

# *Blessed Unrest*



Written By: STI Class of 2015

Directed By: Jessica Burr & Matt Opatrny

Stage Managed By: Kristen Rosello

## Actor/Scene Breakdown

- Upstage Push
  - Starts with Haley
  - Rachel Text #2 (Morgan)
- A String of Laughter
  - Spoken by ALL
- Finding Me
  - Song: "Kill It"
  - End with Push
- Don't Wrestle Winter
  - Bricker does Morgan's choreography
- Elk Part 1
  - Spoken by Cheyenne
  - Spoken by Abilene and Missy
  - Rachel Text #1 (Clara)
- Sleeper in Hell
  - Cheyenne, Abilene, Kat, Clara, Tali, Morgan, Meg, Emma, Haley, Madison, Sydney
  - Madeline may switch with Abilene
  - Missy will follow Sydney
- Saltwater Text/ Saltwater Dance
  - Spoken by Kat
  - Dancers: Sydney, Meg, Madison, Haley, & Madeline
- Syd's Atom/Scared On The Inside
  - Everyone involved/Tali reads Text
  - Rachel Text #7 (Clara)
- The Chain
  - Abilene (singing), Haley, Tali, Clara, Madison
- Hearts In Cages
  - Dana, Emma
- While Dying/Last Song(Meg's dance)
  - Spoken by Clara Bentz and Haley Huskey
  - Dancers: Meg, Sydney, Madison, & Bricker
- Tick Tick
  - Spoken by Madeline, Cheyenne, Madison, Abilene, Meaghan, Sydney, Dana, Haley, Emmi, Clara, Missy, Emma, Morgan, Bricker, Tali, Kat, Meg
- Fingers Like Flying Paper
  - Madeline, Emma, Sydney, & Meaghan (Meaghan's Comp)
  - Morgan/Bricker choreography
  - Sung by Dana
- Losing My Mind

-Spoken by Morgan & Bricker

- Lashing Tongue
  - Spoken by Emmi & Haley
- Elk Part 2
  - Spoken by Abilene and Missy
- Letter/Hiding/Dysphoria
  - Madeline/Meg/Madison, Kat, Sydney, Clara, Emma, Cheyenne, Haley, Emmi, Tali, Missy, Abilene, Meaghan
  - Dana humming
  - Rachel's Text #6 (Morgan)
  - Rachel's Text #8 (Morgan)
  - Rachel's Text #3 (Emily B.)
- Saving Myself
  - Spoken by Sydney
  - Tali sings
- Krishna to Arjuna
  - A: Madeline, Abilene, Meaghan, Clara
  - C: Meg, Missy, Morgan
  - Tali and Dana hum
- Stifle
  - Cheyenne, Missy, Morgan, Bricker, Abilene, Meaghan
- Hooks
  - Spoken by Kat (Brooke) and Tali (Val)
- Elk Part 3
  - Spoken by Abilene and Missy
- Welcome to Hell
  - Clara & Madison
- I Feel It
  - Abilene, Sydney, Cheyenne, Dana, Madeline, Madison, Haley, Clara, Bricker, Tali, Emma, Emmi, Missy, Meg, Morgan,
- Finale
  - Meg, Emma, Missy, Morgan, Bricker
  - Madeline, Dana, Madison

## UPSTAGE PUSH

Haley will enter the stage during a black out and will start pushing the back wall when lights come up.

**Morgan:** The human world is a macrocosm of the human mind. Because the world is naturally dialogical, so is the mind. Humans, like literature, are heavily influenced by context, and so our minds are full of other voices: voices that raised us, that taught us, that stuck out to us in books and movies and songs.

While the mind, like the world, is naturally dialogical, there is a line we each must carefully toe when determining how many “others” it is healthy for us to harbor. If one tries too hard to accommodate both internal and external voices, one risks succumbing to mimesis.

As time goes on the rest of the cast will start to enter from different sides of the stage.

Together the group will do 3 wall pushes.

The first push will have noise.

The second will be softer.

The third will be silent.

Madison, Madeline, and Dana turn first.

Soon everyone follows slowly after them.

## A STRING OF LAUGHTER

**Madison:** imagine this:

**Madeline:** you walk into your home

**Dana:** your kitchen or living room your space

**Abilene:** you find a beautiful box

**Meaghan P.:** (it practically glows)

**Haley:** it is perfectly wrapped

**Madeline:** perfectly placed

**Sydney:** perfectly perfect

**Meg W.:** you unwrap it slowly,

**Cheyenne:** carefully-- as to not tear it to pieces

**Madison:** (the vague disillusionment of saving the paper)

**Dana:** you lift away a layer of sweet smelling tissue

**Haley:** only to find

**Madeline:** a line

**Abilene:** of string

**Emmi:** of yarn

**Madison:** you move aside the rest of the paper

**Sydney:** the box is otherwise empty

**Madeline:** but for a small scrap

**Haley:** with small scrappy script

**Madison:** *it doesn't look like much, believe me, I know*

**Sydney:** *but it will get you through the hardest times*

**Abilene:** *it will help you remember the greatest times*

**Cheyenne:** *the times that mattered*

**Madeline:** *and maybe the times that didn't*

**Haley:** *either way,*

**ALL:** *Happy Birthday!!*

**Madeline:** you stare into the box

**Morgan:** the small gray string stares back at you

**Emily B.:** you scoff but

**Katherine:** you pull it out anyway

**Tali:** and then...

**Clara:** then you hear

**ALL:** the *laughter*

**Meg W.:** the high wheezing laugh when he's laughed long and hard

**Emmi:** the short, blunt laugh she gives when something is particularly clever

**Emma:** the snort that comes unbidden from her mouth

**Emily B.:** the raucous howls that only arrive shortly after midnight and a fourth martini

**Tali:** the curl of his smile when you tell a joke in the library

**Missy:** the silent amusement that radiates off of her as you doodle in your church program

**Katherine:** pictures of absurd notions,

**Emmi:** half-remembered song lyrics,

**Emily B.:** and an infinite amount of stick people

**Meg W.:** a small, wry laugh reserved for the state of the world

**Emmi:** (and FOX news)

**ALL:** you hear them all

**Emmi:** and you close your eyes

**Morgan:** and you clutch the string in your hand

**Tali:** (it is soft, it is warm,

**Clara:** it is the best of times,

**Katherine:** and sometimes, it is the worst)

**Meg W.:** and you breathe it all in

**Emily B.:** and you *marvel*

**Emmi:** and you feel your lips curl back

**Missy:** and your teeth reveal themselves

**Tali:** and you laugh for a long time

**ALL:** string tangled in your fingers

## FINDING ME

Everyone is in formation at the end of A STRING OF LAUGHTER.

“Kill it” will start.

All groups are in sink for the first few steps that were choreographed by Aja Depass.

Then the groups will break into different routines.

All groups will end up UPSTAGE in front of the wall.

Music will fade.

Everyone will turn and whisper “1,2,3” and push without noise.

## DON”T WRESTLE WINTER

Emily B. and Morgan will be doing choreography underneath this piece.

### **Cheyenne:**

It’s kind of like that little chant we used to say when we were kids, “Can’t walk over it, can’t walk around it. I guess we’ll have to walk through it!” Wallow. Weep like a willow. Feel it. Feel it till you can’t stand it. One day you’re going to wake up and wonder why you didn’t choose to cry through the pain and feel that wet whistle of water drops crawl out of your wounded soul. Hey, wondrous warrior, don’t sit there. Don’t lie down; blaming and praying to the same person, tracing circles round and round like feet racing the treadmill. Don’t wrestle winter. You can’t just lace on your old princess, diva skies and go gliding downhill till you hit leftover, stiff summer air. I never learned to stop. You just fell. It was a lot more fun to do, and a lot more fun to watch, but, as you grew and you fell so often, I just wished and wished and wished you’d learn to stop. Keep walking straight. Keep walking till you walk through it all. If you stop, not even knowing how, you’ll be the warrior left wrinkled and wheezing. This last fall was hard, so you thought hey lets skip to summer. Summer is warm. Summer is the good kind of wet, but you’re wrapping yourself up in waves rather than letting them touch you. I know you’re walking through it. I’m waiting, and I’ll be waiting, till you are ready for me to see all you have become.

**Clara:** In monologism, “truth,” constructed abstractly and systematically from the dominant perspective, is allowed to remove the rights of consciousness. Each subject’s ability to produce autonomous meaning is denied. Qualitative difference is rendered quantitative. This performs a kind of discursive “death” of the other, who, as unheard and unrecognized, is in a state of non-being.

## YOU’RE A F\*\*\*ING ELK (1)

**Mel-** Missy

**Frank-** Abilene

[A girl, **MELANIE**, stands on a curb. Buses drive past every few seconds, never stopping. **SHE** moves to step up to the curb, but stops herself almost as soon. **SHE** looks up at the sky. A drop of rain. A muttered curse. **SHE** takes out her umbrella.]

**MEL:** Of course...

[**FRANK**, and elk, saunters in on his two hind legs. **MEL** does not see him.]

**FRANK:** You got room under there for one more?

**MEL:** Yeah, sure, man.

**FRANK:** Sweet. I’m Frank, by the way.

**MEL:** I’m Mel—[sees that **FRANK** is in fact an elk on his hind legs.] Melanie...

**FRANK:** Good to meet you, Melanie.

**MEL:** [increasingly confused] Yeahhhh...

[beat.]

**Morgan:** Mel’s dreams occur in a liminal space. Victor Turner defines liminality as “a place where boundaries dissolve a little and we stand there, on the threshold, getting ourselves ready to move across the limits of what we were into what we are to be.”<sup>1</sup> Bus stops themselves are liminal spaces – they exist only to aid in the movement from present to future. Mel herself is transitioning: from denial to acceptance; from bitter anger to forgiveness.

**FRANK:** Terrible weather isn't it? Like something out of horror movie. I mean, you could get *killed* in this kind of weather. Or like one of those sad movies where someone is lying dying in some musty hospital bed, ya know?

[These words have struck a chord with **MEL**. **SHE** fights the urge to react.]

**MEL:** ...Yeah.

[beat.]

**FRANK:** So, uhh, do you mind if I just unload for a minute?

**MEL:** What?

**FRANK:** Great—So this bus is literally *always* late. You ever know anyone like that? Never on time. *The worst*. Like, man, I've got places to be, people to meet. Most selfish thing ever, being late, am I right?

[**MEL** is silent for a moment and regards **FRANK** with a new wariness.]

**MEL:** Some people can't help it.

**FRANK:** Now, I'm not saying you're making excuses, but it sure does sound like one, amiright?

**MEL:** ...Yeah. Okay. Sure.

[beat.]

**FRANK:** Sooooo... Have you been to that new sandwich shop downtown? The, uh, whatsitcalled. Oh, god, I am *terrible* with names. Johnny's... Jacob's? Jingy jangy. No that's way off. Jjjjjjjjjj—

**MEL:** ...Jordan's?

**FRANK:** JORDAN'S! There it is. You always got my back, Mel—can I call you Mel?

**MEL:** Actually—

**FRANK:** Great, Mel it is. So—Jordan's. Best meatball sub I have *ever* had. Like, the pinnacle of my sandwich experience.

**MEL:** I'm sorry, can I just—

**FRANK:** Mel, babe, just let me finish this thought. Ya da da da da da... Right! Meatballs. Cos you know you have meatballs and then you have *meatballs*. They got a little silantro, a little onion, sneak a little bit of asigao in along with some breadcrumbs. I am talking prime meatball. And it had just the slightest kick to it. Like a little [insert noise]. Know what I mean? Just a bit of [insert same noise]. And don't get me started on that sauce—

**MEL:** [unable to contain herself.] YOU'RE A FUCKING ELK.

[beat.]

**FRANK:** Okay, captain obvious. Ya got me. Ya got me. But these meatballs—

**Morgan:** In many Native American tribes, the elk is associated with love, and often with sexual prowess as well.<sup>34</sup> While Frank never explicitly hits on Mel, his tone is consistently flirty. In addition, “Frank” is another word for a hot dog, also known as a wiener, and all he can seem to talk about are delicious *meatballs*. But perhaps Freudian thought was debunked for a reason.

**MEL:** I don't care about the meatballs.

**FRANK:** Yikes, Mel. What's your—Ohh. Oh, shit. Oh, deer. I'm sorry. You're a vegetarian, aren't you?

**MEL:** What?

**FRANK:** I always do this. Like, I really respect your diet. I don't know if I could do what you're doing. Like, I love animals. Cute as shit most of the time. But gimme a steak and I'm just [insert noise]. Oh. Oh, god. C'mon, Frank. Here I go, putting my foot in my mouth again.

**MEL:** [lowly] You don't have a foot to put in your mouth, *Frank*.

**FRANK:** ...Uhhh, what're you talking about. They're right here.

**MEL:** Those are hooves.

**FRANK:** You know, I'm not really into labels and stuff like that—

**MEL:** *You're an elk.*

**FRANK:** You see, that is *exactly* what I'm talking about. Elk, human... What's the dif? We're all mammals here. Oh oh oh! Here's the bus!

[beat. **MEL** does not move to the stop.]

**FRANK:** Mel, you're gonna miss the bus.

[beat. **MEL** does not move.]

**FRANK:** Aaaaaaaaaaaaaand it's gone.

**MEL:** Yup.

**FRANK:** There a reason you didn't get on the bus? Maybe something to do with--

**MEL:** Fuck off.

**FRANK:** Wow. *Wow*. I am shocked and hurt.

[beat.]

You're not as nice as you used to be.

**MEL:** [this hurts her.] Okay. Fuck this. I'm done.

[**SHE** goes to leave through the vom but simply enters on the other side of the stage. She has gone in a circle. Throughout her cross, **FRANK** says her name in various ways.]

**MEL:** ...What the fuck.

**FRANK:** Mel, you gotta wake up for us to be done, babe.

**MEL:** ...What?

**FRANK:** I am far too good to be true, Mel. Get with the program. Get on the bus.

**MEL:** *What?*

[A sudden intake of breath. Blackout. **MEL** comes back to herself on a bare stage. **SHE** shakes her head, maybe mutters a bit, and exits.]

## **SLEEPER IN HELL**

Cheyenne, Abilene, Kat, Tali, Morgan, Meg W., Emma, Haley, Madison, & Sydney will be dancing their pieces on stage.

Missy will be following Sydney leading into the next piece.

[Possibility of Madeline switching with Abilene]

## **SALT WATER**

Underneath this piece Sydney, Meg W., Madison, Haley, & Madeline will be dancing

### **Katherine:**

I took with me all I have into the land of the clear and the know

My summer's sun melts into a cold rain down upon my face

I feel lost, I hurry

Pushing

Fresh cool air fills my new lungs

Running

The want for his forgiveness splits me

It relieves, It rebirths

Beginning

Attacks within the weak tear down the smiles in the mud

Must get to new, must finish old

Falling

The last glance of the gooey salt water and sand held in my small and breaking hands

I breathe in the wave

An end

Breath

A New

Breath  
Autumn. Leaves.

### SCARED ON THE INSIDE

During this piece will be Syd's Atom.

This will involve Sydney started Up Center Stage as she slowly makes her way Down Center Stage.

Everyone will be moving throughout the piece interacting with others as well as following Sydney.

**Tali:**

I'm broken as I make my legs go forward  
Not knowing how to say what I need to  
Without an idea as to why it has to be me  
A past decision I had made thinking this would never happen.  
But it has.

**Clara:** To give in to dialogism is terrifying. We are taught that truths are simple: That there are boys and there are girls. That your parents will always support you. That adults are more than just grown-up kids. That the past stays in the past. That sadness can be sloughed off. That you are the only person who controls you.

## THE CHAIN

Haley, Tali, Madison, & Clara will be doing their solos across the floor.

Abilene will be singing under this piece.

At the end of the piece all four of the dancers will end in a diagonal to enter into the next piece.

## HEARTS IN CAGES

**Emma:** What's that?

**Dana:** Oh, that old thing? It's my heart.

**Emma:** It's your *what*?

**Dana:** My heart.

**Emma:** It's in a kennel.

**Dana:** Easier to keep track of that way, right?

**Emma:** Well, I mean, very *literally speaking*, you're right.

**Dana:** Right. So I keep my heart in a cage so it doesn't do anything stupid. Every time my heart went out, it came back with some bump or bruise or bite, you know? After any commercial with some sad orphan or homeless person on the corner, it was another trip to the hospital. Another suture, Band-Aid, surgery—you name it. It got to the point where my heart was more of a scar than a muscle, and you have gotta be careful with 'em, cos you've only got one. It's not like you can get a new one on amazon prime or anything, right?

**Emma:** Right.

**Dana:** Right. So I keep my heart in a cage so it doesn't do anything stupid.

**Emma:** This cage is small.

**Dana:** That's so it doesn't grow. I once cracked two ribs because my heart got so big. That was a crazy time. I let *anything* in there. Doctor's didn't know what to do with me. I went through a lot to shrink it back down again.

**Emma:** Right...

**Dana:** Right. So I keep my heart in a cage so it doesn't do anything stupid, because the other options suck. Heart on the sleeve is basically an invitation for someone to steal it.

**Emma:** I know.

**Dana:** For the love of Goooooooooooooooooooood, don't you give it away. I did that once. Freshman year. The fucker lost it almost as soon as I handed it over. It took me a *year* to get it back, and the condition it was in—I almost sued.

**Emma:** That bad?

**Dana:** I am talking big time damage. It was almost in pieces. I still don't think I have it all back.

**Emma:** So you keep your heart in a cage so it doesn't do anything stupid.

**Dana:** Exactly.

**Emma:** Don't you ever miss having it with you?

**Dana:** What's there to miss?

**Emma:** The blushing?

**Dana:** The bruising.

**Emma:** The palpitations?

**Dana:** The puncture wounds.

**Emma:** Standing chest to chest, hearts held open and throbbing. Trusting that cracking open your ribcage for them wouldn't end in a trip to the hospital. Knowing that with every person you pass on the street, there's a potential spark, a possibility for your hearts to trade recipes and smiles and secrets. You have the ability to punch through to the center of someone else. To let someone do the same to you and simply say, "Welcome. I've been expecting you." You have this amazing power—all this potential. How can you throw that away?

## WHILE DYING

During this piece Meg W., Sydney, Madison, and Emily B. will be dancing.

Katherine will possibly play piano underneath or a song will be chosen.

**Haley:** *"I'm dying"*

**Clara:** Well no shit Sherlock.

Welcome to the human condition.

You didn't need a doctor to tell you that.

We're all dying here.

From the moment you stopped being born,

you started to die.  
We're constantly dying  
and if you haven't figured that out by now,  
you're behind.

**Haley:** *"Well I guess by that logic, I'm just dying faster."*

**Clara:** No. We don't know that.  
If I get hit by a bus tomorrow then I'll be the one who died faster.  
You don't know till you're dead  
and by then it doesn't matter if you were faster.

**Haley:** *"You don't care at all, do you?"*

**Clara:** Of course I care.  
This is horrible news.  
You have lost the bliss of ignorance.  
You now have the pain of knowledge.  
You now have the pain of definite time.  
You now have the pain of limits.  
And I guess you'll have the pain of chemo too.  
You'll now have to play a cruel game of hope  
if you want the slightest chance at life while dying.

For that I am sad. Broken.  
Because you deserve better.  
A better death.  
A slow and painless way of dying  
and the final breath years and years and years into the future.

But I am jealous too.

Because you've been given a one way ticket off this waiting game.  
And sure it won't be easy. And sure it won't be fun.  
But at least you're dying faster.

(Probably faster, anyway.)

People call this living,  
but it's just passing time while dying.  
I'm anxious when I'm waiting and I'd rather have it end.  
And I know you don't want to hit the end like me,  
but I'm ready and impatient and nothing's holding me.  
But I'm jealous  
Because I'm a coward  
For not showing myself out.

**Haley:** *I'd rather live while dying, than die while I'm alive.*

### TICK TICK

People will start to scatter around the stage to get to their next spots while this piece is going on.

**Meg W.:** Tickkk, Tickkk (continue softly throughout the rest of the scene)

**Madeline:** Time is precious. Sometimes I forget how brief our moments on this earth are.

**Cheyenne:** "Welcome", as a mother cradles her first born child.

**Madison:** Crassshhh. An untimely death that could have been avoided.

**Abilene:** Time is precious.

**Meaghan:** We have one life to live, the duration impossible to calculate.

**Sydney:** Why am I spending these precious moments hiding?

**Dana:** Cowering behind my true identity, trapped in a cage that I built for myself.

**Haley:** As the pressures of the public eye close in, I cling to the bars of my cage.

**Emmi:** A sanctuary I have built that is comfortable and safe, but no growth can result.

**Clara:** Safe? Life is too short for safe.

**Emmi:** There is no time to have the poison of comparing myself to others take over my system.

**Emma:** There is no time to be anything less than my: inappropriate, shocking, crazy, sensitive, idiotic, wonderful self.

**Morgan:** Life is unpredictable.

**Emily B.:** Why can't I feel free to be my full self?

**Tali:** The one that dances around in my underwear at 12am belting *Dreamgirls*.

**Katherine:** The one who's not afraid to Fuck-up and look like the biggest fool in the entire universe.

**Meaghan:** The one who loves myself and knows I'm enough.....enough.

**Emily B.:** Life's too short

**Morgan:** It's time to start living.

### FINGERS LIKE FLY PAPER

Madeline, Emma, Sydney, and Meaghan will dance their solo comps.

Morgan and Bricker will have their small choreography piece.

Dana will be singing underneath the whole thing.

### LOSING MY MIND

**Morgan:** Where have you been?

**Emily B.:** I was out. I had to pick up some things.

**Morgan:** It's getting worse. I can't put the pieces together.

*Emily B. begins to pick up all the puzzle pieces.*

**Emily B.:** I know, I know. It's okay. No one expects you to be able to, you're condition is difficult.

**Morgan:** But I do! I want to be able to... But I... I just (*struggles for words*)

**Emily B.:** I know, I know. Don't worry. I understand.

**Morgan:** How could you? It's like... like... feeling things and not knowing why, but knowing that I should. It's *du vu* all the time.

**Emily B.:** It's alright. I get it.

**Morgan:** NO YOU DON'T! Losing your mind isn't something that makes sense. It's as if my mind is a giant puzzle that I put together and pieces keep falling out (**Meg W. will fall**). But they don't just fall out (**Meaghan will fall**) and I can put them back in. The cardboard pieces have been warped. Some are swollen (**Cheyenne will fall**) and bent. Some of them have been ripped apart. (**Katherine will fall**) I'll find myself trying to make pieces fit in places they don't go. (**Tali will fall**) I blame people for doing things they never did. I feel angry. I feel sad. On the good days, I feel happy, but as soon as I realize I don't know why I'm happy I try to figure it out and get irritated. Losing my mind is like losing myself. It's not like losing my heart. I can think without a heart. Without a mind, I don't even remember where my heart is or why I would need it. So don't tell me you get it.

*By the end of this Emily B. has picked up all the puzzle pieces and places them in to a box.*

**Emily B.:** Don't worry, I'm going to keep these in here and they will be safe.

**Morgan:** But they will be useless to me! Please don't put them away. I won't remember where they are. If I can't put them together I at least like to look at the shapes and attempt making sense of them.

**Emily B.:** No really, I think this is for the best. Just lie down and relax. You'll feel much better.

**Morgan:** NO! Please!! I need my mind!

*Emily B. puts the box away under the bed.*

**Emily B.:** If you want them I can get them for you later. Please lie back.

*Emily B. pushes A back into a sleeping position.*

**Emily B.:** You're going to be fine.

Both the LOST and FOUND groups will gather and begin to flock around the stage.  
Haley will stay Down Stage Left to begin the next piece.  
Emmi will break free from the flock.

## LASHING TONGUE

**Emmi:** [under the breath] Jesus.

**Haley:** [insulted] What?

**Emmi:** [heated] You do this thing, Haley.

**Haley:** *What thing?*

**Emmi:** [heated] The Haley thing. [imitating **Haley**] Hello, my name is Haley and I'm going to be incredibly guarded with everyone and keep all those who attempt to care about me at bay with my massive intellect and wit!

**Haley:** [fighting for words] I—I don't know what the *hell*--

**Emmi:** Oh, come on. You know. You know what you do—How could you not?!

**Haley:** Enlighten me.

**Emmi:** Anytime *anyone* gets too close for comfort, you verbally *attack* them. It's like watching a lion take down a baby gazelle. I've seen you reduce people to tears with a look and two words. You shut down any attempt at conversation about what we are—

**Haley:** [mocking] What do you *think we are* exactly?

**Emmi:** See? See that right there is why you are such a pain in my ass. Any time we get remotely close to a serious conversation, you spit it back in my face!

**Haley:** You didn't answer my question.

**Emmi:** [an outburst.] That's because *I don't know the answer!*

[beat.] Emmi will start to move Up Stage as the flock closes and hides her.

...I really don't know the answer, Haley. I know what I want us to be. I know what we *could* be. I just—You baffle me. I have no idea what you want from me, and when I ask, you cut me to ribbons. What do you *want*, Haley? From us. From me.

[beat.]

[**Haley** fights for an answer. **SHE** cannot speak. **Emmi** freezes. **Haley** says what she could never say aloud.]

**Haley:** My tongue is sharp; I made sure of that. Sharper than any knife in your drawer and crueler than an angry wasp on the first day of spring. As long as I have my tongue, my brain, I can satirize anything. Nothing can hurt me. My tongue will *lacerate* the first attempt made to penetrate my walls.

[beat]

But then, you show up, with your stupid Labrador retriever smile, and your messy conversations and your mayonnaise covered French fries which I still find disgusting, by the way. I don't know how *you* happened. You slipped through my line of control, and *just* when I thought you weren't a threat, you blew yourself up in my chest cavity. I knew it wouldn't be pretty, because with a tongue like mine, nothing ever is, but I still I didn't see you until you were elbows deep in my ribcage. Suddenly my words weren't stopping you. You just keep burrowing in, under my skin and deep as my arteries.

[angrier] You've altered my biology. You've *infected* me. My tongue dulled, or you grew a second skin, something my insults couldn't get to. You just smile your stupid, stupid grin, and I have to watch you disable my carefully constructed responses until they are raw and real and bleeding.

[beat.]

And that scares me, okay, because I haven't been real for a long time. I've gotten used to the paper emotions, and fictional wounds. My life was carefully comprised, double spaced and formatted before you started scribbling in my margins. Now it's a new story; one that I can't read with lines I can't say and *words I don't know*.

[a realization.]

You've taken my tongue from me.

[beat.]

Without my tongue I am just muscle, tendons, and nerves. How do I protect myself if it's tied in knots around you?

[beat.]

[**Emmi** unfreezes, waits impatiently and finally speaks again.]

**Emmi:** Well?

[**Haley** shows a hint of weakness and allows **HERSELF** a moment of honesty.]

**Haley:** Emmi, I can't—

[Emmi sighs, places a hand over **Haley's**, and continues]

**Emmi:** Sorry. Sorry, it's just—You drive me nuts. Just...[insert frustrated noise, movement etc]

**Haley:** [repeats inserted frustrated noise, movement etc]...?

**Emmi:** Yeah, you know?

**Haley:** Yeah. I know.

**Emmi:** Yeah? Okay. Okay, that's a start.

### YOU'RE A F\*\*\*ING ELK (2)

**Mel-** Missy

**Frank-** Abilene

Clara will slowly walk through the space once.

[**MELANIE** stands once more on the curb, a few feet away from the bus stop.. Buses drive past every few seconds, never stopping. **SHE** moves to step up to the curb, but stops herself almost as soon. **SHE** looks up at the sky. A drop of rain. **SHE** sighs and gives into the rain. **FRANK** enters loudly, startling **MEL** out of her reverie.]

**FRANK:** Mel, my main squeeze, welcome back to the bus stop. Weather's still pretty bad though. You'd think with time it'd at least cle—

**MEL:** I'm dreaming again, aren't I?

**FRANK:** I mean, probably. But does that really make a difference?

**MEL:** Of course it **MAKES A DIFFERENCE!!** It makes a fucking difference if a goddamn elk is actually talking to me at the bus stop!

**FRANK:** I am literally standing right next to you. And you're not at the bus stop. You're next to the bus stop, which is really annoying for those of us who would like to catch the bus downtown to Jordan's for a nice meatball sub--

**MEL:** Get out of my dream, Frank.

**FRANK:** You know, Mel, I would really love nothing more than to leave this place behind and get a meatball sub, but here I am.

**MEL:** Have you ever considered that, as a herbivore, eating meat is just the tiniest bit unnatural.

**FRANK:** I hardly think you are an expert on what society deems “natural.”

[**MEL** recoils and, just as quickly, gathers herself once more.]

**MEL:** [viciously] What are you doing here? What do you want?

**FRANK:** Gotta catch the bus.

**MEL:** YOU'RE AN ELK. YOU COULDN'T FIT ON THE BUS EVEN IF THEY ALLOWED YOU ON THE BUS.

**FRANK:** Okay, first of all, rude. Second of all, how do you know?

**MEL:** You have giant antlers. You couldn't get through the door. Not to mention you're probably upwards of 500 pounds.

**FRANK:** Excuse you, I am very trim. You don't have to be so aggressively angry all the time.

**MEL:** [aggressive and angry] What. Ever.

[beat. **MEL** watches another bus pass in silence, **FRANK** watches **MEL**.]

**FRANK:** Aaaaaand ya missed it.

**MEL:** Yup.

**FRANK:** You're never gonna get to where you need to be if you don't let the buses stop for you.

**MEL:** What does it matter to you?

**FRANK:** Well, I'm kinda your subconscious attempt to cope with some trauma. I figured I had to point it out.

**MEL:** I'm sorry— My subconscious is a douchey elk? [to herself] I must deeply disturbed.

**FRANK:** You're a very negative person, you know.

**MEL:** [under her breath] Oh, Christ. Thanks, mom. You wanna tell me how to get a boyfriend next?

**FRANK:** I mean, as a male, I don't appreciate this kind of death queen, black aura, hedge witch kind of thing you got going on here.

**MEL:** Okay, first of all, that literally makes no sense. Second of all, I couldn't care less about what a fucking elk thinks I look like, figment of my own imagination or not. And third—

**FRANK:** I'm just saying, your milkshake doesn't bring all the boys to the yard because it seems to be full of spiders.

**MEL:** It's good I don't give a shit about boys then, isn't it?

**FRANK:** [hoofs up in surrender] I mean, who am I to judge, right? Ladies are pretty cool.

[**MEL** regards him with wariness and the smallest hint of approval.]

**MEL:** At least you aren't a homophobic asshole elk.

**FRANK:** Your lack of faith in anything is both refreshing and draining. Kind of like that fish movie—What was it...? Finding Elmo?

**MEL:** Oh my god.

**FRANK:** Loved that reunion. Cried like a baby when I saw it.

**MEL:** Stop it.

**FRANK:** You ever see that movie?

**MEL:** I said, *stop it*.

**FRANK:** It's easier when you see sad movies with other people, huh. A shoulder to cry on, a hand to hold and all that junk. Hard to admit to anyone you cried about a fish, but some people just know. They see your eyes and they just *know*.

**MEL:** I'm not talking to you about her. About anything.

**FRANK:** Clown fish, right? They just get to the heart of you.

**MEL:** I have had enough of this for one night.

**FRANK:** [suddenly serious.] We're gonna have to talk about her sooner or later, Melanie.

**MEL:** God. Okay. I'm walking. Fuck you. Fuck you, Frank. [**SHE** exits.]

**Morgan:** Mimesis from within is potentially far more dangerous. Once aware of a harmful outside influence, one can remove herself from it, but mirroring and confusion within cannot so easily be shaken off. In Al Stanley's piece *Dysphoria*, the mimesis starts as external and is eventually revealed to be internal. The speaker is initially controlled by Mother, Father, and Bars, which seem to be outside forces. They are limited by the world around them – Mother rearranges the house, stops them from sitting in Father's chair; the Bars tell the speaker how they are supposed to feel: "Safe, Right, Whole...Welcome."<sup>7</sup>

As the piece continues, the speaker rips their house apart, and finds that it is entirely constructed of bars – as is everyone else’s house. The bars are presented as an external force the moment the speaker discovers them, but with lines like “not one soul exists outside of a cage” and the layered cries of confusion that follow,<sup>8</sup> it becomes clear that these cages exist inside of the speaker’s – and everyone else’s – heads.

### LETTER, HIDING, DYSPHORIA

All of these pieces will be said one after the other.

Dana will hum “Desh” throughout the whole piece.

**Madeline:** I am beginning to forget our time together. Memories formed still clear crystals in my mind beginning to slowly shatter—unable to place back together the way they were created.

I have forgotten... I have forgot.... I have f... I....

**Meg W.:** Her nimble fingers float through my hair, gently placing pieces in certain ways and sliding pins this way and that.

**Madison:** I live in a house where all of the furnishings were passed down from my parents’ parents, or their parents. The draperies, the foundations, the architecture... Mother brushes my hair. Often. She sits in a golden rocking chair, the arms smooth and polished. I am too small to climb into Father’s chair. I am too small to see the bars on the windows.

**Clara/Emma/Cheyenne/Haley/Emmi/Tali/Missy/Abilene/Meaghan:**

*(Comforting)* Safe, Right, Whole... Welcome.

*(Speaker rises to their knees unsteadily as they continue to speak.)*

**Madison:** I grow, until I can just... barely... reach the windowsill, and I see the heavy iron bars. Not menacing, not restricting, just... there. Mother pats them. Often. The heavy, oak timbers of Father’s chair are stacked and stable. It smells of pine, of dirt, of oil. I begin to climb into Father’s chair.

*(Speaker attempts to climb into chair at right, is stopped by Mother.)*

*(Bars' and Mother's lines overlap slightly.)*

**Katherine:** Don't sit there.

**Clara/Emma/Cheyenne/Haley/Emmi/Tali/Missy/Abilene/Meaghan:**

*(Indifferent)* Safe, Right, Whole... Welcome.

**Madeline:** I...grew up by your side, always having pride that you were mine. Summer nights and pillow fights. Halloween... and apple orchards... and Saturday morning cartoons. Giving up on growing up in a world where growing up means giving up on all your wildest dreams—Little Sister—your imagination is a roaring fire—crackling with curiosity.

I have forgotten... I have forgot... I have f... I...

**Meg W.:** Her nimble fingers float through my hair, gently placing pieces in certain ways and sliding pins this way and that.

She places her hands on my shoulders and lifts me up. My skirt brushes the cold, hard, and unforgiving floor, stinging my bare feet. I shut my eyes, though the lights still penetrates.

**Morgan:** This narrator conceals information from both her in-story and real-life audiences (that's you). The piece begins with a scene that could have come from someone's childhood – a woman gently prepares the narrator for a big event.

**Madison:** I grow. Smarter, more inquisitive, more critical. The walls and furniture become a nuisance, and I neglect them. The architecture warps, engulfing me. Angry, cheated, weak, I tie up the drapes, scrub the walls bare, and ignore the heavy iron bars. Mother sighs. Often. She places the picture frames and appliqué back onto the walls, dropping delicate petals in her wake. Her perfume permeates my every breath. Each morning, each night, I try to lower myself into Father's chair.

*(Speaker attempts to sit in chair at right, is stopped by Mother.)*

**Clara/Emma/Cheyenne/Haley/Emmi/Tali/Missy/Abilene/Meaghan:**

*(Firm. Scolding.)* Safe, Right, Whole... Welcome.

**Katherine:** Don't sit there.

**Sydney:** It's just a house, kiddo.

**Madeline:** I... am sorry. For all the sadness and pain I have caused you. For all the times I didn't care or wasn't there—for the days we didn't talk.... I am sorry for the future, when I know I'll let you down. Or make you not very proud—to have me as your sister.

I have forgotten... I have forgot... I have f... I...

**Meg W.:** She places her hands on my shoulders and lifts me up. My skirt brushes the cold, hard, and unforgiving floor, stinging my bare feet. I shut my eyes, though the lights still penetrates.

Voices and bells, and clothing brush against objects unseen. I slowly raise my eyelids, my face burning from the eyes staring at me, expectant, waiting for me to crack.

**Madison:** I age. My parents move out of the house. Mother no longer drops flowers on the bare, wooden floors. But she writes to complain. Often. Alone, seething hate for this house captivates my every wretched thought. Confused, alone, I go often to Father's chair to think.

*(Speaker attempts to sit in chair at right, is stopped by Mother.)*

*(Bars', Mother's, and Father's lines overlap slightly.)*

**Clara/Emma/Cheyenne/Haley/Emmi/Tali/Missy/Abilene/Meaghan:**

*(Indignant, Furious)* Safe, Right, Whole... Welcome.

**Katherine:** Don't sit there.

**Sydney:** It's just a house, kiddo.

**Madeline:** I ask myself. I ask myself every day, a question I am so afraid of—inscribed into every muscle in my mind:

“Will I be able to help you if you need me?”

(beat)

No.

**Meg W.:** Voices and bells, and clothing brush against objects unseen. I slowly raise my eyelids, my face burning from the eyes staring at me, expectant, waiting for me to crack.

I am led outside, the sun warming my skin, burning my skin. The voices and eyes follow quickly, [eager]. The grass whispers against me sending words of comfort. I stop and my body convulses, the crowd cheers. The woman who fixed my hair places her palm on the small of my back urging me forward.

**Madison:** I tear into the walls with hands, claws, feet, teeth; leaving streaks of blood and sweat and spit, until at last only bars stand where once a house was built— Iron bars cast into cold, incorruptible concrete.

*(At last, Speaker succeeds and stands tall on the chair at right.)*

**Clara/Emma/Cheyenne/Haley/Emmi/Tali/Missy/Abilene/Meaghan:**

*(Laughing menacingly)* Safe, Right, Whole... Welcome.

**Madison:** Father copes with the sight of his child standing in the ruins of the cage he has unknowingly built.

**Sydney:** *(Uncertain, halting, worried and at a loss.)* ... It's just a house, kiddo.

**Madison:** Mother cries, wrings her hands, sobs as she copes with the sight of her child standing unsteadily but triumphant in the ruins of the cage she has so knowingly built.

**Katherine:** *(Furious. Terrified. Frantic.)* Don't sit there...!

**Madison:** I behold what lies beyond my own iron bars.

*(Speaker is sorrowful, desperate in their grief.)*

**Madison:** Cage upon cage, in rows reaching towards infinity. Some still disguised as protective shells. The bars on their windows sing.

**Clara/Emma/Cheyenne/Haley/Emmi/Tali/Missy/Abilene/Meaghan:**

*(Comforting)* Safe, Right, Whole... Welcome.

**Madison:** Others. Bars ripped from the windows, discarded.

**Clara/Emma/Cheyenne/Haley/Emmi/Tali/Missy/Abilene/Meaghan:**

*(Brokenly)* Safe... Right... Whole... Welcome.

**Madison:** And among the cages and houses sit homes— honest homes with no bars to be seen. Children content in their identity. Children without self-hatred, without self mutilation. Children born into the right buildings, with the right furnishings. The right draperies, the right foundations, the right architecture.

**Clara/Emma/Cheyenne/Haley/Emmi/Tali/Missy/Abilene/Meaghan:**

*(Silent)*

**Madison:** But not one soul exists outside of a cage.

*(Speaker peers about. The thought of being caged repulses the Speaker. The Speaker retches, tears at their skin, breasts, hair, legs. Speaker howls, an inhuman wail of fear, uncertainty, and desperation. Others join in with the following:)*

**Morgan:** The title almost certainly alludes to gender dysphoria, the intensely uncomfortable feeling one experiences when one's body and one's gender do not correspond, which is a product both of mimesis and of monological thought. For many recent years, mainstream Western society has demanded that there be strictly two genders, and that genitalia must determine gender. Because mainstream society proclaims this bigender structure as the one true structure, it is monological. Many people conform to this division without thinking, thus becoming mimetic. If a person questions and fights the structure, they invite in dialogical thought and they fight the affective mimesis that has become ingrained in them.

**Madeline:** If we were living on opposite sides of the globe I could not run, drive, or fly fast enough to help you. From danger. From heartbreak. From feeling lonely. Or sad...or afraid. I could not help you.

The rest of my life will be spent forgetting what it was like to grow up with someone as great as you.

And one day I will know nothing but the sure fact that you are my brother.

I have forgotten... I have forgot... I have f... I

**Meg W.:** I am led outside, the sun warming my skin, burning my skin. The voices and eyes follow quickly, [eager]. The grass whispers against me sending words of comfort. I stop and my body convulses, the crowd cheers. The woman who fixed my hair places her palm on the small of my back urging me forward.

To those eight small wooden steps. I walk up, feeling the sharp straw scrape the soles of my feet. Large hands shove me to the edge of the platform. Their hatred rolls off of them and into me like waves. The large hands are back and thrusting me to my knees where a small damp cloth is tied around my eyes.

**TOGETHER:**

**Madison:** She. Her. Me. He. Them. I. Xe. Zir. They. His. Mine. Theirs...

**Katherine:** (*Layering into jumble*) Don't sit there... Don't sit there... Don't sit there... (con't.)

**Sydney:** (*Layering into jumble*) It's just a house, kiddo. It's just a house, kiddo... (con't.)

**Clara/Emma/Cheyenne/Haley/Emmi/Tali/Missy/Abilene/Meaghan:**

(*Layering into jumble*) Safe. Right. Whole. Welcome. Safe. Right. Whole... (con't.)

(*Speaker emits another inhuman wail of despair, desperation, and fear. This noise breaks the wall of sound created previously by the Caged Beings, Mothers, Fathers, and Bars.*)

**Madison:** (*Soft. Small. A desperate and broken plea for peace.*) This cage is small.

**Meg W.:** To those eight small wooden steps. I walk up, feeling the sharp straw scrape the soles of my feet. Large hands shove me to the edge of the platform. Their hatred rolls off of them and into me like waves. The large hands are back and thrusting me to my knees where a small damp cloth is tied around my eyes.

I try and block out all senses but I can feel their eyes boring into my soul. They look but they cannot truly see me, the truth I am hiding. I hear the instrument strike the air before I feel it.

**Morgan:** By the end of the poem, the real-life audience (that's you) is aware that this person is being led to a guillotine. Although we start off knowing less than the in-story audience, we end up knowing more than they do. Neither of us knows the narrator's secret, but at least we know that she is keeping one.

When these three pieces are interwoven they take on a more complex meaning, and may give us some insight into the secret kept by this narrator. Perhaps she is aware of the bars that encase each soul. Perhaps she herself experiences dysphoria. Either way, her audience will never know, and she has some satisfaction in taking this knowledge with her to the grave.

Emily B. will be doing slow mo choreography without speaking

**Madeline:** I... will forget.

But today—

For me.

For you...

I will remember.

## SAVING MYSELF

Tali will be singing “I will follow you into the dark” by Death Cab for Cutie underneath this piece.

**Sydney:** I am broken. There are pieces missing that I can’t get back, or that I never found in the first place. I have holes in my hard exterior, and anything can get inside. Even you. But now is the time to stop of trying to please you. We are finished.

I am strong.

I am better.

I am me.

I will heal.

I am a glacier moving across the earth. I flatten anything in my way.

I am a robin flying overhead. I glide across the sky, grace oozes out of my pores.

I am myself. Beautiful, Strong, Indestructible.

## KRISHNA TO ARJUNA

Tali and Dana will be humming “I will Follow You into the Dark” by Death Cab for Cutie underneath this piece

**Madeline/Abilene/Meaghan/Clara:** I want to crack open before a person, to pry apart my ribs and feel salvation rocket into me. I wanted what Judas felt for Christ; catharsis in worship.

**Meg W./Missy/Morgan:** People are not gods.

**Madeline/Abilene/Meaghan/Clara:** I wanted you to be.

**Meg W./Abilene/Meaghan:** People are not gods.

**Madeline/Abilene/Meaghan/Clara:** I dreamt you could be.

**Meg W./Missy/Morgan:** People are not gods.

**Madeline/Abilene/Meaghan/Clara:** I formed a perfect pedestal for you. I shaped it to cup you, to coddle and support your body like a nest, like a womb. I formed myself into a perfect pedestal for you.

*Meg W./Missy/Morgan chant is interrupted at each underlined word; they stumble backwards as if physically pushed. Meg W./Missy/Morgan restarts the chant every time they recover from being “pushed.”*

**Meaghan:** But you in your gluttony, your voraciousness for a one-sided affection,

**Clara:** you with your heavy soliloquies on empathy bore down on my spine,

**Madeline:** subtly splintering my bones,

**Abilene:** breakages so intimately infinitesimal

*Meg W./Missy/Morgan stop entirely after “infinitesimal.” Madeline/Abilene/Meaghan and Meg W./Missy/Morgan start to lower themselves to the ground.*

**Madeline/Abilene/Meaghan:** that neither of us noticed until we had each sunk to a perfect eye-level.

*Madeline/Abilene/Meaghan and Meg W./Missy/Morgan sit cross-legged next to each other, entirely still.*

**Madeline/Abilene/Meaghan & Meg W./Missy/Morgan:** People are not gods. People are not gods.

## STIFLE

*All but one of the on-stage actors enter and take their seats (they shall be henceforth known as the “OTHERS”), leaving two open seats.*

*The Cheyenne actor enters and attempts to sit in one of the open seats.*

**Missy/Abilene/Meaghan:** Don’t sit there.

**Cheyenne:** Sorry. (*sits in other seat. A beat. Jokes.*) I’ve heard louder graves.

**Missy:** Quiet.

**Cheyenne:** Sorry.

**Missy/Abilene/Meaghan:** shhhh.

*A moment, then from off stage, in a whispery and hushed voice...*

**Morgan/Emily B.:** Welcome.

**Cheyenne:** ... Hello?

**Abilene:** Quiet.

**Missy/Abilene/Meaghan:** shhhh.

**Morgan/Emily B.:** This cage is small.

**Cheyenne:** What?

**Missy/Abilene/Meaghan:** Shhhhhh.

**Cheyenne:** Sorry.

**Meaghan:** You should be.

**Morgan/Emily B.:** Too small...

**Cheyenne:** What--

**Missy/Abilene/Meaghan:** (*menacingly*) Quiet.

**Morgan/Emily B.:** It's yours...

**Cheyenne:** Excuse me--?

**Missy/Abilene/Meaghan:** (*intensely*) Shh!

**Cheyenne:** (*with frustration, standing*) What's going on--!?

*Missy/Abilene/Meaghan stiffen, silently their gaze follows what must be an invisible figure that moves slowly to the previously forbidden empty chair. LAST is confused, but silent.*

**Morgan/Emily B.:** This cage is yours.

*Suddenly, the Missy/Abilene/Meaghan and Morgan/Emily B. combine to make a chilling chorus by quietly repeating their previous lines in hushed tones. Cheyenne, frightened and mildly panicking, slowly sits. The moment Cheyenne is seated, all sound stops, except for Cheyenne's own heavy breathing. Missy/Abilene/Meaghan heads slowly turn away from Cheyenne.*

*Cheyenne's panic builds, without depending on making excessive noise, and just as she is about to either scream or fall off her chair—Blackout. Silence.*

**All:** [*Then an exhale from the whole company, while one or two faintly whisper*] Welcome...

## HOOKS

**Brooke:** Katherine

**Val:** Tali

Emmi and Haley will sing

**Brooke:** Val, what happened to your hands?

**Val:** They're right here!

**Brooke:** No sweetheart, those are hooks. You have hooks for hands.

**Val:** Yeah, hooks for HANDS. I have hands. They're right here. *Shakes hooks*

**Brooke:** Okay, why do you have hooks? I literally saw your fleshy hands right there on your wrists yesterday.

**Val:** Yeah... stage combat accident.

**Brooke:** Classic... Okay, but why hooks? Aren't they sorta impractical?

**Val:** Nah, they do everything I need them to do. Plus, in this day and age, where idiots run around screaming annoying shit all the time, it's convenient to have something to slice people with.

**Brooke:** That's morbid, but valid. Still, hands are the physical souls. They're absolutely necessary! How will you hold someone's hand? Or pet your dog? Or hug someone? Or be a normal fucking person?!

**Val:** Normal is all relative. Joe Biden has abnormally white teeth and I have hooks for hands. Hooks weren't a norm for me yesterday, but now they are. We learn to adapt. We learn to do without.

What I do or do not have is irrelevant. We make do with what we have. We wake up out of the dream of the past and we move on.

CHANTERS: *Very loudly.* Hooks, shoulders, hooks, and toes, hooks and toes. Hooks, shoulders, hooks, and toes, hooks and toes. Eyes and hooks and mouth and hooks. Hooks shoulders hooks and toes hooks and toes.

**YOU'RE A F\*\*\*ING ELK (3)**

**Mel:** Missy

**Frank:** Abilene

Clara will do the dance from *While Dying Scene*

[Lights come up on **MEL**. **SHE** waits on the curb in silence, occasionally glancing around to see if anyone else is coming. Only when **SHE** appears to be sure that **SHE** is alone, does

**FRANK** appear from the aisle, carrying what looks to be a small cup of ice cream.]

**FRANK:** Mel! Sorry I'm late! Had to run some errands, ran into someone at the post office—You know how it is. But check out this weather. Look's like a storm is a-brewing.

**MEL:** [having none of it]What is that.

**FRANK:** What is what?

**MEL:** In your hand.

[**FRANK** starts to make a noise, probably eyyyyyyyyyyy, and **MEL** rushes to correct herself.]

**MEL:** Hoof. In. Your. Hoof.

**FRANK:** You said hand.

**MEL:** I meant hoof.

**FRANK:** But you saaaaaaaaaiiiid—

**MEL:** You can't do finger guns, Frank. You are a fucking elk.

**FRANK:** Then what am I doing right now?

**MEL:** I don't have a damn clue. You don't HAVE FINGERS. YOU'RE AN ELK. I don't even know how you're holding the-- The whatever it is!

**FRANK:** Mel, this your dream--

**MEL:** Frank, what is in your fucking hoof?

**FRANK:** Oh this? It's just a little vanilla bean gelato.

**MEL:** [steadily losing her composure] Of course. Of course that's the flavor you got. Of course.

**FRANK:** I always loved getting a nice treat after church.

**MEL:** Yeah, I bet you do.

**FRANK:** You ever do that?

**MEL:** [fighting him] I don't remember.

**FRANK:** My bullshit meter is going ding ding ding ding ding ding--

**MEL:** [dings continue beneath until MEL gives an answer.] Shut up! Shut. Up. Shut up shut up shut up-- I GET IT, OKAY.

[beat.]

**MEL:** I see what you're trying to do, and I am *not* going to do it. Do you understand me? So step off. I refuse to be emotionally manipulated by a fucking pint of ice cream.

**FRANK:** ...It's gelato.

**MEL:** Jesus Christ.

**FRANK:** I got it from that place down by the... Down... By... The... Bay. [four hoof clicks in rhythm] Where the watermelons grow--

**MEL:** Oh, Jesus Christ!

**FRANK:** [taking on a deeper meaning] Back to my home I dare not go...

**MEL:** Enough.

**FRANK:** For if I do... My--

**MEL:** I said enough, okay! I am not going to talk to you about this, Frank!

**FRANK:** I'm not going to leave it alone, you know. I know she bought you ice cream, I know she helped you get ready for prom, I know she brushed your hair almost every night until you were 15-- Why aren't you seeing her? Why won't you get on the bus?

[beat.]

Mel. Talk.

[MEL draws in a deep breath and speaks. Slowly at first, with little emotion, but the more she talks, the more feelings resurface. Eventually, she cannot keep it contained any longer.]

**MEL:** Dad called me. Which is weird in the first place because he does the bare minimum required to be called a father. So he calls, for the first time in a long time, and says that-- Says the doctors don't know how long it'll take her to die, but they know that it'll happen. And--

beat. Anger.]

And--the cherry on the fucking cake--says that she's is ready to forgive me.

[beat.]

Forgive *me*. Forgive me for breathing. For being born, for being wired the way I am. Forgive me for having the gall to bring my girlfriend to Christmas. For daring to step outside of my fear and my doubt and actually *love* and allow myself to be loved. Yeah. I have a *lot* to be forgiven for.

[beat.]

**FRANK:** You gonna see her?

**MEL:** God. It's the last thing I want to do. But-- But I can't-- I can't let her die without-- Without giving her what she never gave me.

[beat.]

**FRANK:** Then get on the bus, my friend.

**MEL:** It's not that simple.

**FRANK:** Then stop making it so hard.

[HE moves toward the vom.]

**MEL:** Where are you going?

**FRANK:** Places to be, souls to guide, sandwiches to eat, ya know. Besides, you don't need me here anymore, do you?

**MEL:** God, no. Maybe. I don't know.

**FRANK:** I think you do.

**MEL:** [without venom.] Fuck you.

[**FRANK** grins, clicks his hoof four times in rhythm. **MEL** allows herself a small smile as **HE** exits. **SHE** stares at an approaching bus. **SHE** breathes and goes to move, forward or back we do not know.]

## WELCOME TO HELL

Flocking groups will gather into one big group.

**Clara:** They bring you into a room with four blank white walls. (*Lights change as Clara rises*) Just four white walls and you. You spot the tiniest cage you've ever seen. (*Light change as Meaghan walks off*) This cage is small. Too small. Life can't be lived in such a space. What could possibly live in a cage this size?

(*Madison rustles from inside the cage. They should look very weary and beat up but do not show their face. Clara notices and is very surprised.*)

**Clara:** What are you? (*Examines the cage but eventually gives up*)

**Madison:** Don't sit there.

**Clara:** (*Alarmed*) Who said that?

**Madison:** Don't sit there.

**Clara:** How do you have my voice? Who are you? (*Takes a closer look and stumbles back obviously frightened*) How?!

**Madison:** Don't sit there. Don't sit there.

**Clara:** How do you have my voice?

(*Madison shows their face for the first time*)

**Clara:** (*Angry*) How do you have my face?!

**Madison:** (*Meekly yet calmly*) Don't sit there.

(*Light change to signify time passing*)

**Clara:** Nothing but good and innocent? Good. Good. So much good.

(*Clara reaches to out to Madison but does not touch them or the cage while Madison cowers and shakes more than before*)

**Madison:** (*Growing in intensity*) Don't sit there. Don't sit there. Don't sit there. Don't sit there.

After the piece ends the groups will go back into flocking.]

Solos will start to emerge out of the groups as the next piece begins.

## **I FEEL IT**

**Abilene:** It feels like lightning in my blood.

**Sydney:** It feels like wildfire behind my eyes.

**Cheyenne:** A chance meeting.

**Dana:** A fated Glance.

**Madeline:** Connection. It feels like

**Madison:** A buzzing in my ears

**Haley:** A feather light touch

**Madison:** The sand between my toes

**Madeline:** The sun on my face after a long, unforgiving winter. It

**Sydney:** Feels

**Abilene:** Like

**Clara:** Waking up to the smell of coffee or

**Emily B.:** My mother's hands and

**Tali:** Dancing with my dad or

**Emmi:** Fireworks

**Meg W.:** It feels

**Missy:** Indescribable

**Morgan:** Unmistakable

**Emmi:** Irreplaceable

**Clara:** Something to cherish. Something to hold onto when the clouds are thick and the room is hard.

**Emmi:** Something I can't see, but I know it's there.

**Abilene:** Something supportive, a heart I can always call home.

**Dana:** Something I don't quite know and yet I feel it.

**ALL:** I feel it.

Group goes back to flocking.

Meg W., Emma, Missy, Morgan, and Emily B. will separate going into their own flocking group into the next piece.

This will be 1 big group and 1 small flocking across the stage.

## **FINALE**

**Meg W.:** If I'm alive she's alive.

**Meg W./Emma:** I can't live in a place where we don't wake up to the same sun.

**Meg W./Emma/Missy:** I can't live in a place where the very same rain that touches her face washes through me.

**Meg W./Emma/Missy/Morgan:** I can't live in a place where she can't live, where we can't be in a comfortable silence swallowing the same crusty air as if it were from a childhood juice box.

**Meg W./Emma/Missy/Morgan/Emily B.:** There isn't any more silence in my life.

**Meg W./Emma/Missy/Morgan:** I just want to be quiet. It was all such a dream when she was here.

**Meg W./Missy/Morgan:** It was all so still when she held me. It was all so safe.

**Meg W./Morgan:** She carried me through every storm.

**Morgan:** Every thunder clap was dwindled to a soft squeeze.

Three separate flocks will appear as Madeline, Dana, and Madison create a new one.

Possibly have the whole company sing/hum during the end.

**Madeline/Dana/Madison:** I have forgotten. I have forgot... I have f... I

## **THE END**