for publication. He never published them, but I found the fact that he had created stories to be almost mystical. I read them immediately, and along with my normal reading satisfaction, I experienced awe. These were complete, fully functioning short stories that had been produced by somebody I had known. My abstract faith that somebody had to write in order for things to get written came into conflict with my sudden concrete understanding of what that meant. My grandmother owned a typewriter, and so I began right away, looking for and pushing the buttons for the letters that (sometimes correctly) made up the words I wanted to write. My first "story" was less than a page, possessed nothing that suggested structure or even forethought, and was, in fact, little more than rambling fancies—It was nothing less than the chaos that threatens my experiments today.

I needed a model and an aim. Television and movies were one source, but since I was trying to write stories I also turned to the books I was reading. This early influence was particularly odd because as I outgrew the young adult genre, I was pushed toward the genre of pulp sci-fi and fantasy. I remember the boxes so clearly, big cardboard boxes

stuffed with paperbacks, up in the corner shelf of my parents' walk-in closet. We did not have bookshelves, for some reason, so my dad kept all of his books there. As soon as I was old enough to risk my life hauling those boxes over my head and onto the floor, I spent an hour or two between every book I read digging through them for my next literary experience. It was a journey through wild possibilities as the collection included the pulpiest of pulp. I spent my early reading years exploring obscure authors like E. C. Tubb and John Norman. While they may not have been the best models of narrative craft I could have chosen, I learned from these books that if I decided I would like to defy the science of astronomy by positioning a counter earth on the other side of the sun or to write a series of thirty-two novels each containing a nearly identical dialog about the mystical origins of humanity, I could. My writing took on elements of the fantastic, and nothing could stop me from portraying a world where trees sneak around at night and antelope are the descendants of space-aliens. I have since worked to purge my writing of many of the tendencies I picked up from those books, but being unafraid of the most absurd premises is something that still characterizes much of what I write, and it fuels many of the meta-theatrical impulses that I express in my scripts today. "Guess what," I tell my audience, "in this script, the characters know they are on stage. Oh, and do not get too used to the positions of those trees."

Eventually I migrated on my own to the truly talented writers in the genre—Orson Scott Card, Ursula K. Le Guin, Phillip K. Dick—and among these I found the great short story writer, Harlan Ellison. As I hunted down and read out-of-print anthologies of his work I learned the value of the grotesque in literature. Ellison seems to enjoy taking the

comely and pleasant and sane, and stretching aspects of these clear into the realm of horror, a practice I gleefully emulated. Around this time I also discovered Flannery O'Connor who does much the same thing but without magic or unknown technology. I can vividly recall the first Flannery O'Connor story I read even though I have not reread it in the 18 years since its discovery. I found the story among the readings of my first college literature class, its horrors hidden behind the innocuous seeming title, "A Good Man Is Hard to Find." Without looking up the story to supplement my recollection, I can describe its principal actions more easily than I can explain what I read last week. An old woman and an escaped convict discuss religion, morality, and the afterlife while the convict's henchmen kill the woman's family one by one. I remember the story being richly layered as the awful action provides a backdrop for the discussion, which contrasts with the mutual respect the two principal characters have for one another. From my admiration of the story I developed an artistic craving for that particular brand of the grotesque and a much clearer understanding of the nature of the contrast that Ellison so often presented. By discovering the nearly obscene action of O'Connor's story couched in a realistic setting, I discovered what I had not understood about Ellison, that the mundane has the greatest potential to be fantastic.

From this somewhat strange start, I discovered many of the tools of the mad scientist; I was emboldened toward the bizarre, and my sensibility was dark. But my aim was to write well-crafted narratives, and I was not particularly innovative with structure. No story or novel I read disturbed my belief in how to construct a proper story. I may have been imbalanced, but I was not yet insane. Back then the student-writer side to my

personality, the part that studied and followed rules, was huge, and my stories suffered under the tyranny of clarity and overstated exposition. Had I kept to this path, I surely would have worked these issues out; I think I would have become a traditional but quirky storywriter and that would have been acceptable to me. I was nudged from this path and any hope of respectability by my interest in theatre and my peculiar interpretation of what performance should be.

I began attending theatre on a whim. I noticed inexpensive shows at small venues in the entertainment section of The Stranger, the free weekly I read. I was in Seattle, and at that time the city was active with every kind of show. There were lesbian comedies about pirates with breast patches and drag recreations of Michael Jackson videos and theatrical performances of established scripts, news scripts, and traditional classics with a twist, all in spaces that could seat maybe thirty or a hundred people. I went to shows that charged between three and ten bucks. My initial thought was, “why not? Why should not I go here?” I soon became addicted. My memory of that time reminds me of Oscar Wilde’s description of the opium dens from The Picture of Dorian Gray: I emerged from these shows demented.

It was not the scripts that affected me; it was the productions, inexpensive, intimate shows with minimal sets and often no professional lighting. I loved it. I could see the actors’ breath and sweat. There was some line-botching and a bit of inexpert acting, but I ticked all this off in the plus category because it reminded me to keep looking around at where I was; these shows were like marionette shows with thick, brightly colored cables for strings. The one thing that was consistently interesting in all

these shows was the production strategies; to get around the limitations of meager financing, the companies imaginatively stretched cheap, mundane objects into fascinating sets that relied not on mimesis as their objective, but on their impact as spectacle. In one show, a series of wooden crates of different heights formed a half-moon around a central platform, which was lower than the seating—the actors were sometimes above and sometimes below the audience. Another performance I attended featured a sandbox with a spiral drawn into it, downstage center; the sandbox remained decorative until an important moment in the play placed the lead sitting anguished in it, covering himself with sand.

I saw my first professional performance around this time, a production of Private Eyes by Steven Dietz at the Seattle Rep. High production value, comfortable stadium seating, well-polished acting, the sort of clever script that rewards the audience for attending an artistic event. I hated it. I have since come up with the term “fancy dress theatre” for shows that play to the turtleneck and blazer crowd. High-liberal theatre is a term I also like. Since then I have seen several of these shows. This is where the would-be conventional writer inside me could have fit in if I had not taken so badly to this sort of venue. It is the home of the well-crafted play and it is a place where playwrights can actually make money. Tom Stoppard’s less interesting plays belong here, as do plays by other well-known, respectable writers. And of course, Neil Simon, whose witty and fun comedies about life in New York stage nicely in this sort of house. Common attractions include rotating sets and technical magnificence. It is difficult not to admire these productions. And yet I manage. My real issue is that although some aspects

of a show like this are unique to live performance, little distinguishes the experience from a movie. Such shows are too polished; the sets are sleek and professional, the actors are unlikely to slip and do something weird; the scripts are more or less tame to reflect the tastes of the fancy dress crowd. People go to these shows to dress up, drop a little cash, and have a cultural experience. For the most part, this crowd wants to be wowed by a production's quality, and intrigued by a nuanced plot. They do not want to be overwhelmed or confused. Because this is the audience that does not mind paying big money on a regular basis—the audience that pays high ticket prices and donates to the theatres—this audience gets what it wants.

When I saw the Dietz play in Seattle, I had not thought through any of this; I just knew I was bored by the show. I returned to the cheap theatre of the bizarre with greater appreciation. If high-liberal theatre was respectable, this was its club-footed cousin that suffered mental anguish. I began to accept, even appreciate the deformities, the unskilled actors that peppered the casts, the dropped and (sometimes) recovered lines, the technical malfunctions. These things reminded me that I was at a live performance with live actors and living people next to me in the audience. When a company does not have the funds to create the illusion of reality, the true world, where the performance takes place, becomes more real. I learned to watch shows hyperaware of their stagyness, enchanted into an awareness of the present rather than transported to some other place and time. I began to recognize the ambiance built in this environment as a half-world where a story was being acted out, a story performed while I sat in the dark, filling in the blanks with my imagination, but never losing sight of the storytellers. This experience is more

strongly connected to ancient storytelling traditions—to primitive audiences gathered around a fire—than high-end theatre can be. It was in these venues and for these reasons that I developed an interest in writing plays. I wanted to design scripts that could enhance the theatrical nature of theatrical experience.

I was becoming artistically deranged. The suspension of disbelief, long sought goal of the writer, was becoming uninteresting to me. Everything I knew (which I suppose was not much) about constructed well-crafted narratives became offensive to me. My prose writing took a turn toward the strange as I started trying to work out which aspects of a properly constructed story could be omitted. I was in such a state of mind when I began putting together my first scripts. I wrote monstrosities, wildly disfigured things that lacked essential elements and, for the most part, did not work. I was writing things that were in some ways interesting to read, but that left the reader unsatisfied because they were not properly shaped. I did not care; I had entered a period of literary mental illness and I was happy for it. I threw away everything I wrote because it was so bad, and while I celebrated my freedom from sanity, I also mourned my abandoned hope of ever being published.

After this peculiar transformation, I began reading plays. I was researching the form. I did not think I would ever write anything anybody would want to read, but I had something to communicate theatrically. And if my scripts turned out as malformed as my stories were, I could put together my own pack of strange blueprints and perform them in the streets. Professional aspiration had been abandoned in favor of wild fancy, but I still had enough sense left to realize that I needed to know what proper scripts looked like

before I could write improper ones. I found Ibsen and Chekhov fairly quickly, and while I did not understand the history of theatre well enough to appreciate how innovative they had been, I recognized the quality and enjoyed reading their plays. I also found Ed Albee, Naomi Wallace, Arthur Miller, and quite a few other important playwrights during this period. Given my mad aspirations, it is not surprising that Samuel Beckett and Sam Shepard were particularly interesting to me; plays like, Endgame and Suicide in Bb spoke to what I was trying to do. Although I hoped to take my experiments to a ridiculous extreme, I found in these works a willingness to impose unrealistic limitations on characters to defy logic, and to disregard mimesis. I found in this pair of playwrights absurdism and a near offspring, and I was willing to take another step in this direction, to graduate beyond all sense. I wanted to remove the meaningfulness from words.

The answer to that desire came from dance. After attending a performance of Michael Nyman's Strange Attractors, I read a statement in the program from Stephen Petronio, the choreographer, explaining how he approached putting together a feature-length dance. Because the language of dance is non-verbal, Petronio holds ideas in his mind while he works. He tries to physicalize meaning through the appearance of motions. This was it: rather than using words to convey meaning traditionally, I could write verbal nonsense that suggests meaning through the sounds of the words. I wrote several short plays using this method, and the results were more satisfying than I had anticipated. Far from being the outer dregs of senseless experimentation, these plays actually came together the way a good dance performance does.

Then I discovered String Theory, and the universe became a lot stranger. The very laws of physics I had grown up believing in—the very creation of the universe—had been challenged. Suddenly I felt validated in my lunacy. Reality might not work as we all had thought, which meant that my portrayal of reality (which in a strange way is what I had written) should not either. The part of String Theory that was most interesting to me was its portrayal of dimensionality. Rather than the consistent set of dimensions I had learned about in my early science courses, dimensions in String Theory were something of a mixed lot with some (the directions and time) behaving as I had been taught they do, and some that behaving quite differently. Along with the four dimensions that we experience, our universe also contains several others, the exact number being a subject of contentions among String Theory's numerous offspring. Moreover, some scientists have speculated that there are many universes, or branes, existing side-by-side, each with its own dimensional composition, and that the big bang resulted not from an exploding singularity, something I never really understood anyway, but from the collision of two branes.

String Theory led me to Quantum Theory, which led me into total chaos. In Quantum Theory even the most basic premise of what is is, becomes challenged. A particle, Quantum Theory tells us, can be in two places at once. Far from living in the hypothetical world of String Theory, however, Quantum Theory provides proof. Particles have been photographed behaving just as the theory describes. I felt as if I were staring into another world when I looked at a photograph of a single particle existing in two locations, but I was not: I was staring into this world. String Theory actually

answers this seeming inconsistency, but the answer is controversial. What is important here is that by discovering these speculations I lost faith in the known and I learned that everything that seems certain is little more than a convenient narrative to explain what is essentially uncertain.

Oddly, this confirmation of the instability of the world made me more, rather than less, interested in rational writing. I began to claw my way out of the absolute absurdity I had immersed myself in. Those few people who had read my most extremely distorted writings had laughed at me justifiably and I had not cared because I was a senseless person in a sensible universe. But now that I had rethought the physical laws and found reality to be as disjointed as my peculiar theatrical sensibility, I decided to engage in a dialog about reality.

I discovered the twentieth century and I discovered History. I returned to school after a long digression and began working toward a Bachelor Degree in history. That study strengthened my emerging worldview. Bias is a great issue of concern for historians. Most have realized that the exploration of history is no pure examination of fact, but is rather a subjective interpretation of evidence, that true historical events can only be excavated through guesswork and opinions. Naturally, I was interested in this uncertainty; in every field of study that I had naively thought stable and steeped in fact—in the words science and history that I had taken to mean truth and fact—I found instability, and the more I examined the institutions and traditions of my society, the more instability I found. Objectivity in Journalism? A lie. Integrity in the clergy? A hoax. Even political beliefs that I dogmatically held, that informed me that people would

not tolerate blatant violations of their rights crashed around me as I watched the administration of the second George Bush repeatedly defy conventional political principals and still attain re-election.

As I studied history and worked my way through these thoughts, I found the early twentieth century in theatrical literature. More specifically, I found modernism. Here were the voices of Tristan Tzara and Antonin Artaud—the great Gertrude Stein. Here were several distinctive experimental movements, some that amputated the characteristics of theatre as severely as I had. Artaud’s famous (infamous?) The Spurt of Blood, for example, is un-performable. I connected these theatrical forms with my study of history. The shifting alliances of nineteenth century Europe encouraged anxiety and uncertainty that affected these writers. The movements and the anxieties spread to the United States as the Great War did, and the economic and political aftermath of that conflict prolonged the instability through the Second World War and into the middle of the century. General anxiety and uncertainty came through in the writings of modernist playwrights, but the specific circumstances that created anxiety and uncertainty changed rapidly allowing for the compartmentalization of distinctive modernist movements. I find my own anxiety and uncertainty to be inextricably linked to the responses of past playwrights to their own anxieties, and in their varied expressions of these anxieties are the building blocks of my own work.

I began reading Harold Pinter and Adrienne Kennedy, and found like-minded playwrights. The Birthday Party, my first Pinter play, exemplified how eloquently sensible storytelling could be abstracted from a work that still functioned as a whole.

Like my dance-inspired experiments, this play replaces traditional meaning with something that suggests meaning. The arc of the story, McCann and Goldberg showing up to take Stanley away from the house he has been living in, is completely abstracted from any direct expression of motivation. Significant moments—Stanly beating his drum, Goldberg blowing into McCann’s mouth, McCann breaking Stanley’s glasses—function on an emotional level rather than a logical one. The overall meaning of the story is logically obscure; it is something the audience senses.

Funnyhouse of a Negro has a similar relationship with logic, but Adrienne Kennedy’s work is highly physical. While Pinter uses measured moments of activity to great effect, Kennedy fills her work with actions and imagery to create a visual poetry that complements her stylized dialogue. The first scenes transition from black women in white face to a woman carrying a bald head to the Negro, a character with wild, kinky hair, a noose around her neck and blood obscuring her face. These images are brought into focus through speech that conveys anxiety and fear but falls short of clarity. The play functions as a dance set to poetry.

There it was then, a composite model. From these sources I had attained the tools I needed to construct plays that borrowed and invented, suggesting interpretations rather than supplying them. I had developed a theatrical sensibility that seemed—and seems limitless. I sucked in every spectacle and performance I could find. I watched fireworks displays at Disneyland, street performers, musicians, and in all of these things I found elements worth drawing into my plays. I boldly filled each script I wrote with more until I reached Candice and designed a play that threatened total instability. When I

abandoned my earlier absolute obscurity, I did so with finality—to go back would be regressive and destructive. I have reached a point in my writing where I can—must—show the world that I am not mad. When they laughed at my earlier experiments it was because they were not fully realized; now I have sewn together life from the discarded pieces of the dead! Here I present to you a living, breathing thing, crafted carefully and set loose. Notice the seams; pay attention to how naturally they move together. Let us hope the brain is not too damaged . . .

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CAST OF CHARACTERS

- Andrew: A man in his late fifties or early sixties. He is played by the same actor who plays Mr. Amsel's assistant.
- Mrs. Kutscher: A woman in her fifties.
- Candice: A woman in her late teens or early twenties.
- Jeri: A woman who is a little older than Candice. The same actress plays Candice's silhouette when necessary.
- Darla: A solid, masculine woman in her mid- to late thirties. The same actress plays Mrs. Kutscher's silhouette when necessary.
- Pete: A man in his early thirties. He is played by the same actor who plays Mr. Amsel.
- Mr. Amsel: A man in his forties. He is played by the same actor who plays Pete.
- Mr. Amsel's assistant: A man in his fifties. He is played by the same actor who plays Andrew.

SETTING

A house that is something between a boarding house and a state psychiatric hospital. There are five main areas of the house, the Kitchen, the common room, two bedrooms, and the front door. The kitchen is furnished with a table and two chairs, a counter with a coffee pot, and cupboards. Behind the table is a staircase that leads up. To the left of the kitchen is the common room, which is screened off by a hospital curtain on runners. When the curtain is pulled back, the room is shown to be furnished with a bookcase, three chairs, and an end table. To the right of the kitchen, the front door is blocked by a screen or a curtain which is lit up from time to time to cast the silhouette of the door. The two bedrooms are to the right and left of the stairs and slightly upstage. As the play progresses the bedrooms will be moved and doorways will be added.

TIME

Before Candice arrives, while she is there, and after her death—often all at once.

Performance note: asterisks appear within dialog indicating that the next character's lines begin to overlap at that point. Double asterisks are used to indicate another layer.

ACT ONE

(AT RISE: Mrs. Kutscher stands stunned in the Kitchen, holding a spatula before her limply. She is staring into nothing. Andrew comes partway down the stairs, but stops when he notices Mrs. Kutscher.)

ANDREW

Mrs. Kutscher?

(He cautiously descends the remaining stairs, then hesitates.)

Mrs. Kutscher, are you all right? (Pause.) Hello?

(Andrew slowly approaches Mrs. Kutscher. She doesn't move or notice him.)

Are you feeling unwell, Mrs. Kutscher?

(Andrew nervously reaches as if to touch her hand or the spatula but before he does, she jerks into a confused alertness, causing him to retract his hand quickly.)

MRS. KUTSCHER

Oh! Andrew—Mr. Berkman. Oh, um. I was just . . .

(Distantly)

It must be breakfast time . . .

ANDREW

Are you all right?

MRS. KUTSCHER

Me? I've had a difficult night, that's all.

(She turns and pours water into the coffeemaker.)

ANDREW

What was it?

MRS. KUTSCHER

It was none of your business, is what it was, Mr. Berkman.

(Candice enters walking through a wall, ignoring the logic of the set. She is wearing a house robe and she seems to be in a trance.)

It was Candice.

ANDREW

Candice?

MRS. KUTSCHER

She wasn't herself last night, Mr. Berkman, if you must know.

(Candice sits at the table.)

ANDREW

If there's something wrong with Candice you need to—

MRS. KUTSCHER

(Turning on Andrew)

I run this boarding house, Mr. Berkman, not you.

(Andrew holds up his hands defensively, but before he can respond, Candice interrupts them. Andrew and Mrs. Kutscher turn to stare at her.)

CANDICE

In time, on time, with time, no time, time's up, time out, no time without time, make time, lose time, time to give your time and money, time it is, time it was, when it's time you need time, there's no time like the present time . . .

(Footsteps start upstairs as Mrs. Kutscher, entranced, walks off through an implied wall. Andrew backs up several steps, eventually leaving the lit portion of the set.)

. . . my time, your time, our time, time to take your time.

(Yelling)

Time and space! Time and tide!

(Candice falls silent, brooding as the footsteps reach the top of the stairs and Mrs. Kutscher descends, wearing a house robe.)

MRS. KUTSCHER

Oh! Candice. I had no idea you'd be up.

CANDICE

You ever think about time, Mrs. Kutscher?

MRS. KUTSCHER

Candice, I don't think—

CANDICE

It's always the right time to think about time. I mean, it's always there, isn't it? Even when the morning isn't yet morning. It's sleep time then, right? Even for those who don't sleep, who walk the hours before dawn to sit at tables or . . . get a drink of water.

(Mrs. Kutscher pours herself a glass of water.)

MRS. KUTSCHER

You're making me nervous.

CANDICE

Oh?

MRS. KUTSCHER

Have you been taking your pills?

CANDICE

Pill-time. Every day, a couple of times a day there's a pill time. Mealtime comes three times a day, and it's time to get up once a day—twice if there's a nap. Sometimes—

MRS. KUTSCHER

Candice please, this is serious. Do you take your pills?

CANDICE

Sometimes there's time to kill; isn't that a strange thing to say? Can we really kill it? Is it really gone when we pass it?

MRS. KUTSCHER

Young lady, I've asked you a question.

CANDICE

And it's about time you got an answer, isn't it? But not quite. About time has to mean not quite time, doesn't it?

MRS. KUTSCHER

Candice!

CANDICE

Of course I take my pills. I take them every time you bring them. You watch me. You'd know if I didn't.

MRS. KUTSCHER

Thank goodness! You've just seemed so—

CANDICE

I take them and keep them until I have enough of them. Then I wait for the right time to come around.

(Candice pushes herself up, and leans in on her arms, staring hotly into Mrs. Kutscher's eyes. Their faces are uncomfortably close.)

Like right now.

(Pause.)

MRS. KUTSCHER

Candice, I—

(Candice pushes the table aside and begins stalking Mrs. Kutscher, who retreats backward.)

CANDICE

Right time, wrong time, good time, no time, in time, time enough, time's up. It's always some time. It seems to go slower or faster at different times. We water our language with time like we don't for directions. It's time to think, Mrs. Kutscher.

MRS. KUTSCHER

You're acting crazy!

CANDICE

Well, it's crazy time, isn't it? It's time for the pill festival. You can't deny a girl her fun. Not when you provided the entertainment. Here, take a little of this and a little of that—you were bringing me the same thing but a bit at a time, you were giving me crazy in small doses. And guess what, there's a little weak place between the worlds right now, Mrs. Kutscher, a small little thin bit of nothing between me and you.

MRS. KUTSCHER

I demand—

CANDICE

Request. You can't demand from me right now.

MRS. KUTSCHER

(Weakly)

I request that you go up to your room and sleep this off.

CANDICE

Why? Buy yourself some time?

MRS. KUTSCHER

(Frightened and desperate)

Candice, please . . . I don't want to wake the rest of the house.

(Candice and Mrs. Kutscher stand eye to eye for a long moment before Candice explodes into a rant, pacing and gesticulating, causing Mrs. Kutscher to cower from her.)

CANDICE

(Loud and crazy)

Three plus one, Mrs. Kutscher, we live in a three plus one world. Every direction goes two ways—left and right, up and down, forward and back—you can ungo anywhere you've gone—but we're stuck in time, you can't ungo time because we're hurling through it. Do you understand that, Mrs. Kutscher? The reason we're so fascinated by time is because we're crippled in it.

MRS. KUTSCHER

I will wake up the house.

(Candice assesses Mrs. Kutscher, and then marches to a drawer to retrieve a long, serious looking kitchen knife. She rushes Mrs. Kutscher and pushes her against the wall, pointing the tip of the knife toward her face, ready to skewer her.)

CANDICE

Call and I'll poke you up.

MRS. KUSCHER

There's no need for—

CANDICE

Of course not.

(Candice pushes away from her and begins to pace again.)

We're having a nice talk about time. You do have time for that, don't you?

(Not even pulling herself away from the wall, Mrs. Kutscher nods.)

You ever hear about String Theory, Mrs. Kutscher? Superstring Theory? Brane, M-brane, D-brane? Any of that? It's Physics, Mrs. Kutscher, possibilities in Physics. A particle's not a particle—well, it is a particle but not a dot—it's got length in one direction and that makes it a string. You get that? A string. And all these particles—all these strings—all these everything's that make up everything that are open or closed or whatever, interact on these weird canvases called worldsheets, in a timespace that's got ten or eleven—howevermany dimensions. And everybody's trying to figure out how we get from ten or eleven good dimensions down to just. Three plus one. But that's what we've got. Maybe we live in a three plus one brane—a three plus one slice of everything, a thin sheet of everything and maybe all the branes have their own dimensionality, and maybe they just float around together and occasionally collide. And maybe that's where we came from—what the big bang was: a collision that caused a whole bunch of something to erupt into the universe that we know now.

(Candice brandishes her knife menacingly.)

Think about this, Mrs. Kutscher: all of everything spewing inward all at once with great velocity.

(Still gesturing wildly, Candice approaches Mrs. Kutscher in measured steps that accompany her point as she speaks.)

Space is expanding.

(Step)

Galaxies are separating.

(Step)

Momentum pushes us apart from everything else.

(Step)

But we live in this worldsheet that's fully present in three dimensions.

(Step)

CANDICE (Continued)

We can move left

(step)

and right

(step)

up

(step)

and down

(step)

forward-and-backward

(step)

all-around-our-world

(step. Candice is now pressed up against Mrs. Kutscher, looking into her eyes. Pause.)

But maybe everything is on a flat plate, timewise. Maybe we're being pushed through time, all of our known universe together with such force that we can't go any other direction, and we can't conceive of time working any other way. If I were to slaughter you right now, Mrs. Kutscher, I could only think of that as an event that occurred in time, and I could not imagine retracing my steps to the time that the crime was committed.

What do you think about that, Mrs. Kutscher?

MRS. KUTSCHER

(Terrified)

That's . . . very interesting.

(They stand immobile for a moment, only breathing, and then, casually, Candice walks away, toward the table.)

CANDICE

Do you remember when I came here?

(A loud knock echoes through the room as Candice rights the table and sits down with her back to the stairs. The screen lights up to reveal the silhouette of a doorway, Mrs. Kutscher's silhouette approaches the door and answers it. Candice's silhouette is on the other side.)

CANDICE'S SILHOUETTE

Mrs. Kutscher? I've been told I could take a room here.

(Candice's silhouette crosses the threshold, and the two disappear together. The shadow scene begins to repeat.)

CANDICE

Then what happened? Anything maybe.

(The knock sounds again. Mrs. Kutscher's silhouette approaches the door and answers it, revealing Candice's silhouette.)

CANDICE (Continued)

Uncounted possibilities. Each approach a different future—passed to us now*—a different present.

CANDICE'S SILHOUETTE

*Mrs. Kutscher? I've been told I could take a room here.

(Candice's silhouette crosses the threshold, and the two disappear together.)

Do you remember when I left?

(Mr. Amsel's silhouette enters through the door, and closes it as another knock sounds. Mrs. Kutscher's silhouette approaches the door, but is startled to find someone inside already.)

MRS. KUTSCHER'S SILHOUETTE

Oh! Mr. Amsel.

(Mr. Amsel's silhouette pushes past her.)

MR. AMSEL'S SILHOUTTE

Stand aside, Mrs. Kutcher; I'm here to deal with Candice.

(Mrs. Kutscher's silhouette answers the door to reveal Candice's silhouette while Mr. Amsel's silhouette walks off the screen, disappearing.)

CANDICE

How did you first hear about me?

CANDICE'S SILHOUETTE

Mrs. Kutscher?* I've been told I could take a room here.

MR. AMSEL

(Off)

*Mrs. Kutscher? I'd like you to take in a special boarder, if you would.

(Candice's silhouette crosses the threshold, and the two disappear together.)

MRS. KUTSCHER

(Looking toward the shadows)

What's her name?

(Darla comes down stairs to check on the commotion, looks at Candice, and then makes eye contact with Mrs. Kutscher, who regains her composure and straightens herself.)

MR. AMSEL

(Off) Candice. She needs special care.

CANDICE

That was Mr. Amsel, wasn't it? (She notices Darla.) Must be bedtime.

(She stands up. Darla takes her arms and escorts her up the stairs, followed by Mrs. Kutscher. The kitchen sits empty for a long moment, then the knock sounds at the door again. Mrs. Kutscher's silhouette answers the door to reveal Candice's silhouette.)

CANDICE'S SILHOUETTE

Mrs. Kutscher? I've been told I could take a room here.

(Candice's silhouette crosses the threshold, and the two walk off the edge of the screen together, this time though, instead of disappearing at the end, Candice and Mrs. Kutscher walk out from behind the screen. Mrs. Kutscher is wearing a muumuu, and Candice, a neat button up sweater and a skirt. Mrs. Kutscher leads Candice into the kitchen.)

MRS. KUTSCHER

Come on in and have a look at the place. What was your name, dear?

CANDICE

Candice.

MRS. KUTSCHER

Candice. Well, I am pleased to meet you. This is the kitchen. I prepare all the meals myself, morning midday and night. Excuse me.

(Mrs. Kutscher picks up the water glass and the knife from the last scene and puts them in the sink.)

Sorry about the mess, dear.

CANDICE

How much is the rent?

MRS. KUTSCHER

I'm afraid it's gone up recently from very reasonable to just fairly reasonable, and it's due once a month. Will that be a problem?

CANDICE

No. Um, I have assistance.

MRS. KUTSCHER

Assistance? Government subsidy, SSI, or whatever; it doesn't matter here; you're perfectly welcome. Why don't you come in and meet the other tenants, I think you've found your new home.

(Mrs. Kutscher flicks a light switch, causing the lights to go out in the kitchen and on in the common room, which is shielded by a curtain. Just

as this happens, Darla walks across the kitchen to the common room and pulls the curtain back from inside. In the room, Andrew sits reading a paper, and Pete and Jeri play checkers.)

MRS. KUTSCHER (Continued)

Pardon me everyone. I'd like to introduce you to our new boarder; her name is Candice. Candice, this is Mr. Berkman, our oldest tenant.

ANDREW

Candice.

MRS. KUTSCHER.

Jeri and Pete. Pete's a part-time deliveryman, and Jeri works in the entertainment industry.

PETE

Glad to know you.

CANDICE

What sort of entertainment do you do?

JERI

I'm broadly specialized.

MRS. KUTSCHER

And this is Darla. Darla, come over here and meet Candice.

(Darla stiffly and emotionlessly approaches Candice and takes both of her hands. Then, as if switching on, she becomes expressive and friendly. Candice stares down at their joined hands, terrified.)

DARLA

I'm right next door to where you'll be staying. If you need anything, just give the wall a knock and I'll be there.

(Candice starts to struggle to free her hands, but despite the fierceness of her attempt, and Darla's relaxed grip, she is unable to free herself. No one reacts to this.)

MRS. KUTSCHER

Isn't she sweet?

DARLA

And I'll come in and check up on you a couple of times in the night, when you're scared. Everyone's scared at first.

MRS. KUTSCHER

Let's show Candice her room, Darla.

(Darla releases Candice's hands, allowing Candice to break free, and then gently puts her arm around Candice's waist. Candice struggles against this as well, but again is held firm. Mrs. Kutscher ascends the stairs, and Darla leads Candice up behind her. In the common room, the lights begin to dim as Pete and Jeri blankly slide the checkers into the box, close the lid, and return the box to the shelf before walking off. The lights in the common room drop and the kitchen lights rise. Andrew and Mrs. Kutscher return to the counter. They freeze for a moment, and then Andrew sits down at the table while Mrs. Kutscher pours a cup of coffee.)

MRS. KUTSCHER

The coffee is ready.

(Mrs. Kutscher pours a cup of coffee and brings it to Andrew along with a bowl of sugar and some cream. She leans over Andrew intimately, touching him while she spoons sugar into his coffee.)

Two sugars, Mr. Berkman?

ANDREW

Thank you.

(She pours some cream.)

MRS. KUTSCHER

And a bit of cream?

ANDREW

Please.

MRS. KUTSCHER

These are the advantages of being the first tenant, Mr. Berkman.

ANDREW

Certainly but—

MRS. KUTSCHER

Not advising me about Candice.

(Mrs. Kutscher returns to the sink, picks up her spatula, and begins taking down plates and cups for breakfast.)

ANDREW

Mrs. Kutscher, I don't mean to presume, but* Candice is a special case, and if you don't contact Mr. Amsel, you could wind up with more than you can handle.**

MRS. KUTSCHER

*You are presuming, Mr. Berkman, you are.

(Slapping her spatula against the counter)

**I will run my own boardinghouse, Mr. Berkman!

(A bed creaks upstairs followed by footsteps.)

The house is beginning to wake. Do you wish to continue this in public?

ANDREW

No, certainly not, Mrs. Kutscher.

JERI

(Off)

Oh God.

(Jeri descends the stairs.)

MRS. KUTSCHER

(Calling)

Good morning Jeri!

JERI

(Off)

Good?

(She enters from the stairs.)

I can't remember the last good morning.

(Jeri opens a cupboard, and retrieves a small bottle of bourbon, which she begins to pull off of occasionally. She leans on the counter, occasionally getting in Mrs. Kutscher's way.)

Paper here?

MRS. KUTSCHER

When the paper comes, Mr. Berkman has the first look at it.

ANDREW

Oh, I can share as good as anyone. Besides, she only ever reads the comics. And I have no interest in those.

JERI

He's right you know; he doesn't even get the jokes.

MRS. KUTSCHER

Isn't it early to be drinking?

JERI

God yes! But you told me you don't want me sleeping all day. Where's Candice?

ANDREW

She was up late—

MRS. KUTSCHER

We're not talking about it.

(Jeri sweeps her way into a chair next to Andrew and leans into him.)

JERI

Up late?

MRS. KUTSCHER

We're not talking about it. Jeri, would you care for some toast? I've just made some.

JERI

Ack!

ANDREW

I would very much like some toast.

(Mrs. Kutscher brings Andrew a plate of toast.)

JERI

I thought she never stayed up late. What was she doing?

MRS. KUTSCHER

How about a cup of coffee, Jeri?

JERI

Why do you always think I can eat and drink things, Mrs. Kutscher?

(To Andrew)

Did she do anything weird?

ANDREW

Why, what do you know about this?

(Jeri pushes her chair away)

MRS. KUTSCHER

Jeri, this morning would be a good time to mind your own business.

JERI

I do mind my own business. I just have a broad definition of what that is. Wha'd she talk about, Andy?

ANDREW

Andrew.

MRS. KUTSCHER

Or Mr. Berkman. What has gotten into you this morning?

ANDREW

(Accusingly)

Jeri . . .

(Jeri jumps up.)

JERI

More coffee, Mr. Berkman?

MRS. KUTSCHER

Jeri! That's so nice of you to help out.

(Jeri brings the coffee pot to the table.)

Mr. Berkman takes two spoons of sugar and a bit of cream.

(Jeri pours carelessly, dumps some sugar straight from the sugar bowl, and splashes some cream in.)

JERI

(Sweetly)

Mrs. Kutscher?

MRS. KUTSCHER

Yes Jeri?

JERI

What did you and Candice talk about?

MRS. KUTSCHER

Time, Jeri.

JERI

Time!?

(She sits next to Andrew again.)

They talked about time last night in the middle of the morning.

ANDREW

I don't find it funny at all.

(Jeri leans back in her chair, and takes a big sip from her bottle.)

JERI

Can't you just see Candice sitting around, talking about time?

(In a comical imitation voice that sounds more like a cartoon businessman than Candice)

I think we all need to recognize that there's not enough time in this house.

MRS. KUTSCHER

Jeri, don't lean.

JERI

Oh. Right.

(Jeri rights her chair. A knock sounds at the front door, causing Mrs. Kutscher to go tense. Jeri and Andrew look toward the door.)

MRS. KUTSCHER

Ignore that.

ANDREW

(Leaning in toward Jeri)

What do you know about last night?

(Jeri starts to push away from the table again, but Andrew grabs her arm.)

Jeri!

JERI

Nothin'. Nothin', jeese.

(Another knock sounds.)

MRS. KUTSCHER

It's nothing.

ANDREW

Jeri, I know you know something.

JERI

OK, so I know something.

(Another knock sounds.)

MRS. KUTSCHER

Ignore that, it's nothing.

ANDREW

What if it's the paper?

MRS. KUTSCHER

It's not.

(Mrs. Kutscher stops everything to stare at the door. She is completely absorbed.)

ANDREW

(To Jeri)

Jeri, please . . .

(Another knock sounds.)

Candice is in trouble.

(Another knock sounds, this time Mrs. Kutscher's silhouette answers the door to reveal Candice's silhouette.)

MRS. KUTSCHER'S SILHOUETTE

You must be Candice. Come in.

(Candice's silhouette comes through the threshold, and the two disappear together as they walk into the room.)

JERI

That's not my business.

(Another knock sounds.)

ANDREW

It is if you did something.

(Another knock sounds.)

MRS. KUTSCHER

Ignore that.

JERI

Did? Did!? Did is a tricky word.

(Another knock sounds. Mrs. Kutscher's silhouette answers the door to reveal Candice's silhouette.)

ANDREW

What did you do?

JERI

To Candice?

MRS. KUTSCHER'S SILHOUETTE

You must be Candice.

ANDREW

Come on.

MRS. KUTSCHER'S SILHOUETTE

Come in.

(Candice's silhouette comes through the threshold, and the two disappear together as they walk into the room.)

JERI

I gave her some advice, that's all.

(Another knock sounds.)

Here have a drink.

MRS. KUTSCHER

Ignore that. It's nothing. There's no one there.

ANDREW

Jeri!

JERI

I told her she should save up her pills, that's all.

(Another knock sounds. Mrs. Kutscher's silhouette answers the door to reveal Candice's silhouette.)

ANDREW

What!?

MRS. KUTSCHER

Ignore that. It's nothing.

MRS. KUTSCHER'S SILHOUETTE

You must be Candice.

ANDREW

Jeri!

JERI

What?

MRS. KUTSCHER'S SILHOUETTE

Come in.

(As Candice's silhouette comes through the threshold, another knock sounds.)

MRS. KUTSCHER

What!?

(The two Silhouettes disappear together as they walk into the room.)

ANDREW

Candice needs those pills for stability.

(Another knock sounds at the door.)

MRS. KUTSCHER

What—WHAT—WHAT!?

JERI

That's a bunch of crap, Andrew, that's a lie.

(Another knock sounds at the door.)

MRS. KUTSCHER

(Simultaneous with the knock or just a moment before)

What!? What do you want!?

ANDREW

(Pointing at Mrs. Kutscher)

Mrs. Kutscher is not capable of handling something like this.

MRS. KUTSCHER

(Brandishing her spatula)

I said stop it!

(Another knock sounds.)

JERI

What're you worried about her for?

(Mrs. Kutscher's silhouette answers the door to reveal Candice's silhouette.)

Shouldn't you be worried about Candice?

MRS. KUTSCHER'S SILHOUETTE

You must be Candice.

ANDREW

I am worried about the state of the house.

MRS. KUTSCHER'S SILHOUETTE

Come in.

JERI

She's the one who came in to all this trouble.

(Candice's silhouette comes through the threshold, and the two disappear together as they walk into the room. Mrs. Kutscher leans forward, hands on the table, just waiting for the knock to sound again.)

ANDREW

We're going to need to get the owner of the house to fix this trouble you've started.

JERI

Amsel? That ought to fuck things up.

(A knock sounds at the door. Mrs. Kutscher slaps her spatula against the table. Mrs. Kutscher's silhouette answers the door to reveal Candice's silhouette.)

ANDREW

What choice is there? Mrs. Kutscher can't handle this on her own.

MRS. KUTSCHER'S SILHOUETTE

You must be Candice.

(Jeri sets her bottle down in front of her on the table.)

JERI

Isn't it a bit late to start worrying about what happens in the world around you?

MRS. KUTSCHER'S SILHOUETTE

Come in.

(Candice's silhouette comes through the threshold, and the two disappear together as they walk into the room.)

ANDREW

Why did you do this, Jeri? Everything was fine.

JERI

Was it?

ANDREW

Jeri!

(Everything is still while Mrs. Kutscher stares at the door and Andrew stares at Jeri. After a long pause, Jeri pushes the bottle over and stands.)

JERI

Stir things up.

(Jeri exits to the common room. A light comes on in the common room, but the curtain blocks the room. Another knock sounds at the door. Andrew jumps up for a towel to clean the bourbon. Mrs. Kutscher slaps the table with the spatula again. Pete comes down stairs followed by Darla who looks tired and disoriented.)

PETE

Hey everybody. What's going on? I thought I heard some commotion.

(The knock sounds again.)

MRS. KUTSCHER

Shadows! It's just shadows!

PETE

I think there's someone at the door, Mrs. Kutscher.

(Pete walks toward the door while Darla stands at the foot of the stairs.)

MRS. KUTSCHER

Ignore that! It's nothing!

(Behind the screen, Pete opens the door to a delivery person who hands him a rolled newspaper. Pete closes the door and returns to the kitchen.)

PETE

It's the newspaper.

(Pete brings the paper to Andrew who, having cleaned the bourbon, sits again at the table and starts looking through it.)

Candice still asleep?

MRS. KUTSCHER

Candice and I were up late last night, Pete.

(Darla and Mrs. Kutscher exchange a look, and Darla walks over to the curtain that blocks the common room from the audience. Mrs. Kutscher goes back to setting up her breakfast.)

PETE

Oh?

MRS. KUTSCHER

It was nothing, Pete, don't worry about it.

(Pete sits down next to Andrew as Darla pulls the curtain back to reveal Candice sitting in a prim daze in the common room some distance from where Jeri reclines, bored, with one foot on her chair, throwing checkers

across the room into the checker box. A half bottle of bourbon sits next to her on the table.)

PETE

(To Andrew)
Candice really asleep?

ANDREW

Jeri did it.

JERI

(Languidly)
Hey Candi-can.

(Heavily sedated, Candice does not reply. Darla picks up the checkers that have missed the box, and returns them to the table by Jeri.)

PETE

Jeri did it?

ANDREW

Jeri.

(Darla authoritatively shifts Jeri's legs to the floor and then walks to the kitchen as Jeri returns their legs to their previous position.)

PETE

What did Jeri do?

MRS. KUTSCHER

What's this about Jeri?

JERI

Hello?* Candice?

ANDREW

*Later.

(To Mrs. Kutscher)
Is there any more of that good coffee, Mrs. Kutscher?

JERI

You with me?

MRS. KUTSCHER

Oh! Certainly.

(Mrs. Kutscher brings the coffee pot to the table. Darla spreads plates, silverware and glasses around the table, as unobtrusively as possible, to create the set for a recently completed meal.)

ANDREW

Piece of the paper, Pete?

(Mrs. Kutscher pours the coffee and, with her free hand, adds sugar and cream.)

MRS. KUTSCHER

Pete? Would you care for anything?

PETE

(Standing to get a cup from the cupboard)

Maybe a bit of coffee, Mrs. Kutcher. Thank you.

(Jeri hits Candice on the head with a checker, causing Candice to look at her confused. Jeri stares back guilty for a moment, and then laughs at Candice's response. In the kitchen, Mrs. Kutscher pours coffee in Pete's cup.)

There a sports section?

(Andrew sets the sports page in Pete's place at the table.)

JERI

Sorry, Candyland.

(Pete sits next to Andrew and the two hold open papers before their faces. Jeri takes a long slow sip from her bottle but doesn't take her eyes from Candice. Mrs. Kutscher and Darla freeze. Everything stops for a long moment. And then, simultaneously, all three scenes come to life. Pete looks around his paper to see if anyone is paying attention to him, Darla grabs a broom and starts to sweep, Mrs. Kutscher begins cleaning the mess Darla has set up, and Candice stands up, staring accusingly at Jeri.)

MRS. KUTSCHER

Darla, I need to speak with you.

(Pete nudges Andrew, who lowers his paper to look.)

PETE

Hey Andrew.

CANDICE

Why?

JERI

I was just chucking checkers.

MRS. KUTSCHER
Right now, while everyone's asleep.

DARLA
Not asleep yet.

ANDREW
Yeah Pete?

MRS. KUTSCHER
No but they're in bed.
(Candice sits back down slowly. Her eyes are locked on Jeri.)

PETE
Tell me about Jeri.

ANDREW
(Peeking forward.)
Not yet.

PETE
Andrew!

ANDREW
Too many people here.

MRS. KUTSCHER
No one's here. It's a good time to talk.

CANDICE
(As if hearing Mrs. Kutscher)
Time?

PETE
What?

MRS. KUTSCHER
Nothing. I just wanted to tell you we have a new tenant coming. Her name is Candice.

ANDREW
Candice was going on about time.

JERI

What about time?

CANDICE

Nothing. I slipped. It happens. Every now and then some weird thought slips in about time.

(She looks around as if waking somewhat from her daze.)

Mostly I don't have thoughts at all . . .

MRS. KUTSCHER

I thought I should tell you. She's . . . special.

PETE

It had something to do with Jeri?

(Jeri moves across the room to sit next to Candice.)

ANDREW

Yeah, Jeri.

JERI

You don't think?

CANDICE

No, I . . . I'm confused a lot. I don't understand this place.

JERI

Don't you remember coming here?

(The lights come up on the screen and there is a knock at the door.)

MRS. KUTSCHER

(Suddenly distracted by the door)

Stop it!

(The lights drop on the door.)

MRS. KUTSCHER

This new girl will be on a pill schedule. However many it takes. The pills are in the closet in the common room. If you bring them to me, I'll show you how to administer them.

(Darla crosses the kitchen and the common room to retrieve a box from the closet along with a pill cup of pills.)

PETE

What do you mean?

(Darla marches to Candice and hands her the pills.)

What time is it?
MRS. KUTSCHER

Come back to time, Candice.
JERI

It was several months ago.
ANDREW

It's several months ago, isn't it?
(Jeri nods)
CANDICE

It's several months before that, Mrs. Kutscher—before Candice came. Who she anyway?
DARLA

Who?
CANDICE

Save these.
(Pills balled in her fist)
JERI

I think I should call for help.
ANDREW

They're power.
JERI

Candice needs help.
ANDREW

We'll give her what she needs. However many she needs.
MRS. KUTSCHER

A few to make you numb.
(Jeri drinks with her free hand, still staring at Candice.)
JERI

I can help her.
ANDREW

These will help her adjust.
MRS. KUTSCHER

JERI
More can help you fly.

MRS. KUTSCHER
Help her stay calm.

DARLA
Help us keep her calm.

ANDREW
Help the house.

PETE
Helping? You?

JERI
Have as many as you want. When you want.

PETE
You haven't helped anybody in a long time, Andrew.

JERI
(Opening her hand to offer the pills to Candice)
Be in control.

DARLA
Help us keep her in control.

ANDREW
Mrs. Kutscher has lost control.

MRS. KUTSCHER
I have control of the situation. I want to help her—help her stay in control of herself.
Help. . .
(Candice takes the pills and stares at them.)

ANDREW
Mr. Amsel. I think somebody needs to call Mr. Amsel.

JERI
It's time.

PETE
Is that your idea of helping?

ANDREW and MRS. KUTSCHER
Time?
(Pete looks at Andrew quizzically.)

DARLA
What?

ANDREW
Nothing. I thought I heard an echo.

CANDICE
(Somewhat less confused)
Your name is Jeri, isn't it?
(Jeri nods.)

MRS. KUTSCHER
(Fearfully looking around) Everything echoes.

CANDICE
I see you every day. Why didn't you help me when I—
(Candice is interrupted by a knock. The lights come up on the silhouette of the door.)

MRS. KUTSCHER
When the echoes echo each other, they start to fade . . .
(The shadow door dims.)

JERI
When you . . . ?

CANDICE
Fade. It's fading.

DARLA
Nothing fades.

JERI
I can't help that.

PETE
Andrew, don't try to help here. There's nothing you can do.

ANDREW

Yes, I see that.

MRS. KUTSCHER

(Separating out the pills)

We'll give her two of these, two of these, and just one of this one, once a day for starts.

PETE

What's done is done.

MRS. KUTSCHER

We're going to help her.

DARLA

Whatever will be will be.

(Andrew suddenly puts down his paper.)

ANDREW

Mrs. Kutscher?

(Mrs. Kutscher and Darla freeze)

ANDREW

Could I have some more coffee?

(Dazed, Darla picks up the pill box and walks toward the common room. Candice jumps up, confused.)

CANDICE

I have to go.

(Candice backs off the stage, ignoring the continuity of the room. Darla enters the common room, takes hold of the curtain, and pulls the curtain closed while she walks across the room.)

MRS. KUTSCHER

Certainly, Mr. Berkman.

(Mrs. Kutscher pours coffee for Andrew and Pete.)

Warm up Pete?

(She stirs sugar and cream into Andrew's cup.)

I don't want you to get the idea that I've been pushed around by Candice.

ANDREW

Oh?

PETE

(Aside, to Andrew)

You see, everything's fine.

(Darla enters from the common room still carrying the box of pills.)

MRS. KUTSCHER

Certainly not. Everything is completely under control in this house. Darla, set those down right there, please.

(Darla sets the box on the table. Mrs. Kutscher unpacks three bottles of pills.)

So. What we're going to do is adjust her pill schedule for the better.

(Jeri steps into the doorway between the common room and the kitchen.

Mrs. Kutscher holds up the different pill bottles as she mentions each.)

Two of these and two of these—that remains the same. Two of these instead of just one. And we'll add this one. A very strong pill. She won't need more than one of these at a time. You got that Darla?

DARLA

Yes ma'am.

MRS. KUTSCHER

Good, set up the first pill cup, would you?

(Darla puts the correct combination of pills into a pill cup.)

JERI

Awful lot of pills, isn't it, Mrs. K?

MRS. KUTSCHER

Mrs. Kutscher! You will refer to me by my proper name, Jeri.

ANDREW

Your whole plan is to change her medication?

(Andrew shoots Pete a concerned look.)

MRS. KUTSCHER

Yes, Mr. Berkman, that is exactly right. Is there some reason that my TENANTS need to QUESTION how I deal with CANDICE?

PETE

She knows what she's doing, Andrew.

MRS. KUTSCHER

Are you through with your coffee, Mr. Berkman?

ANDREW

(Tersely)

Yes ma'am.

(Mrs. Kutscher gathers up the plates and cups. Darla comes over to help but Mrs. Kutscher stops her.)

MRS. KUTSCHER

Darla, why don't you wake Candice. I'd like to speak with her.

(Darla starts toward the stairs and Jeri slides her way toward the pill box with Pete watching her.)

Darla.

(Darla stops.)

While you're up there, why don't you lock the rest of these pills in your room. For safekeeping.

(Jeri strikes a casual pose while Darla backtracks for the pills and then starts up the stairs with the box. Mrs. Kutscher's hands are full of dishes by this point.)

If you truly wish to bring greater formality into our relationship, Mr. Berkman, we can manage that. Just so long as you remember your place.

PETE

Yes Andrew, what's going on? You're not usually like this.

ANDREW

I just can't help but think maybe we should have handled things differently when Candice first arrived.

(The lights come up on the shadow doorway and there is an accelerated knock as Mrs. Kutscher throws down the dishes breaking them. Everyone else stops and stares at her, shocked. A rushed shadow scene begins with Mrs. Kutscher's silhouette quickly answering the door. Mrs. Kutscher speaks loudly to drown out the scene.)

MRS. KUTSCHER

Candice* was treated with care and respect when she arrived.

MRS. KUTSCHER'S SILHOUETTE

(Rushed)

Candice. I'm Mrs. Kutscher. Come in.

(Mrs. Kutscher's silhouette takes Candice's silhouette by the wrist and rushes her in to the edge of the curtain where they both disappear and the shadow scene fades.)

MRS. KUTSCHER

Question that and nothing will make sense.

(Mrs. Kutscher throws Jeri the broom.)

MRS. KUTSCHER (Continued)

Sweep this up.

(Jeri stands agape, holding the broom as if it were completely unfamiliar to her, and pointing at her chest mouthing the word, "me?")

Yes Jeri, you; Darla's busy and I need someone to clean this.

(Jeri ineptly scatters and swirls the broken dishes around with the broom.)

I DON'T UNDERSTAND WHY ALL OF A SUDDEN I LIVE IN A MADHOUSE!

PETE

You've really upset her.

(Andrew stands and approaches Mrs. Kutscher.)

ANDREW

Mrs. Kutscher, please. I'm sorry. I was trying to help out—not to meddle.

(Darla and Candice come down the stairs. Darla maintains a firm grip on Candice's arm. Candice appears hung over, but walks with defiance.)

MRS. KUTSCHER

Please stand aside, Andrew.

(Andrew and Pete both move aside, clearing a path between Candice and the table. Andrew sidles up to Candice. Mrs. Kutscher walks around the table to face Candice.)

Well Candice, how many ways does our world go today?

CANDICE

Three plus one.

MRS. KUTSCHER

I'm sorry?

CANDICE

(In a smaller, less certain voice)

Or ten. Eleven maybe.

MRS. KUTSCHER

Not as certain today?

CANDICE

Not as clear.

ANDREW

(Aside to Candice)

Be careful.

MRS. KUTSCHER

You kept me up late last night because you were certain you had to tell me something. And today it's not as clear? There's not a single tenant here who hasn't given me trouble this morning, because of you, and you're uncertain? Last night you were ready to "poke me up" over it.

CANDICE

Look—

MRS. KUTSCHER

Apologize!

CANDICE

(Defiantly)

I'm sorry.

MRS. KUTSCHER

Oh, is it sorry time now? Time to be sorry? Or is it time to do our timetables, or DO THE CROSSWORD IN THE TIMES!

ANDREW

Mrs. Kutscher!

MRS. KUTSCHER

You will stay out of this, Mr. Berkman. Well Candice? Want to tell me about the two times two world?

CANDICE

Three plus one.

MRS. KUTSCHER

Oh? Are you sure now? Not ten? Not eleven?

CANDICE

(Mumbling)

The others are small or something.

(Loudly)

Three dimensions plus time. Gravity's the problem.

MRS. KUTSCHER

Oh it's gravity now?

CANDICE

It's escaping.

MRS. KUTSCHER

I see. How would you like to pretend that none of this ever happened?

CANDICE

You can't ungo time, Mrs. Kutscher.

(The lights come up on the doorway as a knock sounds. Mrs. Kutscher and Candice look toward the doorway while everyone else continues to look at them. The lights on the doorway dim and Candice and Mrs. Kutscher turn toward each other again.)

MRS. KUTSCHER

Can't you? Darla the pills.

(Darla retrieves the pills from the counter and Mrs. Kutscher stares into Candice's eyes. Nobody else moves. Darla returns.)

And the flashlight, Darla.

(Darla goes back and opens a drawer to get the flashlight while Mrs. Kutscher grabs the lapels of Candice's robe, and forcefully hoists her back onto the table and pushes her down, crawling up onto the table with her, her own knee between Candice's legs. Pinning Candice with one hand, Mrs. Kutscher reaches back with the other.)

The pills, please.

(Darla hands Mrs. Kutscher the pills and Mrs. Kutscher forces Candice's mouth open, pours in the pills, and then stuffs them down her throat. Andrew and Jeri are horrified but say nothing. Pete is neutral. After a few moments of struggle, Mrs. Kutscher holds out her hand again.)

And the flashlight if you would.

(Mrs. Kutscher takes the flashlight from Darla, and with Candice's mouth pried open, shines the light inside and all around before releasing her. Satisfied, she turns off the light, and climbs off Candice.)

This will be the new routine whenever it's . . . pill time.

(To Darla)

Make sure to do this every time, and make sure she doesn't get more. At this dosage, she should not be able to . . . think much.

(To Candice)

It's for your own good.

(To the group in general)

Let's give Candice a moment alone.

(Mrs. Kutscher motions for everyone to exit to the common room. Darla watches everybody leave but stays put. Pete catches Mrs. Kutscher at the door. He whispers in her ear, and then exits to the common room.)

MRS. KUTCHER (Continued)

Jeri. Could I speak with you alone for a minute?

(Jeri returns.)

Upstairs.

(Jeri starts up the stairs. Mrs. Kutscher removes a serious looking belt from the closet and then follows Jeri holding the belt menacingly. The lights narrow on Darla and Candice. Darla watches Candice, who lays immobile for a long while. Finally, Candice begins to slide her way off the table. She gets her feet down, and starts to stand, but just collapses on the floor. Candice pushes herself up to a sitting position, and looks up at Darla.)

CANDICE

Help me up?

(Darla crosses her arms. Candice tries to push herself up again.)

That looked like a nasty bunch of pills you gave me. Once they kick in I'm going to be really uncomfortable.

(Darla doesn't budge.)

I just want to get up the stairs before I get sick.

(Darla looks toward the common room and the stairs, then bends down, and very tenderly helps Candice to her feet. Darla puts one arm around Candice's waist, and gently holds Candice other hand, as she assists Candice up the stairs.)

Thank you, Darla.

(The kitchen is empty for a moment, and then Andrew enters.)

ANDREW

(Calling to the common room)

I'm just going to get a drink of water.

(Andrew pours himself a glass of water, takes a drink, and then looks around, suspiciously. He sets the water down, and quickly dials the phone. Whispering into the receiver.)

Mr. Amsel please. Thank you.

(Pause.)

Hello? This is Mr. Berkman; I'm a tenant at Mrs. Kutscher's boarding house. Yes, that's right. I'm calling about another tenant here named Candice.

(Pete unobtrusively enters the threshold between the rooms and leans, watching Andrew.)

MRS. KUTSCHER (Continued)

Yes, she's been having some difficulties lately, and um, Mrs. Kutscher, she . . . I just thought you should know about it. What? Well, I don't really think you need to come ut, it's just—maybe you could just have a talk with Mrs. Kutscher over the—oh? Well, if you think you should—but I—hmm? Oh, I see. I—I'll see you soon then.

(Andrew is about to hang up when he notices Pete. They both freeze. The lights rise upstage left where a bed stands amidst other stored set pieces. Jeri Enters the room, followed by Mrs. Kutscher. On the other side of the stairs, another similar room lights up. Darla half-carries, half-draws Candice into bed. The lights drop in the kitchen while Jeri looks through the walls and notices Darla. Mrs. Kutscher freezes while Jeri curiously watches Darla tuck Candice into bed and then leave the room. The lights drop on the bedrooms and they come up in the common room where Darla walks to the curtain and begins pulling it open. In the room, Jeri lounges on a chair, bored. A bottle of bourbon is on the floor next to the chair. Darla begins straightening the room.)

JERI

Darlingest Darla.

(Darla moves the bottle onto the end table as part of her clean up.)

Look at you. Cleaning and straightening for Miss Kutch.

DARLA

Mrs. Kutscher.

JERI

Loyal house girl. Or whatever you are.

(Jeri takes a big drink and sets the bottle on the floor.)

How did you fall into something like this? Ad in the paper? "Loyal house girl wanted. Personality a plus.

(Darla picks up the bottle and moves it to a shelf out of Jeri's reach.)

"But not required." I was drinking that.

(Pause.)

So, what's your deal, Dari-o, why do you like it here? Following around behind Mrs. Kutscher all day, "go do this, please get that. Fetch me some more pills for Candice." We could swap you out with a grumpy terrier.

DARLA

I mind my own business.

JERI

Sure. Sure but what is that?

(Darla doesn't respond.)

Say, um, Darla? Could you bring me that bottle for a sec? Promise to give it right back.

(Jeri crosses her heart but Darla ignores her.)

JERI (Continued)

I'm warning you, if you don't bring it to me I'll be forced to . . . walk across the room, or something.

(Jeri waits for a moment before she dramatically pushes herself onto her feet and drags herself to the bottle. Darla continues to ignore her. She takes a drink and studies Darla as Darla continues to clean and straighten. Before long, Jeri becomes inspired to approach Darla.)

No really, Darla, what is it.

DARLA

What?

(Jeri puts her arm around Darla's shoulder.)

JERI

You.

DARLA

Wh—huh?

JERI

What are you all about, Darla? What do you want? What are your dreams? Have any passions?

DARLA

I don't understand.

(Jeri proffers her bottle.)

JERI

Here, hit this.

DARLA

Wh—

(Jeri puts the finger from the arm around Darla's neck against Darla's lips to shush her then slowly puts the bottle to Darla's mouth and tilts it back. The action is tender, almost erotic. Darla swallows, clearly affected.)

JERI

Tell me.

(When Darla turns toward Jeri, their faces are quite close.)

DARLA

Wh-um-I—I don't know what you mean.

JERI

Yes you do. You want to tell me. I can see it in you.

DARLA

Wh-what?

JERI

Everything. Like a little note, asking me to ask. Crack open a little Darla. What is it that's all stuck in there so deep?

(Darla hesitates for a long while, seemingly on the verge of talking, and then suddenly, she pushes Jeri away.)

DARLA

What are you up to?

JERI

Oh, come on, Stary-Dary, I'm just toying with you.

DARLA

Darla—my name's Darla.

JERI

Yeah, sure, whatever.

DARLA

You will call me Darla.

(She snatches the bottle from Jeri's hand.)

And you've had enough of this.

(Nonplussed, Jeri smiles at Darla.)

JERI

Mrs. Kutscher says I can have all I want.

(Darla thrusts the bottle back to Jeri. She is angry.)

DARLA

Take it then! Take it and go!

(Smiling, Jeri toasts Darla, takes a drink and then leaves the room. The lights come up in the kitchen. Andrew and Pete stand frozen where they had been, but then unfreeze as Jeri walks through the scene. Andrew hangs up the phone.)

PETE

Do you have any idea what that man is like?

(A pounding knock sounds from the door.)

MR. AMSEL

(Recorded loop)

Open this door. Open this door now. Mrs. Kutscher. Open this door.

(This recording repeats throughout the remainder of the act. Jeri returns to the bedroom where she left Mrs. Kutscher. The lights come up on Mrs. Kutscher who stands frozen. Mrs. Kutscher unfreezes when Jeri enters.)

JERI

So what's the deal, Miss Kutch?

(Mrs. Kutscher lashes out with the belt. Jeri cowers in a dark corner, disappearing from view as Mrs. Kutscher violently beats her with the belt. The lights rise in the room where Candice sleeps. Candice lies immobile in the bed. Darla rushes in and shakes the body.)

DARLA

Candice! Wake up; we need to get you out of here. Candice! Mr. Amsel's on his way over. He'll be here any minute!

(Jeri enters the kitchen carrying a noose. She does not see Pete and Andrew, and in fact walks directly toward Andrew.)

Mrs. Kutscher said to get up! C'mon! Just pull it together for a few minutes.

(Andrew moves out of Jeri's way. Jeri walks past, climbs onto the table, throws the rope over a beam and begins securing the other side. Candice enters. As Candice and Darla speak and Mrs. Kutscher whips, she finishes her knot, retrieves a bottle, adjusts the table to make it easy to kick aside, climbs back up and takes a final swig of bourbon.)

CANDICE

Particles—fast particles—particle acceleration, that's the answer. Particle accelerators—smash—graviton, that's the answer.* If you accelerate particles on a particle accelerator and smash them into each other, they should produce a graviton. If they produce a graviton and the graviton leaves, then it has to have gone someplace. That explains why gravity is so weak—it's a weak force—weakest of the forces. If gravity goes someplace else, then there's someplace else—some other world—some other brane. I can tell this world isn't right—that it has the wrong number of dimensions—that the strings that should form rings are unstrung, and the strings that should be open are closed. And that all the dimensions are tied up in a little, little space. I'm a graviton—I don't make sense—I need to leave.

DARLA

*Candice, listen to me. Candice, please. Don't be passed out now—not now. C'mon! Gravitoids or whatever you were talking about—gravity—Remember? Candice, c'mon! We've got to pretend that nothing's happened!

DARLA (Continued)

We've got to show Mr. Amsel that everything's OK. Candice! WAKE UP! DO YOU HAVE ANY IDEA WHAT AMSEL WILL DO TO ALL OF US!?

(As Candice finishes her monolog, the lights begin to drop on the various scenes. First Mrs. Kutscher fades, then the recording of Mr. Amsel stops and the lights fade on the door, then while the lights drop on Darla, all but a wide spot drops in the kitchen. The spotlight narrows, gradually excluding Jeri and Candice to form tight around Pete and Andrew.)

PETE

Maybe you should think about the consequences next time before you act.

(Pete walks out of the light. Andrew stands stunned. The lights fade on the first act.)

ACT TWO

scene one

(AS THE LIGHTS COME UP ON THE SECOND ACT: Darla sits alone on the floor with her knees up, her elbows on her knees, and her head in her hands. She sits there for a long while before pounding her forehead several times with both palms. She looks around at nothing, then she sighs and covers her eyes, and as she does so, the lights come up behind her to show Candice, Jeri, and Andrew sitting from right to left, downstage on folding chairs. They are all pacified and mostly drugged up—Candice more so than the others. Jeri is covered in welts. Darla stands up and takes a pill bottle from one of her pockets.)

DARLA

I used to live in Florida. In Florida every Fall we had these terrible storms. Level 5 hurricanes—the worst imaginable—the strongest of the level 5 hurricanes that almost needed a new category—the kind that only ever happened at sea or in my head. Unimaginable chaos—houses and high-rises uprooted and hurled across town into other houses and high-rises. The storms themselves were angry red with sparks around the edges. Nobody knew how severe they were but me.

(Darla walks toward the chairs and stops next to Candice, who opens her mouth.)

I used to hide under my bed because it was the only safe place. I'd built a hurricane shelter down there because I knew how dangerous these things were. I used prayer candles and those tall hurricane glasses because I knew that those were the kinds of things that could keep the storm out.

(Darla looks at Candice tenderly, and then steps away. Candice closes her mouth.)

I used to tell my little sister to come down there with me. Only children could be protected in my hurricane shelter.

(Darla lowers herself onto her stomach, looking forward toward the audience from underneath an imaginary bed.)

We would hide down there while the wind blew.

(Darla sets the pill bottle next to her, transforming it into a prayer candle.)

My parents thought they were safe with their boarded up windows and strong, sound walls but they died every time. The whole house, except for my safe place, would fly off, leaving my sister and I the task of rebuilding civilization.

(Darla warms her hands on the candle.)

Our new society was founded on the worship of saints. Famous bars were our holy places.

(Long pause.)

I used to molest my sister down there.

(Darla stands.)

We were very imaginative. Incest survivors are very imaginative.

(Darla picks up the pill bottle and walks to the chairs and stops next to Candice, who opens her mouth again.)

DARLA (Continued)

This is my dream job. Working here. For Mrs. Kutscher. I like helping people and helping people change because it's not their fault that they're messed up and wrong and bad. I understand that because I had those problems once.

(Darla walks away. Candice closes her mouth. Darla acts out her description of the bedroom scene.)

Mrs. Kutscher is a hero—a saint and a hurricane glass combined. She's . . . I thought she was perfect. One night I slipped into her room and I found her in bed with Mr. Berkman. That was confusing. Mrs. Kutscher is beautiful but her and Mr. Berkman writhing together was grotesque. I didn't like it. I was sick. I threw up quietly on the floor. They never heard me or saw me. If they smelled anything they didn't react. Shamed, I cleaned it up in the dark. Then I started watching for it, creeping in on those nights, watching, listening, stomach churning. Then heaving up on the floor at the foot of the bed, silently gagging out everything until I was empty. Then, alone and invisible in the dark, cleaning up everything that had been in me.

(Darla walks back over to Candice. Candice opens her mouth.)

I never knew anything could make Mrs. Kutscher seem ugly to me. But it was only when she . . . on those nights. In the daytime she was still beautiful.

(Darla looks at Candice and takes out a pill. Candice becomes eager, craning her neck forward, looking for all the world like a baby bird.)

When I first saw her, my heart paused and my body flushed.

(Darla looks down at Candice who continues to beg for several moments before Darla pops one of the pills into Candice mouth. Candice gobbles down the pill as if she were a chick eating a worm, and then opens her mouth again and resumes begging.)

I learned a lot from Mrs. Kutscher. There is no better administrator. Still, I've worked in enough of these places to know that I'd run things differently. You've got to have an iron hand in these places—a real iron hand.

(Darla holds up her index finger before Candice face. Sternly)

No.

(Candice ceases begging but leaves her mouth open.)

You've got to maintain absolute control, otherwise these people are likely to do anything—cause you no end of trouble.

(Darla pops another pill into Candice's mouth and takes a step left. Candice simply closes her mouth, and Jeri opens hers. Popping a pill into Jeri's mouth)

Every patient

(Jeri closes her mouth and Andrew opens his as Darla continues left.)
(Popping a pill into Andrew's mouth)

on a medication schedule.

(Andrew closes his mouth and Darla continues to the left of the chairs.)

DARLA (Continued)

Every patient

(Darla takes hold of Jeri's hand with the bottle in it, lifts hand and bottle toward her mouth, and facilitates Jeri taking a sip.)

under control.

(Looking at Andrew with disdain)

Otherwise, they'll kick you in the head when you're not looking. If I were in charge . . . if I ever am in charge, that's how I'll run things.

(Darla watches the pacified trio. Pause.)

Lights out!

(Andrew, Jeri, and Candice begin to hurry off. Darla intercepts Candice and leads her back to her chair as the others leave. Darla watches to be sure the others are gone. Then, with sudden, profound sadness:)

Sometimes I lie with Candice when no one's around. I don't do anything to her—I know right from wrong now—I just hold her close to me. She doesn't even know I'm there . . .

(Darla and Candice leave. The lights drop. The door lights up and someone pounds on it.)

MR. AMSEL

(Off)

Open up. Open this door now. Mrs. Kutscher, open this door.

(The door crashes in and the silhouettes of Mr. Amsel and his assistant enter and walk past the screen. The assistant carries a toolkit. The lights come up as they enter the room to reveal the set from the previous act in chaos. Tables, chairs, walls, counters, even the staircase are out of place and strewn about. Mr. Amsel and assistant look around the wrecked room. Mr. Amsel goes upstairs while his assistant looks through the common room. Mr. Amsel returns.)

ASSISTANT

How did this happen?

(Mr. Amsel rolls a bed out from the wings, and positions it in the kitchen.)

MR. AMSEL

It started in her bedroom.

(The assistant starts pushing out kitchen furniture, and bringing in bedroom furniture. Candice enters and crawls into bed. She is fast asleep. Jeri slips in.)

JERI

(Loud whisper)

Candice?

MR. AMSEL

She must have had help.

(Jeri creeps up to Candice's bed and touches Candice's shoulder.)

JERI

(Whispering)

Candice, it's time.

(Mr. Amsel helps his assistant to rearrange the set.)

MR. AMSEL

She must have been difficult to rouse.

(Candice starts to stir, but she's very sluggish and groggy.)

JERI

(Whispering)

Candice—hey Candice. Candice! It's time.

ASSISTANT

They were going after the medication?

MR. AMSEL

Of course.

CANDICE

(Completely out of it)

Are there more pills . . . ?

JERI

More pills? Oh yeah baby, there are a lot more pills. Here, hit this.

(Jeri produces and passes a flask. Candice drinks, cringes, and returns it.)

CANDICE

What th—

JERI

It's liquor. Gotta be good for you.

ASSISTANT

You think they were both drinking?

MR. AMSEL

Just a guess.

(Candice begins to lie back down, but Jeri stops her.)

JERI

No Candice, we've got to go.

(Pause.)

I'm here to help you with that thing.

(Pause.)

Tonight's the night.

(Pause.)

It's time.

CANDICE

Time?

JERI

Time to get the pills.

(Jeri passes the flask again. Candice takes a drink and returns it.)

CANDICE

Where are they?

(The assistant and Mr. Amsel lean in to hear.)

JERI

They've got to be in Darla's room.

(Mr. Amsel gets another bed from the wings, and he and his assistant start to set up Darla's room. Jeri helps Candice up.)

CANDICE

Wow, everything's so unclear.

(Jeri offers the flask, but Candice refuses it. Jeri drinks instead.)

JERI

Can you walk?

(Candice takes a few clumsy steps.)

Can you creep? 'Cause I'm not going out that door until you get sneaky.

(At the mention of the word "door," the assistant hastily sets up a door for the room. Candice closes her eyes and concentrates. Mr. Amsel casually sets up a door for Darla's room. Candice opens her eyes.)

CANDICE

Yes.

JERI

Let me see it.

(Candice holds her arms out as if balancing, bends her knees, and starts an exaggerated sneaky walk.)

JERI (Continued)

Slower.

(Candice takes slower, more cautious steps.)

Slower.

(Candice creeps forward with total caution.)

That's it, that's a creep—that's creeping. Now sneak.

(Candice jumps up to her tiptoes, and sneaks quickly.)

Let's go.

(They both hit the flask once, and then Jeri quietly opens Candice's door. They sneak into the hall then over to Darla's door. They listen. Darla enters, taking a path to her bed that crosses directly through Mr. Amsel's position.)

DARLA

Excuse me.

(Mr. Amsel moves aside, and Darla gets in her bed.)

CANDICE

Do you hear her breath?

JERI

Wait. Yeah, yeah now I do.

(Jeri opens the door slowly and they slip in. Both are very cautious and careful as they sneak around the room, opening boxes and drawers, looking for the pills. Mr. Amsel and his Assistant watch the search closely for a long time.)

ASSISTANT

(Abrupt and loud)

Did they find it?

(Everyone jumps except Darla, who sleeps through the remark.)

MR. AMSEL

I'm certain.

(Jeri finds the box of pills in a drawer and holds it up for Candice to see.)

Kutscher was too stupid to guess what would happen.

CANDICE

How many should I take?

JERI

(Removing and opening a pill bottle.)

Well, you're on a few different kinds of pills so we'll have to be precise.

(Jeri pours a pile of pills into Candice's hand.)

JERI (Continued)

Too few will keep you foggy—too many will kill.

CANDICE

Isn't this a lot then?

JERI

Err on the side of interesting.

(Candice throws back the pills.)

Wash it down with this.

(Jeri gives Candice the flask, and Candice gulps it down. Darla sits bolt upright.)

DARLA

What?

MR. AMSEL

(Holding up his hand)

That's enough.

(Darla lies down, Jeri leaves as if automated, and Candice sits on the edge of the bed, waiting and watching.)

ASSISTANT

Then what? Was it too much?

MR. AMSEL

That was the idea.

ASSISTANT

But did she die?

MR. AMSEL

The syringe please.

(The assistant opens up his toolkit and readies a syringe.)

ASSISTANT

Did she succeed?

MR. AMSEL

She woke the house. A storm like this hasn't been seen.

ASSISTANT

Chaos?

(Mr. Amsel nods as his assistant hands him the syringe.)

MR. AMSEL

We'll have to put her down.

ASSISTANT

We have to find her first. Where's she gone?

MR. AMSEL

It doesn't matter; she's here now.

(Mr. Amsel sits on the bed next to Candice. To Candice)

Are you ready?

(Mr. Amsel lifts Candice's wrist, turning her arm to expose her forearm, and then gives her a shot. Candice struggles against the drug but she quickly starts to swoon.)

Find Mrs. Kutscher and escort her to the car, please.

(The assistant exits.)

Would you like to lie down?

CANDICE

(From a million miles away)

No . . .

(Mr. Amsel helps her remain upright by putting his hand behind her neck.
Pause.)

You're Mr. Amsel, aren't you?

MR. AMSEL

Yes.

CANDICE

You brought me here . . . or left me here . . . something.

MR. AMSEL

Now I'm taking you out.

(Andrew and Jeri enter Candice's bedroom, and start dragging in furniture from the common room and kitchen, creating a hybrid set that is part upstairs and part downstairs.)

JERI

She wrecked this room.

ANDREW

The whole house.

CANDICE
You look familiar. Now. Like this. Hurting me.

MR. AMSEL
I've been with you the whole time.

JERI
Amsel's really going to come here?

ANDREW
Yes, he did.

CANDICE
You're going to kill me.

MR. AMSEL
I already have.

ANDREW
He killed Candice.
(Candice's head begins to wobble as she becomes more unstable.)

JERI
What!?

CANDICE
(Delirious and disjointed—dying.)
Pills, Jeri . . . pills . . . what about the . . . what about the "and more . . . ?"

ANDREW
(Accusingly)
Jeri.

JERI
What?

ANDREW
What happened?

JERI
I'm sure I don't know what you're talking about.

ANDREW
Jeri, don't. You gave her more pills again, didn't you?

Drop it, Andy—

JERI

Andrew—

ANDREW

Drop it, Andrew.

JERI

That man killed her because of you—

ANDREW

She isn't dead yet.

JERI

She is.

ANDREW

JERI

Look, all I did—all I ever did was help her out. You ever want to help somebody, Mr. Berkman?

(Andrew turns away.)

Mr. Berkman . . . ?

(As if a cold wind just swept through they both stop. They look at each other for a moment and then look back at Candice. Candice's head rolls back one last time and then Mr. Amsel lowers her onto the bed. She has passed away. Andrew and Jeri pause for a moment and then resume cleaning.)

MR. AMSEL

(Calling to his assistant)

Have you found Mrs. Kutscher yet?

(With a sigh, Mr. Amsel gets up and starts searching the house for her. Pause.)

ANDREW

I had to do something.

JERI

(Moving in close for the gossip.)

You—?

ANDREW
It had gotten to the point that something had to be done.

JERI
So . . . what'd you do?

ANDREW
I called him.

JERI
Him?
(Pause.)
Amsel?

ANDREW
Yes, Mr. Amsel.

JERI
(Pushing herself away from Andrew)
That's fucked up. You're a weirdo.

ANDREW
I just thought—

JERI
(Toasting him with her bottle)
A toast to Mr. Berkman. You really know how to shake things up.

ANDREW
Jeri I—

JERI
No, no, Andy B, I'm gonna quit the entertainment business 'cause you got it cornered.
(She drinks.)

ANDREW
Jeri, this is bad enough without—

JERI
I'm sure it could be worse.

MR. AMSEL
Mrs. Kutscher? Hiding is not doing you any good.

ANDREW
How could I sit there while everything was going on?

JERI
What, so you called Amsel? Too little, Mr. Berkman.

ANDREW
Jeri—

JERI
Too late, Mr. Berkman.

ANDREW
I just wanted to fix things.

JERI
(Suddenly serious)
And?
(Andrew looks down.)

MR. AMSEL
Really Mrs. Kutscher, hiding is below you. You can't hide from me here.

ANDREW
Jeri—

JERI
(The silhouette of the doorway pulses as Jeri says "you" the next three times.)
You let him bring her here. You watched them drug her. You sat back while everything happened. And then they went a little bit too far and your conscience lit up?

ANDREW
Stop it.

JERI
You want to see what happened when Candice came?
(The lights come up on the doorway.)

ANDREW
This isn't about me.
(The lights drop on the doorway. Candice sits up.)

No? JERI

Mrs. Kutscher? MR. AMSEL

Mr. Berkman? CANDICE

What happened to your neck? ANDREW
(Jeri takes a moment to drink.)

Kutscher. JERI

What? ANDREW

Mrs. Kutscher. She heard what I did from Pete. JERI
(Andrew goes slack.)

Mrs. Kutscher, I just need to speak with you for a moment. AMSEL
(Mr. Amsel walks outside.)

Mr. Berkman? Mr. Berkman? JERI

I told Pete. ANDREW
(Andrew sits on the floor and looks off at nothing.)

Oh. No wait, look. Mr. Berkman—Andy, old boy, old chap, old Andy-handy; it's not that bad. JERI
(She sits next to him.)
It doesn't hurt that much—just a bit of a lashing.

Mr. Berkman? CANDICE

ANDREW
I called Mr. Amsel in here and I told Pete about you.

JERI
Error in judgment. Have a bit of this.
(She offers her bottle.)

CANDICE
Mr. Berkman?

ANDREW
I thought I was helping.

JERI
Exactly!

ANDREW
But look how it turned out.

JERI
Everybody makes mistakes.

ANDREW
And then people get killed and beat?

CANDICE
Mr. Berkman?

MR. AMSEL
(Off)
Ah, there you are.

JERI
Some of what I did didn't work out that well.

ANDREW
It certainly didn't.

JERI
Thanks.
(Jeri drinks.)

CANDICE
Mr. Berkman?

MR. AMSEL

(Off)

I'm afraid you're in a bit of trouble, Mrs. Kutscher.

ANDREW

If I listen I can hear her calling me, still.

MRS. KUTSCHER

(Off)

Then maybe we're both in trouble, Mr. Amsel.

AMSEL

(Off)

I don't think so.

ANDREW

I thought I had to do something.

JERI

It was just too late.

CANDICE

Mr. Berkman?

MRS. KUTSCHER

(Off)

Don't think I won't call in that doctor?

MR. AMSEL

(Off)

Doctor?

MRS. KUTSCHER

(Off)

The one I've been taking Candice to.

MR. AMSEL

(Off)

I pay his extraordinary fees, and he doesn't keep records.

ANDREW

I could hear her calling me when she looked at me, when she didn't say anything.

MR. AMSEL

(Off)
No, Mrs. Kutscher—

ANDREW

When I didn't say anything—

MR. AMSEL

(Off)
I think all the evidence will demonstrate that she began being mistreated when she started living with you. She's been abused here, she's suffered trauma here, she's been medicated by prescription pills that came from some unknown source the entire time she's been living here, and she seems to have died. Here.

CANDICE

Mr. Berkman?

ANDREW

Our house became a hell, Jeri.

MRS. KUTSCHER

(Off)
Mr. Amsel!

ANDREW

She asked me once.

MR. AMSEL

(Off)
Why did you kill Candice, Mrs. Kutscher?

JERI

Asked you what?

(Pause.)

Asked you what? Mr. Berkman, what did she ask you?

ANDREW

When she got up . . .

(Candice gets up and starts slowly stalking the stage. The flashing red lights of a police car start outside the door. Pete runs down the stairs, and peeks out the curtains.)

PETE
(Calling)
Darla. Darla!

MR. AMSEL
(Off)
I'm afraid you've been negligent and abusive, and to cover it up you killed Candice.

JERI
When Candice got up?

ANDREW
When she got up that one time.
(Darla starts down the stairs.)

PETE
Darla hurry!

ANDREW
That one time she walked the kitchen before dawn.

PETE
It's Mrs. Kutscher.

ANDREW
With Mrs. Kutscher.

JERI
I remember.

DARLA
(Looking out the window as she walks to Pete)
Is she being arrested?

ANDREW
When she was on all those drugs.

PETE
We've got to talk to them.

DARLA
Do we?

PETE

Tell them she didn't do it. Come on.

(Pete starts for the door but Darla stops him.)

DARLA

No.

ANDREW

I thought . . .

DARLA

Mr. Amsel knows what he's doing.

PETE

But—?

ANDREW

I thought it had gone too far.

(Candice begins to pace more vigorously.)

ANDREW AND CANDICE

She was pacing and walking the house. Crazy—getting crazy—threatening people with knives.

DARLA

If Mr. Amsel says she did it then—

PETE

You know she didn't do anything—

DARLA

I'm in charge.

ANDREW AND CANDICE

Desperate—she was desperate—and she opened out, clear—lit up.

PETE

Forget this.

(Pete starts for the door again. Again, Darla stops him.)

DARLA

Think about it.

ANDREW AND CANDICE

She saw it all—almost all. Almost but not quite—almost has to mean not quite, doesn't it?

DARLA

If she goes, I'm in charge.

ANDREW AND CANDICE

Until later—until last night.

DARLA

Then whose side do you want to be on?

ANDREW

But it was out of control—

CANDICE

Lit up—flash!

PETE

But—

DARLA

Amsel says she did it. I say she did it. Whose side do you want to be on?

ANDREW

And I knew suddenly—

CANDICE

Flash!

ANDREW

That—

ANDREW AND PETE

it couldn't be right.

DARLA

Come on.

(Darla takes Pete by the wrist and they go out the door. Then, the lights stop flashing and Pete returns.)

PETE

But what choice did I have?

JERI

Mr. Berkman? Mr. Berkman!?

(Andrew stares off dazed but then recovers suddenly.)

ANDREW

She wanted to know what kind of person just watched.

(Jeri studies Andrew for a moment, then stands and helps him to his feet.)

JERI

Mr. Berkman—

ANDREW

You can't help.

(Jeri studies him again and then leaves.)

PETE

Darla was right, Mrs. Kutscher—

CANDICE

(Whispery, almost silent, like a wind in the background.)

* In time, on time, with time, no time, your time, for time, sometime, more time, give time lost time, time to think, this time, time and space, that time, do time, run time, give me time, long time, having time, for time, super time, our time, time to act, time for change, time to loose, time of day, good time, real time, making time, time for time, stop time, us time, making time, saving time, time and space, time away, fun time, winter time, bad time, end times, wasting time, take time, down time, every time, finding time.

(Candice repeats as necessary throughout the next exchange.)

PETE

*I just had to go with it. Isn't that what you always wanted? Just go with it? Good ole Pete, he does the right thing. Call for a hop and hop he does. Crisp Pete, you used to call me that some time 'cause you liked the crease in my pants and the unwrinkled sheen in my shirts. Reliable, you called me that too but it was because I could be counted on to fold when you put the pressure on. Of course I wanted to do the right thing for you, but Darla's right; she's in charge, and there was nothing else I could do. Nothing, right? Like when you brought that girl in—

ANDREW

You weren't there—

PETE

And I just sat there at the kitchen table.

(The lights come up on the silhouette of the door and a knock sounds.)

ANDREW

You weren't really there. It wasn't you!
(The lights drop on the door.)

PETE

You told me a new girl was coming into the house—
(The silhouette of the door flickers in and out.)

ANDREW

No she didn't—

PETE

And that I was to stay out of things—

ANDREW

Mind your own business!
(The door stops flickering.)

PETE

What else could I do?
(Candice stops chanting. Eyes locked, Pete crosses slowly to Andrew.)

JERI

NNNNOO!
(Off. Extreme.)
(Darla storms on holding Jeri's bottle with Jeri in hot pursuit. Candice throws a chair across the set.)

CANDICE

A particle can be at two places at once but it gets FIXED when you notice it.

JERI

You have no right to take that from me.

DARLA

This is how things are going to be from here on out.
(Pete approaches Andrew.)

PETE

Nice what you can do with a telephone call.

CANDICE

Sure a particle can be in a lot of places all at once, but that's old. School. Yesterday's news.

ANDREW

I didn't know.

CANDICE

Old. News. Yesterday's school.

JERI

Nobody's ever told me I can't have a drink.
(Darla rounds on her.)

DARLA

Well, that was a mistake. That was a Mrs. Kutscher mistake. Wasn't it? But it's all different now. Every patient on a medication schedule. Every patient under control.

ANDREW

I couldn't let things go on.

PETE

And?

ANDREW

(Defeated)
There wasn't a solution.

PETE

Jeri got whipped
(Pause)

ANDREW

Because of you.

PETE

Candice went mad.

ANDREW

Because of Jeri.

PETE

Candice died.

(Pause.)

Mrs. Kutscher got taken.

(Andrew hangs his head.)

CANDICE

No-no-no-no-wait!

(Jeri pursues Darla into the kitchen)

JERI

You don't gotta do this—s'wrong. You know s'wrong. I got to have a little liquor to calm me down.

CANDICE

A particle in two places is just Schrödinger's cat. Interesting idea. Can't stand up to time. Fades when you see it. Sure you can picture the damned cat alive and dead. Sure you can picture the particle in two places. Sure we can take a picture of something and see that it is in both spots at once.

(Progressively louder and more intense.)

But it's just a picture! This is the real thing! This really happened!

(While Candice rants, Darla sets the bottle on the counter and reaches up to the cupboard, but is forced to snatch it back up when Jeri reaches for it. Darla puts the bottle in her pocket, and pushes her hip against the counter so Jeri cannot get at it. Darla takes a bottle of pills down from the cupboard. Candice goes on a tear, running around the room throwing anything—pushing people aside if she gets near them)

PETE

What were you thinking, Andrew?

CANDICE

(Still rampaging.)

Gravitons! It's all about gravitons!

ANDREW

I—

(Lamely)

Didn't I have to?

(Darla pushes a pill into Jeri's mouth and turns to get a flashlight out of the cupboard. Jeri spits the pill into her hand, and pockets them.)

DARLA

I decide what's wrong and who gets liquor.

ANDREW

To do something?

CANDICE

Gravity's weak. Why is gravity weak?

ANDREW

(Distracted by Candice)

I already know this.

(Darla shines the flashlight in Jeri's mouth. Jeri cooperatively opens wide, satisfying Darla.)

No . . . maybe not.

CANDICE

Gravity has to be weak, it can't do anything really—it can hold us down but not very good—it can't even hold up against a magnate.

PETE

Then why'd you wait?

(Darla picks up the flashlight and the pills, and takes Jeri by the arm, leading her toward Pete and Mr. Berkman. Candice is wild.)

CANDICE

Gravitons! Gravitons escape—gravitons have to escape and that makes gravity weak.

PETE

This is what you've done.

(Candice grabs Darla by the lapels on the way by. Darla does not react, despite Candice's violence.)

CANDICE

Things can go—anything can go. If gravity fades anything can fade. Time goes on without stopping—no matter what comes and goes.

(Candice releases Darla, hurls a chair across the room and grabs another.)

PETE

This new world is yours.

(Everyone but Andrew and Pete freeze as it starts raining outside. Andrew and Pete look up slowly. Then everyone unfreezes. Candice throws the other chair and Darla and Jeri reach Andrew and Pete. Candice resumes pacing.)

DARLA

Everybody on a schedule. Everybody under control. Including you, Mr. Berkman.
(Mrs. Kutscher enters. Candice notices her and stops. Candice and Mrs.
Kutscher stand facing each other, sizing each other up.)
Mrs. Kutscher's out. I'm in charge and you will obey my rules.

ANDREW

Of course—

DARLA

I didn't tell you to speak, sir. You're all my tenants now. My rules now. Everybody on
a schedule. Everybody under control.

MRS. KUTSCHER

(Still looking at Candice.)

It's not that easy.

DARLA

Everybody on a pill schedule.

MRS. KUTSCHER

Tenants rebel.

DARLA

Everybody under control.

MRS. KUTSCHER

They'll throw fits. They'll call Mr. Amsel.

DARLA

Not in my boarding house.

MRS. KUTSCHER

They'll turn their backs when you get taken.
(Pete looks away from Mrs. Kutscher. Pause.)

DARLA

(To Andrew as she separates out his pills.)

These are your pills. You'll be taking two of this one and one of these.

ANDREW

Isn't this a lot? Candice was taking—

DARLA

Everybody on a pill schedule. Everybody under control.

ANDREW

Of course.

(Andrew eats his pills.)

JERI

(Aside to Andrew)

Mr. Berkman, don't.

(Jeri pantomimes spitting them out while Darla looks away to find her flashlight, but Andrew ignores her.)

DARLA

You've already had yours, Jeri. You'll have more at regular intervals.

(Andrew opens his mouth so Darla can shine the flashlight around it.)

Good. Pete, a little of this and a little of that. A little less so you can stay alert. I need to rely on you, Pete.

(Darla gathers a combination of pills in her fingertips, and waits expectantly. Pete opens his mouth and Darla tosses them in. Pete swallows and Darla shines the light in his mouth.)

JERI

So Pete gets privileges.

(To Pete)

Why do you get to take less?

PETE

Shut up.

DARLA

Should I give you more?

(Jeri stands where Pete can see her and pulls down the shoulder of her shirt so he can see some lash marks.)

MRS. KUTSCHER

Isn't this a lovely house.

(Lightning flashes. Jeri, Darla, Pete, and Andrew look up and around, searching the sky. After a long wait, a distant roll of thunder sounds. The doorway lights up, and Darla jerks her head in that direction.)

MRS. KUTSCHER

Darla dear, could you bring those dishes here?

(Darla jerks her head to look at Mrs. Kutscher.)

MRS. KUTSCHER (Continued)

That's good, thank you. I'd like to talk to you for a moment. You've been such a good tenant—

DARLA

Everybody on a schedule. Everybody under control.

MRS. KUTSCHER

I want to give you a special position—as a helper around the house.

DARLA

This is my house!

JERI

(Aside to Andrew.)

Somebody's hearing voices.

(She leans against Andrew conspiratorially but he just wobbles, throwing off her balance. She tries to catch herself against Pete but he wobbles also. Both men continue to wobble.)

Wow, you guys are, like, looped out.

(Darla notices Jeri.)

DARLA

Are your pills working?

JERI

Oh. Uh . . .

(Jeri begins wobbling.)

MRS. KUTSCHER

I'm trusting you with a lot, but I think you can handle it.

(Jeri stops wobbling to watch Darla.)

DARLA

Stop it!

(The lights drop on the doorway and Mrs. Kutscher resumes looking at Candice.)

My house! My rules! My borders! My way! Pete! You may go out now if you wish.

(Pete stops wobbling to turn and walk automatically through the front door.)

Mr. Berkman, you might want to lie down before the full effects of your medication come on.

(Andrew stops wobbling and goes upstairs. Darla looks at Jeri who starts wobbling again. Lightning flashes and Candice and Mrs. Kutscher begin

to circle one another, eyes still locked. Darla watches Jeri for a while, then snaps her fingers in Jeri's face twice. Darla takes hold of her face and moves it left and right, looking luridly at her neck, and then leads her by the wrist upstairs. Thunder sounds in the distance.)

CANDICE

A particle's not a particle—well, it is a particle but not a dot—it's got length in one direction and that makes it a string . . . no wait, I know this. Three plus one, Mrs. Kutscher, we live in a three plus one world . . . I know this already. Maybe everything is on a flat plate, timewise—No . . . I . . . Mostly I don't have thoughts at all . . .

(Pause. The sounds of furniture and dishes being thrown around begin as the rain starts to fall harder. The storm gradually builds in intensity throughout the remainder of the scene.)

MRS. KUTSCHER

(As if calling down from upstairs)

Who's down there making all that noise? I run an orderly house here, and I will not have it. Candice? Is that you? I will not have this.

CANDICE

Gravity. Gravity escapes. It has something to do with Gravity. . . Jeri was there. Jeri knows.

(Darla gets in one of the beds and Jeri stands next to it with a bottle of bourbon in her hand.)

JERI

Candice? Hello?

(Candice walks over to stand next to Jeri. She looks off at nothing, mouth agape. Andrew enters and approaches Mrs. Kutscher.)

ANDREW

Mrs. Kutscher, what was it?

MRS. KUTSCHER

Somebody's downstairs, Mr. Berkman, somebody's waking the house.

JERI

Can you hear me at all Candy-cain?

(Darla stirs and Jeri shushes Candice and drags her farther from the bed. Candice's shoulders and neck go slack.)

Fuck!

(Darla stirs again and again Jeri shushes Candice.)

Candice? Hello? Are you dead?

(Darla jumps out of bed and rushes to Mrs. Kutscher.)

DARLA

Mrs. Kutscher, I need your help downstairs.

JERI

Candice!? Candice!? CANDICE!?

(Candice pops to awareness. She looks around, then at Jeri. She is high.)

CANDICE

It's time, Jeri-o, Jeri-airy, Jeri-mander.

(Candice takes Jeri's bottle and drinks.)

It's the witching hour.

JERI

Shh!

CANDICE

Loosen up, Jeri-Jer.

(Jeri pulls Candice aside, away from the bed. Whispering)

JERI

We'll wake her up. If we haven't already.

(Candice looks at the bed, hands the bottle back, and storms through the door.)

CANDICE

Time's up this time—it's wake up time.

(Candice walks off through a wall. As she leaves)

Particles in part—particles in—particles in particle accelerators, pushing the limits.

(Pause. Off)

SMASH!

DARLA

That's Candice.

(Mrs. Kutscher stands for a moment in a cold rage then storms off.)

MRS. KUTSCHER

It's time to do something about this once and for all.

(Darla and Andrew disappear while Candice appears, standing on the kitchen table.)

CANDICE

(Playing to the audience—very performative)

One, two, three. Right angle, right angle, right angle. Three fully realized directions. Up and down, left and right, forward and back. Round and around and around. We can make a sphere.

(Pause. Jeri comes partway down the stairs.)

Right angle.

JERI

Wow, Candy, wow.

CANDICE

Sort of. Sort of a right angle. The sphere progresses. It moves against its will without moving. It ages and deteriorates and is finally destroyed.

(Beat.)

Right angle.

(Beat.)

Right angle.

(Beat.)

Right angle and right angle and right angle each smaller than the original four—three plus one—right angle, right angle, right angle. Right angle after right angle living microcosmically in our own universe. I can see it, I'm lit up.

(Candice looks back at Jeri and then looks imploringly at the audience.)

She climbs down off the table and walks to the edge of the stage.)

You know, don't you? What's gonna happen. I'm going to die, aren't I?

JERI

Candice, who are you talking to.

CANDICE

(Yelling at the audience)

Why won't you tell me!?

(She starts shaking uncontrollably.)

JERI

(Approaching)

I uh . . . I—I . . . I think you're having a side effect.

CANDICE

(Turning on Jeri)

THIS is a side effect.

(Stalking Jeri)

My whole life is a side effect. Your whole existence here. Pills are a side effect, breakfast is a side effect, your stupid, damn checker games are a side effect.

JERI

Candice, it's me, Jeri.

CANDICE

My time, some time, for time, in time.

(Candice continues to back Jeri around the stage in silence for a bit.)

JERI

Your friend, Jeri.

CANDICE

Long time, each time, no time.

(Candice continues to back Jeri around the stage in silence for a bit.)

JERI

The pills are making you—

CANDICE

LIT UP!

(Jeri trips and Candice towers over her dangerously.)

Lit up so I can see—lit up. Lit up so I know what you've all done. AND YOU'RE GUILTY!

(Darla comes down the stairs and starts confidently toward Candice.)

DARLA

Alright Candice, I'm putting you back to bed.

(Candice turns on Darla, and Darla slows her pace.)

This is enough fooling around.

(Jeri gets up and moves a safe distance from Candice who just stares hotly at Darla. Darla stops. Tentatively)

Candice . . . ?

CANDICE

(Raging and advancing.)

Rrrrraaaaagh!

(Darla backs away and then runs up the stairs when Candice charges her.)

DARLA

(Off)

Mrs. Kutscher, I need you down stairs.

JERI

Candice, you're high—you're a little too high—the pills are—

(Candice starts throwing anything she can reach at Jeri. Once she runs out of heavy objects, Candice chases Jeri off stage. Mrs. Kutscher stomps down the stairs. Candice turns her full attention to Mrs. Kutscher. Andrew follows her down and Darla nervously comes halfway down. Andrew stands out of the way as Candice and Mrs. Kutscher face off. Long pause.)

DARLA

Mrs. Kutscher, do you need any—

CANDICE

(Advancing toward the stairs, screaming)

Rrrraaaaagh!

(Darla runs. Candice start circling and chanting.)

* In time, on time, with time, no time, your time, for time, sometime, more time, give time lost time, time to think, this time, time and space, that time, do time, run time, give me time, long time, having time, for time, super time, our time, time to act, time for change, time to loose, time of day.

MRS. KUTSCHER

*You've woken the house and I'm not going to stand for it. I hope you're paying attention, Mr. Berkman; this is the Candice you've been so concerned about. This is the young lady that you think I've been mishandling by treating her too harshly. If I've been mishandling her its in not keeping her down.

(Candice stops circling.)

CANDICE

It's time Mrs. Kutscher.

MRS. KUTSCHER

Oh yes? Which time is that? Is it time to poke me up?

CANDICE

Show you off—

MRS. KUTSCHER

You think you can do what you want—

CANDICE

Show you off for who you are—

MRS. KUTSCHER

Whatever the consequences? Break the rules—

CANDICE

Show you off as so much trouble—

MRS. KUTSCHER

I've never had trouble like I had when you came here—

CANDICE

Show off your weak spots!

(Candice advances on Mrs. Kutscher but Mrs. Kutscher stands her ground.)

MRS. KUTSCHER

Not this time, Candice, you've already woken the house.

CANDICE

You can't do this to me.

MRS. KUTSCHER

I can do anything I want—you're a boarder in my house!

(Candice pushes Mrs. Kutscher and the both give ground.)

CANDICE

Boarder!?

(The screen lights up revealing the silhouette of the door.)

MRS. KUTSCHER

Stop that!

(The screen light drops.)

CANDICE

A boarder comes and goes—a boarder has a choice.

(The screen lights up and a knock sounds.)

MRS. KUTSCHER

Stop that, it's nothing!

(The screen light drops.)

CANDICE

A boarder doesn't get drugs forced down her throat.

(The screen lights up and a knock sounds.)

There's nobody there!
(The screen light drops.)

MRS. KUTSCHER

This time.

CANDICE

I run this house and I will not have my tenants out of control, do you hear me?

MRS. KUTSCHER

Not this time.

CANDICE

Do you hear that, Mr. Berkman? This is your Candice, right here, is it?

MRS. KUTSCHER

Not this time 'cause I'm lit up.

CANDICE

Lit up. (Sarcastically)

MRS. KUTSCHER

Mrs. Kutscher, she means it.

ANDREW

Lit up, Mrs. Kutscher, lit up.

CANDICE

Lit up how? What do you mean?

MRS. KUTSCHER

Lit up like I can see it all.

CANDICE

Mrs. Kutscher . . . (Warningly)

MR. BERKMAN

(A knock sounds and the door lights up. Candice starts toward the door but Mrs. Kutscher grabs her arm. Candice pushes her away as the lights drop on the door.)

CANDICE

Hands off!

MRS. KUTSCHER

Young lady, you will—

CANDICE

Hands off, back off, Kutscher, I'm lit up and I've got a charge—
(There is a flash of lightning outside, but no thunder.)

ANDREW

Candice—

CANDICE

Accelerating.
(There is a knock at the door, it lights up again, Candice starts for it again, and once more Mrs. Kutscher grabs her arm. This time Mrs. Kutscher throws her away from the door as the lights drop on it.)

MRS. KUTSCHER

Not this time.

(Mrs. Kutscher walks to the table.)

This is my table.

(She points to the cupboards.)

This is my kitchen.

(She points to the stairs and the common room.)

These are my stairs and my rooms and they are in my house. I run this house. Mr. Berkman, you do not, and Candice, you do not. I would appreciate it if you would treat my house with some RESPECT.

(Everybody is still for a moment, and then Candice storms up to Mrs. Kutscher. They stand facing each other, inches apart for several heartbeats. Thunder sounds while they stand there. Then, suddenly, Candice screams and starts throwing plates and dishes across the room. A knock sounds and the lights come up on the door. Candice starts toward the door, but Mrs. Kutscher grabs her and throws her to the ground and proceeds to the door herself. As she nears the door.)

Oh, you must be Candice, come in. I have a room waiting for you.

(Candice pounces across the room and tackles Mrs. Kutscher before she can reach the door. The two wrestle neither gaining the upper hand. Andrew approaches them.)

ANDREW

Ladies, please.

(Candice and Mrs. Kutscher stop fighting, get up, and advance on Andrew.)

CANDICE

*In time, on time, with time, for time, no time, some time

MRS. KUTSCHER

*You are presuming, Mr. Berkman, you are.

(Candice and Mrs. Kutscher circle Andrew. Lightning flashes.)

CANDICE

*Show time, run time, air time, your time, stage time, down time, fun time, RAGE time, giving time, living time, having time, finding time

MRS. KUTSCHER

*One thing this house would do very well without is interference, Mr. Berkman, do you understand that? Your participation is unnecessary and unwelcome.

(Mrs. Kutscher and Candice stop on opposite sides of Andrew.)

Well, young lady, how did this happen?

CANDICE

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

MRS. KUTSCHER

How did you get . . .

CANDICE

Lit up? I just took my pills.

MRS. KUTSCHER

They don't do this.

CANDICE

Oh yes they do.

MRS. KUTSCHER

They sedate.

CANDICE

Not if you do it right.

MRS. KUTSCHER

I kept them in Darla's room—

CANDICE

And I took them from Darla's room, Mrs. Kutscher. Does that surprise you?

ANDREW

I already know this.

(Thunder sounds. Candice and Mrs. Kutscher circle again.)

CANDICE

Our time, some time, no time, with time, for time, your time, my time.

(They stop. Candice approaches Andrew.)

You killed me.

(She reaches out his hand, touches his cheek and collapses.)

ANDREW

She's going to die—she really is going to die.

MRS. KUTSCHER

Then she's better off.

ANDREW

When she came through that door—

(The door lights up.)

she became your responsibility.

(A knock sounds at the door.)

MRS. KUTSCHER

Oh really? She wasn't your responsibility? She wasn't anybody's responsibility but mine? Then why is it now?

(The knock sounds again.)

What did you do all that time ago, Mr. Berkman? Do you remember that?

(Mrs. Kutscher steps over Candice to pull the table where it belongs, then throws a chair under it where Andrew sat earlier.)

You were sitting here like you normally do.

ANDREW

Mrs. Kutscher, I—

MRS. KUTSCHER

I believe you were.

(Andrew sits down stiffly. Candice begins to recover.)

Let's see . . . it was lunchtime, wasn't it?

CANDICE

(Chanting quietly)

* In time, on time, with time, no time, your time, for time, sometime, more time, give time lost time, time to think, this time, time and space, that time, do time, run time, give me time, long time, having time, for time, super time, our time, time to act, time for change, time to loose, time of day, good time, real time, making time, time for time, stop time, us time, making time, saving time, time and space, time away, fun time, winter time, bad time, end times, wasting time, take time, down time, every time, finding time.

(*The scene continues over her chanting. Candice repeats as necessary.)

MRS. KUTSCHER

Jeri and Pete really were in the sitting room playing checkers but you were in here at the table, weren't you, Mr. Berkman.

(Pete and Jeri hurry by to the sitting room behind the curtain.)

ANDREW

I can't remember—

MRS. KUTSCHER

You were sitting there, eating toast. Quite content, I believe.

ANDREW

I can't recall—

MRS. KUTSCHER

You were sitting there, eating toast contently when the door knocked.

(There is a knock at the door. Lightning flashes)

ANDREW

I really don't remember any of this—

MRS. KUTSCHER

What sort of life did you want to lead, Mr. Berkman?

(Candice stops chanting and watches the exchange intently.)

You'd had your time in the sun, hadn't you? You'd pushed things around quite enough and you felt good about yourself, didn't you?

ANDREW

Mrs. Kutscher, this is hardly the time to—

MRS. KUTSCHER

You thought you could just sit back and let the world take its course. So what did you do when you heard a knock?

(There is a knock at the door.)

ANDREW

Mrs. Kutscher—
(Thunder sounds.)

MRS. KUTSCHER

What did you do when you heard a knock?
(There is a knock at the door. Suddenly Candice jumps up, excited,
pointing at Andrew.)

CANDICE

I remember this. You really were there—you were right there, and Mrs. Kutscher was at the counter and they were in that room. And I was . . . and I was . . . I was at the door.
(There is a knock at the door.)

I was—I was—I . . .
(She grabs Jeri from behind the curtain, pulls her into the room, and
pushes her toward the door.)

Jeri, you need to be me. And—and—and—and you answered the door, right? You were here and there was a knock at the door.
(There is a knock at the door.)

And you . . . ?
(Jeri starts to walk away from her post.)

JERI

This is ridiculous.

CANDICE

Jeri, you stay there!
(Jeri returns.)
OK, now Mrs. Kutscher, go answer the door.
(Lightning flashes. Candice tries to push Mrs. Kutscher toward the door
but she doesn't budge.)

JERI

Am I supposed to knock first or something?

MRS. KUTSCHER

I will not participate in this.

CANDICE

You can't ungo time, Mrs. Kutscher.

MRS. KUTSCHER

What about memory. I'll bet you can ungo that. I'll bet you can't do it twice the same way.

CANDICE

Shut up!

(Thunder sounds.)

OK, there was a knock at the door.

(There is a knock at the door.)

JERI

Do you want me to knock?

CANDICE

Mrs. Kutscher, answer it, OK?

MRS. KUTSCHER

I will not.

CANDICE

No, I think that's how it happened; you were standing there and then you answered it.

(Pause.)

Fine. Darla. Where's Darla?

(Darla comes downstairs and Candice redirects her toward the door.)

You're Mrs. Kutscher and there's a knock at the door.

(There is a knock at the door.)

MRS. KUTSCHER

Darla, I forbid you to participate in this.

DARLA

I run this boardinghouse, Mrs. Kutscher.

ANDREW

Candice, this is ridiculous.

CANDICE

Do I need to get someone to play you? Because Pete's around here somewhere.

(Andrew looks away.)

OK, Darla, you stand here. Or . . . You should be over there where Mrs. Kutscher is. I think? It doesn't matter—you can be here.

DARLA

What are we doing?

CANDICE

This is when I came here.

(Mrs. Kutscher folds her arms doubtfully.)

DARLA

And who am I?

CANDICE

Mrs. Kutscher.

DARLA

And who's Darla?

CANDICE

I—uh—don't worry about it. OK, there was a knock at the door.

(There is a knock at the door.)

Jeri, Knock on the door.

(Jeri knocks on the door.)

Mr. Berkman, you were there and . . . you probably . . . glanced with mild interest toward the door.

ANDREW

I will not.

CANDICE

Mr. Berkman, please.

(Andrew folds his arms.)

OK, fine. So, um, Darla, you're Mrs. Kutscher and you say . . .

DARLA

(As Mrs. Kutscher)

Ignore that, it's nothing.

MRS. KUTSCHER

HA!

(The lights drop on the doorway.)

CANDICE

NO!

(The lights come back up.)

We're going to do this. There was a knock at the door.

(Jeri knocks almost simultaneously with another knock. Lightning flashes.)

CANDICE (Continued)

Mrs. Kutscher answered the door.

(Candice pushes Darla toward the door. Darla opens the door. Darla and Jeri hesitate.)

And . . . um . . . somebody brought me here . . . ?

MRS. KUTSCHER

I thought you were lit up.

(Thunder sounds as Candice takes a step toward Mrs. Kutscher, glaring and pointing her finger.)

ANDREW

Don't antagonize her; she's out of her mind.

MRS. KUTSCHER

Why do you persist, Mr. Berkman?

CANDICE

OK, so, I came here. And this was a . . . hospital? There was something wrong with me . . .

(Jeri and Darla peek around at Candice.)

No, you were there and you were there.

(Candice walks up behind Jeri.)

And there was a knock at the door.

(Although the door is open still, there is a knock.)

And Mrs. Kutscher answered it and said . . .

DARLA

(As Mrs. Kutscher)

Hello . . . I'm Mrs. Kutscher—

CANDICE

A little meaner—

DARLA

(Meaner)

Hello, I'm Mrs. Kutscher.

(Candice takes hold of Jeri's wrists and starts manipulating her arms.)

CANDICE

(Imitating herself)

Oh, hi . . . um . . . I was told I had to come here, or I was brought here, or something.

(As her real self)

Anyway, I came in.

(Lightning flashes. She pushes Jeri through the door and out from behind the screen, and then pulls Darla into the kitchen as well.)

CANDICE (Continued)

And then we were in here, and Darla was . . . um, never mind, you just talk.
(Thunder sounds.)

DARLA

(As Mrs. Kutscher)
So you're Candice, are you?

JERI

(In her banker voice.)
Why yes I am. I've been sent here to live here.
(As herself)
You know, this would be a lot easier if I could have a little shot of something.
(Candice starts to look but is stopped short by Darla.)

DARLA

No. The rule is set.
(As Mrs. Kutscher)
I understand you've been having some difficulty, Candice.

JERI

(In her banker voice)
You must be mistaken, I've been sent here for no good reason.

CANDICE

Not so sarcastic.

JERI

Um—
(In her banker voice)
Sure, I guess.

CANDICE

And Mrs. Kutscher was like:
(Darla takes hold of Jeri's wrists.)

DARLA

(As Mrs. Kutscher)
Things are going to be different here.

JERI
(Actually sounding like Candice)
What are you doing?
(Lightning and thunder strike.)

CANDICE
And you sat right there, Mr. Berkman—

DARLA
(As Mrs. Kutscher)
In this house there are certain rules.
(Jeri struggles to free herself but Darla holds firm.)

JERI
(As Candice)
You're hurting my wrists—

CANDICE
Watching—
(Darla forces Jeri to her knees.)

DARLA
(As Mrs. Kutscher)
As a resident of this house you fall under my guidance.

CANDICE
Waiting—

JERI
(As Candice)
Please—

CANDICE
Eating toast.

MRS. KUTSCHER
This is the most ridiculous thing I've seen in my entire life. It did not happen that way.
(Darla releases Jeri, Jeri stands, and everybody turns toward Mrs. Kutscher.)
I did not push you to the ground as you walked in.

CANDICE

It was something like that . . . Fine. So you were here and you were here. And you, Mr. Berkman, were right there. And Mrs. Kutscher didn't just push me down like that but she was like . . . she was . . .

JERI

Candice, this isn't—

CANDICE

No! No-no-no. You were—I was there, Mrs. Kutscher was where Darla is, there'd already been a knock at the door.

(There is a knock at the door.)

And we were—and we . . . I was . . . I said—

JERI

(In banker voice)

Mr. Amsel brought me here—

CANDICE

No, no—like before.

JERI

(Somewhere between the banker voice and Candice)

He said I should stay here for a while.

CANDICE

And then, Darla, say . . . um, when you're under my house you're under my rules.

DARLA

(As Mrs. Kutscher)

When you're under my roof you're under my rules.

(Lightning and thunder strike.)

CANDICE

And-and, you're just a source of income.

DARLA

You're just a source of income here.

MRS. KUTSCHER

I never said any such thing!

CANDICE

And um—and um.

(Jeri approaches Candice.)

And then . . . and you were—and the—and the pills . . .

(Jeri touches Candice's shoulders.)

And-and-and—wait! You were . . . and something.

(Pause.)

Err on the side of interesting?

(Candice goes limp in Jeri's arms. Beat.)

MRS. KUTSCHER

I'll show you what happened.

(Mrs. Kutscher jerks Candice out of Jeri's arms by the wrist, drags her behind the screen, outside the door where she leaves her, then walks around to the inside of the door.)

Knock.

(There is a knock at the door. Mrs. Kutscher answers it to reveal Candice.)

Come in, you're perfectly welcome.

(Mrs. Kutscher pulls Candice into the room. Noticing Jeri and Darla, Mrs. Kutscher snaps her fingers and points to the common room.)

Move.

(Jeri and Darla hurry into the common room.)

Pete!

(Pete runs across the room into the common room. Mr. Berkman stands.)

You were right there.

(Mr. Berkman sits.)

This is Candice. Mr. Amsel sent her. You remember Mr. Amsel, don't you? He told us he had a boarder for us. She's under our care, Andrew.

ANDREW

I understand that, Mrs. Kutscher.

MRS. KUTSCHER

Do you?

(Lightning and thunder strike.)

ANDREW

Yes.

MRS. KUTSCHER

What?

ANDREW

Yes.

MRS. KUTSCHER

I'll be taking charge of the girl. You needn't do anything. Do you understand that?

ANDREW

Hrmp.

MRS. KUTSCHER

I'm sorry?

ANDREW

I do.

(Pause.)

MRS. KUTSCHER

Good. I'll introduce Candice to the other tenants now.

(Mrs. Kutscher drags Candice a few feet toward the common room.)

ANDREW

Why?

MRS. KUSCHER

(Stopping)

What?

ANDREW

Why? It's just a game. This didn't happen. You're not going to introduce her to anybody.

MRS. KUTSCHER

Mr. Berkman!

ANDREW

Andrew. And she's right: you can't ungo time.

(Mrs. Kutscher jerks Candice toward the common room.)

MRS. KUTSCHER

Come on, Candice.

(Candice struggles as Mrs. Kutscher drags her. Darla pulls back the curtain to reveal Pete and Jeri playing Checkers. Mrs. Kutscher stomps her feet, and Candice gives up struggling to glare at Mrs. Kutscher.)

Everybody, I'd like you to meet our new tenant, Candice. Candice, this is Jeri and Pete.

JERI

Hiya Can—

ANDREW

I called Mr. Amsel.

(Everybody stops to look at Andrew. The wind and the rain are quite intense by now. Pause.)

MRS. KUTSCHER

You didn't really.

ANDREW

(Looking away)

Yes. I did.

MRS. KUTSCHER

Candice.

(She grabs Candice's face in her hands. Lightning and thunder strike.)

CANDICE

*No time, lost time, without time, time's up, time's out, dark time, your time, doing time, giving time, time to loose, time to leave, time to pray, time to die, my time, our time, wasting time, giving time.

MRS. KUTSCHER

(Panicked)

*Candice, Candice please. We've got to get you some coffee—
(She looks into Candice's eyes.)

Oh God. We've got to—um—um . . . hide. Run and hide.

(Mrs. Kutscher frantically drags Candice off as the lights drop on everybody but Andrew. Andrew sits alone. Pause. The scene ends but the storm continues in the dark.)

ACT TWO

scene two

(The rain and the wind intensify outside as the storm builds. Candice lies on the table in the kitchen. Andrew sits over her body. Jeri sweeps somewhat inexpertly while Pete straightens the furniture. Darla supervises the cleaning effort but ignores Andrew. They continue in silence for a while, then Pete steals a glance at Andrew. He looks back at Darla who seems preoccupied with watching Jeri. Pete approaches Andrew and then puts his hand on Andrew's shoulder.)

PETE

It's over—

ANDREW

It never was. I hate you.

PETE

Mr. Berkman, you and I have been friends for—

ANDREW

We were never friends.

PETE

We read the paper together, we—

ANDREW AND PETE

sat together, watched television together—

ANDREW

Sat and watched. How could you sit and watch like that. And do nothing. Just sit and watch while everything happened.

DARLA

No, that's wrong!

(Darla snatches the broom from Jeri's hand and snaps it over her knee.
Andrew and Pete turn to watch.)

Get another broom!

(Jeri starts to comply and Darla throws the end with the bristles on the
ground in front of her.)

And pick that up too.

(Jeri does.)

PETE
What could I have done?

ANDREW
You just told Mrs. Kutscher everything.
(Jeri returns with a new broom and starts sweeping again.)

PETE
That's not what really made you mad.

ANDREW
No.

DARLA
SWEEP IN STROKES! SWEEP IN STROKES!
(Jeri alters her sweeping but it is still obviously ineffective.)

PETE
You couldn't do anything.

ANDREW
Why couldn't you do anything?

PETE
You weren't able to lift a hand or say a word—

ANDREW
You never looked up from your toast and said anything cross—

PETE
because you didn't know what to do—

ANDREW
and you were afraid you might lose everything.

PETE
You sat—

ANDREW
imobil—

PETE
hoping things might fix themselves—

somehow—

ANDREW

PETE
hoping you could let it go, hoping it would all go away or work out, hoping it wasn't as bad as it was.

ANDREW
But it was and you knew it was—

PETE
You knew it from the start.
(Darla knocks the broom out of Jeri's hands and advances with the handle of the broken broom raised. Pete and Andrew turn to watch.)

DARLA
Goddamn it Jeri! That's not how you sweep!
(Jeri backs away from Darla but trips. Darla hits Jeri several times with the broom handle, then just stands and looks down at her.)

ANDREW
But you cared about her—

PETE
that girl—

ANDREW
that little girl that came into this house. You wanted to protect—

PETE
that girl—

ANDREW
and help—

PETE
that girl—

ANDREW
But then—

PETE
she—

Mrs. Kutscher—

ANDREW

had her own ideas—

PETE

ANDREW
her own trouble—her own needs. But how could you ignore things like that.
(Without breaking eye contact, Pete sits down next to Andrew.
Pause.)

PETE
I was in love with Mrs. Kutscher.
(They stare at each other for a long moment and then Pete stands. The screen lights up to reveal the silhouette of the doorway. Darla smacks the broom handle against the floor. As Pete leaves through the silhouette of the door.)

DARLA
Ignore that! It's nothing!

ANDREW
Pete's gone, Darla.
(Darla looks at her watch.)

DARLA
It's time for your medicine.
(Darla slams a prescription pill bottle down in front of Andrew and brings him a glass of water.)
Take those. I'll get your other one.
(Darla goes upstairs. Andrew looks off at nothing as he opens the bottle. Jeri gets up, looks around, and then comes over to kneel by Andrew.)

JERI
Don't take them.

ANDREW
Why?

JERI
Please.
(Andrew pours a couple of pills into his hand. Jeri grabs his wrist, trying to hold him back but Andrew is too strong for her. He swallows the pills,

drinks, and then stares out at nothing. Jeri hangs helpless from his arm. Darla returns with another pill bottle and Kicks Jeri away.)

DARLA

Stop it! Get off of him.

(Slamming the pills down)

Here's your other pill.

(Lightning flashes several times accompanied by thunder until Andrew and Darla disappear and Jeri is replaced by Candice who bangs her palms against the floor repeatedly as a scream gradually rises from her.)

CANDICE

RrrrrrrraaaAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAGGHHH

(Lightning flashes several times until Candice disappears and Andrew and Mrs. Kutscher appear sitting at the table.)

MRS. KUTSCHER

Mr. Amsel called today and said he will bring the girl by this afternoon.

ANDREW

It makes me nervous.

MRS. KUTSCHER

We've already talked about this, Andrew.

(Lightning flashes several times until Mrs. Kutscher disappears and Candice reappears on the table laid out as before. Andrew stares out at nothing. Pause. Lightning flashes several times until Candice disappears. Andrew continues to stare. Pause. Lightning flashes several times until Andrew disappears and Mrs. Kutscher appears standing, holding her spatula. Thunder sounds and the silhouette of the door flashes in and out. Mrs. Kutscher slaps the spatula against the table.)

Stop it! It's nothing!

(Thunder sounds again and the silhouette of the door flashes in and out.)

It's nothing! There's no one there.

(Thunder sounds again and the silhouette of the door flashes in and out. Mrs. Kutscher throws her spatula at the door.)

STOP IT!

(Lightning flashes several times until Mrs. Kutscher disappears and Jeri appears by the stairs, approaching the table. In another flash of lightning she is gone. Thunder sounds again and the silhouette of the door flashes on. There is a knock at the door. Lightning flashes again, Andrew appears at the table and Mrs. Kutscher appears at the counter. Thunder

sounds again and the silhouette of the door flashes on. There is a knock at the door.)

She's here.

(Lightning flashes several times again until Jeri appears where she stopped last time, still walking. Lightning flashes again and she is gone. Lightning flashes several times until Darla appears at the counter, washing dishes. The storm continues but she stays there for several moments before Pete enters from the common room.)

PETE

Darla, can I speak to you for a moment?

DARLA

Better be fast.

PETE

Um, this is important.

DARLA

It's all gonna fly away.

PETE

Really important.

DARLA

No boarded up windows or reinforced walls—

PETE

It's about Jeri.

DARLA

(Louder)

No boarded up windows or reinforced walls can help you now.

PETE

Jeri's not well.

DARLA

(Throwing down a dish)

DID YOU HEAR ME!?

(Darla advances on Pete. Pete backs away but not quickly enough. She pushes him down and kneels with her knee between his legs.)

I threw up when I saw what I'd done with you.

(Lightning flashes several times until Darla and Pete disappear and Jeri appears where she disappeared last, still walking. She makes it to the table. Lightning flashes several times and she disappears. It flashes again and she reappears at the foot of the stairs, walking toward the table. It flashes again and she disappears. Thunder sounds and the silhouette of the door appears. A knock sounds. Mrs. Kutscher's silhouette answers the door to reveal Candice's silhouette and Amsel's silhouette.

MRS. KUTSCHER'S SILHOUETTE

Oh! Mr. Amsel. Come in please.

AMSEL'S SILHOUETTE

Mrs. Kutscher this is Candice.

(Lightning flashes and Andrew appears by the counter in the kitchen. The silhouettes freeze. Andrew takes a slow step to where Mrs. Kutscher normally stands.)

ANDREW

Mrs. Kutscher?

(Lightning flashes and Andrew disappears. The shadow scene returns to life.)

AMSEL

Candice, this is Mrs. Kutscher. She'll be taking care of you.

(Lightning flashes and Andrew reappears. The shadow scene freezes.)

ANDREW

It's about Candice.

(Andrew freezes, and the shadow scene comes to life. Mrs. Kutscher, Candice, and Pete step out from behind the screen.)

MRS. KUTSCHER

This is your new home, Candice.

(Andrew comes to life and the others freeze.)

ANDREW

Mrs. Kutscher, please.

(Andrew freezes and the others come to life. Candice looks around suspiciously. She starts to explore the space between the door and the table. Lightning flashes several times. Andrew disappears and Mrs. Kutscher is transported to her usual position by the counter, washing a dish. Amsel freezes and Candice continues to explore.)

MRS. KUTSCHER

What, Mr. Berkman? What do you want to talk about?

(Lightning flashes and Andrew appears in the chair. Mrs. Kutscher freezes and Pete comes to life. Candice startles when she finds Andrew.)

AMSEL

Oh, this is Mr. . . .

(He looks where Mrs. Kutscher was.)

Berkman? He's her live in . . . boarder.

(Mr. Berkman looks away in shame. Lightning flashes and Andrew is transported to where he was behind Mrs. Kutscher. Amsel freezes)

ANDREW

She's—

MRS. KUTSCHER

She's fine, Mr. Berkman.

ANDREW

I'm worried she'll die.

(Lightning flashes and everyone disappears. Lightning flashes again and Jeri appears at the foot of the stairs, walking toward the table. Lightning flashes and she disappears. Lightning flashes again and Mrs. Kutscher, Amsel, and Candice reappear. Amsel pulls Mrs. Kutscher off to the side.)

AMSEL

I don't want her talking to anybody about anything that happened to her before she came to your house. I don't really care about anything else.

(Lightning flashes and everybody disappears. It flashes again and Jeri appears where she stopped, still walking to the table. Lightning flashes and she disappears. It flashes again and Amsel and Mrs. Kutscher reappear.)

MRS. KUTSCHER

I will be able to manage without difficulty, thank you Mr. Amsel. Mr. Berkman and I are excellent caregivers.

(Lightning flashes again. Amsel and Mrs. Kutscher disappear, and Candice appears, lying on the table. Lightning flashes and Candice disappears. It flashes again and Jeri appears where she left. Andrew is halfway up the stairs looking down. Jeri reaches the table and starts to climb onto it. Lightning flashes and Jeri disappears.)

ANDREW

Mrs. Kutscher?

(He descends the remaining stairs and then hesitates.)

Mrs. Kutscher? Are you all right?

(Pause.)

Hello?

(Lightning flashes and Andrew disappears. It flashes again and Jeri appears at the foot of the stairs, walking toward the table. Lightning flashes and she disappears. It flashes again and she reappears where she was, still walking. Lightning flashes and she disappears. It flashes again and Candice's body appears on the table.)

MRS. KUTSCHER

(Off)

Andrew, when this girl comes, you're going to have to let me handle her. Mr. Amsel tells me she is in a delicate state.

ANDREW

(Off)

I'm a little bit worried about—

MRS. KUTSCHER

(Off)

Don't be. You've done everything you need to do. If I thought for one minute that this would interfere with you, I would say no to the whole thing. You're a good man, Andrew, and you've done your bit. Rest.

(Lightning flashes and Candice disappears. It flashes again and Jeri appears at the foot of the stairs, walking toward the table. Lightning flashes and Jeri disappears. It flashes again and Candice appears in Andrew's chair. Andrew is halfway down the stairs.)

ANDREW

Candice?

(He walks to Candice and waves his hand before her eyes. She is obviously out of it. He sighs and turns away. Lightning flashes and Andrew and Candice disappear. It flashes again and Jeri appears where she was, still walking to the table. Lightning flashes and Jeri disappears. It flashes again and she appears where she was, still walking. Andrew is halfway down the stairs. Jeri reaches the table and begins to climb it. Lightning flashes and Jeri and Andrew disappear. It flashes again and Jeri appears at the foot of the stairs, walking toward the table. Lightning flashes and Jeri disappears. It flashes again and Candice appears, pacing the floor.)

CANDICE

Particles—particles—particles. Particle dots—particle strings. Three plus one. Plus one—plus one—plus one. Particle strings—particle strings—particle strings. Open strings—closed strings. Ten or eleven or three plus one? ARE THE STRINGS OPEN OR CLOSED?

(Lightning flashes and Candice disappears. It flashes again and Jeri appears where she was, still walking.)

CANDICE

(Off)

Accelerating particles in a particle accelerator.

(Lightning flashes and Jeri disappears.)

Accelerating particles in a particle accelerator.

(It flashes again and Jeri appears where she was still walking. Andrew is halfway down the stairs.)

Smashing particles into other particles.

(Jeri reaches the table and starts to climb onto it. Lightning flashes and Jeri and Andrew disappear.)

SMASH!

(It flashes again and Jeri appears at the foot of the stairs, walking toward the table.)

A graviton's released.

(Lightning flashes and Jeri disappears.)

Where does it go?

(It flashes again and she appears where she was, still walking. She is holding a rope. As the lightning continues to flash and the wind grows louder, Andrew comes halfway down the stairs and notices Jeri, who approaches the table and climbs onto it. Andrew descends the remaining stairs as Jeri throws the rope over a beam, and knots a loop onto it. The lightning lets up.)

ANDREW

What are you doing?

JERI

Changing a light bulb.

ANDREW

Jeri . . .

JERI

I'm sorry to tell you this, Andy-panda, but things suck around here.

(She tests the noose around her neck and then readjusts the knot.)

ANDREW
You're going to kill yourself.

JERI
I've always wondered how you got to be so quick. Must be that drug cocktail you people have been swallowing up.

ANDREW
Jeri—

JERI
Know anything about knots?

ANDREW
Knots?

JERI
Yeah, knots.

ANDREW
No.

JERI
No. This isn't the right kind of knot.

ANDREW
Jeri, don't.

JERI
I guess it will be fitting to dangle off the wrong kind of knot.

ANDREW
Jeri, really, don't.

JERI
Fuck you, Mr. Berkman, I'm outie.
(She puts the noose around her neck.)

ANDREW
Wait. If you just wait you'll get used to things, you'll adjust to it.

JERI
I don't want to adjust to it.

ANDREW

Why? Why not? It's not that bad.

JERI

Actually it is. Darla's a nasty little cookie, and you and Pete just sit around all day, staring out numb at the happy-pill gray. I've got nothing but a secret stash of meds that I could use to go out like Candice, but I think this will be much more fun. I only wish I could be here to see Darla's face when she notices me up here. Bye—

ANDREW

Wait!

(Jeri hesitates.)

What about me? Pete's gone. Candice died, Mrs. Kutscher left, Mr. Amsel won't be back. If you do this, it'll be just her and me.

(Andrew starts rifling desperately through the cupboards.)

Look, why don't I get you your bourbon—I think I know where she put it—it was wrong of her to take that from you—she shouldn't keep you from something that important.

JERI

She shouldn't have.

(Jeri tightens the noose and prepares to hang herself.)

ANDREW

Don't! Wait just a minute. What do you want? You want me to talk to her? I'll talk to her about letting you keep your bottle—she'll understand—it's a kind of sedative.

Wait—wait---wait—I've almost found it. Don't you want to have a drink first?

Wouldn't you rather have a drink before you go?

JERI

Why don't you talk to her about all of it?

ANDREW

What?

JERI

All of it. The whole, big thing. Tell her to stop, tell her you won't do it any more—the pills, what she says—none of it.

(Andrew turns around with the bottle. Pause.)

ANDREW

That's a lot.

(He approaches the table and hands the bottle up.)

Is that what it will take to keep you here?

(Jeri opens the bottle and looks at it.)

ANDREW (Continued)

I can do that . . . for you.

JERI

Look at this; it was here all the time. I'm not very good at finding things sober.

(She sniffs it, savoring the smell.)

Huh, look at that. On my last day I gave up drinking.

(She throws the bottle to the floor.)

ANDREW

Jeri . . . ?

(Pause. The lights drop. Pause. The table crashes over and the thud of the gallows sounds, ending the scene.)

ACT TWO

scene three

(Mrs. Kutscher stands at the counter, washing dishes. Andrew sits at the table drinking coffee, eating toast, and reading a newspaper. Darla, Pete and Jeri disassemble and remove everything that's not in the kitchen. After several moments there is a knock at the door. And the screen lights up, revealing the silhouette of the door. Pete walks quickly to the door, putting on Mr. Amsel's clothes as Mrs. Kutscher turns from her chores and Darla takes down the screen in front of the door. Pete walks around behind the door.)

MRS. KUTSCHER

That's them. Now Andrew, I want you to be polite. Don't cause trouble for Mr. Amsel.
(She starts for the door.)

ANDREW

I don't really understand this arrangement.

MRS. KUTSCHER

It's for me to understand, Andrew, not you.

ANDREW

I told you I—

MRS. KUTSCHER

You don't have to do anything. Having this girl here won't interrupt your retirement.
(She answers the door to reveal Mr. Amsel standing with Candice.)
Mr. Amsel, it's good to see you.
(Mr. Amsel and Mrs. Kutscher shake.)

MR. AMSEL

Mrs. Kutscher

MRS. KUSCHER

Come in.

(They do.)

This must be Candice. Mr. Amsel, this is Mr. Berkman, my . . .

MR. AMSEL

Oh yes.

(Mr. Amsel shakes hands with Andrew.)

Good to meet you.

ANDREW

You know I don't really understand—

MRS. KUTSCHER

Mr. Berkman has his own routine. He'll mostly be leaving things up to me.

MR. AMSEL

Ah, good.

MRS. KUTSCHER

Candice dear, you are not to bother Mr. Berkman. Do you understand that?

CANDICE

Yes ma'am.

MRS. KUTSCHER

And Mr. Berkman will not interfere with you.

(Mr. Amsel pulls Mrs. Kutscher aside and Candice and Andrew look at one another.)

MR. AMSEL

I've arranged things how you wanted. My doctor has prescribed her these. They are very strong and should work the way you want them to.

(He hands Mrs. Kutscher two prescription bottles.)

MRS. KUTSCHER

Oh, this should work out just fine. Are there any side effects?

MR. AMSEL

Some memory loss—she may get sick from time to time. Nothing too undesirable.

(Candice takes a few tentative steps toward Andrew.)

CANDICE

Mr. Berkman?

ANDREW

Andrew.

MRS. KUTSCHER

And what should I do if she's already . . . damaged in some way?

(Mr. Amsel hands her a business card.)

MR. AMSEL

This is my doctor. You can take her here for anything.

And um . . .

MRS. KUTSCHER

Why?

CANDICE

Should I expect someone to come around and . . . check on her?

MRS. KUTSCHER

Because something seems wrong.

ANDREW

That's all been taken care of.

MR. AMSEL

Is there?

ANDREW

You will receive satisfactory reports but no one will actually come by.

MR. AMSEL

Something wrong?
(Candice nods.)

ANDREW

You have a free hand in this, and all you have to do is live quietly and make her disappear.

MR. AMSEL

Help me.
(Almost inaudibly)

CANDICE

What?

ANDREW

I'm trusting you with this. Don't betray me.

MR. AMSEL

Help me.

CANDICE

MRS. KUTSCHER

(Shaken and noticing for the first time where Candice is)

Candice! You are to leave Mr. Berkman alone.

(Candice backs away from Andrew but they remain in eye contact.)

MR. AMSEL

(Eyeing Andrew)

You do have this under control?

MRS. KUTSCHER

You needn't concern yourself with this, Mr. Berkman.

(Andrew looks away.)

Candice, you will stand over there by the stairway until I am ready to show you your room.

(Candice does.)

Everything is under control, Mr. Amsel.

(Mr. Amsel sizes her up for a moment and then nods.)

MR. AMSEL

Call me if there's trouble.

(Mr. Amsel walks toward the door, removing his Mr. Amsel clothes and becoming Pete. He throws the unneeded clothes off, takes away the door, and continues to help Jeri and Darla break down the set. Mrs. Kutscher hands Candice some pills.)

MRS. KUTSCHER

Hold these while I get . . . a glass of water?

(Mrs. Kutscher stands confused for a moment, but quickly shakes it off and retrieves a glass of water. She hands the glass to Candice and Candice takes the pills. By now the set has been reduced to the table, the chair, and the stairs. Jeri takes the glass and the pill bottle away and Darla approaches Mrs. Kutscher.)

DARLA

That's just about everything. Do you want us to give you a little more time?

MRS. KUTSCHER

No, I think we're finished.

(Andrew jumps up and turns.)

ANDREW

Wait a minute!

(Everybody stops and looks at him.)

You can't do this. We can't let him pay us to just sweep whatever he's done to this girl under the table.

CANDICE

You can't ungo time, Mr. Berkman.

(Candice and Andrew stare at each other for a moment before Andrew sits back down. Mrs. Kutscher and Candice leave while Pete and Jeri pick up the table. Andrew takes one more sip of coffee and then quickly picks up his toast as Pete and Jeri take away the table. Darla looks around once, and then she too leaves. Andrew looks around and then sighs and eats his toast.)

(BLACKOUT.)