



CHOICES

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Character Breakdown

- Liz:** A girl in her early teens/middle school age. Featured in the Alcohol scene.
- TJ/David:** A boy in his early teens/middle school age; Doubles as David in Suicide/Depression scene.
- Erin/Sonia:** A girl in her early teens/middle school age; Doubles as Sonia in Peer Pressure scene.

Props Breakdown by Scene

- Bullying: Phones (all)
TJ
- Textbook
- Dating Violence: Phones (all)
- Self-Harm: TJ
- Scissors
 - Hoodie or long sleeve shirt
- Alcohol: Phones (all)
Liz
- Bottle
- Body Image: Phones (all)
- Drugs & Peer Pressure: Sonia
- Costume change (shirt, hat, shades)
 - Juul/vape
 - Red solo cup

Phones (all)

Depression/Suicide:

TJ

- “David” costume change
- Backpack
- Notebook

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CHOICES

Choose your topics between Dating Violence, Bullying, Cutting, Alcohol, Suicide,

Body Image, and Drugs to create your own play.

GRAY BRICK VB

INTRODUCTION

(LIZ, ERIN, and TJ enter.)

LIZ

Hi. I'm Liz.

TJ

I'm T.J.

ERIN

And I'm Erin.

LIZ

And we all go to the same school. It's no different than any other school but lately some different things have been going on. Some pretty serious things. And they're not all good.

TJ

Yeah. I was new at school last year and since it was my first year here, I thought that some of the things that were going on here were weird. But after looking into it, some of the stuff that we saw happen here last year, actually goes on at a lot of places.

ERIN

And we didn't know how to handle these things. Some of these are things I've never dealt with or even been talked to about. But that's why we're here today, to help you make smart decisions about these difficult situations.

BULLYING

BLUE LOCKERS VB

TJ

So, going into middle school is hard. But going into middle school right after you move

into a new town is *really* hard. I didn't know anybody there and I just felt stupid whenever I tried to talk to people, so I just kinda kept to myself, which wasn't so bad... for awhile. I mean I was kind of lonely, but I was slowly making friends just by doing school projects and by joining a couple of clubs. Then, Erin came into the picture.

(TJ exits SL)

ERIN

(ERIN enters SL)

So last semester wasn't the best for me. I broke up with my boyfriend, my parents were fighting all of the time, and I was nearly failing science. I wasn't too happy with my life, so I kind of took it out on people at school. I remember this one day in the hallway before class with Liz when it all kind of started...

(LIZ enters SR)

LIZ

Erin, hey, how's it going?

ERIN

Horrible.

LIZ

Oh! What's up?

ERIN

Who's your partner for the science project?

LIZ

That TJ kid. He's really smart, so I'm happy.

ERIN

Wait, you got TJ?! He's super-smart! I got stuck with Chad. He's an idiot.

(TJ enters SL)

LIZ

And there is my walking A++ now. Hi TJ!

(TJ crosses SR and shyly waves and walks on by, then exits SR.)

ERIN

What's his problem! Too smart to come over and say hi I guess.

LIZ

I guess he's just shy.

ERIN

You mean full of himself.

LIZ

Erin, come on.

ERIN

What? You in love with him 'cause he's gonna save your failing grade in science?

LIZ

I'm not failing science.

ERIN

Oh, well then I guess you don't need him as your partner then, do you?

(ERIN exits SL, LIZ talks to the audience)

LIZ

So Erin went and talked to the biology teacher and asked the teacher if she could switch partners. She said that she didn't get along with Chad and THEN, she lied and told him that I said it would be cool if we switched. Everybody at school knows me and Erin are friends, so Mr. Landale didn't think twice about it. I would have said something to Mr. Landale myself but Erin was being so mean to everybody at school, and well, I just wanted to stay on her good side. So I didn't say anything about it.

(LIZ exits SL)

CLASSROOM VB

TJ

So I found out Erin was my new partner on the science project, which kind of bummed me out because Liz seemed pretty cool. And Erin wasn't much of a partner. At our first meeting I ended up doing nearly all of the work. I mean, she was nice to me, almost too nice, but she didn't do any work at all. She just sat on the side and just kept telling me how smart and great I was. It was awkward.

(ERIN and LIZ enter SL)

Then one day at school I was at my desk before class and I saw Erin talking to some of her girl friends.

And she goes...

ERIN

(Flirtatiously)

Hey TJ!

TJ

I was so embarrassed I didn't know what to do so I just kind of waved and they all laughed and turned away.

(ERIN exits SL)

(LIZ crosses to TJ)

LIZ

Hey.

TJ

Hi.

LIZ

I just wanted to see how your project is going with Erin?

TJ

It's fine, I guess.

LIZ

Really?

(TJ nods, LIZ looks over where ERIN exited)

Listen, I don't know if I should tell you this or not but Erin is spreading rumors about you all over school and I just wanted to tell you that I don't think it's cool.

TJ

Oh, great... Thanks...

LIZ

Sorry, maybe I shouldn't have told you.

TJ

No, no, it's fine. I'd rather know what people are saying about me. What's she telling people?

LIZ

She's... she's telling people that you're hitting on her every time you work on the project together...

(He is surprised)

Yeah, don't worry about it, it's stupid, nobody actually believes her. I guess I just wanted you to know.

TJ

Okay... Thanks for the information.

LIZ

Okay, sorry again.

(LIZ exits SR)

TJ

What could I do? I didn't know any of the students at the school, confronting her probably would have only made it worse, and I wasn't going to tell a teacher, that would

ruin any chance of making any friends at school. So, I just decided to deal with it by doing nothing at all. But I didn't come to school the next day, or the day after that. I just couldn't deal with everyone pointing and laughing at me, especially Erin and her friends. I just told my mom I was sick...and I wasn't really lying. This whole thing was making me sick to my stomach.

(TJ exits SL and LIZ enters SR)

HALLWAY VB

LIZ

When TJ and Erin presented their project in class Erin didn't say a word through the entire presentation. After the presentation Mr. Landale asked her some questions about the project and she couldn't answer them. So...

(ERIN storms on from SL)

ERIN

I got an F! How could I get an F when that freak TJ got an A?!? We were partners on the same project, we deserve the same grade!

LIZ

Sorry Erin.

ERIN

How could this happen?!?

(Pause, discovery)

He must have snitched on me, what a loser!

LIZ

What?

ERIN

TJ! TJ must have told Mr. Landale that I didn't do any of the work so I didn't deserve a good grade. How dare he embarrass me like this? He's gonna pay!

(ERIN exits SR. LIZ follows)

LIZ

Erin, come on!

(TJ enters SL)

BLUE LOCKERS VB

TJ

So when I checked my phone that night I had all these notifications from people at my school. Erin created this meme using this embarrassing 4th grade picture of me with a caption saying I got her a failing grade in science. There is no worse feeling in the world than people making fun of you for something you didn't do. My mom saw how upset I was and then...she saw the picture. She printed it off and called the school. Everybody who spread the meme got detention and Erin got suspended. I was scared to go to school because I knew everyone hated me. I missed another four days, but finally, my mom said I had to go back and deal with things. But I didn't know how. I felt so alone, and then Liz found me at my locker that day.

(TJ is at his locker between classes. LIZ enters SR)

LIZ

Hey TJ.

TJ

Hi.

LIZ

I'm glad you're back. Um, I just wanted to come by and tell you that I'm sorry about all that stuff Erin did online.

TJ

(Frustrated)

Yeah, I know you're sorry, you already told me you're sorry! Come on Liz, you're one of her best friends and all you can do is tell me you're sorry? Whatever...

(TJ storms off SL)

LIZ

And he was right, I was her best friend. I didn't like the way the other kids treated TJ, and I didn't want it to happen to anyone else, but I wasn't really changing anything simply by apologizing for Erin. When Erin got back from her suspension, she still wouldn't leave TJ alone, but this time, I did more to help. I remember we were outside before school.

BRICK VB

(LIZ and ERIN enter SR. TJ enters SL. ERIN book checks TJ as she passes him.)

ERIN

Oh, sorry TJ, are you okay? Please don't tell your mommy on me. Yeah, everybody, TJ *tattled* on me and that's why I got suspended!

LIZ

Erin, drop it.

ERIN

What?

LIZ

Come on TJ, let's go somewhere else.

ERIN

Oooo, looks like Liz has a crush.

LIZ

Erin, what happened to you? When did you get like this? I've known you since 4th grade and I've never seen you act like this. Can't you just leave TJ alone?

ERIN

No way, he ratted me out.

LIZ

No he didn't!

ERIN

Oh, really?

LIZ

Yeah, I asked Mr. Landale. TJ didn't say a word to him about the project. Mr. Landale gave you that grade because you didn't do the work. It wasn't TJ's fault!

ERIN

Why do you care so much about TJ?

LIZ

Why are you so angry? (Pause) Come on TJ, let's get out of here.

(LIZ and TJ exit SR)

ERIN

Liz really made me think that day. And it wasn't just what she said, but the way she said it. I doubt I would have listened if she would have picked a fight with me.

BLUE LOCKERS VB

(TJ enters SR)

ERIN

TJ, I'm really sorry for the things I did to you. I don't know why I was acting so horribly. Anyway, I deleted all those memes.

TJ

Thanks, Erin.

(Addresses the audience)

It took some time, but Erin and I have actually gotten to be pretty good friends. And it felt really great when Liz stood up for me.

(LIZ enters SR)

LIZ

Yeah, it felt good to help TJ out that day, and well, Erin wasn't thrilled with me at first, but it all worked out for the best cause now we're all friends. And doing something to help felt a whole lot better than doing nothing.

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DATING VIOLENCE

HALLWAY VB

ERIN

One thing that happened to me this year was that I started dating. His name was Joel and he was one of the most popular guys at our school. We started dating right at the beginning of the year.

(LIZ enters SR)

LIZ

Hey Erin, I got your text, what's up?

(They sit)

ERIN

You're never going to believe this, so today when I went to my locker there was a sign telling me to go to the gym. I was a little weirded out because, you know, no one has gym in the morning but I went anyway out of curiosity. When I got to the gym there were tons of balloons all over the floor, shaped like fish! When I moved some of them aside, I saw this big sign saying "There are plenty of fish in the sea, but will you go out with me?"

LIZ

What?! No way! Who did it?

ERIN

I have no idea. There was no one in the gym, so I think I'm going to put it on Instagram and see if I get any leads.

LIZ

Good idea! That is so exciting! I'm so jealous. Okay, I'm gonna go see what I can find out!

(Liz Exits SL)

ERIN

This is what I posted right after talking with Liz.

(Erin takes her phone out of her pocket)

Wow! Who is my secret admirer? #smiling #socute. I just went on with the rest of my school day. But around lunch I noticed a lot of people were liking my post. Apparently the big event in the gym had spread around the school and everyone was wondering who had pulled it off. Then, at the end of the day, I was closing my locker when all of a sudden Joel Walters, the cutest guy in our grade, walked up to me with a huge bouquet of flowers. He admitted he had put all the stuff in the gym just to ask me out and that he had been crushing on me all **last** year. It was the sweetest thing, so of course I said yes and that is when we started hanging out a lot.

(ERIN crosses DSR, texting on her phone)

(TJ enters SL)

TJ

I remember that day when Joel asked Erin out and I remember it well because it was the last time that I got to hang out with her for a long time. She spent all of her time with Joel.

(TJ exits SL)

LOCKER VB

ERIN

I fell for Joel so fast, and a lot of my friends had boyfriends too, so I was excited to be dating someone so amazing. He also played basketball for one of the city's club teams and was one of the best players. I just felt like the luckiest girl in the world. I didn't have time for anything else because I just wanted to be with him, and he wanted to be with me. I was supposed to meet Joel between classes when TJ came up and started talking to me. I was worried someone would see and tell Joel. I didn't want him to get jealous.

(Erin crosses center, they are in a hallway between classes, TJ approaches Erin)

TJ

Hey Erin! What's up? It's been awhile, what's going on?

ERIN

(Paranoid)

Oh! Hi TJ. What's up?

TJ

I was wondering if you wanted to maybe come over to my place after school. A bunch of people are coming over. You should too!

ERIN

Yeah, I can't. Me and Joel are hanging out. Sorry.

TJ

Oh. Okay, well how about this weekend? We're going--

ERIN

No TJ! Look I have to go, I'm gonna be late for class.

(Erin exits SL)

TJ

Hey, I tried. I just missed my friend. She just seemed so wrapped up in Joel it was like she was someone else.

(TJ crosses DSR - Erin enters SL)

ERIN

I had to ignore TJ. Joel and I were getting pretty serious, and I didn't want there to be any misunderstanding. TJ just didn't get it, so I posted about it just to make sure.

(Texting)

(TJ reads the post)

Guys need to leave girls who are taken alone. I love my guy so just stay away!

(ERIN exits SL)

BLUE WALL VB

TJ

Joel didn't like me very much and he said I shouldn't ever talk to Erin. Joel said that he was sure that I was trying to hit on Erin and it was just embarrassing for everyone. He also said if he saw me talking to her again that I was going to get it. Erin and I were friends so it hurt that she just dropped me like that. But I guess Joel was the most important thing in her life then, and that meant she had to sacrifice our friendship.

(TJ exits SR)

(LIZ enters SL)

LIZ

I had let Erin know that I didn't approve of the whole Joel thing soon after it started. The balloons were sweet but when I found out it was him, I got worried. One of my other friends used to go out with him and he just seemed way too controlling to me when they were together. Well, Erin got really defensive with me after I told her that and we weren't hanging out as much anymore. Erin and Joel were the couple who were always attached at the hip at school. Lots of PDA stuff, ya know, public display of affection. Holding hands in the hallways, kissing at their lockers. They kind of smothered each other.

(Liz exits SR - Erin enters SL)

HALLWAY VB

ERIN

Outside of school, Joel and I hung out all the time, and at school, he would come see me between classes whenever he could. But one time, he sent me a text asking me to send him some pictures. I knew right away what he meant. I knew about other kids sending pictures of their bodies to their boyfriends or girlfriends. I didn't feel good about that. That was really private stuff, and besides, I'd heard about couples breaking up and using those pictures to embarrass their ex-es by sharing them with...everyone, so

I took a selfie instead and put a heart frame around it.

(She demonstrates taking a picture of just her face)

(She hits send)

He didn't reply, and he didn't meet me after class that day either.

(ERIN exits SL - LIZ enters SR)

LIZ

One day I was leaving school when I saw them. I had a meeting with the art teacher so I was leaving school out the west doors which are usually deserted. I was excited to see Erin because we hadn't talked in a while but then I saw Joel walking up to her. He was yelling. She backed away and seemed nervous. I stayed around the corner and listened and she just kept saying...

ERIN

(Offstage)

I'm sorry Joel. I'm so sorry. Nothing happened!

LIZ

Then he yelled-

TJ

(Offstage, as Joel)

SHUT UP!!!

LIZ

And I heard something bang into one of the lockers.

(Erin enters SL, Liz crosses to her in a panic)

Erin!

ERIN

(In shock)

He pushed me...but I'm ok. I think it was just an accident. I'm ok, I uh, got to go.

LIZ

Yeah, well...if you ever need anything you know where to find me.

ERIN

Thanks Liz.

(LIZ Exits SL)

PINK WALL VB

ERIN

I was really humiliated that Liz had seen the whole thing. But at the time. I thought Joel was right. I thought I should have told him I was working on the project with TJ. I just forgot he said he needed to know where I was all the time so he could protect me. I felt like it was all my fault, like I was a bad girlfriend. I made a post just to show Joel how much I cared:

(Texting)

I am the luckiest girl. Joel is the greatest boyfriend. #soinlove

But things just got worse. Joel got more jealous and controlling which meant more yelling, more ignoring, more blaming. The final straw was the time he got mad at me because I couldn't go and watch his basketball game. I told him I was sorry but I had to go with my family to visit my grandma. He said that if I really loved him I would go with him to the game, and that if I wouldn't go, maybe he would find some *other* girl who appreciated him and *would* show up. I tried to tell him to calm down because I was scared my mom would hear us and come downstairs and ... he hit me across the face. When I looked up my mom was standing there and she screamed at Joel to leave or she was going to call the police. I was so ashamed and scared. Joel left and my mom came and gave me a hug and asked me if I was okay. I was still kind of confused over the whole thing. My mom told me I needed to end it and stay away from him.

(LIZ enters SL, TJ enters SR)

I knew she was right but it was so great for so long. What did I do wrong?

(LIZ crosses to ERIN, puts her arm around her, TJ crosses to them)

LIZ

When Erin told me what happened I was glad she was okay and that I could be a

support for her at school. Since then Erin has learned that what happened wasn't her fault.

ERIN

I've talked to some counselors and Joel got in big trouble after my mom reported what happened to the school. I haven't spoken to him since and don't plan to. Relationships like the one I had with Joel are dangerous and I'm telling you this because I want you to recognize the signs of a dangerous relationship and get help sooner and be better informed about teen dating violence than I was. Thanks to my Mom and my friends, I'm getting there.

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SELF HARM

BLUE WALL VB

LIZ

So throughout the year last year me and TJ got to be pretty good friends. He was a good guy, just shy. We really liked the same kind of music and we used to go to concerts together sometimes and share music. One day I found a band that I knew TJ would love and I went over to his place, really excited to have him hear them.

(LIZ exits. TJ enters SL with a pair of scissors. He checks his surroundings, turns upstage and begins to cut himself. LIZ enters)

TJ'S ROOM VB

LIZ

TJ, you have got to hear this band, they totally---

(TJ jumps back and tries to cover his wrists)

LIZ

Whoa!

TJ

(Covering up what he was doing, scissors go into his pocket)

Oh! Hey Liz! What's up?

LIZ

TJ... wait a sec... What were you doing?

TJ

Nothing.

LIZ

Nothing?

TJ

Yeah, nothing, What do you have for me to listen to?

LIZ

What's in your pocket there TJ?

TJ

Nothing!

LIZ

C'mon, TJ. I saw what you were doing. Roll up your sleeves.

(She reaches for his arm)

TJ

Why?

LIZ

Because I saw what you were doing to your arms.

TJ

I wasn't doing anything.

(Liz reaches for his arm again, he pulls away)

You know what? Just leave!

LIZ

Are you okay, TJ?

TJ

I will be when you leave.

LIZ

Well, if you wanna talk sometime.

TJ

GET OUT!!

LIZ

Alright, I'm gone.

(LIZ exits SR)

(TJ breaks away from the scene, talking to the audience.)

TJ

That was the first time I had been *caught*, but it certainly wasn't the first time I had done it. I started shortly after the school year began and Liz caught me sometime in February. I remember cutting three or four times a week sometimes. I always wore long sleeves so that nobody could see what I was doing to myself. I was so embarrassed when she saw me. I was afraid of what she would think, I didn't think she would be able to understand why I do this. Sometimes, it was even hard for me to understand why I did it. Some people think it's a cry for attention or that I'm trying to kill myself. But it wasn't either of those things for me. For me it was just that, everything in my life was so overwhelming, so out of control and, when I do it, I feel like, at least for awhile, I'm in control. But it never lasts very long.

(TJ exits SL)

PINK WALL VB

(LIZ enters SR)

LIZ

I will never forget walking into TJ's room that day. I couldn't believe what I was seeing. Why would somebody do that to themselves on purpose?

(LIZ exits SR)

(TJ enters SL)

BLUE WALL VB

TJ

At the beginning of the school year I was so depressed about moving away and not having all of my friends from my hometown that I just didn't care about anything. I was also depressed because people were picking on me at school quite a bit. It started with Erin bullying me, but then even after we made up, other kids kept doing it. I know it's because I'm new and mostly they were just showing off when they yelled things like "Freak! Loser!" and even "Fag!", but it hurt...a lot. I wanted to yell back at them, to hurt them like they were hurting me, but I didn't. I just bottled everything up. I tried not to let anything bother me. So the way that I ended up releasing these feelings was by cutting. It was a way for me to feel something... anything. (Pause) It's still kind of hard for me to talk about.

(TJ exits SL)

PINK WALL VB

LIZ

I didn't know what to do, so I called a free, confidential hotline that deals with any issues that teens may have and told the counselor about what I saw. She told me that I had to tell TJ's family or a counselor at school so that they could keep TJ safe. I told the counselor that I knew his family pretty well so I could talk to them, but I was afraid that TJ was gonna hate me for that, and I didn't want to lose his friendship. She said "Wouldn't it be better to have TJ angry at you and getting help than to continue to cut himself?" And I couldn't really argue with that. But I still couldn't get up the courage to confront TJ or his family. So I decided to write his mom a letter, and I sent him a long text.

BLUE WALL VB

TJ

(Enters SL, Holding up his phone)

Here's the text Liz sent me two days later. I know it must have been hard for her to write.

(He begins reading silently as Liz narrates her text)

SPLIT SCREEN PINK/BLUE WALL (Nola-left, D-R)

LIZ

Hey TJ, I just wanted to let you know that I'm worried about you. I know what I saw the other day and called a hotline about it. They told me I needed to tell your family, so this is me telling you that...that's what I did. It was really hard for me to do, but I want you to be safe. I gave your mom a letter this morning before school. You're one of my best friends here and I want you to be okay. Also know that I don't think you're a freak, I'm not scared of you, and I don't think any less of you. And of course, I'll be around if you ever want to talk. Please get better.

(LIZ exits SR)

BLUE WALL VB

TJ

I didn't talk to Liz after that because, well, I was really mad. I got home that day and my parents looked at my arms and told me they thought I should start seeing a therapist. I was so afraid that if people found out, they'd think something was wrong with me. But the therapist ended up being really helpful. And, for now, I've stopped. But my therapist says I have to be careful, because people who have cut before sometimes start again. So when I found that out, I decided that...I needed more help.

(LIZ enters)

HALLWAY VB

TJ

Hi Liz.

LIZ

(Surprised)

Hi.

TJ

Look I know we haven't talked since you burst into my room a few weeks ago, but I just wanted to thank you for what you did. I was mad at you for awhile, which is why I haven't been talking to you, but please know that you did help me out. I'm seeing a therapist now and...I've stopped cutting, Liz.

LIZ

That's great, TJ. I'm really proud of you.

TJ

Yeah well, it hasn't been easy but I feel like I'm doing a little better now. You helped me a lot and I would still really like you to be there if I need help again.

LIZ

Of course, TJ. That's what friends do.

TJ

Thanks. And hey, I never did get to hear that band. You wanna come over now and we can listen to them?

LIZ

Sure. You are gonna freak out. They're so good!

TJ

Great! Liz, I'm really glad you showed up at my door that day.

LIZ

So am I.

(They hug)

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ALCOHOL

PINK WALL VB

LIZ

So one of the coolest things that happened in the past year was when our basketball team made it all the way to the state championships. And then won! I was on the team, but I pretty much sat on the bench the whole time. So since I didn't help out the team much on the court, I always took it upon myself to throw the parties for the team off the court. One day I was talking to my older brother about how I want to throw the best party of the year after the state tournament. And he told me that if I wanted a party worth

remembering. I needed to have plenty of this.

(She picks up a bottle of alcohol from an upstage chair)

LIZ

And I was freaking out! What was I supposed to do with this stuff? So I put it in the back of my closet and saved it for after the tournament. And the night after we won, I threw a party in my basement. And since neither of my parents were home, I figured it was the perfect opportunity to bring it out. I invited TJ and Erin over before the party to help set up.

(TJ enters SR)

TJ

Hey Liz!

LIZ

Hey TJ! Look what I got..

(She reveals a bottle of alcohol)

TJ

Whoa! Where'd you get that?

LIZ

My brother said that this is an essential element to a killer party.

TJ

Oh. Okay, nice. Pass it here.

LIZ

Have you done this before?

TJ

No, but my dad drinks. So how bad can it be?

(LIZ hands TJ the bottle. TJ opens it and takes a drink)

TJ

Oh, ugh! This stuff tastes awful.

LIZ

Ha, whatever. Give it here!

(TJ gives LIZ the vodka and LIZ drinks)

LIZ

Woo! Well, maybe you get used to it.

(LIZ takes another drink. ERIN enters SL. TJ and LIZ hide the vodka from ERIN)

ERIN

Hey, guys what's up?

TJ

Hey Erin!

(LIZ hides the bottle behind her back just smiling)

ERIN

Hey! What do you have there?

LIZ

Only the key ingredient for making any party a huge success!

ERIN

Which is?

LIZ

May I present my good friend... Vodka!

ERIN

(Uncomfortably)

Where'd you get that?

LIZ

My brother. He said that he had a couple more bottles of other stuff too. Tonight is gonna be awesome!

ERIN

Oh.

(Pause)

Listen, I actually just came over because I can't stick around tonight. I have to babysit my little sister so...

LIZ

Awwww, come on!

TJ

You're gonna miss out.

ERIN

No, really, I can't.

LIZ

Whatever. TJ, come and help me get those other bottles.

(LIZ and TJ exit SR)

BLUE PANELED WALL VB

ERIN

I didn't really have to babysit anybody that night. I just couldn't be around that stuff. When I was in fourth grade I had an uncle that was killed by a drunk driver and I promised my mom and dad at his funeral that I would never drink. I was surprised to see Liz and TJ with that bottle, and even though they were my best friends, there was no way that I was going to put myself in that situation.

(ERIN exits SL, TJ enters SR)

BACKYARD VB

TJ

I really didn't know what to do when I saw that Liz had alcohol, but she seemed to be cool with it and she's the best friend I've made since I moved here, so I just went with it. Plus I didn't want to look lame by saying no. I figured Liz had done this before, I didn't

know until afterwards that this was her first time drinking too. I was just trying to join in the party and I only had one drink that night, but Liz, she had nearly half a bottle of vodka that she mixed with some other stuff... all in one hour.

(LIZ stumbles on from SR)

LIZ

Hey man, what are you doing out here all by yourself?

TJ

I came out to get some fresh air. Liz, are you okay? You probably need to slow down.

LIZ

I am just fine TJ, geez, stop telling me what to do!

(She pushes him)

TJ

Whoa, calm down I was just saying

LIZ

And *I'm* just saying shut up, TJ!

TJ

Okay! Sorry...sorry.

LIZ

Oh, I'm not feeling too well right now.

(LIZ exits SR)

TJ

BLUE PANELED WALL

Then Liz went over to a tree in her yard and puked... a lot. I thought about just leaving but I went back inside to make sure that everything stayed cool with the party since the host was out of commission. But ten minutes had passed and I realized Liz hadn't come

back inside.

BACKYARD VB

(TJ exits SL, reenters after LIZ staggers on stage and passes out in a chair)

TJ

Liz! Liz, you still out here?

(Sees LIZ lying on the ground).

Liz, get up...

(No response)

Liz, come on...

(Still no response)

Liz? Are you okay?

(No response, TJ yells into the house as he tries to help LIZ)

Hey! Somebody call 911! She's barely breathing! HURRY!!!

(TJ helps LIZ up, they exit SR)

(ERIN enters SL and crosses to help LIZ stand).

PINK WALL VB

ERIN

That night Liz got rushed to the hospital and had to have her stomach pumped. The paramedics said that it was lucky that TJ called 911 when he did. They said she had alcohol poisoning, which means that the amount of alcohol she drank could have killed her. When my mom heard about it the next day, I got in trouble even though I wasn't at the party. She was glad that I had left the party but she also said that it wasn't enough, that the whole situation could have been avoided if I had just told her. She said that Liz wouldn't have had to learn that lesson the hard way if I would have given her an easier way out. She's right. I thought I was protecting Liz and TJ from getting into trouble, but I just made it worse.

(TJ enters SR)

TJ

Did I get in trouble? Oh yeah. Just like everybody else at the party. We were all charged

with a MIP-- minor in possession. We had to pay a \$500 fine and had to go to these alcohol ed classes. But at least I did one thing right by calling 911.

(LIZ enters SR)

LIZ

TJ told me later that I yelled at him, but I didn't remember doing it. I didn't remember a lot of stuff that happened that night. And it was a good thing that TJ didn't leave because...after I got sick, I passed out in my own vomit. It was pretty bad, but I was lucky. Erin told me the story about her uncle the next week at school, it was really sad. I guess I just didn't think about all this drinking stuff, I mean my brother didn't make it seem like a big deal and I know TJ told me his dad drank. Speaking of my brother he got in more trouble than anybody for getting us the alcohol--he was arrested, the cops came and took him away and everything. Needless to say, things are not very fun at our house these days. My parents were really mad at both of us and now I have to check in with them wherever I go and tell them exactly what I am doing.

So, alcohol and dangerous choices killed Erin's uncle, and it could have killed me. Definitely not worth it.

(Liz exits)

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HALLWAY VB

BODY IMAGE

ERIN

This year at middle school we had our first school dance and we were all really excited about it. Liz, me, and a bunch of other girls were all planning on going together and we went dress shopping. We found a place to go and eat before the dance, and had picked out all of the songs that we were going to request that night. Everything was planned, but things didn't really end up going according to plan. It all started with TJ one day in the hallway.

(TJ enters SR looking at his cell phone)

TJ

Hey Erin!

ERIN

Hey TJ.

TJ

I need your help.

ERIN

With what? What are you looking at?

TJ

Well, I am trying to make a very important decision about the dance next weekend. Who should I ask to go with me?

(Pointing at cell phone)

Zendaya or Ariana Grande?

ERIN

You're going to ask Zendaya or Ariana Grande to our middle school dance?

TJ

Yeah, and looking at these pictures-Ariana looks hotter, but I think that may just be these pictures. I think Zendaya may be hotter in real life. Plus her music is better. Who looks hotter to you?

ERIN

Um...these pictures look fake and photoshopped.

TJ

How dare you!

(Talking to the phone)

Don't worry ladies, I won't let you take this abuse from somebody who is just jealous that she isn't as hot as you.

(To ERIN)

Excuse us.

(Exits SR)

BLUE LOCKERS VB

ERIN

I know that TJ was probably just joking around that day, but what he said kind of bothered me. I mean I don't care what TJ thinks about me, but I do wonder what other

people think of me when they see me. And when I was dating Joel, he used to bug me all the time about watching my weight, so I was kind of paranoid about it. I went home that day and looked at myself in the mirror and I didn't really like what I saw. Then I got on Instagram and TikTok, and well, all the girls were so beautiful and thin. And then I saw this post that said "good things only happen to pretty girls," so I decided to start working out to try and look better. I found out that the school was having cheerleader tryouts so I decided that would be the perfect way to keep fit and stay in shape. After the tryouts, they sent letters to the girls to let them know if they made it or not. I was so nervous, so I asked TJ to go and get my letter from the office.

(TJ enters SR with the envelope.)

TJ

Here ya go superstar!

(He hands her the envelope)

ERIN

Okay! Here we go!

(She opens it, reads, it's a no)

I didn't get in.

TJ

Oh. I'm sorry Erin.

ERIN

Man! Why didn't I get in?! My try out was perfect, I nailed that dance! I was disgustingly peppy!

TJ

I think a lot of girls tried out. I'm sure it was a tough decision.

ERIN

Whatever. This is stupid.

TJ

Hey, look at the bright side. At least now you don't have to wear those little cheerleader outfits. I mean... they can't be very comfortable. Or warm.

ERIN

Whatever. I just want to be by myself right now, please?

TJ

Erin, come on. It's just cheerleading!

ERIN

Leave, okay?

TJ

Okay, bye!

(Exits SL)

ERIN

And immediately after that...

LIZ

(*Enters SR*)

Erin! Erin! There you are! I have been looking all over for you! The coolest things just happened!!!

(They sit)

ERIN

Hey Liz! What's up?

LIZ

You're not going to believe this! Guess! Guess what just happened!

ERIN

What?!?

LIZ

You have to guess!

ERIN

You aren't failing Algebra.

LIZ

No! Of course I'm failing Algebra!

ERIN

You made the cheerleading team?

LIZ

Of course not!! I can barely walk down the hall without falling on my face!

ERIN

Just tell me, Liz!

LIZ

Nathan asked me to be his date for the dance!

ERIN

What?

LIZ

Nathan! Nathan Sterling! He is so cute! He just asked me, like five minutes ago! And you know what? His friend Jackson asked Peyton to go and his other friend Michael asked Mia!

ERIN

Wow... so did you all say yes?

LIZ

Yeah! Oh but don't worry, we aren't bailing on you Erin, you still have to come with us. We are going to do all the same stuff we were before, we just have dates to bring with us now. The more the merrier, right?

ERIN

Yeah, sure!

LIZ

Oh it is going to be so awesome. Oh, there's Peyton, I need to go ask her what to do with my hair. Talk to you later, Erin!

(Exits SR)

ERIN

And suddenly I felt terrible. Why didn't anybody ask me? Why didn't I make the

cheerleading team? I felt so... depressed... I decided I needed to do something to try and make myself feel better so I went to the mall to go shopping but I couldn't find anything that fit right. So then I got even more depressed and I went to the food court and ate like, a ton of ice cream, which just made me feel even more ashamed of myself. *(beat)* My life felt totally out of control, I couldn't get a date to the dance, I couldn't make the cheerleading team, and I hated how I looked. I decided that night that I needed to take control of my life and the way I could do that was by going on a really strict diet, counting my calories, and exercising. These things would help me look good, and if I looked good, I knew everything would fall into place.

(Looking into an imaginary mirror DC)

(LIZ enters SR)

CAFETERIA VB

LIZ

Over the next month there was a huge change in Erin, and it wasn't a good one. She was in my lunch period and she never ate her food, not very much of it anyway. I would ask her why she wasn't eating and she would say...

ERIN

Oh, I just don't like eating in front of people. Besides, look at me--I'm huge!

LIZ

Erin, what are you talking about?! You never needed to lose weight in the first place.

(TJ enters)

TJ

I noticed Erin was acting differently too. I worked on some homework with her at her house and when I went to use the bathroom I saw that she had put up pictures of super models all over her bathroom. I asked her about them and she said..

ERIN

Oh, those are for my diet. They remind me of my goal. Not that I'll ever look like that.

TJ

Erin, nobody really looks like that. Those pictures are photo-shopped and airbrushed and....

LIZ

Erin also started hitting the gym more. When I'd ask her to hang out after school she always said...

ERIN

No, I've eaten 800 calories today and I need to work that off at the gym. Thanks though!

TJ

Whenever I was around Erin she always seemed distant. I would ask her what was wrong and she would tell me...

ERIN

Oh, nothing. I'm just stressed about school, tons of homework these days. And, no matter what I do, I can't get rid of all this extra weight.

TJ

Erin, you don't need to lose any weight.

ERIN

TJ, you don't get it.

LIZ

It was scary to watch our friend change into a person we didn't recognize. She had an intense fear of gaining weight.

TJ

It was like Erin couldn't see all of the wonderful things about her that we saw.

PINK WALL VB

ERIN

I remember Liz and TJ trying to talk to me about their concerns but I never heard them. I was always convinced that I was fat and could lose more weight because that's what I saw when I looked in the mirror. I counted all of my calories everyday and worked out all the time. I couldn't focus at school because I would constantly be thinking about my weight. I became obsessed.

(ERIN exits SR)

TJ

Then, on the day of the dance, everything came to a head. Erin was especially stressed all day because nobody had asked her to the dance. After school I was at the gym running laps for basketball when Erin came in and told me she was going to work really hard that day because she was so upset. She got on the track and ran in front of me. I eventually passed her and I noticed she was breathing really heavily and was wobbling a bit. Then suddenly I heard her collapse. I yelled for help. The gym teacher called 911.

(TJ exits SL)

LIZ

When TJ called me and told me what happened, I was shocked. I went and saw Erin at the hospital right away. She didn't look like herself. I was so scared for her. I held her hand and talked to her but I didn't know if she could hear me. I called my friends and told them that I wasn't going to the dance so I could spend time with Erin that night, which was fine because the night wouldn't have been nearly as fun without her. Erin told me later that she had suffered from an eating disorder called anorexia.

(Exits SL)

ERIN

I woke up in a hospital bed with a feeding tube going through my nose and into my stomach. I saw my mom there, she ran over and hugged me when I opened my eyes. She was sobbing and apologizing to me for not doing anything to help. She told me she noticed how thin I was getting but didn't think it was this bad. At first I wanted them to take out the feeding tube. I tried to convince the doctors that I was fine and that I had just pushed myself too hard at the gym. But then a counselor came and talked to me about a mental disorder called *anorexia nervosa* and, when she described my exact behavior and thought process, I knew that's what I was dealing with. She said I was lucky to be alive and that, according to statistics, more people died from eating disorders than any other mental illness. She hooked me up with a therapy group where I met a bunch of people my age who have been through the same thing.

(Liz and TJ enter SL)

It took a really long time because I didn't just have to change my habits, I had to change my entire way of thinking too, and I am still working on it so I don't slip up. I took down the pictures from my bathroom walls and told TJ and Liz to keep looking out for me. I also continued my workout regimen with the help of a doctor after I got healthy enough to exercise again. Now I try to look at things differently. Instead of always looking to see

what's wrong with me, I try to see what's right, and I'm seeing a whole lot.

TJ & LIZ

(Ad libbed)

“So are we.” Way to go, Erin”, etc.

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DRUGS & PEER PRESSURE

© RESPECT 12/7/2018

By M. Michele Phillips

(Liz, TJ and Erin enter and stand together)

PINK WALL VB

TJ

This is a story of something--

ERIN

Unfortunate!

TJ

“Unfortunate” that happened to me, Liz and Erin but mostly to me.

LIZ

Except we all got in trouble.

ERIN

Let's just tell the story from the beginning. For part of it I'm going to be me and also this girl Sonia--which sounds confusing but you'll catch on once we start. It was on a Friday, last Fall.

(TJ exits SR and Liz moves into place next to Erin. Erin turns to Liz)

HALLWAY VB

Hey, have you talked to TJ today?

LIZ

No, you?

ERIN

No, but I saw him in the hall after Math. He was all smiley and kinda excited.

LIZ

That does not sound like TJ.

ERIN

Somethin's goin on for sure.

(TJ enters from SR and crosses to Liz and Erin. He looks very happy)

TJ

Hey, what's up?

(Kind of non-committal)

Haven't seen you guys lately.

ERIN

You saw me right after Math class. You just went the other way.

TJ

(He shrugs, he's proud)

I was talkin' to Troy.

ERIN

Yeah, you guys looked like bff's. And only last week you were talking smack about him because he doesn't act like you're alive.

TJ

(Defensive)

No way.

ERIN & LIZ

(Together)

Way.

TJ

(Frustrated)

OK! C'mon. Troy and his friends were finally talking to me. They actually invited me....

(stops himself from revealing it)

..to...do..something..with them.

ERIN

Oh, they asked you to Troy's party this weekend.

TJ

You know about it?

ERIN

Liz and I always get asked. The more "victims" the better.

TJ

Victims? What are you talking' about? Look, this is the first time I've been asked to do something by somebody besides you two. Troy's parents are out of town and . . .

(Erin makes a "danger" SFX)

ERIN

Bad sign. TJ, their parties are Truth or Dare. Somebody always gets hurt. Sometimes lots of "somebodys" get hurt.

TJ

I can take care of myself. Sounds like fun.

ERIN

Good luck. I'm not going. I'm planning on having something really contagious and disgusting this weekend.

TJ

Liz, you goin'?

(Liz shrugs and/or fake coughs)

ERIN

Don't you get it? Those guys want to see how far they can push you to do embarrassing or dangerous stuff. There's always tons of drugs and alcohol, and lots of people ready to ambush you with a phone. They can't wait to post it all.

TJ

It can't be that bad. I still haven't made any friends...

LIZ

(Indicating herself and Erin)

Hello!!!

TJ

Besides you two! I want to meet some new people and have a good time, for a change.

ERIN

(Offended)

Fine. Go have a good time "for a change" with your new besties.

(TJ starts to say something, then exits SR in an angry huff)

LIZ

I don't want to go, but I'm worried about TJ. I know I don't always know what to say when I start getting pressured by people. Except I've been to enough of these dumb Troy parties, I don't cave anymore. TJ is desperate, though, so I don't think he'll be able to say no.

ERIN

He needs to find out what it's like for himself. But if you do go, you can call me if things get out of control.

(She exits SL)

LIZ

(Facing the audience)

Erin was really mad at TJ for all the dumb stuff he said, but I was worried. He just did not know what he was in for. The party was actually at Sonia's house, not Troy's. TJ and I didn't go together but we wound up arriving at the same time

OUTDOOR VB

(TJ enters SR and joins Liz)

SONIA

(Entering and crossing to Liz and TJ. She is a stoner, continually reading and texting on her phone. Never looks anybody in the eye)

Where's Erin?

TJ

(Looking at Liz for an answer)

I guess she's sick

LIZ

(Confirming)

She's sick.

SONIA

Yeah. She's **sick!**

(Sonia pulls out a vape and offers it to Liz and TJ)

Who wants a hit?

LIZ

What's in it?

SONIA

That's for me to know and you to find out.

LIZ

No thanks.

TJ

I'll take a hit.

(TJ takes a puff and starts coughing)

What **is** in that?

SONIA
(Laughing)

No idea. Maybe weed. Maybe PCP. Maybe just nicotine and a bunch of chemicals. So, whatta ya' wanna do? Get drunk, get high, get down with somebody.

(She trails her fingers on TJ's shoulder, like a spider crawling)

(Remembering) O-M-G, Sara Thompson is passed out, naked, on my little brother's bed. She wasn't naked to begin with but a few friends helped her get "more comfortable."

(She pulls out her phone and begins scrolling)

I've got some pics if you wanna see a really out-of-it...

TJ
(Interrupting)

No! No thanks. Can I get something to drink?

SONIA
What? Oh. OK. What ev's.

(She exits SL)

LIZ
Don't you wonder what she's gonna bring back? She's so high.

TJ
(TJ is getting nervous)

Don't make a big deal out of it, Liz.

LIZ

Fine. No worries.

SONIA

(Returning with a plastic glass full of what looks like water and hands it to TJ)

Here ya' go.

TJ

(He looks at it hoping it was coke, but takes a big swig anyway and then can't get his breath. Barely getting the words out)

S'not water!

SONIA

Wha'd you expect? This is a par-tay. It's vodka. I dare you to drink the whole thing.

TJ

(Looks at her for a second, then downs the glass, tries to hand it back to Sonia.)

Thanks.

(Not feeling so great at this point).

SONIA

What, you want more?

TJ

(Defiantly looking at Liz)

Sure.

SONIA

(Pointedly)

Not the maid, dude. If you want more it's on the bar

(Trying to remember)

Oh yeah, in the dining room.

(Pointing. TJ Exits SL)

Why are **you** here, Liz? ?

LIZ

The food.

SONIA

I guess--if you like cheese whiz and Doritos Blaze. Compliments of Troy. Have at it.

(She points several different directions, then stands there for a second trying to remember what she was going to do.)

I'm gonna go . . . see what Troy is up to.

LIZ

(Taking out her phone and texting Erin, speaking the words as she texts)

Erin, you said to text. The second he got here he took a hit of Sonia's vape. She won't tell us what was in it. (ERIN TEXTS BACK) No, the party's at Sonia's, not Troy's. TJ also drank a whole glass of vodka.

(TJ is coming back)

Gotta go.

TJ

Who 'ya texting?

LIZ

Wrong number. How do you feel?

TJ

(Dismissively)

Fine. Great in fact!

LIZ

You don't look so good. How many shots have you had?

TJ
(He shrugs)

You my mom?

LIZ
Ya' know, our whole class did a big report on drugs last year. Wanna hear what might have been in the vape?

TJ
NO! (Beat) Yeah. Tell me, since you know everything.

LIZ
Nicotine for sure, but they also use the chemical they make antifreeze out of—ethylene glycol—and that can cause headaches, dizziness, drowsiness. But it's the pure nicotine liquid that's really dangerous—if you ingest it or get some on your skin it can cause vomiting, seizures, even death. Who knows what else was in that thing.

SONIA
(Enters from SL)
First course, guys.
(She hands Liz a joint)

LIZ
(Sarcastically excited)
For me? WOW! Thank You!

SONIA
Don't be a jerk. We're passin' it.

LIZ
Oh. Okay.
(Handing it back to Sonia)

SONIA
You're so weird. More for the rest of us. TJ, don't spend all your time out here with Liz. The fun's in there.

(Sonia goes to exit right, then remembers she's going the wrong way. Off left)

TJ

Now you're gonna tell me all the bad things about weed, right?

LIZ

Want me to?

TJ

(Woozy, unsteady on his feet, slurring a bit)

Go ahead, ruin the whole night.

LIZ

C'mon TJ, you know that marijuana makes it hard to make good decisions. It affects your judgment, your memory, even your ability to move normally. And if you combine weed with alcohol, it makes all those things much worse.

TJ

I'm just gonna take one hit, OK? I don't want 'em all to think I'm a loser.

(He exits SL)

Liz

(Texting Erin)

TJ's shaky and now he's getting high.

I **warned** him, but he's too stubborn. If things get out of control can your Mom pick us up? I'll only text if I can't get him out of here in the next few minutes, ok? Thanks, Erin.

SONIA

(Entering, laughing uproariously, scrolling thru her cell) and I

O-M-G! You should see these shots of TJ trying to get high. What a dork. They're hilarious. Troy's already posted a bunch of 'em. We offered him a line of coke but he couldn't manage to snort it. We got a video of that, too. Can't wait for the Tylenol Challenge. He's so wasted he'll probably try to swallow the whole bottle. I dared him to, anyway. What an idiot.

(Sonia exits SR laughing)

LIZ

(Alarmed, crosses behind banner and drags TJ out. He is even more unsteady)

TJ, we gotta go NOW!

TJ

(Pulls away contentiously)

NOooo! I'm gonna win the Tylenol Challenge.

LIZ

TJ, don't! It's really dangerous. If you swallow too many they'll have to pump your stomach. That stuff will damage your liver--permanently.

TJ

It'll grow back. Quit actin' like my mom.

LIZ

Quit actin' like an idiot.

TJ

Nice. See ya' round some time, Joy. I mean Kill Joy.

(He exits SL)

LIZ

(Texting Erin)

Erin, how fast can you get here? He wants to win the tylenol challenge. Come quick.

(LIZ exits SL)

ERIN

PINK WALL VB

(Entering and addressing the audience)

My mom called 911 and his parents, then we picked up Liz so we could follow the ambulance to the hospital. Everybody at the party freaked when they saw the flashing red lights and tried to sober up, but it was too late. Somebody had already called the

cops. They must have arrived a few minutes after we took off, Lucky Liz and TJ were gone. The detection dog sniffed out the coke and weed right away and there were empty bottles of booze all over. A bunch of our classmates got cited for drug use and underage drinking.

TJ

(Returning to the stage with Liz)

I probably would have done a lot more damage to myself if I'd stayed at the party, not to mention trouble with the police. But Liz and Erin and Erin's mom stuck by me the whole night. I was too far-gone to act very grateful at the time, but I was. (LIZ enters SL) So were my parents, although they were SO mad at me. I was under "house arrest" for 2 months.

LIZ

Yeah, I feel for you but we didn't escape the wrath of our parents either.

ERIN

My mom wasn't happy about the late rescue and she was really mad that I hadn't told her anything about the party in the first place. She said that I wasn't an innocent by-stander, I was just as responsible for what happened because I kept it to myself.

LIZ

And I got grounded for going to the party without asking permission--but TJ's parents were really relieved and grateful to Erin, her mom and me, for being there for him.

TJ

I felt pretty sorry for Sara Thompson. She had a tough time explaining the naked pictures to her parents. I guess none of her friends were looking out for her. Lucky for me, Erin and Liz had my back. Turns out you don't need a million "fake" friends. Two you can count on are more than enough.

(TJ exits)

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SUICIDE/DEPRESSION

LIZ

This segment is dedicated to the memory of our former classmate David Manning.

ERIN

David was the saddest story of our middle school this past year.

LIZ

David was sick. He suffered from depression. And in May of this past year he took his own life.

ERIN

It totally changed the school and our class. We never thought it would happen here, we thought it was just something that happened in movies or in other cities. It shook up the whole school.

LIZ

I wish I could have helped him. I didn't know what was going on or what to do. A lot of people thought the same thing.

ERIN

(TJ enters SR, changes into David's costume)

TJ never got to know David since he was new at our school this year, so he will be playing David in this last segment. The reason we want to tell you about him is because we think it's important to tell you some of the things we saw with him, so you can look out for the people in your school.

(ERIN and TJ exit SR)

LIZ

I found out about David from my dad who found out from another parent. I'll never forget when he told me. He started out pretty strong but as he told me what happened he broke down into tears. It was the first time I had ever seen my dad cry. I cried too. He told me he loved me and gave me a big hug. I wasn't that close to David, but we had gone to the same school since kindergarten.

(DAVID enters, sits in right chair)

This past year we spent a lot of time together in English class. We were partners in a semester-long project writing short stories.

(Sits in chair next to David)

Hey David, I'm Liz.

DAVID

(Playfully offended)

Seriously? I know who you are Liz. We were in Mrs. Hobb's class for 2nd grade!

LIZ

I know! That was just soooo long ago I didn't know if you'd remember.

DAVID

Of course I remember. You always wore that Powerpuff Girls hoodie, I think you might have thought you were one...

LIZ

Oh. My. Gosh. I loved them - they were my favorite!

DAVID

They were pretty awesome. Speaking of superheros - I have the best idea ever for our first short story... a superhero...wait for it...squirrel!

LIZ

A squirrel?

DAVID

Yeah! He can be from Mexico. We can call him El Muchacho De Pistachio! He'll have a little cape and go on adventures and everything. It'll be hilarious!

LIZ

(Skeptical)

Sure, why not?!

(crosses DS)

David was right. At the end of the month when we read our short story out loud, everyone in the class thought it was...

DAVID

Hilarious!

(They laugh and exit SL)

ERIN

(ERIN enters SR)

I found out about David from my parents too. It was awful. I ran into the bathroom and threw up right after I found out and cried for the rest of the day. I couldn't sleep for days. David and I were pretty close. He was in my lunch hour and we both played the trumpet so we sat next to each other in band too. And to this day I have a really hard time with this whole thing. At first I was angry. Angry that he did that. Angry that he left his friends and his family behind like that. I thought it was so selfish of him. I also wondered if maybe it was my fault, that maybe I could have done something to save him. But my counselor says that he needed more help than any single friend could have given him. But, now that I look back, the signs were obvious. I just didn't pick up on them...

(DAVID enters SL, they pass each other in hallway)

ERIN

Hey Hey! Congrats on making first chair. You have been sounding amazing! Your tone...I'm sorta jealous..

(Laughing)

DAVID

Yeah, well you know how my parents are, they made me practice all summer.

ERIN

I guess they can be pretty tough, but it's paying off, you sound great. Those little intro songs you play for everyone when they come in are hilarious!

DAVID

Thanks! I have some pretty awesome ones planned for tomorrow. Hey, so I got this new game that just came out and I want to tell you about it, talk strategy at lunch?

ERIN

I have a meeting with Mr. Landale during lunch so I can't today, but I'll be over after school for sure.

DAVID

Great, see you then!

(ERIN exits SR, LIZ enters SL, David sits)

LIZ

The next month in English class

(She sits)

DAVID

(Crumples up paper)

Ugh... this sucks... I can't think of anything.

LIZ

Hey it's okay, you're the most creative person I know, you'll think of something.

(Beat of silence)

I kind of liked the idea with the rapping puppies.

DAVID

That idea was stupid... I'm sorry I even brought it up.... actually... Is it cool if I just work by myself?

LIZ

But we're partners, come on David.

DAVID

Maybe you should switch partners...

(Exits SR)

LIZ

Eventually we got a second story written and the class really wanted us to read it aloud since they liked “El Muchacho” so much. We did read it aloud, but you could barely hear David when he read because he spoke so quietly, so it wasn’t as big of a hit as the first story was and I think that made him just feel worse.

(Exits SL)

ERIN

(Enters SR)

In band, David wasn't playing as well either, in the beginning of the year, he would write these little songs for people that he said were intro songs, and then he'd play them for people as they walked in the band room for practice. But as the semester went on he stopped doing that and when people came in they would give him a hard time, asking "David, where's my entrance music?" And David would say he just couldn't think of anything or that he was sorry, but he was tired. It seemed like his horn was quieter and he just wasn't hitting the right notes a lot of the time. It was like he couldn't focus or wasn't trying. And then eventually our band teacher had to move David from first chair down to second.

(Passing in Hallway, David enters SR tries to avoid Erin)

ERIN

Hey! David?! Sorry about Mr. Mosley moving you to 2nd chair. I know how much it meant to you.

DAVID

No, it's cool. I'm okay with it...

ERIN

Oh, are you sure? Because...

DAVID

Yeah, it's fine.

(David sits)

ERIN

(Addressing the audience)

I thought maybe he was just mad at me since I had taken first chair but he had been acting differently at lunch too.

(Sits next to him)

Taco Tuesday! It's your favorite!!!

DAVID

I'm not hungry...

ERIN

But it's Taco Tuesday!

(No response)

David...come on, cheer up! (no reaction) what's wrong?

DAVID

Nothing.

ERIN

Nothing?

DAVID

(He shrugs)

ERIN

So everything is good?

DAVID

I guess so.

ERIN

Are you sure? You haven't really been eating at all... David you can talk to me...we

haven't talked game strategy in a while.

DAVID

I'm just tired...I'll catch up with you later.

(He exits SR)

(Liz and Erin talk to each other this section)

LIZ

As the semester went on, our short stories in English class got weirder and weirder. David only wanted to write stories about people dying and what happened to them in the afterlife. He would ask me what I thought happened to people when they died.

ERIN

David started talking like that online, too. I remember one time when our squad lost a really close match, and David logged off right away. The next day, I tried to message him to talk strategy in the next match, but he'd changed his username to "Man Down," and the next day he deactivated his account.

(LIZ exits SL)

ERIN

Hey, what happened last night? I saw you deactivated your account?

DAVID

(Shrugs)

ERIN

You also seemed really... down... in band... is this about getting moved down...

DAVID

I ruin all the songs. I ruin everything. I should just quit.

ERIN

Don't say that David. You don't ruin anything. I know you've been sad or whatever lately but you are too good to quit. Besides, Mr. Mosley would never-

DAVID

Mr Mosley said people in band are tired of my negative attitude and told me whatever it

is to get over it- and he's right... I'm just... over it

ERIN

What does that mean? David?

(David exits SR and she follows after him)

LIZ

The very last writing assignment that I did with David was the weirdest. He told me that I could write the first half and he would write the second half. So I did my fair share and wrote a story about a girl who planted a garden that she wanted to be the best in the world. Well, when David showed me his pages, I couldn't believe it! He made it so that the girl ended up killing all of the plants in the garden because it was so hard for plants to grow up healthy in this world. When I asked him about it, he said he thought that the girl did all of her plants a favor by finishing quickly what everybody knew was going to happen anyway. Why didn't I tell anybody?! It seems so obvious now.

ERIN

One day in band we were performing solos for each other, so people would get up, do their solos and then get feedback on them. Well, David had chosen a really difficult piece. When he stood up to play you could almost feel the tension in the room because we all wanted him to do so well. When he started playing it sounded so good. He played like he had earlier in the year, better even. We were all smiling from ear to ear as he belted it out, but then about halfway through the song he missed one of the notes, a really high one, one that I haven't ever even hit. After he missed it, he stopped, sighed, looked at his music, and tried to hit it again. He couldn't. He tried one last time and...he missed it. It was so awful. Then he went over to his chair, said he wasn't feeling well, and left. I saw him one last time after school that day.

(DAVID enters SR with backpack)

ERIN

David, whoa, what a surprise I didn't expect to see you here. Come in.

DAVID

I can't stay, I just wanted to give you something.

ERIN

What? Why?

(Gives her PlayStation or something resembling a gaming system in a bag)

Why would you give me this? David, you love your PS4? I don't understand.

DAVID

My grades aren't the best right now. My Mom is just going to take it away anyway until I get them up. Figured you should have it until then.

ERIN

David, this is too expensive, I'm not taking it.

DAVID

Just take it. I'll get my grades up and get it back from you then, alright?

ERIN

David, are you okay?

DAVID

Yeah. Bye.

ERIN

So I took it, but I didn't play with it, just left it in the bag because I planned on giving it back to him.

(Beat)

That was the last time I ever saw David. Every time I look at that bag, I can't help thinking... I just miss him.

LIZ

Our school has been really good about providing help since David died by suicide. People who've needed counseling have gotten it. But I wish we wouldn't have needed any of it. I wish he were still here. Whether you are depressed or know somebody that is depressed, please talk to them and tell them there is help for them, that they need to talk to somebody about it.

ERIN

And if you think someone is depressed and thinking about hurting themselves or someone else, you need to talk to a trusted adult, right away, before it's too late.

LIZ

And to David, wherever you are, may El Muchacho de Pistachio live on forever.

ERIN

Bye David. It was good playing with ya. I'll miss you so much.

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CONCLUSION

LIZ

So, like I said at the beginning, a lot of things happened last year,

ERIN

And not all of them were good. But we got through it.

TJ

Yeah we did, with the help of our parents, teachers and counselors...but mostly, each other. And we learned a lot. We hope you learned something, too. Thanks for listening.

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