

A Bid to Save the World

By

Erin Bregman

Erin Bregman
304A Precita ave
San Francisco CA 94110
831 295-9788
erinbregman@gmail.com

COMPLETE LIST OF CHARACTERS (Variable Cast Size: 8-31)

ADAM 17, male. Best friends with Evelyn, earnest, insightful, and a teenager.

EVELYN 17, female. Best friends with Adam, excitable, bold, and a teenager.

IDA Ida is an old woman compared with Adam and Evelyn. Maybe she is only in her 40's though. She has been around for ages, and used to be Sister when she was young.

DEATH Death is any age, female. She is unpredictably changeable, and is played by a rotating cast - every time we see her, we see another version of Death, played by someone new. She eats a lot of oranges.

JAMES 19, male. A library page. Very particular about many things, very sharp, and quick to speak his thoughts. If he were alive today, he would probably be medicated. But in this world, there's no need.

BROTHER 17, dead, and Sister's twin brother. He is not good at telling stories, but can sing pretty well.

SISTER 17, female. She doesn't do anything halfway.

CHORUS They sing, and set the world that sister lives in and travels through. By the end, they are death's minions. Chorus is always played by all actors who are not already in a scene that the chorus is present in.

UNCLE 60's, male. Uncle to Sister. Infinitely patient, and understands her better than anyone in the world now that Brother is gone.

KAREN 40's, female. The assistant to John Jacob O'Reilly Smitherton. Highly capable in

every way.

JACOB 19, male. A singer of beautiful songs.

LYDIA 20's, female. An introvert.

RACHEL 20's, female. An extrovert.

JOHN JACOB O'REILLY SMITHERTON

50's or older, male. He is a banker and probably wears a suit.

DEMONSTRATORS 1-6 Any age, any gender

APPLICANTS 1-13 Any age, any gender

CHARACTER DOUBLING FOR CAST OF 8 (3M, 5F).

BROTHER/ADAM/JACOB	Male
JAMES/DEATH/CHORUS	Male
UNCLE/JOHN J.O.S/DEATH/CHORUS	Male
SISTER/EVELYN	Female
IDA/KAREN/DEATH/CHORUS	Female
LYDIA/DEATH/CHORUS	Female
RACHEL/DEATH/CHORUS	Female
DEATH/CHORUS	Female

SUGGESTED CHORUS DOUBLINGS

JACOB also: Demonstrator 1 & 5, Applicant 2, 7 & 12, Chorus

KAREN also: Demonstrator 3, Applicant 6 & 11, Chorus

LYDIA also: Demonstrator 2, Applicant 3, 8, & 13, Chorus

RACHEL also: Demonstrator 4, Applicant 1, 5, & 10, Chorus

JJOS also: Uncle, Demonstrator 6, Applicant 4, 9, & 14, Chorus

For 31 roles, all chorus characters can be played by different actors.

TIME

A future where nobody dies. A past where people did. And a story where time has no bearing.

PLACE

A library full of card catalogues (no books), a courtyard, a graveyard, a cold and empty place between life and death, and the valley of death.

NOTE: THE SONG OF GREAT SORROW AND BEAUTY

The first hint we hear of the Song of Great Sorrow and Beauty should be in the very first demonstration of heartbreak. The sound of heartbreak is a small, subtle, uncomplicated thing, quietly beautiful with a hint of unbearable sadness underneath. It might be a few notes on a single instrument. An oboe, maybe. Not a violin.

The Song of Great Sorrow and Beauty, whatever it becomes, is built on and around the sound of heartbreak. If heartbreak is the root, the rest of the song is everything that grows from it.

By the time everyone in the world is singing it, the Song of Great Sorrow and Beauty is an orchestra at sea – always moving and shifting, made up of tiny pieces yet somehow together it adds up to the biggest thing in the whole world (big as in vast, not necessarily loud). And though there is something a little chaotic in it, you still want to listen to it forever.

When someone hums part of the Song of Great Sorrow and

Beauty, part of the whole rest of the song wakes up around them, ready to sing along. But humming is not singing, so whatever sounds step up to help are muted versions of the beginning of the song. It should feel like something wants to break through from three rooms over, but can't.

NOTE: IDA'S PHYSICAL TIC

Ida has a physical, nervous tic that functions a little bit like a stutter. It interrupts her speech and movements. It is notated in the script as: /. A repeated or more severe tick is notated as: //.

The physical tic is a small part of whatever the full movement of heartbreak is in the play. It should be short, repeatable, and able to get more or less intense in different moments. Ida reads her book as much as possible. When she is reading the book, the nervous tic is nonexistent.

PROLOGUE

(An empty, non-motorized wheelchair sits onstage, tipped on its side. Sister lays on top of one of the wheels, spinning.)

(Everywhere else is the Chorus. They scatter flower petals and sing. Sister spins as they sing. It's part mourning, part lullaby. It begins and ends simply, but builds to something full and beautiful in between.)

CHROUS

Too young to die,
 much too young to die,
 what a boy so kind, so tender so shy
 and too young to die.

Where the children lay,
 here's where the children lay,
 whether car or train or a bullet through the brain
 it's where the children lay.

All sorrow and tears,
 the world is sorrow and tears,
 so we bury him here, only seventeen years
 with sorrow and tears.

Too young to die,
 much too young to die,
 what a boy so kind, so tender so shy
 and far, far, far, far too young to die.

(Uncle enters, carrying a small plate of fruit--a tangerine, berries, grapes. He watches Sister spin. The moment he opens his mouth to speak, she stops spinning and cuts him off.)

SISTER

You're sorry, you bring your condolences, and invite me to open up to you if I need it.

UNCLE

No, actually.

SISTER

Then you're not sorry, don't care, and would rather not hear a word about how I feel at all.

UNCLE

Wrong again.

SISTER

You're here to check on me then. Make sure I haven't killed anyone for it.

UNCLE

Have you?

SISTER

I'm still plotting my revenge.

UNCLE

Who on?

SISTER

The world.

UNCLE

You'll be here a while.

SISTER

I've been narrowing it down.

UNCLE

Oh?

SISTER

To the first person stupid enough to try talking to me.

(She goes back to spinning. Uncle does not move, but stands holding the plate of fruit.)

(Beat.)

SISTER

I'm not going to eat it,

UNCLE

That's fine.

(beat)

UNCLE

You walked out early, and I thought-

SISTER

I'm not hungry.

UNCLE

That's fine.

(beat)

UNCLE

You left before your time to speak.

SISTER

I had nothing to say.

UNCLE

You were on the program,

SISTER

It wasn't my idea.

UNCLE

I thought the two of you decided that together when-

SISTER

Can we not talk about it?

(He sits on the ground near Sister, and puts the plate of fruit on the ground next to him. Sister stops spinning. Uncle sits. They stay like that for a moment.)

UNCLE

My favorite thing about your brother was the way he took in a place as soon as he got there. Ever since he could walk, I think, even if he'd been there before, he would walk into a space, stand there, turn around, and take it all in. There I was, the grown up, going through life at a million miles an hour. And there he always was, just stopping for a moment to take a breath and take it all in.

(Total stillness. Sister and Uncle

sit.)

(Brother, alone onstage. He takes in his surroundings, turning slowly around to take it all in.)

(Sister and Uncle sit. Total stillness.)

SISTER

Nobody should ever die ever again.

(A library of no books. The Chorus becomes an assortment of library patrons. Ida and James are there, working.)

(James has a pile of cards in front of him, which he is sorting into over a dozen different piles. He does this carefully, deliberately. Every pile is impeccably neat.)

(Ida stands behind her desk, completely absorbed in reading a book. It is the only book in the entire library.)

(Adam and Evelyn sit at a library table with papers scattered from their backpacks. Evelyn has a clean sheet of paper in front of her, and holds a pencil at the ready. Adam is thinking. He twirls his pencil in expert fashion.)

ADAM

Okay. Methods.

(She writes it down)

ADAM

One: Find out how people used to die.

Two: Try them all.

(She writes it down)

EVELYN

Okay.

ADAM
Okay?

EVELYN
Yeah.

ADAM
Cool.

(beat)

EVELYN
So how did people die?

ADAM
How? Umm....

•
Oh: Three Ways.
Drowning, Cancer, and Exploding and Stuff.

EVELYN
Couldn't people also die from just,
getting really really old? Or something?

ADAM
Could they?

EVELYN
I think?

(beat)

ADAM
Maybe we should do some research.

(Evelyn and Adam leave everything at their table, and begin to look through the card catalogues. They pick out a few cards, and bring them to Ida. Immediately, James goes to the catalogue they were using, and straightens the cards that have been put out of place.)

EVELYN
We'd like to see these, please.

(Ida lowers her book down, and examines the cards. Each '/' is Ida's physical nervous tic.)

IDA

Interesting /
interesting selection.

EVELYN

It's kind of a research project.

ADAM

It's for school.

(Ida tucks her book under her arm, and takes the cards over to a door. She opens the door to the blank space, and turns on a light.)

IDA

Let me know when the first is done, and I'll put in the next /
The next card. Come on out when you're finished.

(Evelyn and Adam go into the room and close the door behind them. On the library side, Ida slots in the first of the cards into a sort of reader, and goes back to reading her book.)

(Demonstrators One and Two enter. They carry a large props bag between them which they set down, and open. They use the items inside as needed to help with their demonstrations.)

(After each of the items on the recited list, the Demonstrators give a brief physical demonstration.)

DEMONSTRATORS ONE&TWO

Historical causes of Death, Accidental.

One: Animal Attack, domestic.

Animal Attack, wild.

Two: Avalanche.

Three: Choking.

Four: Crashing.
 of Bicycle
 of Car
 of Plane
 of Rocket
 of Scooter
 of Ship
 of Train.
Five: Drowning.
Six: Earthquake.
Seven: Falling
Eight: Freezing.
Nine: Hurricane
Ten: Gun shot.
Eleven: Impalement
Twelve: Lightning strike.
Thirteen: Poisoning
 Of air
 Of food
 Of skin
 Of water

(Demonstrators One and Two leave with their bag as Demonstrators Three and Four enter with a bag of their own. They also demonstrate each listed item with props from the bag as needed.)

DEMONSTRATORS THREE&FOUR

Historical Causes of Death, Illness.

One: Allergic Reaction.
Two: Bubonic Plague.
Three: Cancer.
 of Blood
 of bone
 of breast
 of lung
 of prostate
 of skin.
Four: Child Birth.
Five: Cholera
Six: Congenital Defects.
Seven: Dehydration.

Eight: Degenerative Disorders.

Nine: Emphysema.

Ten: Hepatitis

Eleven: Infection

of bladder

Of brain

Of kidney

Of lungs

Of respiratory tract

Of skin

Of spinal cord

Of tooth

Of urinary tract

Twelve: Influenza

Thirteen: Leprosy

(Brother, alone onstage. He is still taking in his surroundings, gets cold. He zips up a sweatshirt, and puts his hands in his pockets. He pulls out a small orange. Turns it over. Looks at it. Puts it back in his pocket.)

(Demonstrators Three and Four pack up and leave as Demonstrators Five and Six enter with their bag. They demo as the others did before them.)

DEMONSTRATORS FIVE&SIX

Historical Causes of Death, Non-Accidental.

One: Blood Loss.

Two: Choking

Three: Decapitation.

Four: Drowning.

Five: Electric Shock.

Six: Exploding

of Car

of Person

of Rocket

of Scooter

of Ship

of Train.
Seven: Falling.
Eight: Hanging.
Nine: Gun Shot.
Ten: Head Injury.
Eleven: Impalement
Twelve: Mauling
Thirteen: Poisoning
 Of air
 Of food
 Of skin
 Of water
Fourteen: Radiation

(Brother, alone onstage. He is still taking in his surroundings, still cold. He puts his hood up, and takes out the orange again. Stares at it. Throws it up, catches it. Stares at it.)

(All demonstrators enter. There is no bag. What they demonstrate here should look entirely different from all other previous demonstrations. When we get to 'three', we hear a hint of the Song of Great Sorrow and Beauty)

ALL DEMONSTRATORS

Historical Causes of Death, Other.
One: Ascension.
Two: Fright.
Three: Heartbreak.

(Beat. They are done.)

(Sister and Uncle sit, silent. They sit)

SISTER

Oh no,

(She jumps up. Uncle watches.)

SISTER

Oh no, oh no, oh no,

(She looks around for something,
without really knowing what she's
looking for. She turns to Uncle.)

SISTER

I forgot to tell him something.

UNCLE

Sometimes it can help to write a letter, and-

SISTER

I'm not going to write a stupid letter.
You don't understand.

UNCLE

What don't I understand?

SISTER

Anything!

(She turns away from Uncle, and closes
her eyes. Thinks. Hard.)

SISTER

Theories about where you go right after you die.
One: Heaven.

(She looks up. Looks around.)

No trees, no ladders, nothing to climb, come back to
that one.

Theories about what happens after you die, Two:
Purgatory.

(She looks around)

I have no idea where that is, come back to that one
too. Theory Three.

Hell.

Except, my brother was good, so. Moving on.

Theory Four. Is, um. Nothing.

Nothing happens, you go nowhere, which doesn't help
me, so,

Theory five: ...

Regeneration!

(she scans for people, as far as she

can see.)

That's no good, too many options, too much-next theory.

Six: .

River Styx! The underworld.

(looks down.)

I need a shovel.

(A chorus member hands her a shovel. Without hesitation she grabs it, and begins to dig.)

(She digs. It is hard, laborious, slow-moving work in hard ground. Uncle watches. She digs harder.)

UNCLE

Would you like some help?

SISTER

No.

UNCLE

You'll be digging for a long time,

SISTER

Good.

(She digs.)

UNCLE

You'll never reach him that way.

SISTER

You don't know anything.

UNCLE

I know that questions of the heart have to be answered with the heart, not the body.

(Sister ignores him, and keeps digging. Uncle watches.)

(The chorus sings as she works. Their song is a work song. Pure and Simple.)

CHORUS

The underworld is not

under a hole

(Breath)

The way through death is not
digging the ground

(Breath)

The underworld is digging away
at everything inside you
and death is not a hole
under the ground

(Breath)

The way you seek is not
How you will find

(Breath)

To bury death is not
digging the ground

(Breath)

To get to him you cannot contain
everything inside you
the way you seek is not
how you will find

(Breath)

for death is not a hole-

(Sister stops suddenly, and the song
cuts off. She is out of breath. Sweaty.
Exhausted.)

UNCLE

Let me-

(Sister throws down her shovel, and
turns and screams at him.)

SISTER

Shut up! Shut up! Shut up!

(She picks up the fruit he brought her,
and throws it as hard as she can
offstage, and sits with her back to
Uncle.)

(The orange rolls back on. Uncle
reaches out, picks it up, puts it back
on the plate.)

(A Story. The players act and tell it at the same time.)

(Lydia, in bed. A bang. She wakes up.)

LYDIA

Lydia awoke with a start, on the first morning of the new day of the new year, with a strong resolve, and a resolute resolution to, once and for all, establish a brand new state of peace and quiet in the house, by getting her sister to shut up.

(Another bang, of pots and pans, from the other room.)

LYDIA

Which would, in turn, promote world peace. She rolled out of bed, and while trying to envision this future state of glorious silence, Lydia put on her socks.

(In the kitchen is Rachel, somehow making a ton of noise as she tries to quietly clean up the kitchen from the party the night before.)

RACHEL

Rachel, meanwhile, was in the kitchen, quietly and thoughtfully putting away the pots and pans from last night's dinner with friends that led to the party with friends that led to this first morning of the new day of the new year. She had been up for close to an hour, and had already prepared the coffee, toast, and fresh fruit salad that now sat on the kitchen table, awaiting her sister's typically belated morning arrival. As Lydia entered, she wished her a good morning.

Good morning!

LYDIA

Morning.

RACHEL

Happy new year! She said, even though they'd wished it to each other half a dozen times the night before, amid champagne toasts and balloon drops, but she loved the inherent joy of those two words together in a

line, and since it wasn't something you got to say every day, said it again: Happy new year!

LYDIA

You too, said Lydia. Though she didn't feel it. Her tiredness from the late night before, mingled with the rude awakening and the ongoing noise both in her kitchen and in her own head, full of things she would like to say to her sister given the chance, was making her exceedingly grumpy. But despite all that, she was strongly resolved to move forward with her resolute resolution to get her sister to become her partner in establishing a new era of peace and quiet. Her first tactic?

RACHEL

Guess what?

LYDIA

Would be to lead by example.

RACHEL

Guess what?

LYDIA

Lydia looked at her, and said nothing.

RACHEL

Rachel took Lydia's silence as a sign to talk away, and with a quick glance at the kitchen clock, realized that they had yet to enjoy a morning cup of coffee. Without pausing to stop her story, Rachel poured them both large hot mugs of it, and kept on talking as they sipped away.

LYDIA

Lydia drank her coffee in silence, while regretting that she was drinking it at all, somewhat fearful that doing so was only encouraging Rachel's continued tendency toward noise. She didn't want to listen to this anymore. Peace and quiet could, possibly, be hers. She put her mug down.

RACHEL

Isn't that amazing? Rachel said, at the conclusion of her fascinating, gripping, and suspenseful tale. She grinned at Lydia, who opened her mouth to speak.

LYDIA

She contemplated the most tactful way to broach the subject, and then realized that tact was not part of this particular resolution.
I've made a resolution.

RACHEL

What's that?

LYDIA

I've resolved to get you to help me establish a new era of peace and quiet, by not talking so much. Or at all. Which will someday, eventually, lead to world peace.

RACHEL

Rachel was offended, but tried not to show it.
(She looks very offended)
Why would my not talking lead to world peace?

LYDIA

Try it, and you'll see.

(The library. The chorus, everywhere, are patrons. Ida stands outside the room where Evelyn and Adam were inside learning about Death. She reads her book.)

(James, finished with straightening the catalogue Evelyn and Adam were using, comes over to Ida.)

JAMES

I can re-file any you are done with,

(Without looking up, Ida hands him the cards.)

(He takes them, looks them over.)

JAMES

Historical causes of death?

IDA

School research project.

JAMES

We never researched this at school.

(Beat.)

JAMES

I have said,
we never researched this at school.

(Ida looks up)

IDA

Maybe they're just /
Just curious.

(She reads again.)

JAMES

I don't find it curious at all.

(beat.)

JAMES

I consider our present immunity to death a natural
culmination of Human Evolution.

(Beat. Ida reads.)

JAMES

I know enough about death to put it into context of
the rest of our Evolution, which seems like sufficient
information to me.

(He begins to organize the cards in his
hand.)

JAMES

I will put them away.

(He puts them away. Ida still reads.)

(As Ida reads, she hums a small piece
of the song of great sorrow and beauty.
She repeats just that one piece. James
notices. It is distracting, and
bothersome.)

JAMES

Why are you humming.

IDA

Hm?

JAMES

You know there's no music allowed in the library.
It's against the rules and I think you should stop.

(Ida looks up from her book.)

IDA

Hm?

JAMES

It's very distracting and I am trying to work.

IDA

I'm sorry.

(Ida goes back to reading)

JAMES

Does that mean you are going to stop?

(She reads)

JAMES

Does that mean you are going to stop?

IDA

Yes, I'll stop.

(Ida closes her book. James goes back
to work.)

IDA

//
James,

JAMES

Saying my name is also distracting.

IDA

Stop working for a moment, please.

(James finishes straightening a pile,

looks up.)

IDA

You've been doing great work here,

JAMES

I know.

IDA

I want you to know that I appreciate it.

JAMES

You're welcome.

IDA

It's a huge asset having you here.
You've done great work, all /
All summer.

JAMES

Yes. I know.

IDA

When I hired you, you gave me the impression that you
would only be here temporarily,

JAMES

What exactly was it that I said to give you that
impression?

IDA

You said you were going to /
To University.

JAMES

I will be going, yes.

IDA

I thought you were going this year.

JAMES

I have changed my mind.

IDA

Why?

Don't you think, James, that it's time for you to /

JAMES

University will be there forever, and for now I like it here.

I'm going to go back to work now.

I want you to know that I appreciate your not humming.

(He goes back to working on his piles.)

(Adam and Evelyn at the library table. They have a very very long list in front of them. Evelyn is counting the items on their list.)

EVELYN

There's a serious shitload of ways to die on here.

ADAM

How many?

EVELYN

I don't know, lost count.

(Adam takes the list, starts counting it.)

EVELYN

There's no way we have enough time to try these all ourselves. What we need is
A Team. Or something.

ADAM

What, like. Get people to volunteer to try Accidental A through H?

EVELYN

Yeah!

ADAM

No.

EVELYN

Why not?

ADAM

Nobody's going to volunteer for that.

EVELYN

Sure they will. It's an innovative, ground-breaking, cutting edge medical study. People love that stuff.

ADAM

Yeah, when it's led by certified professionals.

EVELYN

They don't have to know we're in high school.

ADAM

Don't you think it might be illegal?

EVELYN

Who's going to say anything?

ADAM

If one of them dies, everyone.

EVELYN

Yeah, but we'll also be heroes. No one will care if it was Legal.

ADAM

I still think it's a bad idea.

EVELYN

Well I think it's a great one.
Are you going to help or not?

(Evelyn writes a quick sign:
"Experiment: Dying. Apply here." She
tapes it to the front of their table.
The Applicants arrive.)

(It is like an audition maybe--the
Applicants talk, and Evelyn and Adam
take notes.)

APPLICANT 1

So,
I'd like to be part of this study because
um,
Death is like Crazy Interesting.
Cause like,
nobody really does it anymore? and um.
I think it would be cool.
If your whole experiment thing actually works
it would be really cool.
To be the first one.
Or even the second one, you know like
make a name for myself.
Or something.

APPLICANT 2

Well when I was a kid my Dad used to tell me the story
of how the last person in his family to die got
killed.
It was a really great story.
I would love to be part of a really great story like
that.

APPLICANT 3

This thing pays, right?

APPLICANT 4

I'm old.
Really old.
My wife is dead.
My brother is dead.
My parents are dead.
All my best friends from childhood are dead,
I'm the only one who got left out.
Bet they're having all kinds of fun without me.

APPLICANT 5

I'd like to join this study so I can put it on my list
of extracurricular service activities when I apply for
college.

APPLICANT 6

...
...
...
...
.....

I'm sorry, can you repeat the question?

APPLICANT 7

What you need is an Explorer.
This is totally uncharted territory, and I have
experience with that.
You may have guessed it by my name, but I am
of the Blood Line
of Christopher Columbus.
Exploration runs in my veins.

APPLICANT 8

Do I get paid?

APPLICANT 9

Ok.
So I brought some stuff we might Need when we get
there.

.
I don't actually know how this sort of thing used to
go down, I didn't get a chance to finish my research,
but here:

(Takes out the items from a bag, one by
one.)

APPLICANT 9

Pen,
pencil,
water bottle,
extra food,
Coffee.

.
What if they don't have coffee?

APPLICANT 10

Oh. OH!
Ok ok ok,
So like what you mean is,
yeah, No. I totally,
Totally get it.

APPLICANT 11

What I'd do is
Walk right up there
punch 'em in the face like
BAM!

and it'd be like Yeah,
Now What.

APPLICANT 12

I've been practicing:

(Applicant 12 takes a deep breath, and holds it. Holds it. Holds it.)

APPLICANT 13

(Some of this is whispered)

You don't actually believe it. Do you?
You must realize the whole thing is a hoax. The whole "We used to die" story is a central piece of the ruling elite's narrative, just one more way they pull the wool over our eyes to make sure we never see the truth.
Because really, every single one of us is a God. That's why we're immortal.
But they can't have us learning it, because if everyone knew what kind of power they had inside them, we couldn't be controlled.
It's all about control.
Don't believe it.
We're Gods.

(Sister lays on top of one of the wheelchair wheels, thinking nothing, feeling nothing. She does not spin. The Chorus is everywhere, looking at Sister.)

(Uncle still sits, looking at her)

(beat.)

SISTER

I'm sorry I yelled at you.

(He says nothing.)

(Uncle picks up one of the petals from the ground, and puts it down between himself and Sister.)

(He picks up another petal, puts it on top of the first.)

(Uncle picks up a 3rd petal, adds it to the pile.)

(He picks up one petal and stacks it on every line. Uncle picks up petals and recites.)

UNCLE

One for you
one for me
one to speak
one to see
one for now
one for then
one for never
count to ten.

(Uncle looks to sister. She stares back, and says nothing. Uncle counts under his breath as he stacks more petals.)

UNCLE

One, two, three, four, five, six, seven, eight, nine, ten.

(The chorus sits, and begins to pick up petals from the ground. Each chorus member begins to make his or her own small pile on the floor. Uncle starts building another small pile. He recites. As he does, sister begins to slowly pick up a petal here or there. She joins him in the end.)

UNCLE

One for you
one for me
one to speak
one to see
one for now
one for then
one for never
count to ten.

One, two,

SISTER

Three,

UNCLE

Four,

SISTER

Five,

UNCLE

Six,

SISTER

Seven,

UNCLE

Eight,

SISTER

Nine,

UNCLE

Ten.

(Something about the space shifts.
Sister notices it.)

(The chorus begins to sing. It is
reminiscent of the siren's song in O
Brother Where Art Thou.)

(During the song, Sister picks up more
petals of her own, spinning on the
chair to reach them, and adds them to
Uncle's pile. As the song grows, so do
the piles. During the song, sister gets
off the wheel, and sits next to Uncle
to help build his pile. Throughout,
they cast the spell together under
their breath.)

(All of Brother's actions on the
following pages happen at the same time
as the song.)

CHORUS

Cast your spell
Cast it wide,
close your eyes,
Against the tide.

Not to see
Or to know
Close them tight
Cast it wide.

Count to ten
And ten again
One for never
One for then

till you see
You'll never know
Just how deep
The casting goes.

till you see
You'll never know
Just how deep
The casting goes.

(Sister closes her eyes, and counts to ten one more time. At the end of her counting, brother exits. Sister opens her eyes. She finds herself alone, on a trail of petals, and assesses the situation.)

SISTER

Hello?

(Nobody there. She turns around, and takes it all in.)

(Sister spots something in the petals, and picks it up. It is an orange. She pockets it, and follows the trail of petals off.)

(During the song, Brother looks around, taking it all in. He looks around, searching for anyone else. There is nobody else.)

(Brother sees a pile of flower petals on the ground. He goes over to it, bends down, examines it.)

(Brother picks up one petal, smells it. He puts the petal in his pocket. Picks up another, smells it, puts it in his pocket.)

(There is already something in his pocket. He pulls it out: an inhaler. He puts it down on the ground to make room for petals.)

(Brother kneels down, and stuffs every last petal from this pile into his pockets.)

(Nearly finished, Brother spots another pile of petals. He goes over to it, picks one petal up, and compares it to a petal from his pocket. He smells them both.)

(Brother looks around, searching for anyone else. There is nobody else. Brother puts them in his pocket, but there is something there again. He pulls out a candle, and puts it on the floor, then stuffs all of the petals from this 2nd pile into his pockets.)

(Nearly done, he spots a 3rd pile. Without stopping to smell or examine anything, Brother pulls a hospital wrist band and a few bags of tea from a pocket, and stuffs the flower petals into his pockets too. They are

overflowing. Brother discovers every onstage pile of petals. He puts as many as possible into his pockets as quickly as possible. Along the way he also pulls out of his pockets and leaves behind: pill bottles, an elastic physical therapy band, a bouncy ball, another hospital wrist band, a piece of an IV tube, and chap stick.)

(The picking up of petals leads him off, with pockets so overflowing that a trail of petals is left behind.)

(Evelyn and Adam outside of the library, with a large bag of supplies, and a long list. Chorus, as the applicants, is milling around. Evelyn addresses the group.)

EVELYN

If you could please form a line, we're going to be working on Accidental, A through H.

(They form a line. Adam reaches into the bag, and hands out tools to each one as Evelyn gives out the assignments. When an applicant gets a tool, they take it and exit. Chorus members return to the line as new applicants as needed.)

EVELYN

Animal attack, domestic,

(Adam hands Applicant #1 a small cage.)

EVELYN

Animal attack, wild,

(Adam hands Applicant #2 a slightly larger cage.)

EVELYN

Avalanche,

(Adam hands Applicant #3 a large bag of ice.)

EVELYN

Choking,

(Adam hands Applicant #4 a ziplock bag with grapes)

EVELYN

We're going to have a separate Crashing day, so you get
Drowning

(Adam hands Applicant #5 a water bottle)

EVELYN

Earthquake,

(Adam hands Applicant #6 a brick)

EVELYN

Falling,

(Adam hands Applicant #7 a climbing rope)

EVELYN

Freezing,

(Adam searches through the bag, can't find another bag of ice.)

EVELYN

Sorry, you're going to have to share with Avalanche over there,

(Applicant #8 goes off to find Applicant #3)

EVELYN

Gunshot,

(Adam hands Applicant #9 a water gun)

EVELYN

Hang gliding.

(Adam hands Applicant #10 a kite.)

(Evelyn reaches into the bag, pulls out a polaroid camera. Calls to the applicants, off.)

EVELYN

On three, then!
One, two, three!

(Sounds of applicants using their tools. Evelyn takes a picture. Silence. A beat.)

EVELYN AND ADAM

Are you dead?

ALL APPLICANTS

No,

(They come back on, deposit their tools on the ground.)

EVELYN

Thank you.
Same time tomorrow, please.

(Applicants leave)

(Adam picks up the tools, and puts them back into the bag. Evelyn looks at the polaroids they've taken.)

EVELYN

These are ridiculous.

(Adam comes over to look. They look through the photos.)

EVELYN

They don't look like real dying at all.

ADAM

How would you know?

EVELYN

Well, it can't look like this,

ADAM

I bet it does,

EVELYN

Bet it doesn't.

(they look through the pictures for
another moment.)

ADAM

How much?

(Rachel, in the kitchen, sitting.)

RACHEL

Rachel, in a gesture of goodwill and new beginnings,
had really and truly embarked on a path toward helping
her sister achieve peace and quiet. She stopped
putting away the dishes, sat at the table, and tried
to be very still and not make a sound.

(She tries to be very still and not
move.)

RACHEL

When Lydia entered, she didn't even say hi.

(Lydia enters)

RACHEL

She started to,
Hi-
And then caught herself.

(Lydia smiles, and leaves. We follow
her out.)

LYDIA

Lydia was impressed. And pleased. And somewhat skeptical that the peace and quiet would last, but wanted to enjoy it for as long as possible all the same. To her surprise and annoyance, the quieter it became in the house, which she had envisioned as the center of her future life of peace and quiet, the louder it became inside her own head. Unbidden thoughts crowded their way in, and though she had more than once told them loudly and firmly to go away, they did everything in their power to make themselves heard. Unable to quiet them inside her newly quiet and peaceful home, Lydia walked out the front door, and down the street.

(She walks outside, and down the street. On the street corner in Jacob, singing.)

JACOB

On the street corner three and a half blocks away from where Lydia now walked, Jacob stood signing a song of great sorrow and beauty. His hat had been sitting on the pavement in front of him for close to an hour, decidedly empty. He had no fear that this was any reflection on the quality of his voice, or the choice of his song. It was, he now recognized as he turned around to more fully take in his surroundings, a sparsely populated street corner, especially on this first morning of the new day of the new year. As he let out his breath at the end of a phrase, and seriously contemplated picking up his hat and going home, he saw a figure walking toward him in the distance. This person, he thought, will be the last one I sing for today, whether they like it or not. And when they pass, he decided, I will go home. As the figure neared, he took another breath, and continued to sing.

(Lydia enters)

LYDIA

As Lydia came nearer to the street corner on which Jacob stood, she could hear the faint sound of his singing. This, she thought, is another thing to ruin my peace and quiet, and therefore make it impossible

for us to ever attain world peace. She determined that the only right thing to do would be to put a stop to it then and there. As she drew nearer, a song of great sorrow and beauty entered both her ears, and settled itself near her heart. How dare you! She thought, and she broke into a run, heading straight at the singer.

JACOB

Jacob saw her coming, and was thrilled. Someone so struck by his singing, so moved by his music, that she was running to hear more, to hear it better! The closer she ran, the more beautifully he resolved to sing.

LYDIA

By the time she stood on the same street corner as the singer of this song of great sorrow and beauty, Lydia was furious. The noise in her head that she had so strongly resolved and made such a resolute resolution to silence was growing, amplified by the sound of his song. She turned to face him.

(She turns to face Jacob.)

LYDIA

I have made a resolution, she said. But the words were barely audible under the sound of the singing, which had only continued to grow. She tried again. Will you please be quiet! But it was clear he could not hear her, and seemed only to take joy in seeing her speak, which could only mean that her words themselves had gone entirely unheard. Because he showed no sign of stopping, and the noise in her head showed no sign of abating, she took him by the hand, and led him away.

(They exit)

(Brother is trying to stuff one more pile of petals into any pocket that still has room. In front of him forms the chorus, blocking his way. Behind him, a trail of petals.)

(Brother tries to walk around the chorus. They shift, and will not let him pass. The chorus members hold out their hands, palms up.)

(Sister enters, following the tail of petals. She does not see chorus or brother.)

(Brother reaches into a pocket, and pulls out a handful of flower petals. He counts them out under his breath as he puts them into a chorus member's hand.)

(At the same time, Sister spots something, bends down, picks it up. It is an inhaler. She looks around for someone. Nobody there. She searches the petals, finds something, picks it up: a candle.)

(Sister finds and picks up every last thing that brother has dropped from his pockets. When there are too many things to carry, she starts a pile in the middle of the petal trail, and adds each item to the pile when it's found.)

(Every time Sister finds something, and every time Brother gives a chorus member a petal, they count.)

BROTHER AND SISTER

One, two, three, four, five, six, seven, eight, nine, ten.

(Chorus members takes the petals, put them in his or her own pocket, and get into position around Brother.)

(When all chorus members are in position, we see that they form a boat around brother. They row. As they travel, brother takes out his orange, looks at it. They row.)

(Sister arranges each artifact she has found and begins to dance, slowly at first, then faster and faster until it builds to a real fury of sorts. Everything inside of her gets released into the air, and sinks through to the ground.)

(The chorus sings, rows, and watches. Their song grows with her movement, though remains steady in rhythm. As she gets faster, they grow into an orchestra of voices. The parts in parenthesis happen at the same time as the main text, as a second part beneath it.)

CHORUS

Think of me,
Asleep beneath the canopy.
Remember me,
Sharing the back seat.

Picture me,
climb up through the memory.
Till you're free.
Following my feet.

Think of me, (*think*)
Asleep beneath the canopy. (*Remember*)
Remember me, (*Sleep*)
Sharing the back seat. (*Sleep*)

Picture me, (*Climb*)
climb up through the memory. (*Picture*)
Till you're free. (*Free*)
Following my feet. (*Free*)

Think of me, (*Think, remember, sharing sleep*)
Asleep beneath the canopy. (*Climb, picture, follow*)

free)

Remember me, (*Think, remember, sharing sleep*)

Sharing the back seat. (*Climb, picture, follow free*)

Picture me, (*Think, remember, sharing sleep*)

climb up through the memory. (*Climb, picture, follow free*)

Till you're free. (*Think, remember, sharing sleep*)

Following my feet. (*Climb, picture, follow free*)

(Beat)

(Chorus has stopped rowing. Brother steps through their formation, and onto land.)

(Sister waits, completely out of breath. Looks around. Waits. Breaths. Waits. Waits.)

(A piece of an orange peel is thrown in from off. Brother sees it, goes over, picks it up. Another peel. He picks it up. Another, another, another. The picking up of the peels leads him off.)

(Sister is tired of waiting. Her anger explodes.)

SISTER

That
was very clear!
You effing,
Effing Suck!

(She kicks apart her carefully arranged artifacts. They scatter everywhere. She walks over to every item individually, and kicks it again. With each thing, she chants:)

SISTER

None for you.
None for me.
Never to speak.
Never to see.
Not for now.

Not for then.
No forever,
count to ten.
One!

(She picks up the orange, and throws it. The sound of it being caught, off. Sister looks to the sound, and sees the boat. Death speaks from off.)

DEATH

You should be more careful with that.

(In the Library. Evelyn and Adam are with Ida, who holds a large stack of cards for them. Her book is tucked safely under her arm. They all enter the room, as Ida slots the first card in. As soon as it's in, Ida opens her book and begins to read.)

(Chorus of Demonstrators enter, and form the picture of Matthew Brady's "Federal Dead on the Field of Battle of First Day" - Gettysburg, Pennsylvania, 1863. Their re-creation of it should look as grainy as the photo itself.)

(Adam, and Evelyn take a walking tour of the image.)

EVELYN

So these guys are all dead?

(Ida looks up.)

IDA

Nearly all of them.

(She goes back to reading.)

ADAM

Even the ones standing up?

(Ida looks at the ones standing up.)

IDA

No, not /
Not them.

(She reads.)

EVELYN

Can't you be dead standing?

IDA

Usually /
usually not.

(Evelyn and Adam shift their
perspective.)

EVELYN

So what did they die of?

IDA

Gunshot.

EVELYN

Who shot them?

(Ida looks up at the scene)

IDA

They all /
All shot each other.

(Adam and Evelyn laugh.)

ADAM

Well that's dumb.

(Ida skips to the next card, and the
chorus re-forms into the image of
Lawrence Beitler's "Lynching" photo -
Marion, Indiana - 1930. It is also just
an approximation. Ida goes back to
reading.)

EVELYN

Who's dead here?

(Evelyn and Adam tour and look. It is a
bit confusing.)

ADAM

The guys with their eyes closed?

(Ida looks up at the scene.)

IDA

/
Yes.

(She reads)

EVELYN

But they're standing.
I thought you said you couldn't be standing and dead.

(She looks up)

IDA

They aren't /
Aren't standing.

(Adam and Evelyn look closer. Ida
reads.)

EVELYN

Oh.
How uncomfortable.
Does it hurt?

(she looks up.)

IDA

You used to die from /
from it.

(Ida reads. A beat.)

ADAM

Why is there a street party going on? I thought dying
was usually serious and sad.

IDA

You'd have to /
To ask them.

(She clicks to the next card, and the
Chorus re-forms. They become the image
of Nick Ut's "Napalm Girl", Trang Bang,

South Vietnam - 1972. Again, it is just an approximation.)

IDA

I'm /
I'm sorry. I forgot /
I forgot there's actually /
Actually nobody dead in this /
In this one.

(Ida takes out the card, and goes straight back into her book.)

ADAM

I don't feel good,

(Adam opens the door and leaves. Evelyn rolls her eyes, sighs, and follows him out.)

(Adam sits in front of the library, looking awful. A mix between ill and terrified. Evelyn is near by, trying to be helpful. He doesn't look at her, but at the eraser of his pencil, which he methodically works to pull apart.)

(All around them, members of the chorus intermittently walk past, on their way home from work.)

EVELYN

Are you feeling all right?

ADAM

Sure.

(Beat)

EVELYN

Can I go get you something to eat?

ADAM

I'm fine.

EVELYN

You look sick,

ADAM

I'm fine.

(Beat. He looks at her.)

ADAM

Would you be sad if I died?

EVELYN

Sad?

ADAM

If I died tomorrow.

EVELYN

You're not dying tomorrow.

ADAM

No, I want to know.

If you found out I was dead in the morning, how would you feel?

EVELYN

Seriously?

ADAM

How would you feel.

(She thinks about it for a little.)

EVELYN

Impressed. Excited. Amazed.

Downright proud, probably. And maybe slightly annoyed that you figured out how to die all on your own but didn't even bother to tell me, and now I can't even ask you what you did because you're dead.

I might feel a little nervous too. Because I'd have everyone asking tons of questions, and I'd have to be sure to have good answers to everything, even if there were still some things we hadn't figured out.

But mostly I'd be impressed.

And excited.

And proud.

ADAM

So, not sad at all.

EVELYN

What's there to be sad about.

(Beat)

ADAM

Really, Evelyn?

EVELYN

Look, I know dying used to be super serious and stuff,
but not anymore! That's just like

Olden Days Dying.

If we could figure out how to do it today, every time
someone died I bet we'd feel

Exited! And Amazed! And full of joy!

It would be like fireworks in our head every single
time, and people would have parties for it.

Like Birthday parties.

Only Better.

ADAM

I wouldn't have a party if you died.

EVELYN

Oh come off it. You'd be totally excited.

ADAM

No I wouldn't.

EVELYN

You would! You'd be so famous, and get so many cool
people talking to you, it'd be amazing.

ADAM

But I'd never get to see or talk to you ever again.

EVELYN

It would be revolutionary though! It would totally
change the way people everywhere in the entire world
work and think and live and everything!

ADAM

Maybe. But I'd be too sad to notice.

EVELYN

Stop being depressing!

ADAM

I'm being honest.

EVELYN

Well it's really annoying and totally unrealistic.

ADAM

It is realistic, I've imagined it.

EVELYN

Well I've imagined it too!

ADAM

Not seriously,

EVELYN

Because serious sad dying thoughts aren't real!
Adam. Come on. This is Cool and Interesting and stuff.

ADAM

You really still think that?

EVELYN

Yes. Of course. It's amazing!

ADAM

Actually, it's completely terrifying and if you can't
see that I'm sorry but you're a total idiot.

(beat)

EVELYN

Are you going to take that back now?

ADAM

No, I'm quitting.

EVELYN

You can't quit. We're a team.

ADAM

Not on this.

EVELYN

You're my best friend.

ADAM

But you wouldn't shed a tear for me if I died.

EVELYN

Nobody's! Dying!

ADAM

Right! and We shouldn't be trying to either!

EVELYN

You agreed to do this with me, it was Your idea.

ADAM

Well I changed my mind.

EVELYN

Change it back.

ADAM

I don't want you to die.

EVELYN

I do

ADAM

Why.

EVELYN

It would be an adventure.

ADAM

One that you never come back from?

EVELYN

That's still an adventure.

ADAM

Would I get to come?

EVELYN

I thought you didn't want to.

ADAM

I don't.

Would you still go if I didn't come?

EVELYN

You're coming,

ADAM

If I didn't,

EVELYN

You will once you change your mind.

ADAM

If I don't change my mind and you go adventuring and you end up being adventuring alone forever,

EVELYN

Which would never happen because I would have talked you into coming a long time ago.

ADAM

Evelyn,

EVELYN

Look. Are you sick or not?

ADAM

No, I'm-

EVELYN

Then I'm going to go home and eat. Coming?

(beat)

ADAM

No thanks.

EVELYN

See you tomorrow then.

(she leaves.)

(Adam in the library, at the catalogue.
He picks out a single card.)

(James leaves his piles to make sure
the catalogue is still in good shape.)

(Adam brings his card to the reader, slots it in, and opens the door. Ida reads her book through all of this.)

JAMES

I can help you with changing out the cards if you would like.

ADAM

No, it's just one.

(He enters the room, and closes the door.)

(All demonstrators enter. They demonstrate in exactly the same way as we saw before.)

ALL DEMONSTRATORS

Historical Causes of Death, Other.

One: Ascension.

Two: Fright.

Three: Heartbreak.

(Beat. They are done. They go back to the beginning. Adam watches it again.)

ALL DEMONSTRATORS

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ALL DEMONSTRATORS

Historical Causes of Death, Other.

One: Ascension.

Two: Fright.

Three: Heartbreak.

(Beat. They are done. They go back to the beginning. Adam watches it again, and again, and again.)

(A learned man, behind a desk.)

JOHN JACOB O'REILLY SMITH.

John Jacob O'Reilly Smitherton, head banker of John Jacob O'Reilly Smitherton International, was not a crook.

He was, in contrast, a thoughtfully wealthy man. His thinking had, by and large, led him directly to his great and honestly earned wealth. And his wealth, he now hoped, would lead him to be ever increasingly more thoughtful.

He sensed an extra added level of wisdom in his contemplations of this day, the first morning of the new day of the new year. It was the kind of contemplation that one sometimes finds at the very beginning or very end of something, when you take a moment to enjoy the luxury of sitting back in your chair and reflecting on all of life's greatest joys and sorrows.

(He leans back, and closes his eyes.)

JOHN JACOB O'REILLY SMITHERT.

John Jacob O'Reilly Smitherton would often state, and firmly believed, that he would have been enormously happy to have been born someone other than a wealthy man.

Despite his steadfast disinterest in money, John Jacob O'Reilly Smitherton remained exceedingly wealthy, and in that moment resolved, in a moment of inspiration, to use the whole of his equity to instill peace into the world. How he would do this, he was not entirely sure. But he did have a plan.

Karen!

(Karen enters, with coffee.)

KAREN

Karen was his servant, housekeep, barista, secretary, and tutor to his ten-year old niece. She was, above all else, brilliant. She addressed him in the typical fashion in which servants, housekeepers, baristas, secretaries and tutors address their respective employers.

Yes?

JOHN JACOB O'REILLY SMITHERT.

I have a question about world peace.

KAREN

In abstract, conditional, superficial, metaphorical,
or substantively universal terms, Sir?

JOHN JACOB O'REILLY SMITHERT.

The latter.

KAREN

And your question?

JOHN JACOB O'REILLY SMITHERT.

How might I go about buying it?

KAREN

What's your budget?

JOHN JACOB O'REILLY SMITHERT.

Everything.

All of it, minus fifty years living expenses for you,
and twenty years living expenses for me.

KAREN

Twenty years, Sir?

JOHN JACOB O'REILLY SMITHERT.

Better make it thirty.

His health was in no state to realistically expect
thirty more years upon this earth, but he supposed
that life expectancy was sure to increase drastically
in the environment of a peaceful world, and thus chose
to err on the side of optimism.

KAREN

With your assets, Sir, I think the first step would be
to find a singular voice for the people to rally
behind.

JOHN JACOB O'REILLY SMITHERT.

Wonderful. Could you find that for me?

KAREN

Physically, morally, and philosophically unwilling to
overpraise and under-deliver, Karen paused before
responding, deeply puzzled by the task she had
unwittingly set herself on this first morning of the
first day of the new year.
She thought, she considered, she deliberated.

(She does all three. John Jacob O'Reilly Smitherton waits patiently, and expectantly.)

(Lydia enters, still leading Jacob by the hand, who still sings.)

LYDIA

Lydia, increasingly desperate to get this singer to stop singing his song of such great sorrow and beauty, walked straight into her uncle's house, up the stairs, and straight through the door of of his office, still leading the singer by the hand.

(She walks into John Jacob O'Reilly Smitherton's room, leading Jacob, who still sings.)

(Death at her table with a pile of oranges on top of it. She is slowly peeling and eating them. Each time she finishes a peel, Death turns and sets it carefully on a giant pile of orange peels behind. Every placement is intentional. It is a massive sculpture of peels.)

(She peels, eats, places a peel. Doesn't like the placement, moves the peel. Considers. Doesn't like the placement, moves it again. Considers. It's not perfect, but it will do. Death peels another orange.)

(Brother enters holding an orange. He approaches her. Stops, unsure of what happens next.)

(She carefully places a peel, considers. Moves it. Considers. Moves it. Considers.)

DEATH

Chuck it on the pile.

(Death moves the peel again,
considers.)

BROTHER

Are you going to eat all of them?

DEATH

Eventually.

(She moves the peel one more time,
considers. It's not perfect, but it
will do. Death peels another orange.)

BROTHER

Can I watch while you eat mine?

DEATH

You can't just jump the line.

BROTHER

I'm happy to wait.

DEATH

Well I can't stand small talk,

BROTHER

I'd like to watch. I won't say anything.

(Death eats. Brother watches. She
eats.)

DEATH

You some kind of sadist or something?

BROTHER

No. Why?

DEATH

Only sadists ever ask to watch.

(She eats another orange. Brother
watches. She eats.)

DEATH

Well if you aren't one, what are you then.

BROTHER

I don't know.

DEATH

If you're going to stand there long enough to watch
you're going to have to make much better conversation
than that.

BROTHER

ok.

DEATH

Not a good start. Try again.

(He thinks. She eats. He thinks.)

DEATH

You know any good stories?

BROTHER

I'm no good at telling stories.

DEATH

You can't tell a story?

BROTHER

I didn't say I can't, I'm just not good at them.

DEATH

What's to be good at.

BROTHER

Nobody ever seems to like them,

DEATH

Try me.

BROTHER

Really. It's not going to be good.

DEATH

Try me. I don't get to hear many stories, so it's not
as if you've got competition.

BROTHER

Ok.
Once upon a time,

DEATH

Heard it.

BROTHER

A lot of stories begin with-

DEATH

Next.

(She finishes eating, and turns to put the peel on the sculpture. She places it, considers. Moves it, considers. Considers. Moves it up a little more. Considers. It's perfect.)

(She begins to peel another orange.)

BROTHER

What are you making?

DEATH

Guess.

BROTHER

I'm not good at guessing.

DEATH

Guess anyway.

BROTHER

Is it the sun?

DEATH

Nope. Guess again.

BROTHER

A volcano?

DEATH

Nope. Guess again.

BROTHER

A beehive?

DEATH

No! Guess again.

BROTHER

A sunset.

DEATH

Don't be stupid, I said no to the Sun

BROTHER

But the sunset's not the sun.

DEATH

It's still wrong. Keep guessing.

BROTHER

I'm out of ideas.

DEATH

You can leave then.

(She eats.)

BROTHER

A swan.

DEATH

Nope.

BROTHER

An orange tree!

DEATH

Wrong again.

BROTHER

The sea.

DEATH

Incorrect.

BROTHER

The sky.

DEATH

False.

BROTHER

An idea.

DEATH

What about.

BROTHER
About,
Having an idea.

DEATH
No.

BROTHER
Am I getting closer?

DEATH
Not really.

BROTHER
Give me a hint?

DEATH
Keep guessing.

BROTHER
But I don't have anything to go on,

DEATH
That's what makes it such a good game!
Guess again.

(Death finishes the orange, turns to
place it on the sculpture-pile.
Considers, moves it. Considers, moves
it.)

DEATH
I just gave you a hint.

(She begins to peel another orange.)

DEATH
Well?

BROTHER
A table.

DEATH
Nope.

BROTHER
A self-portrait.

Nope. DEATH

A shoe. BROTHER

No. DEATH

A chair. BROTHER

No. DEATH

(Sister sits, as if on a small boat.
Chorus, all around her, rows. They are
in charge.)

(The chorus sings. It's a lighter
drinking/work song. If sister stands,
they sit her down. If she turns, they
turn her back around. They row. A
single chorus member sings all of the
following solos.)

CHORUS

Heave, ho
Pull the handle back,
Pull the handle back with a quickening row
Till you carry what you've got to the deep below
Pull the handle back,
Pull the handle back with a Heave, ho!

SOLO CHORUS MEMBER

Once I carried a daughter,
Then I carried a son
Third I carried the Mother
To the Great Oblivion!

CHORUS

Heave, ho
Pull the handle back,
Pull the handle back with a quickening row

Till you carry what you've got to the deep below
Pull the handle back,
Pull the handle back with a Heave, ho!

(Brother and Death. Death eats. The
pile of oranges in front of her is
noticeably smaller. Brother sits,
tossing and catching his orange. Still
guessing.)

Lemons.

BROTHER

No,

DEATH

Lemurs.

BROTHER

No,

DEATH

Lenses

BROTHER

No,

DEATH

Lentils

BROTHER

No,

DEATH

Lice

BROTHER

No,

DEATH

Lichen

BROTHER

No,

DEATH

Life	BROTHER
No,	DEATH
Light	BROTHER
No,	DEATH
Lillies	BROTHER
No,	DEATH
Limes,	BROTHER
No,	DEATH
Lobes	BROTHER
Never heard of it.	DEATH
Like ear lobes?	BROTHER
No.	DEATH

(We focus back on Sister and the boat.
The second verse, as they row.)

SOLO CHORUS MEMBER

Once I carried a pauper
And I carried a queen
As I carried he caught her
Head in a guillotine!

CHORUS

Heave, ho
Pull the handle back,
Pull the handle back with a quickening row
Till you carry what you've got to the deep below
Pull the handle back,
Pull the handle back with a Heave, ho!

Lobsters

BROTHER

No,

DEATH

The Loch Ness Monster

BROTHER

No,

DEATH

Logic

BROTHER

No,

DEATH

Lollipops.

BROTHER

No,

DEATH

Lots and lots of something

BROTHER

No,

DEATH

Love.

BROTHER

No,

DEATH

Lozenges.

BROTHER

DEATH

No,

BROTHER

A lunatic.

(We focus back on Sister and the boat.
The third verse, as they row.)

SOLO CHORUS MEMBER

Once I carried a sailor
Who'd never been out to sea
Being on the water so scared her
That she screamed in agony!

(The chorus sings the last part of the
song under the last part of Brother and
Death's guessing game. The song ends
wherever the game ends, and sister's
boat hits land.)

CHORUS

Heave, ho
Pull the handle back,
Pull the handle back with a quickening row
Till you carry what you've got to the deep below
Pull the handle back...

(Death with an empty table-no more
oranges are left. She is placing the
last peel on the sculpture. Considers.
Moves it. Brother still guessing.)

BROTHER

A Moment

DEATH

No,

A monument
BROTHER

No,
DEATH

A mountain
BROTHER

No,
DEATH

Mourning.
BROTHER

(Sister's boat hits land. The chorus
stops singing.)

(Death stops, turns around, and sees
the boat. Beat.)

Oh look.
DEATH

(Sister steps off the boat and exits.)

It's your turn.
DEATH

(Death holds out her hand. Brother
hands over his orange. He waits. She
studies him.)

You don't want to watch me eat this.
DEATH

I do.
BROTHER

It will mean watching yourself die.
DEATH

I know.
BROTHER

You don't know what it means.
To watch yourself die.
DEATH

BROTHER

I've been watching-

DEATH

Those don't count.
This time it is your own eyes you will see fading.
Your own breath you will feel stopping.
and your own skin you will see turning pale.

BROTHER

I can handle it,

DEATH

It's not just that,
but your own mind you feel leaving,
your most precious memories will slip away and exactly
as you understand what is happening, you will cease to
be able to understand because that part will also be
gone.

BROTHER

I can handle it.

DEATH

You do not understand!
Your own toes that turn blue, your own flesh that rots
and disappears, your own fingers that become bone by
the time this peel is thrown behind me.
Can you handle that?

BROTHER

Yes.

DEATH

Then here.
You do it.

(She hands him back his orange. She
waits. He waits. She waits. He waits.)

DEATH

I have a confession to make.
I don't really like oranges.
They make my tongue hurt. See?

(She sticks out her tongue.)

DEATH

I think I might be allergic.
My fingers too.
Look.
I always start peeling with this thumb. It barely even
looks like a thumb anymore.
Some days it feels dead. Like it's about to fall off.
Leaves in winter, that's what my fingers are. Pieces
of something that should have blown into some pile to
be raked away half a season ago.
Look at them.
No wonder nobody likes me.

BROTHER

I don't think it's your thumbs that turn people off.

DEATH

Is it my tongue then?

BROTHER

I think it's the whole package.
(Beat)

(She puts out her hand, and Brother
hands his orange back over.)

DEATH

I don't like it when people watch this in silence.

BROTHER

I could sing?

DEATH

Oh?

BROTHER

I'm good, I sing all the time.

DEATH

I'm very picky about my music.

BROTHER

Ok.

DEATH

You can try, but I'm stopping you if I hate it.

(Brother clears his throat. Begins to sing. We hear the first couple of notes.)

DEATH

Allright, I get the idea.

(Brother stops singing.)

(She holds up his orange.)

DEATH

To your health,

(Death begins to peel Brother's orange. He watches.)

(Lydia, Karen, Jacob, and JJOS in JJOS's office. Jacob still sings. Karen is deep in thought. JJOS is leaning back, eyes closed, waiting patiently.)

KAREN

Karen, who had been on the the verge of a potentially perfect solution to John Jacob O'Reilly Smitherton's bid for world peace, was so completely taken by the surprise by the entrance of Lydia and Jacob, that her potentially perfect and incompletely formed thought vanished instantly on their arrival.

Excuse me! She exclaimed, in a firmly polite manner.

This is a private meeting!

And with the power vested in her by John Jacob O'Reilly Smitherton himself, made a gently forceful attempt to usher them both immediately out of the room.

(She tries to push Lydia and Jacob out the door. Lydia dodges around her.)

LYDIA

Lydia stood her ground.
Uncle, she said. I need your help.

JOHN JACOB O'REILLY SMITH

Before John Jacob O'Reilly Smitherton heard any of this, he heard the singing. He caught the first hint of it through the office window when they had been walking towards him on the street below. He caught a phrase of it as they came up the steps, and in through the office door. But John Jacob O'Reilly Smitherton was, even in this very moment, totally unaware that the song was being sung by someone right in front of him. He truly believed, for a full three moments and a half, that this song of great sorrow and beauty was the direct outward manifestation of his morning's decision to instill peace into the world.

LYDIA

Uncle!

KAREN

Sir,

JOHN JACOB O'REILLY SMITH.

He sat up, and opened his eyes. There before him stood Lydia and the singer, hand in hand.

(Lydia drops Jacob's hand.)

KAREN

Sir, if you will allow me, I-

JOHN JACOB O'REILLY SMITH.

Amazing! He exclaimed, and jumped up to shake the singer's hand.
Karen! He exclaimed, and rushed over to shake hers.
What a voice for the people to rally behind!
Where did you find such great sorrow and beauty?

KAREN

She had no answer for this, and thus did not choose to speak.

LYDIA

Lydia would not be deterred.
I need you to get him to stop singing.

JOHN JACOB O'REILLY SMITH.

Why?

LYDIA

She explained her strong resolve and resolute resolution. And, she added, it will lead to world peace.

JOHN JACOB O'REILLY SMITH.

World peace! Yes!

LYDIA

Uncle,

JOHN JACOB O'REILLY SMITH.

I think, he said, a wonderful idea blossoming in his head, that you should call your sister.

LYDIA

Lydia didn't know how that could possibly help the situation, but because it seemed only to be getting worse, and because her uncle had even begun to ever so softly hum along with the singer, harmonizing to this song of sorry and beauty, she picked up the phone, and called her sister.

(It is the end of the day. James does his closing rituals, making sure everything is in its proper place for the morning. Ida still reads.)

(James is trying to finish organizing, but is distracted by something in his head. It won't go away. It really won't go away. He turns to Ida.)

JAMES

The song you were humming is stuck in my head.

(Ida reads. James approaches her.)

JAMES

Songs don't get stuck in my head. I want you to tell me why this one has.

(Ida reads. James comes closer.)

JAMES

I have said, I want you to tell me -

IDA

It's a very good song.

(She reads.)

JAMES

It's not just in my head though, like a normal song.
It's
In me.

(Ida reads)

JAMES

Why is it in me?

(James lowers Ida's book to the table,
and covers it with his hand. She stops
reading.)

JAMES

It's gotten inside my fingers and won't leave. Not
just my fingers, my feet too.
I can feel it behind my eyes when I close them, and it
buzzes my ears, even when I'm not thinking about it.
I had an idea about it too, I imagined I was singing
it by myself in the middle of nowhere.
I had an idea that if I kept singing it, everyone
would come help and then it would become a big,
beautiful sound.

.
I want to know where it came from and how it ends.
I am very curious.

(beat. Ida tries to bring the book back
up to read, James pushes it back down.)

IDA

What /
What have you lost before, James?

JAMES

I do not see how that matters.

IDA

Just tell me /
Tell me what you've /
You've lost.

JAMES

My keys.
A card or two.
Maybe three.

IDA

And what's the most /
The most excited you've ever been?

JAMES

Please just tell me-

IDA

Tell me about /
About the most excited you've /
You've ever been.

(he thinks)

JAMES

Riding a roller coaster.
Getting this job.
Eating really good mint chip ice cream when I got into
University.

IDA

Lose your keys, eat ice cream.
Those are your /
Your opposites.
A song sung by /
Sung by everyone in the world,
What's it's opposite?

JAMES

Nothing.

IDA

Not anymore.

(beat)

JAMES

It can't be possible that song came from death.

IDA

Why /
Why not?

JAMES

Because. It is the most beautiful thing I have heard.

(James stares at Ida. She goes back to reading.)

JAMES

There is another thing I am curious about now.

(She looks up)

IDA

That's a lot of /
A lot of curiosity for one day.

JAMES

If that song came from death, then how do you know it?

IDA

I'm a lot /
A lot older than you, James.

JAMES

So is my mother, but she did not know the song.
My mother also does not have any real books.
I asked her why not and she said they have not existed
for a long time.
Where did you get yours, if they are not supposed to
exist?

IDA

I wrote /
Wrote it.

JAMES

Why?
Did you like writing it?

IDA

Did you finish checking /
Finish checking the lights?

JAMES

Does that mean you are not going to tell me anything else?

IDA

Check /
Check the lights.

(Ida reads. James stands looking at Ida for a moment, then walks over to the demonstration room and opens the door to check the lights.)

(Inside is Adam, sitting in the middle of it, watching the entire chorus demonstrate 'Historical Causes of Death: Other' over and over and over.)

JAMES

The library is closing.

(Adam does not move. The demonstrators keep demonstrating.)

JAMES

We're closed. It is time to go.

.
The library is closed, and it is now time for you to leave.

(James goes back to Ida)

JAMES

I have asked him to leave three times, and-

(Ida sees the demonstration. She is beyond surprised to see which card James has been watching. She tucks her book under her arm.)

IDA

I'll talk to him.
You can go /
Go home.

JAMES

I will wait for you outside.
I would like you to finish answering my questions
first.

IDA

You should go home.
We could /
Could be a while.

JAMES

That is okay. I am good at waiting,

(James removes the card from the slot.
The Demonstrators exit. James carries
the card over to the appropriate
catalogue, and re-files it. Adam does
not move. Ida enters the room, and
closes the door behind her.)

(James finishes re-filing, double
checks his stacks, and leaves.)

(Adam still sits in the middle of the
room. Ida walks over, and sits down
next to him.)

IDA

You picked quite a demonstration.

(No response. Ida sits. Waits. They sit
together in silence for a long moment.)

IDA

That's not usually what people look into when /
When they look into these things,

(He turns to face Ida.)

ADAM

It's not what I thought it was.
At first I thought heartbreak was worse than
everything else, that it was the worst thing ever and
that's why it was last, but I've changed my mind.
Now I hope I'm capable of it someday.
Because if I can have a broken heart it means I
really, really loved someone.

And I think that would be nice.

(beat.)

IDA

/

ADAM

Were you were alive when people still died?

IDA

Yes. I /
I was.

ADAM

So,
did you know anyone who died?

IDA

Yes. I /
I did.

ADAM

Did your heart break?

IDA

/
No. /
No, I've been trying to /
To avoid that for a long /
A long time.

ADAM

Oh.
That's too bad.

IDA

//

ADAM

That's too bad, because I have a theory.

(Ida stands. Adam stands too. As he speaks, Ida's nervous tick begins to come more and more frequently.)

ADAM

I think that when you love someone and they die and your heart breaks, what you're really doing is sending them a message that says you still love them. And your heart breaks the most right when they leave because it means they get the message in time, while they're still traveling to, wherever it is they're going. And it becomes the very last thing they'll ever remember. Your message. But heartbreak is the only way to send it.

(beat)

ADAM

So that's why I think it's sad yours never broke. Because it means you never got to send your last message.

(Adam leaves.)

(Ida stands alone in the demonstrating room, her physical nervous tic on repeat. She opens her bag, and takes out a small pill bottle. She opens it, and dumps out a small pile of flower petals into her hand. She arranges them, and casts the spell under her breath. As she casts it, the tic begins to subside.)

IDA

One /
 One for you
 one for /
 For me
 one to speak
 one /
 One to see
 one for now
 one for /
 For then
 one for never
 count to ten.

(Ida closes her eyes and counts.)

IDA

One, two, three, four, five, six seven, eight, nine, ten.

(She opens her eyes. Nothing.)

IDA

Did you really never hear that?

(Nothing.)

(Ida turns her bag upside down, and from it falls every last thing Brother left behind him: inhaler, candle, hospital wrist bands, bags of tea, pill bottles, elastic physical therapy band, bouncy ball, piece of IV tube, and Chapstick.)

(Ida stands in the place where the demonstrators stood, and tries to do heartbreak just like they did it. She keeps getting interrupted by her physical tic. Every time she pauses to remember what came next, the physical tic, that part of Heartbreak that she has endlessly repeated, comes to the surface. No matter how hard she tries, she cannot get through the heartbreak movement without it interrupting.)

(Death at her table. On the table is Sister's orange. In her hands is a Brother's orange. She slowly and methodically peels it throughout the following.)

(Brother, sitting in an out of the way place, watches her eat.)

(Sister stands directly in front of Death. Chorus is everywhere, waiting.)

SISTER

Where is he.

DEATH

Guess.

SISTER

I'm not guessing, just tell me where he is.

DEATH

Tell me a story and I'll tell you mine.

SISTER

Just tell me where he is!

(Death peels the orange.)

DEATH

You haven't asked very nicely,

SISTER

Please.

DEATH

Please what.

SISTER

Please tell me where my brother is. Please.

(Death considers)

DEATH

No, I don't think I will.

(Sister lets out a yell of fury. She searches for brother.)

DEATH

But if you tell me a good story, I may be inclined to reconsider.

That's a very good offer.

I'd advise you to take it.

I don't usually offer such good trades.

(Death summons the Chorus. They sing.)

(Sister searches throughout the song. The chorus gets in her way of looking in most of the room. It is infuriating.)

CHORUS

Take a walk through the valley
 to the garden of the dead
 And you might meet her waiting
 Where you dare to tread
 Cause your life's in her palm
 Even as a passer-by,
 Your best hope of moving on
 Is to hurry up and die.

If you sit down at her table
 She'll start to tell you tales
 Don't listen to her lies
 or she'll easily prevail
 For the only thing she loves
 more than watching you writhe
 Is when all is said and done
 sharpening her scythe.

When Death strikes a bargain
 you can guarantee she'll say
 That there's really nothing to it
 And it happens everyday
 But be careful what you offer
 be wary what you choose,
 The unlucky one who crosses her
 is always sure to lose.
 it's true,
 The unlucky one who crosses her
 is always sure to lose.

SISTER

Fine!

(Death grins.)

SISTER

Tell me the rules.

DEATH

There aren't any rules,

SISTER

Bullshit. I'm not stupid.
 I have to tell you a good story.
 define Good Story

DEATH

Allright.
A good story is,
Anything I don't hate.

SISTER

That's not a definition.

DEATH

Just tell me something I don't hate.

SISTER

Then I get two false starts.

DEATH

What's that.

SISTER

In races, the runner gets a second chance if they
break the starting rules.
But since you won't set the starting rules, I get two
false starts instead of one.
Deal?

DEATH

Deal.

(Death segments her orange.)

(Sister takes a deep breath, thinks.)

SISTER

Once upon a -

DEATH

Heard it.

SISTER

But I-

DEATH

Heard it. Hate that story.

SISTER

You can't-

DEATH

Don't waste words arguing. I might mistake them for a

second false start.

(Beat. Sister takes a deep breath,
thinks.)

SISTER

There once was a-

DEATH

Heard it! Don't like that one either.

(Death begins to eat her orange.)

DEATH

You know, your brother wasn't any good at-

SISTER

Lydia awoke with a start, on the first morning of the
new day of the new year, with a strong resolve, and a
resolute resolution to, once and for all, establish a
brand new state of peace and quiet in the house, by
getting her sister to shut up.

(Death listens, and eats. She listens
and eats throughout the whole rest of
the following story, clear through till
the end.)

(Rachel sitting at the table, still
trying to be very silent and very
still. A phone rings.)

RACHEL

When the phone rang, Rachel was sitting very quietly
and without moving at the kitchen table, doing her
very best to help her sister establish a new era of
peace and quiet in the world. The noise of the phone
was jarring in so much silence, and she quickly
calculated which response would be more upsetting to
the peace and quiet: to pick up the phone and speak,
or to let it keep ringing.

(The phone rings again.)

RACHEL

On the next ring, she picked it up, and in a stroke of inspiration, held the receiver to her ear without speaking.

(Lydia, in John Jacob O'Reilly Smitherton's office, where Jacob still sings.)

LYDIA

She could make out the faint sound of her sister's breathing on the other line, and shed a tear of gratitude when after a long moment she had still said nothing. She wanted to tell Rachel just how grateful she was for joining her on this quest for peace and quiet, but any words she used would have broken the spell, and so decided to say nothing.

RACHEL

On the other end, Rachel could hear the sound of Jacob's singing. Though it was distorted by the phone lines, the song of great sorrow and beauty entered her ear, and settled itself next to her heart. Oh! She exclaimed, and hardly realizing what she was doing, burst into song herself.

JOHN JACOB O'REILLY SMITH.

John Jacob O'Reilly Smitherton heard Rachel's added voice through the phone, and took it upon himself to keep the melody spreading. So he picked up his phone, and called his mother. His mother was so moved that she added a remote fourth voice from her apartment where she lived with her son-in-law's cousin, who called his sister, who called her daughter, who was best friends with Karen's sister.

KAREN

By the time Karen's sister called her, the number of voices knitted together thorough the phone lines was enough to dissolve every bit of her previous annoyance and frustration. And even she began to sing along.

JACOB

Jacob was thrilled. It was only a matter of minutes before the song was being sung by everyone in the neighborhood, a matter of hours before it had taken over the entire state. And by that night, it had

spread to all the farthest and most remote corners of the earth, where leaders and sinners sang side by side, harmonies perfect and imperfect, in time and out of time, but all with a single, unifying purpose.

LYDIA

And so it was that when the eight billionth voice joined in, such was the fury and beauty of the song that I could hear nothing else. There were no other thoughts, and no other conversations. The only thing I heard was the peace and quiet of sorrow and beauty as I crept off for my first adventure alone in a newly peaceful world.

(Sister and Death alone. Brother is nowhere to be seen. Death is moved, and tries not to show it.)

(beat)

DEATH

That
was a good one.

SISTER

Tell me where my brother is.

(Death looks down at her hands, which hold an orange peel. There is nothing else of Brother's orange left. She looks at Sister, and holds the peel out to her.)

DEATH

A gift,

(Sister takes it. She looks at it, and all the grief she has been keeping at arms length this whole time takes over

completely. Death respectfully looks away as sister holds the orange peel of her brother, and sobs.)

(And sobs.)

(Death becomes concerned. Sister is not able to stop, and there is the hint in her movement of what it looks like to die of a broken heart. Death grows even more concerned. The movement becomes closer and closer to what it looks like when you die of a broken heart, and death becomes positively alarmed.)

(Death gets up out of her chair, and comes to sister. She tries to comfort her. It is as awkward as it sounds. Sister doesn't notice any of it.)

(Sister is getting worse. Death tries another tactic.)

DEATH

I loved your story.
Did you know that?

(Sister, still crying, nods)

DEATH

It was a very good story.
Did you just make it up just now?

(Sister nods. Things subside minutely)

DEATH

How did it start again?
Once upon a time,

(Sister shakes her head. It subsides.)

DEATH

No? Are you sure?

SISTER

You hate that story.

(Death chuckles. Sister snuffles.)

DEATH

That's right. I do.
Tell me how yours started again.

SISTER

I forgot.

DEATH

You can't have forgotten, it was such a good
beginning.
Think harder. See if it comes back to you.

(Sister snuffles, and thinks. She sees
the orange peel and is about to lose it
again. Death gently covers the peel
with her own hand on top of Sister's
hands.)

DEATH

How does it begin?

(beat)

SISTER

Lydia awoke with a start that morning.

(beat)

DEATH

Keep going.

SISTER

You want me to tell the whole thing over again?

DEATH

Would you like to?

SISTER

No.

(Sister looks back to the orange peel,
still in danger of a broken heart.
Death intervenes.)

DEATH

Do you remember the whole story?

(sister nods)

DEATH

Every detail, every word?

(Sister shrugs)

DEATH

Excellent.

I want you to write it down.

SISTER

Why.

DEATH

It's a very good story. I don't want you to forget it.

SISTER

I'll write it down later,

DEATH

No, no.

I want you to start now.

(She leads sister to her table.)

DEATH

Now where did I put them,

(Death looks around for something. Does not see it.)

DEATH

Ah!

(She pushes over her giant pile of peels. They go everywhere. She digs around at the bottom, and pulls out a small blank book and a pen. She hands them to Sister.)

DEATH

Use these.

(Sister puts the orange peel in her pocket, and takes the book and pen in hand. Death sits down at her table again, watching, waiting.)

DEATH

Go on,

(Sister opens the book, places it on Death's table. She leans over, and starts to write. Death leans back in her chair, and watches.)

(Evelyn and James in front of the library. They are waiting. They wait. James starts to hum the song of great sorrow and beauty as they wait. Little pieces of the song echo in the world around him.)

(Adam enters. Evelyn jumps up to greet him.)

EVELYN

Are you hungry? I brought you a snack,

(She reaches into her backpack, pulls out an orange, and hands it to Adam.)

ADAM

Thank you,

(He gives her a huge hug.)

EVELYN

It's just an orange,

(Adam lets go, sits, and peels his orange. Evelyn sits next to him. All three of them sit, quiet. Just the sound of an orange being peeled.)

(Ida enters, and rushes straight to Adam.)

IDA

I have a /
Have a /
A message, but can't /

Can't /
Can't get past /

(she pulls Adam to his feet, and tries to do the movement for heartbreak. She keeps getting stuck.)

IDA

You have to show me /
Show me the /
The rest. I keep /
I keep getting /
Getting stuck //

(She tries again, gets stuck. They all watch.)

IDA

You have to help /
Help me with /
With the rest, /

ADAM

It's like this,

(He shows her the movement for heartbreak one section at a time. She copies him, but keeps having her tic interrupt her movement. Adam eventually goes behind Ida, and physically moves her through the movement. With his help, she is able to get through it on her own. It grows and grows until she dies of a broken heart.)

(Through all of this, James and Evelyn:)

JAMES

Can you hear it?

(She listens. The hint of the song of great sorrow and beauty)

JAMES

I have had it stuck in my head.
It will not leave.

Can you hear it?

EVELYN

I think so,

JAMES

Is it in you?

Can you feel it in your toes and behind your eyes?

(she listens)

EVELYN

I think so,

JAMES

I have never heard the end before.

Only one part of it.

I am very relieved to be hearing the whole thing.

(James closes his eyes, and listens.
Evelyn watches Adam and Ida. James
listens.)

JAMES

It is beautiful, don't you think?

(Ida dies of a broken heart. The sound
fades. Quiet. Beat.)

(Evelyn is terrified. She whispers.)

EVELYN

Adam?

Is she dead?

(He nods, and starts to grin a little.
James opens his eyes, sees Ida, and
starts to tear up a little. He blinks
very fast and tries to make sure nobody
notices.)

EVELYN

Why are you smiling,

ADAM

That was amazing.

EVELYN

You aren't about to try it though, are you?

(He smiles at her, shakes his head.
Adam holds the camera out to James)

ADAM

Will you take a picture of us?

JAMES

Do you think she will mind?

ADAM

That's what cameras are for, to capture great moments
like this.

(James, still blinking fast, picks up
the camera.)

(Adam puts his arm around Evelyn's
shoulders, and leads her closer to Ida
for the photo. She puts her arm around
his waist. They stand, looking at Ida.)

JAMES

On three.
One, two,

(Evelyn shifts her focus)

JAMES

Three.

(picture.)

(Ida at death's table. The pile of
orange peels behind her is rotting.
There is a huge mess of old oranges on
the floor around her that have not been
touched. Death sits, writing out her
memoirs in a massive book. She is
partway through, but still nowhere near
the end. Ida holds out her orange.
Death does not pause in her work.)

DEATH

Long time, no see.

(Ida puts her orange on death's table,
and waits. Death writes.)

IDA

Are you going to eat it?

DEATH

Lost my taste for oranges.
Moved on to words.

IDA

What are you writing?

DEATH

Everything.

(Death writes.)

DEATH

Lost my taste for oranges.
What are you writing, she asked.
Everything.

(Death stops, looks up, expectantly.)

(She grins.)

DEATH

I've caught up!

(Death writes that down.)

DEATH

With everything. Since the beginning of memory.

(She writes what she speaks, slowly,
deliberately.)

DEATH

I
Am
Completely
Caught
Up.

(she looks up, grins.)

DEATH

Then what happened?

IDA

You ate my orange.

(The moment Ida starts speaking, Death writes.)

DEATH

She stood in a calm, cool, confident manner,
(I've leaned about alliteration)
But Death, knowing the damage that a feast of oranges
could do, looked up at this woman-so-recently-a-girl,
and laughed.

Ha!

The woman-so-recently-a-girl leaned over death's
table, and took up her orange in hand once again.

(Death stops, gestures for Ida to do
so. Ida leans forward, and picks up her
orange.)

DEATH

The Woman-so-recently-a-girl cleared her throat as if
to speak.

(Death motions for her to do so. Ida
does not make a sound. Death waits.)

DEATH

She did nothing. Moved not a limb. But death was
patient, and she would wait.

(She waits, looks at Ida who does
nothing but stand and hold her orange.
Death stares at the orange. She
writes.)

DEATH

And as death waited, her eyes were drawn to the
perfectly smooth and ripe orange in front of her. The
smoothest, ripest, orange she had seen in a very long
time.

And it fascinated her.

(she stares at the orange. She writes.)

DEATH

Its roundness.

It's orange-ness.

It had been so long since she had felt peels lift
beneath her fingers, so long since the smell of fresh
citrus had permeated the room.

(she stares at the orange.)

DEATH

But death was not what she had once been, and she did
not reach out to take it.

(She finishes writing, stares at the
orange.)

(Ida sets the orange down on death's
table once again. Death writes.)

DEATH

In a single, fluid motion, the woman-so-recently-a-
girl placed her orange once again on the table in
front of death. Was it a threat? A direct challenge? A
plea for help?

(Death looks to Ida for an answer. She
does not get one. Death writes.)

DEATH

She made no answer.

Death, unaccustomed to being disobeyed, grew angry.

I, she stated, her authoritative voice booming in the
otherwise still air,

I am tired of your company! Go, Death demanded, and
with a pointed finger suggested the direction in which
the woman-so-recently-a-girl might depart.

(As she finishes up writing this down,
Death points off.)

IDA

Eat my orange.

(Death writes furiously)

DEATH

As I have said, I am done with oranges!
She gestured triumphantly to the old, scattered
oranges around her that she had gone so many years
without touching. Proof, absolute proof to her changed
devotions, and of her commitment to a new era of human
life on earth.

(Death writes.)

IDA

Eat my orange.

DEATH

No, death replied. I will not. For you are not dead.

IDA

If I'm not dead, who are you?

DEATH

I am Death.

IDA

If I'm not dead, there is no death.

DEATH

Death concluded that the woman-so-recently-a-girl was
clearly an idiot, or a fool. For who but idiots and
fools could deny the existence of the very person with
whom they spoke?

IDA

I don't deny you exist. I only deny that you exist as
death.

DEATH

I am, therefore, I am.

IDA

Then eat my orange.

(Death writes. Stops. A beat.)

IDA

If you are death, you will eat my orange.

DEATH

And if I refuse, asked Death.

IDA

If you do not eat it, then I shall eat it myself, and I will become death and I will have to ask you to stand up and give me my chair.

DEATH

On hearing this, Death looked up at the woman-sorencently-a-girl and laughed.

Ha!

You, she taunted, as Death?!

You, she teased, in this chair?

That, she declared, is the most pathetic thing I have ever imagined.

You don't have the strength, or guts, or the patience, or the wits.

Stupid girl.

(death picks up her orange and peels it.)

DEATH

Nobody sits here but me.

(Death peels the orange, eats it, and finishes writing down that part of the story as she does.)

(Sister and Uncle sit together next to the wheelchair. Sister stands, and sets the chair upright.)

(She takes an orange peel out of her pocket, and sets it carefully on top of the chair. She stares at the orange peel. A moment of balancing on the edge of something.)

(Sister bends down, picks up the small book next to her, and puts it on the chair underneath the orange peel.)

(beat.)

(She stares at the orange peel, and her heart breaks.)

(Uncle reaches out, and takes Sister's hand in his. Their hearts break together.)

(Brother, holding his orange, surrounded by the chorus, rowing. They hum. From the sky falls a gentle rain of flower petals. Brother looks up, smiles, and holds out his hand to catch a few.)

(Sister and Uncle stand, hugging. Sister counts to ten under her breath.)

(She opens her eyes, and steps back. Sister takes a deep breath.)

SISTER

Okay.

(Sister makes one more adjustment to the peel. She steps back to look at her work.)

UNCLE

Ready?

SISTER

Yeah.

(Uncle and sister leave together.)

END OF PLAY

REFERENCE: PHOTOS CHORUS RE-CREATES



Matthew Brady's "Federal dead on the field of battle of first day" Gettysburg, Pennsylvania - 1863



Lawrence Beitler's "Lynching", Marion, Indiana - 1930



Nick Ut's "Napalm Girl", Trang Bang, South Vietnam - 1972