

TITANIC BLUES

By

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THE CAST:

Three siblings, whose parents belonged to the Weather Underground and were killed in 1976:

BRIAN, 50s, the oldest, a popular playwright; KATE, 50s, a wealthy widow; HEATHER, 40s, the youngest, a history professor.

TIME: Spring, 2019. Fall, 2019.

The play is performed without intermission.

AT RISE

Spring, 2019.

Kate's home. Living room. Tastefully expensive decor, artsy.

Mid-morning.

KATE and BRIAN in an embrace. They break it.

BRIAN

Where is she?

KATE

Napping. I wouldn't let her drive last night and brought her home with me. She got up too early and went back to bed.

BRIAN

Napping or passed out?

KATE

Napping.

BRIAN

Really?

KATE

She wasn't that drunk. Not like she used to get.

BRIAN

How many years did she have?

KATE

Ten, I think. Give or take.

BRIAN

Do you know what set her off?

KATE

I thought I might. She had a doctor's appointment Monday but didn't reply to voice mail or texts when I tried to find out how it went. I didn't reach her until last night -- in a bar.

BRIAN

Her cancer's back?

KATE

I thought that might be it. But she says she's still in remission. I'm not sure I believe her. The other thing is, she was so quiet. Not like she used to get when she was drinking.

BRIAN

Are you serious? No political ranting and raving?

KATE

Really. There was none of that. She didn't mention Trump once.

BRIAN

That's hard to believe.

KATE

I think her cancer may be back.

BRIAN

Heather off her soap box definitely is out of character. Do you mind if I wake her?

KATE

I said I'd wake her for lunch. I'll get sandwiches at the deli.

BRIAN

I do have a late afternoon flight.

KATE

You're leaving so soon?

BRIAN
It's the best I could do, Kate. I'm
here, aren't I?

KATE
Yes, you are. And I'm grateful.

An awkward silence.

KATE
Let's sit down.

They do.

KATE
You're a hard man to get a hold of.

BRIAN
Not really.

KATE
I didn't have a recent address. Or
phone number.

BRIAN
You found me.

KATE
Thanks to Rose.

BRIAN
How did you find Rose?

KATE
From Elinor, who I found from Mary.

BRIAN
Why didn't you just contact my
agent? I thought I gave you that
information.

KATE
Probably. I didn't think of it.
It's a little weird, don't you
think? Having to contact my brother
through his agent?

BRIAN
Not really. So you talked to Rose.
Great. I bet she set your ears on
fire.

KATE
As a matter of fact ...

BRIAN
Consider the source.

KATE
I did.

BRIAN
Thank you.

KATE
Are you with someone now?

BRIAN
Yes. For almost two years.

KATE
Impressive.

Brian stands up.

KATE
Sit down. Don't be so sensitive.

He does.

BRIAN
I'm nervous about my new play.
Something isn't right about it, and
we open in two weeks. Anyway, you
said there was an emergency, so
here I am. Except this doesn't feel
like an emergency.

KATE
She started drinking again. Isn't
that enough?

BRIAN
That's what addicts do. They
relapse.

KATE
But this definitely feels
different. She said she just
stopped in the middle of her
lecture yesterday and said "I can't
do this any more" and walked out.
She said she went straight to a
bar.

BRIAN

Sounds like she's burned out.

KATE

Brian, she was lecturing about 1968 and all the assassinations. She said it made her realize how right mom and dad were.

BRIAN

She's always defended them.

KATE

Heather thinks they were protesting much more than Vietnam. The Weather Underground predicted the disaster we're in now.

BRIAN

How many times have we been through this?

KATE

Look at the country today. Maybe she has a point.

BRIAN

Our parents were criminals, Kate. They blew up buildings. They may have killed people.

KATE

You don't know that. They went to great efforts to make sure they didn't.

BRIAN

But they still were violent and broke the law. They blew themselves up, for Christ's sake.

KATE

The auto accident set off the bomb, not anything they did wrong.

BRIAN

Making the bomb in the first place is what was wrong.

KATE

You saw the documentary. They'd tried everything else. Marches didn't work. Sit-ins didn't work.

(MORE)

KATE (cont'd)

Did you ever hear them talk about more than Vietnam? Did they foresee the growth of corporate power?

BRIAN

I was fifteen when they died. Mostly I remember lots of rules, rooms I couldn't go into. Where they made the bombs, it turns out.

KATE

I called you because I didn't want to have to go through everything alone this time.

BRIAN

Do you still hold that against me?

KATE

That's not what I meant.

BRIAN

I called her every time she had chemo. Didn't Heather tell you that?

KATE

Of course she did. I wish you had been here for me, I mean. So I didn't have to feel so responsible.

BRIAN

Oh. Then I'm sorry.

KATE

At least you came this time. I really appreciate it.

BRIAN

But I can't stay long. This was an easy stop on the way to San Francisco.

KATE

I'm glad you'll have a chance to talk to her. She's always looked up to you.

BRIAN

I don't know why. We disagree on practically everything.

KATE

That's not true. You argue about methods, not goals. You're still her big brother. And mine. I don't like being my sister's keeper. I'm not good at it.

BRIAN

I don't like being my sister's keeper either.

BLACKOUT.

LIGHTS UP. An hour later. Brian stretched out on a divan. Kate is gone.

HEATHER wanders into the room. Disheveled, a little hung over.

HEATHER

Brian?

No response. She sits down near him. Stares at him.

He stirs.

HEATHER

Good morning.

Brian sits up.

BRIAN

Hey.

HEATHER

Where's Kate?

BRIAN

I don't know. Wait. She went to the deli.

HEATHER

She phoned you, I presume. Big emergency and all that.

BRIAN

You know her well. She said you fell off the wagon.

HEATHER

That sounds too negative. I had a few martinis and kept myself under control.

BRIAN

She thought your cancer had returned.

HEATHER

No such luck.

BRIAN

Luck?

HEATHER

Cancer provides clarity.

BRIAN

I don't understand.

HEATHER

Let's wait till Kate gets back. I don't want to have to do this twice.

BRIAN

Fair enough. I just don't want you to repeat the past.

HEATHER

I won't.

BRIAN

I'm no expert, but I've heard you can start out in control and then lose it.

HEATHER

I'm aware of that.

BRIAN

Just be careful.

HEATHER

I will be. Kate, of course, thinks it's already too late.

BRIAN

She told me you walked out in the middle of a class and went to a bar.

HEATHER

My last class before Spring break. No big deal. But I don't plan to go back.

BRIAN

Not even to finish the term? I assume you're on a contract.

HEATHER

What's the point? I was lecturing about how 1968 demonstrated that if you want short-term political change, kill the right people. However, that does not help in the long run, which requires committed grass roots action. And then I realized, we have no more long runs. There's no time for meaningful political change or anything else. The clock has run out. The climate crisis is irreversible and accelerating. What does that say about the rest of my life? Of anyone's life?

BRIAN

This is why you can't teach?

HEATHER

Teaching is just part of it. I can't go on living my life on automatic pilot.

BRIAN

We all do that, to a degree.

HEATHER

I really don't want to get into this until Kate is here.

BRIAN

Fine.

HEATHER

So how have you been?

BRIAN

Busy.

HEATHER

A new play in the works?

BRIAN

We open in San Francisco in two weeks. I'm still fine tuning.

HEATHER
Another musical beds comedy?

BRIAN
Hopefully it's a comedy.

HEATHER
In other words, I'm still waiting.

BRIAN
I have bills to pay, Heather. I
have alimony. I have child support.
Political plays don't sell enough
tickets.

HEATHER
But the one you wrote was so good.
It got the audience thinking.

BRIAN
Critics loved it, and audiences
hated it.

HEATHER
Not the nights I went.

BRIAN
Sorry to burst your bubble but the
play lost money.

HEATHER
I read some great reviews.

BRIAN
Praised in alternative newspapers
with a fan base of hundreds.
Whoopee.

HEATHER
You sound so materialistic.

BRIAN
You wouldn't say that if you saw my
apartment. I repeat, I have bills
to pay, and I am among the
fortunate few who can pay them
practicing my craft.

Kate enters.

KATE
Good, you're up. I hope everybody
is hungry.

BLACKOUT.

LIGHTS UP. A short time later. After lunch.

Brian and Kate seated. Heather stands, nervous, pacing.

BRIAN

Any time. You have our undivided attention.

HEATHER

The first thing I want to say is, I'm not worried about my drinking and you shouldn't be either. The second thing is, I want you to let me finish what I have to say before you start judging me and trying to change my mind. Agreed?

BRIAN

Okay.

KATE

You're scaring me.

BRIAN

She hasn't even begun.

KATE

I know what you're going to say.

HEATHER

I doubt that very much.

KATE

Your cancer is back and you're not going to go through treatment again. You'd rather drink yourself to death.

BRIAN

Kate, for God's sake--

KATE

Am I right?

HEATHER

No, you're not.

BRIAN

Let her say what she has to say.

KATE

I can tell when you're lying,
Heather.

HEATHER

You're pissing me off. I don't have
to share any of this with you. I
could just do what I'm going to do.

KATE

So why don't you?

BRIAN

Kate, would you just--

HEATHER

Because each other is all we have,
and that's been true for a long
time now. It's not the same as it
used to be, when it felt like us
against the world, and we've gone
our separate ways, but we're still
family, and I'm at a point where
this is important to me. What I've
decided to do is not easy. It is
actually against my nature. I was
hoping you'd understand and this
would make it easier for me.

BRIAN

Heather, just tell us what you're
talking about. We won't interrupt.
Right, Kate?

KATE

I'll try.

Silence. Heather has a hard time beginning.

HEATHER

What was I thinking? There's no
point in sharing this with you.

BRIAN

Goddamn it. I don't have all day.
Would you just spill it? Sorry.

Silence.

KATE

You're going to kill yourself.

BRIAN

Oh Jesus ...

HEATHER

You're not that far off.

BRIAN

What? ... I don't believe you. What is it you always say? Keep your eyes on the prize? You've always lived for the future.

HEATHER

You're right, I have.

BRIAN

So what the hell are you talking about?

HEATHER

Come on, Brian. How can you not see what I'm getting at?

KATE

We have no future.

HEATHER

Bingo.

BRIAN

When did you become a doomsayer? This is not like you at all.

HEATHER

Right again. But don't you get it? Everything has changed. Everything! And not in some cycle of one thing followed by another, but permanently. We destroyed the planet, Brian. Our species is done here. Human life will no longer be supported, and the transition will be the most horrific and tragic period of human suffering in history.

BRIAN

You've been listening to the wrong pundits.

KATE

We've been in terrible times before and managed to survive.

BRIAN

By the "skin of our teeth,"
Heather. Remember your favorite
play? You used to say Wilder was
inspirational. It's not really that
different today.

HEATHER

You're both in total denial of
reality.

KATE

I wish Tim were still alive. I
think he could convince you how
wrong you are.

HEATHER

Technology isn't going to save us.
Sure, renewable energy definitely
would help but we don't have the
collective will to make that happen
quickly enough.

BRIAN

You short-change human ingenuity.

HEATHER

No. I accept how much human
stupidity is out there. Look how
many voted for Trump. Who still
support him.

KATE

That sounds so elitist. And Trump
lost the popular vote.

HEATHER

A person's character used to matter
more than anything.

BRIAN

I do see your point, but it's more
complicated than that.

HEATHER

If rational thinking and moral
values and education and believing
in science are elitist, I stand
convicted.

BRIAN

In 1941, after Pearl Harbor, who
would have given us a chance to

(MORE)

BRIAN (cont'd)
 defeat Japan, let alone Germany? We
 rose to the occasion.

HEATHER
 Because there was a future to
 believe in.

KATE
 I'm confused. I thought you were
 going to tell us something you
 planned to do. And you said my
 guess was pretty close to being
 right. Is this all about killing
 yourself because the world is so
 fucked up?

HEATHER
 I am not, repeat not, killing
 myself in some fit of depression
 about climate change or anything
 else. Believe me. I hope to be much
 more spiritual than that when I
 pass.

BRIAN
 Can you explain what you mean?

HEATHER
 I keep thinking of the musicians on
 the Titanic.

BRIAN
 What's happening has nothing to do
 with the Titanic.

KATE ("LET HER SPEAK")
 Brian ...

HEATHER
 Let me try again: I was lecturing
 to my students about the pivotal
 year 1968. This is the year that
 changed so much for progressives in
 this county, that changed so much
 for me. We could no longer pretend
 that all the assassinations were
 random, that in fact what was
 happening was a defense of wealth
 and empire by any means necessary.
 And this was a powerful adversary
 that could never be defeated in
 direct confrontation, that it would

(MORE)

HEATHER (cont'd)

take a worldwide swelling of grass roots protest over many years. And leadership in this epic battle was unlikely to come from the United States. But as I began talking about this to my students, I suddenly asked myself, Why am I doing this? Do they really care, and even if they did, how could they do anything about it? Would they even have time, have TIME, to do anything? A few days before I'd read the latest UN assessment of the climate crisis. There was still time to take action but how could this possibly happen? I concluded that it couldn't. Immediate American unity was out of the question. Immediate planetary unity was out of the question. We were doomed. So why in hell was I even talking? What was the point? I told my students I couldn't do this any more and went off to find a bar.

Silence. Brian stands.

BRIAN

I'm sorry you feel this way, but you're wrong. I think I'll get an early start to the airport.

KATE

You can't go now.

BRIAN

My flight leaves at four.

KATE

You have lots of time.

BRIAN

I thought we were done. Aren't you done?

HEATHER

You disappoint me. Please sit down.

He does.

BRIAN

You're surprised that I don't agree that the world is coming to an end? What have we agreed on in recent years?

HEATHER

We want the same kind of world. We sometimes disagree about how to get there.

BRIAN

In the past, you've been able to turn our small disagreements into pretty heated arguments.

HEATHER

I stand guilty. Sometimes in my enthusiasm, my passion, I forget that I owe you my life.

BRIAN

Hardly that.

HEATHER

Very much that. When social services wanted to separate us, send us to different foster families, when you were only a teenager, you argued so persuasively, so eloquently, you convinced them to keep us together. It was amazing. It made all the difference. To all of us, but especially to me, being so young. You've been my hero ever since I was old enough to understand what had happened.

BRIAN

That, dear sister, is an exaggeration. But I understand what you're getting at.

KATE

I want to hear what you're planning to do.

HEATHER

I plan to do something in the spirit of the musicians on the Titanic. When they knew they were going to die, that they had little

(MORE)

HEATHER (cont'd)
time, they embraced their passion
by playing music. I'm going to do
something similar.

BRIAN
As I recall, back in the day your
passion was photography.

HEATHER
Yes. I have an ambitious project in
mind.

KATE
What does this have to do with
drinking? Or leaving the
university?

HEATHER
I don't think I'll be drinking much
again, if that's what worries you.
I may not be an alcoholic at all.

KATE
No, you can't start thinking that
way.

BRIAN
She's right, Heather. That's
textbook denial.

HEATHER
I don't want to talk about my
drinking. I want to talk about my
life. I'm doing the best I can
here. Will you just let me explain
this my way?

Brian and Kate exchange a glance.

BRIAN
Go on.

HEATHER
I believe the scientists. Soon the
planet will no longer support human
life as we know it. I am living on
a planet that is doomed. I believe
this. Brian, you are wrong, this is
exactly like being on the Titanic.
The ship is sinking. Maybe a few
will get to Mars and human life can
continue there. But most of us are

(MORE)

HEATHER (cont'd)

stuck here. So the question becomes, the question I ask myself is, How do I live with this understanding, how do I live facing this tragic reality? I realize most people will ignore it and continue on as before. We mostly live on automatic pilot. But I personally find this unacceptable. I have to find a way to live in this new terrible reality so that my life has meaning. I think that's what the musicians on the Titanic did. And that's what I want to do.

BRIAN

With a photography project.

HEATHER

Yes.

KATE

And you have to quit teaching to do it?

HEATHER

I have to live my life so every moment counts. Every moment has meaning to me. Teaching loses its meaning in a world with no future.

BRIAN

Can you tell us about the project?

HEATHER

Of course. Have you heard of a company called The Infinite Cloud?

BRIAN

Nope.

KATE

No.

HEATHER

They're going to create time capsules in space where human achievements can be documented and stored for future species. A record of our brief existence on the planet.

BRIAN
So ET can find it later?

HEATHER
I take the effort seriously.

BRIAN
Let me guess. You're going to put
together an album to give them to
put into space.

HEATHER
Yes.

BRIAN
Do you know what kind of album?

HEATHER
Yes. I'm going to document the
natural beauty of Nature in our
National Parks.

KATE
That's it? This is why I've been so
worried about you?

HEATHER
Sorry to disappoint you.

KATE
Tell me the truth. Your cancer's
back, isn't it?

HEATHER
No.

KATE
When I worried you were going to
kill yourself, you said I was
close. Why did you have to say that
if it's not true?

HEATHER
But it is true. When the project is
finished, I will be as well. And if
I do it right, it will be a
beautiful ending. Like when you
write a play, Brian. You once told
me everything is arranged for the
ending.

KATE

This is your life, not a fucking play!

BRIAN

I can agree with you this far, Heather. You have every right to live the end of your life in any manner that you choose. Including taking it.

KATE

You can't mean that.

BRIAN

I do, in principle. (To Heather) But I've always admired you as the embodiment of the cliché, when the going gets tough, the tough get going. I find it hard to believe you've become a quitter.

HEATHER

I find it hard to believe we've destroyed the planet.

KATE

We didn't do shit. It's the international corporations.

HEATHER

Look around you, Kate. Look at your beautiful home, filled with beautiful things. Things that cost a considerable amount of money. All this supports the corporate culture we live in.

KATE

Don't you dare take potshots at Tim's money when he's not here to defend himself. You've never forgiven me for marrying a Republican.

HEATHER

I'm just saying none of us can say we haven't contributed to the destruction of the planet. We're consumers. We buy the stuff that keeps the system going. I do myself. To less a degree than you, I suppose, because I'm not rich.

KATE

That's a cheap shot. Tim always shared his wealth. Look at how many people he put to work when he bought a startup. Look at how well they did later. All his employees had shares in the company when it sold.

HEATHER

I'm not criticizing you.

BRIAN

Then what are you saying? We should feel guilty for not living like Buddhist monks?

HEATHER

We shouldn't blame corporations without looking in the mirror at the same time. But none of this matters any more. Don't you get it? The only thing that matters, the only real issue left to anyone who understands the reality of the situation, which corporations and consumers caused together, which capitalism caused, is what do you do on the deck of the Titanic in the little time left to you? Most people will do nothing, and maybe they're the lucky ones. I'm not blessed with their blinders. I have to do something that makes sense to me. I have to be a musician on the Titanic. Photography has always been my passion. I didn't think I could make a living at it, and I also was consumed by a desire to understand why mom and dad did what they did, what caused them to risk so much. So I became a historian and photography became a hobby.

BRIAN

Which National Parks are you going to?

HEATHER

As many as possible. It depends on what happens. I don't want to be around to witness the worst of the suffering.

KATE
So you do plan to kill yourself.

HEATHER
You make it sound ugly.

KATE
It is ugly! What the hell has happened to you?

HEATHER
I was hoping you'd understand.

KATE
It's wrong and it's selfish. Think of the person who has to clean up after you, with blood everywhere and your brains splattered on the wall or whatever.

HEATHER
It won't be like that at all. I'm passing cleanly and peacefully. I'll light charcoal in my car and go to sleep.

BRIAN
Death by hibachi.

KATE
It's still selfish. Did you ever think of me or Brian, what you'd be putting us through?

HEATHER
I think of you all the time.

BRIAN
Actually I appreciate your sharing all this. I might go along with you except--

KATE
How can you?

BRIAN
--except your premise is wrong. The planet isn't dead. Not yet. I know we're taking the crisis right to the wire but we've always come through before, and I expect us to come through again.

HEATHER
You don't believe the scientists?

BRIAN
I do believe them. And they say
there's still time.

HEATHER
And we'll come together? You're a
dreamer.

BRIAN
Something big will happen. It
always does. Something dramatic
enough to wake us up.

HEATHER
I don't share your optimism.

BRIAN
I know. I respect that. But you're
still doing the wrong thing.

KATE
It's morally wrong.

BRIAN
You're doing the wrong thing
because you can't take it back. And
even you, surely, have a shred of
doubt about what you plan to do.

Silence.

BRIAN
Heather?

HEATHER
Maybe I do. A zillion to one.

BRIAN
So don't be rash or in a hurry to
do something you can't take back.

HEATHER
I don't think I'm being rash. But
when it's time, I want to be
prepared.

BRIAN
I get it.

KATE

What's to get? Suicide is always selfish and leaves the clean up and dirty work and suffering to someone else.

HEATHER

I didn't realize you felt this way.

KATE

Now you know.

BRIAN

Okay. I need to get going. Your project sounds good. When do you start?

HEATHER

Right away. I'll do the Northwest parks first. Olympic, Mt. Rainier, Crater Lake.

BRIAN

Keep me up to date.

He gives her a card. He also gives Kate one.

BRIAN

Put this where you won't lose it.

KATE

Whatever.

BRIAN

Well, give me a hug.

Brian and Heather embrace.

BRIAN

The beauty in the parks will cheer you up.

HEATHER

Or the opposite.

BRIAN

Don't be a fatalist. Kate?

They embrace.

KATE

Good luck with the play.

BRIAN
I may need it.

HEATHER
You wasted your talent, Brian.

BRIAN
I'm not responding to that. I'm out
of here. Everybody try to be nice.

He leaves.

HEATHER
He could've written plays that got
people thinking instead of making
easy jokes about sex.

KATE
I don't want to think. I want a
drink. Oh, sorry.

HEATHER
Don't be.

KATE
I'm not going to ask you to join
me.

HEATHER
I need a ride back to my car.

KATE
Then we'll do that.

HEATHER
Don't think ill of me. This
situation is so difficult. So
unprecedented. I'm trying very hard
to do something I can believe in.

KATE
Tim always said you think too much.
You talk everything to death. You
can't see the trees for the forest.

HEATHER
I know you think I hated Tim but I
didn't. As far as politics goes, he
was the most progressive Republican
I've ever met. But I disagreed with
his confidence that technology can
save us.

KATE
I'll take you to your car.

HEATHER
Are we good?

KATE
Sometimes you are so frustrating.

They embrace.

HEATHER
I love you, sister.

KATE
You, too. I want you in my life.
Please don't go away.

BLACKOUT.

LIGHTS UP.

Five months later. Fall, 2019. Somewhere in Utah.

Heather sits on a bar stool at a small table. She has a drink. She is punching a number on her phone. Waits for an answer.

LIGHTS UP on Kate and Brian in the living room.

The phone rings. Kate answers.

KATE
Hello ...

HEATHER
Well, it's me.

KATE
It's about time you called! (to
Brian) It's Heather. (On phone)
Don't you answer texts any more?

HEATHER
As little as possible.

KATE
Brian's here, I'll put you on
speaker phone.

She does. Hereafter the convention has Heather and Brian talking to the speaker phone.

HEATHER
What's Brian doing there?

BRIAN
Hey, sis.

HEATHER
What are you doing in Portland?

BRIAN
Just passing through. Kate tells me
you've been incognito.

HEATHER
I've been busy.

KATE
How much effort does it take to
answer a text? Anyway, I'm glad you
called. I've been worried about
you.

BRIAN
How's the project going?

HEATHER
Not as I expected.

BRIAN
In what way?

HEATHER
Our parks look like garbage dumps.

BRIAN
I assume you exaggerate.

HEATHER
Not by my standards. But many
obviously don't give a damn because
the crowds are overwhelming and
growing. Frankly the National Parks
have become a disgrace as far as
I'm concerned.

KATE
Have you been drinking? I'm hearing
your drinking voice.

HEATHER
Well, one point for your side.
Cheers.

BRIAN
You're drinking right now?

HEATHER
I have better sense than to make
this call sober.

KATE
I'm hanging up, Heather.

HEATHER
Don't hang up! I have something
important to tell you.

KATE
It really hurts me to hear you this
way.

BRIAN
What's going on, Heather?

HEATHER
I wrote you guys a letter. I should
have mailed it. Instead of this.

BRIAN
We're here, so what is it?

KATE
You've decided to drink yourself to
death.

HEATHER
No time for that.

Silence.

BRIAN
Heather?

HEATHER
My cancer's back.

BRIAN
I'm so sorry. When did you see a
doctor?

HEATHER
Kate was right, it was back before.
I didn't want to upset you.

KATE

I knew it.

HEATHER

It's gotten worse.

BRIAN

What are you going to do?

KATE

Would you get your ass home and deal with it? Where are you?

HEATHER

I'm on my way to southern Utah. Moab. It's near Canyonlands and Arches.

KATE

I can't listen to this.

BRIAN

Don't hang up!

She starts to hang up but Brian grabs the phone.

Kate exits into another (off stage) room.

BRIAN

Kate, wait! ... You've upset her.

HEATHER

Not hard to do.

BRIAN

Be nice. What in hell is going on? Truthfully.

HEATHER

It's time to take care of business.

BRIAN

With the charcoal.

HEATHER

Yes. I'm hurting and I'm tired.

BRIAN

And you're sure this is what you want to do?

HEATHER

I want to pass while I still have memories of human behavior that aren't depressing.

BRIAN

i don't know if you've been following the news, but some scientists are already pulling their punches on the more extreme scenarios for the future. We definitely haven't lost this yet.

HEATHER

I don't want to argue with you.

BRIAN

Okay. So you're doing it in southern Utah. You can't find a more spiritual landscape.

HEATHER

My thoughts exactly.

BRIAN

Did you get anything done on the album?

HEATHER

At first. Then I started focusing on the garbage. I guess I have two albums. Before humans, and after humans.

BRIAN

Don't generalize. Not everybody shows such disrespect for Nature.

HEATHER

I know. It only takes a few but the result is still overwhelming. Maybe we deserve to become extinct.

BRIAN

We won't become extinct.

HEATHER

Why isn't that comforting?

BRIAN

You know what I think? You need to concentrate on positive things. Months ago you told us that after

(MORE)

BRIAN (cont'd)
your project, you wanted to leave
in a peaceful, spiritual way. How
can you be spiritual if you're so
angry?

HEATHER
Touche. How come you're so smart?

BRIAN
Not smart. I love my sister and if
she insists on doing this, I want
to help her make the experience
meaningful and positive.

HEATHER
It's become so easy to forget the
positive.

BRIAN
Is there anything I can do here?

HEATHER
I can't think of anything off the
top.

BRIAN
Somebody has to deal with your
belongings in your apartment. I
assume you have a will.

No response.

BRIAN
You don't have a will?

HEATHER
I never got around to it.

BRIAN
Everything can get really dicey if
you don't have a will.

HEATHER
I'll write something.

BRIAN
Get it notarized.

HEATHER
Jesus, Brian, why does everything
become so complicated?

BRIAN

Death is complicated because life is complicated. Is there anything in your apartment you want me to set aside for anyone?

HEATHER

What are you talking about?

BRIAN

Getting rid of your stuff. I imagine they'll be a lot to take to Good Will, Salvation Army, whoever you prefer.

HEATHER

I haven't thought about it. You're doing this on purpose.

BRIAN

Doing what?

HEATHER

Making everything difficult. You think it will change my mind.

BRIAN

I'm sincerely trying to help.

HEATHER

I haven't dealt with any of this. It never occurred to me I wouldn't have lots of time to deal with it later. But this doesn't mean I'm changing my mind.

BRIAN

Think about it and let me know if anything in your apartment goes to a special person. And I really recommend writing a will.

HEATHER

I appreciate your help.

BRIAN

That's what big brothers are for.

HEATHER

You're always there for me. Why do we argue so much?

BRIAN

You're more impatient than I am.

HEATHER

You think important change can happen from within the system.

BRIAN

Always have. Don't throw the baby out with the bath water.

HEATHER

Mom and dad disagreed, and I understand where they were coming from.

BRIAN

Let's not play our broken record.

HEATHER

Will you ever forgive them?

BRIAN

It's not a matter of forgiveness. I won't defend the violence they did.

HEATHER

So trivial compared to our violence in Vietnam.

BRIAN

We've talked this subject to death.

Kate rushes into the room.

KATE

Give me the phone.

BRIAN

The speaker's still on.

KATE

Heather, I have a plan.

HEATHER

Don't do this.

KATE

You said you were going to Moab?

HEATHER

My first stop, yes.

KATE

I'll meet you there. I'm leaving in the morning.

HEATHER

Kate, you can't change--

KATE

I won't try to change your mind. Promise.

HEATHER

Then what are you doing?

KATE

I love you. I want to give you a proper goodbye.

HEATHER

Kate, I--

KATE

We didn't get to say goodbye to our parents. I can't be denied this with you as well.

HEATHER

Brian?

BRIAN

She has a point.

HEATHER

Oh, Jesus.

BRIAN

You know I respect you. I'll come along and make sure we honor your decision.

HEATHER

Kate?

KATE

I can't change your mind. I realize that. But the thought of not being able to hold you and say goodbye ... Don't deny me this.

BRIAN

If we leave tomorrow, we can be in Moab by Friday. Just tell us where to meet you.

HEATHER

I have to trust you on this.

BRIAN

You know you can.

HEATHER

And you'll just stay for a day?

BRIAN

Just long enough to say goodbye.

HEATHER

You can do that, Kate?

KATE

Yes. I love you.

BRIAN

Just tell us where.

HEATHER

I'll text you the motel I get.

BRIAN

Perfect. We'll leave in the morning.

KATE

I'm sorry your cancer came back.

HEATHER

I'm not doing this because my cancer's back. It makes me act sooner.

BRIAN

See you in Moab.

HEATHER

I love you both very much. Goodbye.

Lights off the bar stool.

KATE

I know I can change her mind once I see her.

BRIAN

That's not the deal.

KATE

Not yours. She isn't thinking straight and drinking doesn't help. I'm not letting her do this.

BRIAN

She has a right to end her life with dignity, on her own terms.

KATE

Suicide is immoral.

BRIAN

I don't think you can stop her.

KATE

Fine. You don't have to come with me.

BRIAN

Now I have to come more than ever.

KATE

I'm taking my own car. I don't want to ride with you.

BRIAN

Terrific.

Kate starts to exit.

BRIAN

I'm still coming.

KATE

It's a free country.

She's gone.

BRIAN (AFTER HER)

That's another fallacy in your thinking!

BLACKOUT.

LIGHTS UP.

Three weeks later.

Brian and Kate have just entered.

KATE
Can I get you a drink?

BRIAN
I've had enough.

KATE
I'll have one.

She'll mix a drink at a bar area.

BRIAN
I didn't expect such a huge
turnout.

KATE
She was very popular at the
university.

BRIAN
Several students told me she was
their favorite professor.

KATE
I heard the same thing.

Kate has her drink.

KATE
Cheers. That doesn't sound right.
Whatever.

She drinks.

BRIAN
Are you okay?

KATE
Of course not. I'll never
understand how she could do that to
us.

BRIAN
She didn't trust us not to
interfere. With reason, it turns
out.

KATE
I will not apologize for wanting to
do the right thing.

BRIAN
She obviously didn't think it was
right for her.

KATE
Obviously. But I hoped she'd at
least let me say goodbye properly.

She's close to tears.

BRIAN
Sometimes her intelligence got in
the way of common sense.

KATE
How could she be so smart and so
stupid at the same time?

Brian doesn't respond to this.

BRIAN
What time is good for you tomorrow?

Kate looks like she doesn't understand.

BRIAN
To do the ashes.

KATE
I don't care. Not too early.

BRIAN
Do you think you can find the spot?
The newspaper articles aren't too
specific.

KATE
I'm not sure. I only went with her
a few times and the last was
several years ago. I can come
close.

BRIAN
I didn't realize she went there
every year.

KATE
Religiously. Always with daffodils.
Mom's favorite.

BRIAN
Always alone?

KATE

Unless I went with her.

BRIAN

I mean none of the Underground ever paid their respects?

KATE

I have no idea.

BRIAN

A lonely way to die.

KATE

Heather didn't have to die alone.

BRIAN

What can I say? She didn't trust us. You would have tried to stop her. It probably would have gotten ugly. I think this is for the best.

KATE

Now I feel alone. And most people, a huge majority, would agree with me that suicide is wrong. Always.

BRIAN

Let it go.

KATE

You sure you don't want a drink?

BRIAN

I'm going back to the hotel. I'll pick you up at noon tomorrow.

KATE

And you'll take care of the photos?

BRIAN

I'll do exactly what she wrote in the letter. An album before humans, an album after humans. A pretty depressing legacy. And a little misleading, I think.

KATE

She cared a lot about legacies. It drove her activism. I really don't have one, do I?

BRIAN

Your kids.

KATE

A son who overdosed and a daughter who won't talk to me. How about your kids? Are they your legacy?

BRIAN

I suppose so. I don't see them as often as I'd like. As I should.

KATE

And your plays. They're a legacy.

BRIAN

Hardly. They're forgotten as soon as the topical jokes get old. After a few years, in most cases.

KATE

What about your first play? Heather always talked so highly of it.

BRIAN

Actually it does have a few loyal fans, even after all these years. A university is going to revive it next year. I wasn't going to see it but maybe I should. See if I'm missing something.

KATE

Maybe you'd take me with you.

BRIAN

When's the last time you saw a play of mine?

KATE

We could honor Heather together.

BRIAN

We'll see how we feel down the road. So noon works for you tomorrow?

KATE

Fine.

BRIAN

I'll pick up the ashes on the way.

KATE

Don't go yet. I don't want to be alone.

BRIAN

A short drink then. Bourbon and water.

She'll mix his drink.

BRIAN

You know, despite the climate, I always thought Trump was really driving her depression. I thought once impeachment started, she'd see some light at the end of the tunnel.

KATE

Once she was certain of something, it was impossible to change her mind.

BRIAN

Tell me about it.

KATE

I know you think the opposite, but I get more confused every day. What if she was right? I mean, I'd never kill myself over it but think of all the suffering and chaos that's coming.

BRIAN

Oh, there'll be plenty of that before we get a handle on this.

KATE

So what are we supposed to do? Go along on automatic pilot, like she said?

BRIAN

You have to focus on the things that make you happy to be alive.

KATE

Jennifer has disowned me, I can't see my granddaughter ...

BRIAN

I'm sorry about that. Hopefully time will heal a few things.

KATE

What keeps you going?

BRIAN

Quite a lot, actually. My work. Despite what Heather thought about it. Music. Gerry Mulligan and Chet Baker playing My Funny Valentine. Chris Connor singing Angel Eyes. The plays of Friedrich Durrenmatt. The USA trilogy by John Dos Passos. All the old stuff that dad turned me on to.

KATE

I guess I read and listen to music to escape.

BRIAN

It's escape for me, too. Escape from the mundane into the glories of human creation.

KATE

That sounds so uplifting.

BRIAN

It is uplifting. You have to keep everything in perspective.

KATE

And when the shit hits the fan?

BRIAN

If you see suffering around you, and you can help, you do what you can. You have to remember we're all in this together.

KATE

I wish Heather thought about it that way.

BRIAN

So do I. But she didn't. She died a very lonely person.

His drink is empty.

KATE

Another?

BRIAN

No thanks. I want to get to the hotel and take a shower. I'll pick you up at noon.

KATE

Maybe we should scatter daffodils with the ashes. She would have liked that.

BRIAN

I'll pick some up.

KATE

I'm not sure I can find the exact spot. I probably can come pretty close.

BRIAN

I couldn't find any evidence that would pinpoint where the bomb went off. I think Heather went on faith and the photograph of where the cars ended up. It's close enough.

KATE

Yes, close enough.

BRIAN

It's been a long day.

KATE

A long week. Heather is dead in Moab before we get there, the memorial here is packed with students and colleagues who adored her, we scatter her ashes with daffodils where mom and dad died, you send the albums to the company to put her photographs in space, and then ... then we all go on automatic pilot, right? Everything is back to normal.

BRIAN

Automatic pilot isn't always as bad as you make it sound.

KATE

I have no idea. I have no idea what to do. I have no idea how to live the rest of my life.

BRIAN

It's been a long week, like you say. We need time to heal and grieve.

KATE

Time for more glaciers to melt and oceans to rise and forest fires to rage and temperatures to climb, and more and more displaced families and children to--

BRIAN

Stop it! Trust me, we're going to get through this.

KATE

What do I do in the meantime?

BRIAN

Whatever works.

KATE

Automatic pilot.

BRIAN

Yes, but that won't be enough. We need to demand action. As many of us as it takes. Maybe millions. The kids are already leading the way.

KATE

Heather didn't think it could happen.

BRIAN

She's wrong. Maybe we need to suffer more. A greater climate catastrophe than we've seen. Something will get good people off their butts. Something will put many millions in the streets. We're going to get through this.

KATE

How can you be so sure?

BRIAN
Trust me, Kate.

Kate stares at him. She looks skeptical.

BRIAN
Trust me.

Their eyes lock..

BLACKOUT.

THE PLAY IS OVER.