

The Slow Nothing Program
By
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THE SLOW NOTHING PROGRAM

ACT I

Scene 1:

(Room. Mattress on floor. A chair with a television on it. Empty bottles and junk food trash on the floor. Window that light is just starting to peek through. Jen Cooper and Holden Barrows lie in bed. Intoxication level is low, they're both coming down after a long night of shooting up.)

Holden: Jen, the sun's coming up.

Jen: Send me a postcard.

Holden: The sun, sweetie. Bringer of life.

Jen: The reason curtains were invented.

(Holden traces her back with his fingers.)

Holden: I could write a poem for every inch of your skin.

Jen: So write one.

Holden: She breaks windows in careful consideration

Six feet from her own shadow

Where dolls turn heads in the corner of your eye

I see them shake their heads

I turned back six legions at daybreak

Jen (Sitting up): And spaced four lines on a mirror.

Holden: It's not coke is it? I can't have a Charlie kick right now.

Jen: Nah, it's the powder leftovers.

Holden: We'd do better to stretch it.

Jen: My nose is itchy. I need to take the weight off.

(Jen produces a mirror and razorblade. She begins dividing lines on it.)

Jen: You've gotta kick it back deep. They're still mixing it with powdered milk.

(Holden bends over the mirror.)

Jen: I'm glad you woke me up now. Just to see that little valley at the bottom of your throat.

(Holden inhales a line and then straightens quickly.)

Holden (nasally voice): I woke you up for the sunrise.

(Jen takes the mirror from his hand.)

Jen: Sunrise needs a chaser.

(Jen inhales a line and then straightens.)

(They sit in silence for several seconds. A bird can be heard from outside.)

Jen: I have class in two hours.

Holden: Who ever said you have class?

(Jen strokes his leg.)

Jen: If I don't go, I'll have to go to summer school.

Holden: Have you learned anything in the last four years of school that you actually needed to know?

Jen: I learned what frogs look like inside. You know, in case we're ever attacked by giant frogs. I can rip that spleen right out.

Holden: The spleen is pointless. And I don't think frogs have spleens. But it doesn't matter because the spleen is unnecessary. It's a reservoir of blood that can be used if there's ever rapid blood loss.

(Holden moves to the edge of the bed and begins putting on his shoes.)

Holden: You should drop out.

Jen: And you should move in with me.

(Holden grabs his shirt off the floor and sits up to put it on. Jen wraps her arms around him.)

Jen: Don't leave. Don't put that on, don't leave.

Holden: If I don't leave...

Jen: You'll have to go to summer school!

(Holden shrugs her arms off.)

Jen: You can live with me. I know the combination to the liquor cabinet.

Holden: It's not bad.

Jen: You hate it.

Holden: It's not terrible or anything.

Jen: You're lying.

Holden: Yeah, but hear me out.

Jen: I'll drop out when you move here, Holden.

Holden: That really sweetens the deal. I'd be wise to hitch a ride on that.

Jen: I can start selling it. I've got the connections.

Holden: Where's the line, Jen?

Jen: Right here. (She turns around and snatches the mirror.)

Holden: Not that line.

Jen (Pointing): How about the other line?

Holden: Shit. I have to get home before my dad wakes up. He's getting older so he gets up earlier. I can't walk in there looking like this.

Jen: You look wonderful.

Holden: I've been up shooting H all night and having sex and-

Jen: Is it actually sex if there's no penetration?

Holden: Christ, I've probably got you all over my face.

Jen: Your stubble looks a little crusty.

Holden: Can I take a shower? I can't go home looking like this. I'm going to show up at 6 in the morning talking like a fish.

Jen: The only shower is in my parents' bathroom.

Holden: Can I hose off in the yard?

Jen: Another line.

Holden: No.

Jen (Followed almost on top): Nooooo, you have to. You can't let me do three lines before I go to school. You have to do one more with me.

Holden: Jesus Christ, I think I was about to get hard.

Jen (Holding out the mirror): One more line. We'll do one together.

Holden: I hate the mirror. I hate it. I hate having to look at myself while I do that.

Jen: Is it the sight of yourself that does it or seeing yourself and knowing what you're doing?

Holden: This mirror is a part of my heart.

Jen: And the lines are part of mine. Put it inside you.

(Holden inhales and slowly slumps forward into the bed.)

Jen: Okay, one more. Well, one more after this one. So two more. Oh god, I hate the number three. Three more- Shit. Four more. Yeah. Four more.

(Jen bends down and begins to inhale.)

(Blackout.)

Scene 2:

(Room. Mattress on floor. Tv on a chair. Same clutter of trash and empty bottles. Jen and Holden stand side by side, a few feet separating them. They face the audience.)

Jen: Holden's the sweetest guy. He used to get beaten up in school, that's what started the lying. He had to protect himself. He had to insulate himself behind an image.

Holden: The lying started when I was a kid. It's a shortcut, you know? Someone has a good story, well I've got a better one. Maybe it's not true and maybe it is and maybe parts of it are true and maybe nothing matters because we're just machines put here to consume. It takes guts to hate consumerism at a young age.

Jen: Oh, he would go on about consumerism...

Holden: But the lying. From the first, the biggest lie was that I was some kind of karate master. I learned the names of moves, I saw diagrams in books. I watched kung fu movies and built a mythical character in my head that I could become. And so, when a bully wants to pick on you, he'll think twice. What if he *does* know karate? What if this smaller kid whips my ass in front of the whole school?

Jen: I didn't know him then.

Holden: And it all would have worked. I even went too far. I brought this medal my brother had gotten at some school competition, I brought that thing to school and flashed it around saying I'd won this big karate meet. And the teacher heard about it and had me come up front and tell everyone about it. I thought I would die.

Jen: I can't imagine my life without him.

Holden: And it all would have worked if it hadn't been for that Mike Deacon. The big bully of the class, the mountain of a kid that had chin whiskers in 5th grade. He doesn't even have the courage to test me himself. No, he tells this sixth grader, Jason Lasser, who I don't even *know*, that I'm talking shit on him. He sets up another guy to beat me up just in case I do know karate.

Jen: He was just a skinny little kid. He didn't want any trouble with anyone. That's why he started with the lying.

Holden: And all the kids follow me home from school. They follow me to see if Jason Lasser will kick my ass. And I'm trying to just get home. I'm fucking scared to DEATH. And then Jason sweeps my legs out from under me. I'm shouting up at him from the ground, "Just leave me alone!"

(Pause.)

Holden: And what does he do? He bends down and grabs the front of my shirt and lifts me up. He lifts me straight into the air and holds me over his head. And he's got this big grin on his face. He looks like that fuck from Dawson's Creek. And I'm crying. Most of the school is there and I'm crying. I think about my hours of carefully rehearsing how I'll defend myself. How I can break any hold that someone attempts on me. And then he's holding me up in the air and all I do is cry.

Jen: He had bad things happen to him.

Holden: So then I had to learn what life was like after I got caught in a lie. Got caught in a lie by the whole school. I stopped at my best friend's house because it was on the way home. The crowd had broken up now. Jason didn't do any physical damage to me. I'm shaky and crying and my friend opens the door and I ask if I can come in. He said no. So that was it. I went home. I cleaned myself up. I pretended like nothing happened and waited to see if that worked tomorrow. Like they're all just gonna forget it.

(Pause.)

Holden: And I also decided I would have to be smarter with my lies.

Jen: I lied too. I mean, you know, don't you lie? White lies, maybe, that aren't so white? I mean, I don't make stuff up. I just don't tell the whole truth. Doesn't everyone do this? With your parents? With your partner? I guess I just kind of stopped telling the truth to everyone.

Holden: She was always honest with me.

Jen: I mean, sometimes I still don't tell Holden everything.

Holden: She always tells me everything.

Jen: Like, I never told him about when my uncle tied me up when I was six. It was a barbecue, or a picnic, or we were shooting off fireworks, or my dad survived a plane crash or something. Maybe it was all those

things. I had on a new dress. My mom bought special just for me. This frilly white thing with a flower pattern on the bottom. And there was a pumpkin patch. No foolin', a pumpkin patch.

Holden: Pumpkin farmers are in league with Halloween marketers. It's all another Hallmark holiday but this time it's centered around pumpkins and fake vampire teeth and convict outfits.

Jen: And my uncle said he had a jump rope for me but I had to catch him to get it. And he just did that thing that adults do when they want to run but not so the kid can't catch them. And he went straight into this pumpkin patch and let me catch him. And he let me tackle him and we were on the ground, right in the middle of these pumpkins...or tomatoes...maybe it was tomatoes...

Holden: I think tomatoes are actually a fruit. Nature's fucking stupid.

Jen: And he said to me, "Jen, I've got another present for you but it's in the shed." And it must have been a place my uncle knew because he managed to turn the light on without even looking for the switch. And he shut the door and reached into his pocket. "Jen," he said, "I've got the best chocolate ever made here. Do you know where it comes from?" And I said, "Of course I do. All the chocolate comes from Hershey, Pennsylvania."

Holden: Chocolate is a somewhat effective aphrodisiac with women because it releases endorphins like sex does. But only in women. Women get all the breaks.

Jen: Guys can pee standing up.

Holden: The miracle of childbirth.

Jen: Not calling the next day and thinking nothing of it.

Holden: Sex anytime they want it.

Jen: The sexual double standard.

Holden: Mult. Iple. Or. Gasms.

Jen: You can't argue with men.

Holden: That shut her up.

Jen: Thinking that you won because you had the last word. So male.

(Pause.)

Jen: But you don't want to hear poor Jen's story of the uncle with something in his pocket. You've seen that story a thousand times. I was just saying, you know, that maybe I lie by not telling the whole truth.

Holden: I tell lies about things that never happened to me. Like I'm incomplete.

Jen: I don't tell the whole truth like part of me is extra. Like there's a whole other world underneath everything. Like I'm too much.

Holden: And I guess together we are

(Together): whole.

(Blackout.)

Scene 3:

(Room. Mattress on floor. Tv on chair. Junk food and bottles scattered around the room. Jen and Holden sit back to back, leaning against each other for support. Intoxication level is high.)

Holden: I guess maybe I hate my brother for being part of my life.

Jen: You won't let me meet him.

Holden: That would ruin the whole thing.

Jen: Those particles...they slide off of things...the surface of things.

Holden: I love my brother, I do. He's my best friend and pretty much always has been. When we were enemies, he was my best friend.

Jen: When you smell things, that's particles coming off the thing you're smelling. They travel the distance from here to...(slowly extending her arm outward) there.

Holden: But, it's like, this is just mine. This is something that is mine, that he's not a part of. And I had some other friends that he wasn't a part of but I let him in on that. But this, this is something he'll never understand.

Jen: Sometimes it gets so cold you can see your breath...and that's part of your insides coming out...bits of your lungs coming off...particles...

Holden: This is something that is mine and not ours. Or it's ours, you and me. Not me and him. Do you ever feel like you're a different person with everyone you meet and you're just trying to hold it together the whole time?

Jen: When I feel you inside me...I know what's missing from life. I know where each of us begins, but there's no end. We're joined in there.

Holden: I don't want people at my funeral to say, "He kept it together, at best." I don't want to have to be a different person with everyone I meet, either.

Jen: My brother's starting me out.

Holden: I don't want to feel like maybe everything I've done has been a lie. And that's another thing I like about here. I can't bluff my way through this. Either it's in my veins or I'm not really here.

(Jen slides off his back and they collapse onto each other.)

Holden: Tell me about your day.

Jen (Very spaced out): That's what I was trying to...I was saying, about the thing...

Holden: You were talking about particles.

(Jen sits up)

Jen: The particles of a stopped watch

Where he lets out his most heartfelt scream

Maybe on a subway

Or intercontinental flight

He spends all his time....

He spends all his time....

Oh, come on, Holden, he spends all his time...what?

(Holden reaches up and pulls her head down into a kiss.)

Holden: He spends all his time

Bleeding in the bathroom

Jen: Yeah. Yeah. Oh god, Holden, you're so great. You're gonna be famous.

Holden: I've already got a million dollar arm.

Jen: Do you think, maybe, if I had a kid, he would, you know, turn out okay?

(Holden crawls across the bed and dangles off the end, half on and half off.)

Holden: Who's the father?

Jen: It could be anybody. It could be you. If you were the father, would he turn out okay?

(Holden picks up a pipe from the floor.)

Holden: Are you saying-

Jen: No.

Holden: Because-

Jen: I'm not.

Holden: We use protection.

Jen: You can't get it up half the time.

Holden: We use protection. We've never not used protection. Even the first time.

Jen (picking at a scab on her knee): It's so clumsy.

(Holden sits up and turns back to her.)

Jen: My hands. They go clumsy. It's like I'm watching someone else's hands. And I try to direct where it goes but I can't do more than get in the general area. It's just (waves her hand in a clumsy manner) can't do it. But only with you. My hands are only clumsy with you.

(Holden reaches out and interlocks his fingers with hers.)

Jen: My brother's setting me up. He's going to give me enough to start with. And then we'll make enough off that to buy more and we'll just keep doing that.

Holden: I don't think either of us should make a career out of this.

Jen: Holden, you're so good with that stuff. "Bleeding in the bathroom." Damn, that's good. That's, like, something else entirely. It was just the thing to end it.

Holden: Screaming corduroy rebellion

Over greasy pool hall dinner

In backseat plotting....

(Jen grabs him and kisses him. She runs her hand down his back, just the fingers. They break the embrace.)

Holden: Plotting to get rid of ourselves.

(Blackout.)

Scene 4:

(Room. Mattress on floor. Tv on chair. Junk food and empty bottles scattered on the floor. Holden lays flat on mattress, Jen straddles him.)

Holden: You make the needle a religious experience.

Jen: When I penetrate you...

Holden: Uh huh.

Jen: It's like I'm piercing straight through your heart. Into the very inner core of you.

Holden: That's where you are.

Jen: It's like I can see your ghost departing. Right before you wake. And I can see it in the way you breathe. I can see you forgetting to breathe and that wakes you.

Holden: I don't breathe when I dream of you. I'll be alone in my bed, that stale nicotine smell that fills the room, and my mind will go to you. You've always got a flower in your hair. You've got some kind of disease where I can see your blood through your skin. Not the blood, the veins. I see veins in your face, I see the blood rushing through you. And it's clean. It's pure. And you're so damn beautiful that I just forget to breathe. Or I'm scared to breathe. I'm afraid you'll leave if I breathe. You'll see me too clear. You'll see empty sockets and broken promises and dying flowers. So I don't breathe.

Jen: And then you wake up.

(Jen reaches down to the floor and picks up a needle.)

Jen: It's cool now.

Holden: Then I wake up. And I'm not in a graveyard with you. I'm not in some stupid pumpkin patch. I'm not on a mountain. I'm alone. I'm in my bed that I've never had sex in. And you're not there, nobody's there. And I hate myself for being alone.

Jen: When I dream of you, you're onstage. You're in front of a thousand million people and you're just saying it like it is. You're telling them how their cars own them and they would have to go through withdrawal if they gave up processed food.

(Jen has been tapping Holden's arm throughout and now picks a spot and injects the needle.)

Holden: Not too close. I don't want scars.

Jen: And I love you up there. I want every girl to want to fuck you. I want every mother to wish their daughter would bring you home.

(Pause.)

Jen: But I want you to always come home to me.

Holden: Sometimes it hurts when I don't breathe. Sometimes I can feel you so close that even when I wake I can't breathe. And all I can think is, "This is not the way. I don't want to die like this."

Jen: How do you want to die?

Holden: I want to shoot myself.

Jen: I just shot you.

Holden: I want to die like this.

(Holden reaches up and caresses her breasts.)

Jen: Holden, stop.

Holden: The way I feel your nipples through your bra, this must be what it's like to feel a baby kick inside a stomach. It's everything I've ever wanted. And having it is never enough. It's a thirst that can't be sated. I want it to never end. I want to die with my hands here. I want to feel you.

Jen: Holden, you just shot up. Don't start something you can't finish.

Holden: I want to be rich. I want to buy a thousand pounds of H and just disappear.

Jen: We can disappear right here.

Holden: Disappear here.

Jen (pushing his hands off her breasts): Slide down the surface of things. Stop being cardboard cutouts.

Holden: I can feel you, you know. Through these pants and underpants, through this sheet, through your panties. I can feel the most beautiful parts of you.

(Pause.)

Holden: If I am up on that stage, I wouldn't want to come home to anyone else.

(Jen leans down and they kiss.)

(Blackout.)

Scene 5:

(Bedroom. Mattress on floor. Tv on chair. Junk food wrappers and bottles litter the floor. From this point on in the play, there should be no light coming through the window. The stage should be only half as bright as it has been up to now. Holden lays on bed. Jen sits with back to audience, clearly in the process of shooting up.)

Jen: Holden, where did the rest of our stuff go?

(Holden remains silent and appears to be sleeping.)

Jen: We need that. I'll have to cut into the stuff we sell.

(She turns and hits Holden on the leg. Holden remains immobile.)

Jen: ...Holden?

(Holden remains immobile.)

Jen: Holden, baby, wake up.

(She places her hand over his mouth and nose. He is not breathing and she turns viciously.)

Jen: Holden! Holden, wake up! Open your eyes!

(She grabs his arm and sits him up. Holden remains unconscious throughout.)

Jen: Come on, oh, come on. No no no no no, come on.

(She begins dragging him around the room.)

Jen (in tears): Holden, please wake up. Please, baby, please. Wake up.

(She drops him back on the bed and begins hitting his chest. Holden coughs once and instantly begins heaving.)

Jen: That's it! Breathe!

(Holden is gasping for air.)

Jen (really crying, bawling): Holden!

Holden (breathing raggedly): What?

(Blackout.)

Scene 6:

(Bedroom. Mattress on floor. Tv on chair. Junk food wrappers and empty bottles litter the floor. Holden and Jen stand side by side facing the audience.)

Holden: I saw what it's like to die.

Jen: That was the second time.

Holden: It's a cold and it's dark and it never ends. It's so cold.

Jen: The first time, I stole my dad's car and drove him to the hospital. I dumped him out on the sidewalk in front of the doors and he woke up and chased me down before I got out of the parking lot.

Holden: Our stupid little desires. All the things we wish for and will never see. You can see all of that, just beyond your reach. But you come back. You come back from death and you find a page in your handwriting. You find a story you wrote in some kind of withdrawal sickness and it's the first thing you've ever really written. You don't even remember writing it.

Jen: Once there was a boy

Holden: Once there was a boy with a hole for a heart. People could

Jen: See into him.

Holden: He lived in a glass house

Jen: With glass people

Holden: Until they told him to leave. He got lost in the woods.

Jen: So lost.

Holden: People found him and sat him on a tree stump.

Jen: And they made him feel special.

Holden: But then he told them the forest was dead.

Jen: Dying.

Holden: The forest was dead but they didn't see it.

Jen: Until he told them.

Holden: They fled. Left him there alone.

Jen: That was his punishment.

Holden: So he walked.

Jen: He walked.

Holden: Until he found a lake.

Jen: And he saw his reflection in the lake.

Holden: He was old and pointless.

Jen: It was all too late.

Holden: He saw his family walking by and he cried out.

Jen: But they didn't recognize him anymore.

Holden: He tried to ride the wind

Jen: But the ground hurt his feet.

Holden: So he just sat down and waited

Jen: To die.

Holden: And he was buried upside down

Jen: Because he was different.

Holden: And the dirt

Jen: Filled that hole

Holden: In his heart. Death filled the hole

(together): In his heart.

(Blackout)

End ACT I.

ACT II:

Scene 1:

(Bedroom. Mattress on floor. Tv on chair. Junk food wrappers and empty bottles litter the floor. Holden sits on bed with David and Patrick.)

Holden: Yeah, it's totally cool. It's this, like, poetry competition and it's going to be taped for public television. I stayed up like two days working on new poems for it. My friend was in it last year and he said I've totally got the thing down. I've got a real chance at this. I feel confident. You know how you stay up too long and suddenly you have total faith in everything you do? I'm fucking ready.

David: When did Jen leave?

Patrick: She said she'd be back around midnight. So we've still got a few hours.

Holden: You want to hear some of my stuff? I've got all kinds of poems. I've got serious and funny and beautiful and sad, everything. Which ones should I do?

Patrick: I don't know, man.

Holden: And my friend, the one that was in it last year, he said there's going to be publishers and agents there looking for new clients. It's gonna be great. This is all I need. Just a chance to get in front of the right people and impress them. I know I can do it.

David: I've got some Demerol. If we had a needle we could shoot it.

Holden: My needle streak war wounds

On carpet-bombed valleys in late evening

I saw ice crystals and hidden fortress mounts

Tapping her wrist and winding our clock

Drowning for fun

Another gift of stolen orchids

To win her cruel charm

Patrick: Do you know where Jen keeps her needles?

Holden: Yeah, they're in the bathroom.

(Holden stands and walks offstage.)

Holden (from offstage): She's got connections with diabetics to get needles. But, you know, since she got busted she has to take piss tests randomly. You, like, call a number and it reads the color of the day. If it's your color, you've gotta go piss in a cup. She's on maroon, that's a tough color. That's really frequent, that's like four times a week.

(Holden enters holding a needle.)

Holden (hands the needle to David and David begins preparing a shot): She's got this girl that works in a hospital. Gets urine from her every time it's a maroon day. It's gotta be from someone that's about Jen's age and there can't be anything in it. So it can be a challenge. But Jen says she's got it locked down. It's no problem. She has to, like, tape a pouch of urine to her leg because it needs to be at body temperature. They actually check the temperature before they test it, so they can tell if you brought it in.

David: We'll do you first, Holden. I know you don't like needles.

Holden: Thanks, man.

(Holden removes his shirt and presents his arm.)

Holden: But, like I was saying, this poetry thing could change everything. I could start making a living at it, get a book published. I'd have enough to move out of my parents' house and keep in the H the whole time. I'd get me and Jen an apartment and she could stop selling it. We'd just fuck all day and screw around with each other and watch movies and do H. And then we could...just...

(Holden sinks backward onto the bed.)

David: I think he likes it.

Patrick: Is he out?

David: Holden!

(David claps his hands over Holden's face. He snaps his fingers by his ears.)

David: Nah, man, he's out.

Patrick: We should check his wallet.

David: Dude, he's Jen's guy.

Patrick: Yeah, but he probably wouldn't even notice. And when he does, he won't remember what happened to anything he has. Shit, how much did you give him?

David: I just don't want to piss Jen off.

Patrick: You fucked her yet?

David: Yeah, finally.

Patrick: She's a fucking slut.

(Pause.)

David: You think he knows she fucks other guys?

Patrick: Well we had a threesome, once. Or we were going to.

David: You and him and Jen?

Patrick: Well we were doing coke and talking about sex and it was getting pretty heated and then Jen just took her shirt off. And then I said we should do another line and they were both into it but I put up lines of H instead of the coke. And this little faggot passes out before we get started.

David: What'd you do?

Patrick: What do you think I did? I fucked her and went home.

(Pause.)

Patrick: He sure does pass out a lot.

David: Did you hear how he lost his virginity?

Patrick: No, man.

David: Well Jen invited him over to do some painkillers, right? And she shoots him up with like a super-duper double dose because she doesn't know what the fuck she's doing. And then she fucked him while he was passed out.

Patrick: No way!

David: For serious. And he was a fucking virgin!

Patrick: We really should check his wallet.

(David rolls Holden over and takes out his wallet. He looks inside it.)

David: He's got a ten and a bunch of pieces of paper.

Patrick: Paper? Like, rolling papers?

(David inspects the papers.)

David (reading aloud): We assembled with ladders

Grew four times normal size

To clear pigeons from overhead wires

But the cold broke backs

(David examines another piece of paper.)

David (reading aloud): We're all tracked by secret armies
Bearing down to deliver the final last thing
With nowhere left to hide
And no reason to try

Patrick: I don't get this guy. He doesn't make any sense. He just uses words that don't mean anything most of the time.

David (Holding up the ten dollar bill): Hey, I know where we can score.

Patrick: Right now?

David: Yeah, we'll go score and then come back and score from Jen. She'll be back by then.

Patrick: Cool.

(David puts Holden's wallet back in his pocket and they exit.)

(Blackout. Holden does not move during blackout and in next scene he is in the same position.)

Scene 2:

(Same as previous scene's ending. Jen enters. She is crying. She crosses the stage and lays on bed, arm wrapped around Holden.)

Jen (whispering): Holden.

(Holden begins to stir.)

Jen: Holden, something bad happened.

Holden (waking): What happened?

Jen (crying): My brother got arrested.

Holden (checking his watch): Is it really 6:30?

Jen: I need to go bail him out.

Holden: Do your parents know?

Jen: Yeah, they're going to bail him out and I'm going with them. We got there and the police had just raided the place. Everything was all torn up and thrown around.

Holden: What did they catch him with?

Jen: The cops wouldn't say. They just said he was under arrest and gave us the address.

Holden: Well you've got the best lawyer in the city. I'm sure he can beat the case.

(Jen sees the needle on the floor and picks it up.)

Jen: You're high?

Holden: I think I'm coming down. Must have passed out.

Jen: Who shot you up?

Holden: David and Patrick were here. Guess they got tired of waiting for you.

(Lights begin to dim.)

Jen: I need a hit before we go. I can't handle this straight.

(Holden picks up the spoon and holds it for her. She presents a small bottle and pours some powder from it onto the spoon. Jen spits into the spoon. Holden holds the spoon while she holds a lighter under it.)

Holden: Where are your cottons?

Jen: Forget the cottons.

(She fills the needle from the spoon and then leans back against the wall that is at the head of the bed.)

Holden: I miss you so much when you go to score.

Jen: Well I didn't score because my brother got arrested before we got there.

Holden: I'd like to come with you next time.

Jen: No.

Holden: Why not?

(Pause. Jen shoots up while the question lingers.)

Holden: Are you embarrassed by me?

Jen: Of course not, honey. It's just...

(She removes the needle and is instantly very sedated.)

Holden: It's what?

Jen: You have this world separate from your brother. I have this world separate from my brother. If he knew...

(Holden stands and walks to the window.)

Holden: You know that road by my house? If you go past my house, there's that fork in the road?

Jen (dreamily): Yeah.

Holden: And one branch is the main road and the other one isn't even paved.

Jen: Yeah.

Holden: I never see anyone go down that other road. I never see a single person go down that road that isn't paved. And I don't know where it goes.

Jen: It goes left.

Holden: But where does that lead?

Jen: Where does anything lead?

(Holden turns back and walks to the bed. He sits down at the foot, facing away from Jen.)

Holden: Sometimes I want to drag a chair out there and just sit and watch. Just wait for a car to go left.

(Jen crawls forward and wraps her arms around Holden from behind.)

Jen: Maybe there's nothing out there. Maybe it's a dead end. Or it just leads to a dead place.

Holden: I had a dream before you got here. I was in a mental institution. And everyone there was crippled somehow. Sometimes it was physical and sometimes it was emotional. Everyone wanted to be the only one that was crippled. Everyone wanted to be so special for being the only one carrying this thing.

Jen: Maybe it's not our differences that make us special.

Holden: There was this evil doctor that ran the whole place. We all hated him but we wanted his respect. It was like reading a book. And then he chose me. He said I was the most special. And I had to be the

only one that was crippled or injured or whatever it was. So I had to kill the other kids there. And I started to. I started killing every single one of them while the doctor watched me. Then he set me up with a rifle in an upstairs window. There was just one person left to kill. He had leg braces and he couldn't run. I just started shooting at him. I didn't hate him, I didn't care at all. All I knew was that I had to please the doctor, I had to be the only one that really deserved what I was going through.

Jen: And so you killed him. You got what you wanted and it turned out that you didn't want what you finally got. You looked down and your body had changed. Now you had leg braces.

Holden: No. I didn't kill him. I didn't get what I wanted. And my body hadn't changed. I missed him. I missed him every time until I was out of bullets. And he started to come after me.

Jen: So the doctor killed you for failing.

Holden: The kid with the leg braces became three people. He turned into three and the other two didn't have braces. And they looked like me but they weren't me because I was me. They just looked like it. And then I knew that I'd killed them. I had killed them so I could be the only special person and they were back. They would all come back. They would all get me. Everyone I killed would come back because death couldn't even stop them. All it did was seal my doom.

Jen: What did you do?

Holden: I got down on my knees and asked the doctor to cure me. I said I didn't want to be special, I just wanted to live.

(Jen pulls him backwards so he lays down on the bed.)

Jen: When I was a kid, I used to assist my dolls in suicide. They were hanging in my room, their wrists were slashed and stuffing poured out. They would have knives sticking out of their chests. I liked that at the time. I liked helping to kill them. It was their choice and I respected that.

(Pause.)

Jen: Winter is coming. We need to escape.

Holden: I don't even have a job. My parents wouldn't let me go on a vacation.

(Jen strokes his chest.)

Holden: I know, okay? Don't give me shit about it.

Jen: What?

Holden: I know I should take any chance to get out of here but I can't just leave. So don't say anymore about it because you don't understand.

Jen: But I didn't say anything.

(Holden sits up and begins putting his shoes on.)

Jen: Is it the bi polar?

Holden: It's not uncommon for people with bi polar to hear voices.

Jen: Do they tell you to kill your parents?

(Holden turns to her angrily.)

Holden: I'm not a fucking freak. I'm not a danger to anyone. You know me better than anyone, you should know I wouldn't hurt anyone.

Jen: I'm sorry, okay? It was a joke.

(Holden turns back and begins putting his shoes on.)

Holden: First it was just my name. I'd hear someone say my name and when I turned around, nobody was there.

(Jen runs her fingers up and down Holden's back.)

Holden: But now...now they tell me what a shitty person I am.

(Pause.)

Jen: Honey, why don't you tell someone?

Holden: I'm telling you.

Jen: What about your parents?

Holden (angrily): Fuck my parents.

Jen: You don't really hate them.

(Pause.)

Jen: Maybe we could all go on a vacation together.

Holden: You, me and my parents? Where would we go, Jen? What could we ever do together? I'm so sick of everything. I'm so sick of being a zombie and a number and a patient and a problem and a bad employee and a bad son. I'm sick of being sick. And I'm sick of being tired. And I'm sick of being sick and tired. I'm tired of not being whatever it is that I want to be.

(Pause.)

Holden: Sometimes it makes me want to kill myself.

(Jen grabs him and holds him.)

Holden: But I don't want to die like that.

Jen: By suicide?

Holden: I don't want to die alone.

Jen: Everyone dies alone.

Holden: I need to stop reading books and start reading maps.

Jen: You can't leave without me.

(Long pause.)

Jen: Look, I'll be whatever you need me to be. I'll be your nurse if you need that. I'll be your best friend. I'll be your lover. I'll be the only person you can ever talk to. I'll be anything, as long as you're in my life.

Holden: Patiently nurse. Patient and nurse.

Jen: Why didn't you tell me about the voices?

Holden: This is the part of me I can't show anyone.

Jen: You're my heart. And sometimes I feel like I don't even know you.

Holden: Nobody knows anybody.

Jen: I need to go bail out my brother. My parents will be home any minute.

Holden: I've gotta go. I've got this poetry thing-

Jen: You're not coming with me?

(Pause. Holden turns back to face her.)

Holden: Of course I am. I just need to make a call.

(Jen grabs him and kisses him. They stay in the embrace for a very long time.)

(Blackout.)

Scene 3:

(Bedroom. Mattress on floor. Tv on chair. Junk food wrappers and empty bottles litter the floor. Stage is black except for spotlight on Holden. There is another spotlight on Jen, who is on the phone. This spotlight should only be half the intensity of the light on Holden.)

Holden: There was a crack in the hull. Maybe you lose the whole crew but you just keep steaming towards port. Stopping will just sink the boat.

Jen: I can give you a couple grams. Oh, come on. If you need more than a couple grams for the night, you've got problems.

Holden: I know she sleeps with other people. It's not killing me, it doesn't break my heart. I'm the one she wants the most. And that's why she can't have me. Because if I give myself to her, then it's not uneven anymore. I'm not in charge. We'd become joint partners in the venture.

Jen: Well Patrick is down at the police station every day. He says his brother wants to be a cop. So he keeps taking him to the police station to talk to the cops about how to join the force.

Holden: We just don't talk about sleeping with other people. If we don't talk about it, it's like it never happened. It doesn't affect us in any way.

Jen: It's a shitty alibi. He'll turn if any pressure's put on him. I need to cut him off. But if I do cut him off, maybe he'll rat then just to get back at me. I hate being in this position.

Holden: If you're the dealer, you've got a whole new mess of problems. You start using more because you have more on hand. Then you have to sell more to buy more. And the customers. They're all potential informants. They're all one insult away from going to the cops. And they push you to insult them. They always expect a shot on credit. They'll always be able to get you the money tomorrow. They've got a rich aunt that sent a check. They know this guy they're going to rip off. They're waiting for their mom to go to sleep so they can raid her purse. And they paid you yesterday so they expect you to carry them today. Jen ends up with customers from every social level. She's spread her business to cover most of the city. And everyone wants one on credit. And everyone is ready to rat on her. And everyone will turn if they get caught. She's been in jail twice now.

Jen: And then there's Andrew. He's got pigeon all over him. Eyes like a video camera.

Holden: A heart like suicide. A head full of pesticides. Lungs made of broken glass. We've decided to stop having human parts. The H eats away at them like rust.

Jen: Free agency doesn't pay in the long run.

Holden: It's not the highs that get you. It's the low. It's hitting bottom. You get to the very bottom and you don't worry because absolutely nothing is important anymore. You stop getting high and you're just doing the drugs to maintain. To hold it together. What am I going to do with my life? If I'm just waiting to get paid to spill my guts, I'm going to keep swallowing them. I feel like sometimes there's not enough time. Death is creeping up, it's right behind me. Maybe a car will jump the curb while I'm walking to Jen's and that'll be it. Or the cops will beat me to death because I smirk at them. Or Jen will get bored with me and cook me up a hot dose. I don't know how I'll die, but death is close enough for shadow puppets. Something is going to happen. Every bomb eventually goes off.

Jen: Look, call me back. I'll cut the stuff and you call me back in an hour.

Holden: So I guess it's not important if she sleeps with other guys. I've slept with a couple other girls. It's no big deal. Our love transcends a need for ownership and other fairy tales designed for conning ourselves.

(Jen has walked over to stand by Holden's side. Spotlight on her comes to full strength.)

Jen: We have an understanding. Until he's ready to put a ring on my finger, I'm free to act like we're not married. I tried to explain this to someone and all they could say is that there can be a middle ground. Not married but not separate. I don't know. I can't imagine having a relationship that constricts you unless it's the only relationship you want to be in. I would marry Holden. He just won't act.

Holden: It's getting harder to keep it all from my parents. My dad's not a problem, he just works and then watches tv all night. But my mom...she still thinks she wants to be involved in my life. When she's not kicking me out. She can't distinguish between children and monsters anymore.

Jen: He's writing bad checks to everyone for everything and I still vouch for him.

Holden: Breaking a promise shouldn't break your fucking heart.

Jen: He's getting distant. He's turning against me.

Holden: I need to get the needle out of my arm. I need to get the junk out of my system. Just to see if I still exist in there. If there's a part of me that isn't infected.

Jen: He's losing interest. I think I'm going to lose him. The one thing that was never supposed to happen and I think it's happening. He's looking at his life and asking

Holden: Isn't there more than this?

(Pause.)

Holden: I'm tired of a life of chasing the low. I'm tired of shooting up just so nothing matters anymore. I'm tired of shooting up just to not go into a shaking fit on my bathroom floor.

Jen: He's the strongest person I've ever met. He kicks junk alone, with no help. Whenever he feels like he's getting trapped by it. I see him less when he kicks, but I can't blame him. But he always comes back. He can't stay away from me. But what happens when he can?

(They turn to face each other.)

Holden: I think you're losing interest in me.

Jen: You know that's not true.

Holden: You took your all our pictures down.

Jen: I can't look at them. I miss you too much when I look at them and you're not here.

Holden: You're painting me out of the picture.

Jen: Only because you white out my name.

Holden: Let's fix. I think we need to talk.

(They walk to the mattress and sit down. While the following conversation occurs, they are preparing to shoot up.)

Holden: I think we're in a low period right now.

Jen: Why do you say that?

Holden: Where is this taking us?

Jen: It's the journey, though.

Holden: Even that's bad now.

Jen: Is it something I did?

Holden: It's everything we do. It's us together, dying a little more each day.

Jen: Well even if we stop, we're still dying.

Holden: But I need to start living.

Jen: This isn't living? What is it, then?

Holden: Killing time.

Jen: So are you leaving me?

Holden: I don't want to.

Jen: So you're going to stay?

Holden: I don't want to do that either.

Jen: Well what other options are there?

Holden: Something else instead.

Jen: Holden, you know I love you so much.

Holden: I try so hard not to breathe. But nothing ever happens.

(Jen finds a vein on Holden's arm and injects.)

Jen: If you turn and walk out that door again...

Holden: There's something missing.

Jen: I don't want you to go.

Holden: I'm 17 and I feel like I already died. And nobody noticed.

Jen: Why are you talking about leaving, then? Huh? You already disappeared. Just go with that.

Holden: Not leaving. Not *just* leaving. Change.

Jen: A broken vessel of half-notes

A quarter past four in the morning

Months of calm seas

Where faces mask their own sad recognition

Holden: I passed through a gate into my own sad story

I had made myself a prisoner to an idea

I never would have entered if I had known

I couldn't get back out

I never would have had an idea

If I thought it would be the death of me

Jen: This sounds like the end.

Holden: I carry all this pain inside me. I carry a lifetime of embarrassing incidents and awkwardness. I don't even know if I have any friends left.

(They both collapse backwards and stare up.)

Holden: It's cold in here.

Jen: Don't go. Don't leave me. Don't- Just...don't go.

Holden: I don't want to go. You're the only part of the world I'm not allergic to.

(Jen traces upwards across his stomach with her fingers.)

Jen: I love the skin stretched over your bones.

(Holden notices her arm and grabs it to look.)

Jen: It's nothing.

(Holden stares into her eyes.)

Jen: I knew something like this was coming, that's all.

Holden: You said you wouldn't do it anymore.

Jen: No harm done.

Holden: Scars. Blood loss. You could cut nerve paths or ligaments. And then there's the psychological thing.

Jen: I'm fine.

Holden: No you're not. If you were fine, you wouldn't be cutting yourself. It's a sign of major psychological problems. I can't stand it. I can't stand for you to be in pain. And it's worse that you're causing the pain. It feels like a betrayal.

Jen: She said she was sorry

Like methane in her lungs

She would die for him

If he would just live for her

Holden: A heart made of sand

It scatters in the wind

He fills his arm with her cruel love

And keeps a room at her hospital
Marking days and failures on the wall
That will never be big enough
Sprinting on broken legs
And pleading for a fresh start

(Blackout.)

Intermission:

Scene 4:

(Bedroom. Mattress on floor. Junk food wrappers and empty soda bottles litter the room. Tv on chair.

Jen, Holden, and Bonnie lay entwined on the mattress. Intoxication level is high.)

Holden: It's like I spend all my life in your bed.

Jen: A bed too small for three.

Holden: Just big enough.

Bonnie: We're all bunched together.

Holden: I like having two lovely ladies making a Holden sandwich.

(Jen playfully swats his arm and then sits up.)

Jen: Oh. Ohhhh. Oh...shit.

Holden: I don't want to get lost on the way home.

Jen: No, I have a shipment to move.

Holden: You need an assistant.

Jen: Yeah, I'll take an ad out in the newspaper.

Bonnie: Did you hear about what the paper did on International Clown Day?

Holden: What'd they do?

Bonnie: They ran a little story on it and pulled a stock photo for it. It turned out to be a picture of John Wayne Gacy in his clown outfit. The clowns were *mad*.

Holden: So forty of them hopped into a car and drove to the newspaper?

Jen: And sprayed them with seltzer while throwing pies.

Holden: I rear-ended a clown car once. There was sixty-eight injuries.

Jen: But I really do have to take this down there.

Holden: I see some kind of implied message here.

Jen: Well not to put too fine a point on it, but...

Holden: No way. Not me.

Jen: You've done it before.

Holden: That's right, I've done it before. And I said no more after that last time.

Jen: It was beautiful. We were on the glass elevator, going up again and again, seeing the city beneath us.

Holden: Yeah, that was great. When the doctor got on and said that you'd be selling your body in two years, that kind of ruined it.

Bonnie: Oh my god, I couldn't handle that.

Holden: Jen can handle anything. She probably fucked him.

(Jen looks hurt.)

Bonnie: That doesn't seem like something Jen would do, Holden.

Holden: You sure? She fucks every guy she meets.

(Jen dashes to the bathroom.)

Bonnie: That was an asshole move.

Holden: Don't worry, I have a plan.

Bonnie: Whatever it is, it's a shitty plan for assholes.

Holden: She'll be angry and go out and fuck whoever she's meeting, you know, to get back at me. And that means I get to have sex to get back at her.

Bonnie: Well, unless you've got a woman stashed down the front of your pants...

Holden (grabs Bonnie's hand): You don't think we'd be great together?

(Bonnie yanks her hand out of Holden's.)

Bonnie: I couldn't do that to Jen.

Holden: Well that puts a damper on my threesome idea. I've had all these pictures of you doing quite a few things to Jen in my head.

Bonnie: You're horrible.

Holden: But I'm great in bed.

Bonnie: You're a terrible person sometimes.

Holden: That hurts. I'm a tolerant, forgiving, modest, and handsome man. But that hurts me a little bit.

Bonnie: Holden, seriously, that's fucked up. I can never tell if you're serious when you say things like that.

Holden: Just look in my eyes.

Bonnie: There is no pupil in your eyes.

Holden: Well, there ya go. I'm the man with no pupils. Like a defrocked priest that taught at a Catholic school. Which is, incidentally, my ultimate goal in life.

(Jen marches out of the bathroom with a toilet plunger. She whacks Holden over the head with it and then marches back to the bathroom without saying a word.)

Holden: Well that was pretty surreal.

Jen (from offstage): I'm not talking to you, asshole!

Holden: You're talking to me to tell me you're not talking to me.

Jen (offstage): Well that's all you get!

Holden (to Bonnie): Does it sound like she's talking to me?

Bonnie: She's talking at you.

Holden: I'm used to people laughing at me but-

Bonnie: Nobody laughs at you.

Holden: They laugh towards me.

Bonnie: Maybe they're laughing with you.

Holden: I don't think so. You know, I don't even get half my jokes.

Bonnie: Why do you do that to her?

Holden: Do what?

Bonnie: Upset her.

Holden: By pointing out the obvious and glaring truth?

Bonnie: Holden, do you even know what you're rebelling against anymore?

Holden: I don't need to know. I'm a nihilist. I don't believe in anything, not even nihilism.

Bonnie: It just seems to me that you use your wit-

Holden: Which is ample.

Bonnie: To hurt people.

Holden: I'm also awkwardly making passes at you that are being deflected.

Bonnie: I don't know if Jen has made you into this or if Jen keeps you from always being like this.

(Holden considers.)

Holden: Oh, that Jen. The only part of the world I'm not allergic to. She makes me whatever I am, definitely.

Bonnie: You make yourself. You're not tied down by the past or the present.

Holden: What about the future?

Bonnie: You let me know when you start thinking about the future.

Holden: Fuck it, I'm a rock star.

(Holden begins digging through garbage behind the mattress.)

Bonnie (to Jen): Jen, come back, honey. Holden wants to apologize.

Jen (offstage): He can stick his apology up his ass with the dildo!

Holden (to Jen): Jen, is *that* NEVER TALKING ABOUT IT AGAIN?!

(Bonnie begins to laugh.)

Holden: Shut up!

Bonnie: No, it's just-

Holden: Don't laugh at me, damn it!

(Holden returns to digging behind the mattress.)

Bonnie: Holden, just apologize to her.

Holden: Fuck her!

Bonnie: Then maybe I should just leave. I don't want to cause friction.

Holden: Then use lubricant. Ow!

(Holden pulls his hand up and there is blood on it.)

Bonnie: What happened?

(Jen enters from the bathroom.)

Jen: Holden, are you okay?

Holden: I'm fucking bleeding.

Jen: What happened, baby?

Holden: There's a stupid nail sticking out of the mattress!

Jen: There are nails in mattresses?

Holden: I thought the bed of nails thing was bullshit!

(Jen walks towards the bed.)

Holden: Stay back! I could infect you!

Jen: You don't have AIDS, Holden.

Holden: Sure I don't. And you didn't fuck some guy in front of me last night.

Bonnie: Jen, get the Band-Aids.

Jen: Holden, I-

Holden: Oh no, it was a lot of fun. "Don't mind him, he's passed out." Is that why you dope me up? So that you can fuck other guys?

Bonnie: Holden, just calm-

Holden: Shut the fuck up, Bonnie! Shut up! Just shut up. Stop talking. Enough out of you. Jen gives me the floor because I mean so much to her. You're not fucking important! You don't get to see her fuck other guys, do you?

Jen: Why are you-

Holden: I'm the one that's here every day, I'm the one that you beg to move in. I'm the one with promise and prospects! And if I say I want to fuck someone else, then I'm gonna fuck someone else!

(They sit in silence for a few seconds.)

Jen: Holden, you can sleep with anyone you want. You've made it clear you don't want to restrict yourself to me. So why should I have to restrict myself to you?

Holden: Because you fucking love me. Right? Don't you love me?

Jen: I love you so much.

Holden: Enough to fuck other guys in front of me?

Jen: I thought you were asleep.

Holden: Oh, that's a good reason. By all means, let that be your opening statement on the matter.

Bonnie: I think I'm just gonna go. You guys need to talk and-

Holden: You're not going anywhere. Jen wants to fuck other guys, I'm gonna fuck her best friend. Right here in her bed.

(It sits until finally Holden puts his hands over his ears and screams. They sit in silence for several seconds.)

Holden: I don't know how to feel right. Nothing helps and everything makes it worse.

(Jen crawls onto the bed and cradles Holden.)

Holden: I'm 19. I'm 19 and I've never given myself a break on anything. It's always me, me, me. Me, me, me. I'm at fault, this is my problem. I have no future because I dropped out of school to be a musician. I'm not a musician because I did too much H and got kicked out of the band. I'm gonna be dead in five years and I'm not a famous artist.

Jen: You don't even want that.

Holden: How do you know what I want? Beyond the occasional fuck when I can get it up, and the constant H to make sure I can't get it up, you don't know anything about me.

Bonnie: You're not a bad person, Holden.

(Holden sits up and turns his back to the audience.)

Holden: I hurt all over.

(Blackout.)

Scene 5:

(Bedroom. Mattress on floor. Tv on chair. Junk food wrappers and empty soda bottles litter the floor.

Bonnie and Holden sit in bed. Holden is slowly rubbing Bonnie's extended leg.)

Holden: I get so I can't even tell what's normal anymore. I can't tell if I'm justified in feeling so pissed off and hating the world or if, you know, I'm just completely fucked in the head. I'm no good anymore. Look at my hands. Look how selfish they are.

Bonnie: I had this dream about you in an abandoned building. You were tossing a baseball on the stairs. And the ball would go right through the stairs. You never went upwards because you always had to chase the ball down.

Holden: And then it got away from me. It just disappeared entirely.

Bonnie: And there was some sort of bird. There was like a rustle of cavalry horses outside, there was some kind of ice age coming. And all you did was chase this ball.

Holden: What do you think the word escape means?

Bonnie: What do you mean?

Holden: We can be neither friends nor enemies

We offer no terms except unconditional surrender

So sometimes we slip the needle to strain

We view carousel pictures of red ivy catastrophe

In a charmed room of linen

That ignites when we sleep

Bonnie: I wish I wasn't so plain.

Holden: Why do you say that?

Bonnie: You make me feel like I'm ten and have my first crush. I feel like I'm not good enough or whatever.

Holden: How could anyone not be good enough for me? Here I am, the rat that just won't drown. Sinking ship has passed away. And now I believe some kind of fortune cookie message that I'm going to have a better time ahead. But that's insanity. Just like AA says.

Bonnie: What do they say?

Holden: "The definition of insanity is doing the same thing over and over, expecting a different result each time."

Bonnie: You were an alcoholic?

Holden: Well one time Jen and I were going to shoot whiskey but even we were too scared to try that.

(Holden becomes more animated.)

Holden: Listen, I'm leaving. I'm going to Omaha.

Bonnie: Why?

Holden: Because I can. Because it's in my grasp. I have a car that runs good enough, money for gas, and anyway, that's *another place*. That's a different place where the sky has different stars at night. Where nobody's kicked me out of any place yet and there aren't roadblocks around my house.

Bonnie: And that's the stuff that's wrong with here?

Holden: You should come with me. You should see what people look like when you haven't grown up with them. You should see a highway that doesn't just go in a circle.

Bonnie: What would we tell Jen?

Holden: Tell her? Why tell her? Does she own us?

Bonnie: She's my friend.

Holden: Then she'll understand. The best thing we can do is just disappear. We can just go there and see a place that never touched our past. Because I just walk through my failures in this city.

(Holden leaps up.)

Holden: Think of it! Think of a place where there are no stop signs where you expect them. Someplace where there's a new club playing some new band you've never heard of. It's amazing our currency is even the same. Haven't we reached the end of the line here? Doesn't it seem like it? What holds us here except a needle? Do you want a needle to own your life?

Bonnie: A needle doesn't own my life.

Holden: I hate needles. I can't even stand to look at it when I shoot up. And let that control me?

Bonnie: I can't just pick up and leave.

Holden: Why wouldn't you? You don't owe Jen anything. You don't owe anyone except yourself. Don't you want a fresh start?

Bonnie: Are you sure you want me to go?

Holden: We can actually LEAVE this place. Just like that. Pack the car in ten minutes and see where we end up. And if we don't like Omaha, we can go to Denver. And if we don't like there, we're already

halfway to California and we could go straight into the ocean. We could just go until we disappear altogether. We could be new people. Hello, I'm Clyde Barrow.

Bonnie: We would be... Bonnie and Clyde.

Holden: We can hit every bank on the way there.

Bonnie: I've got a life here. My family-

Holden: Kicked you out.

Bonnie: My friends-

Holden: Who, me and Jen? That's all you've got left at the end of the day. You know what she offers you and it's fucking final. That's what you have here. Or you can come with me and do something new.

Bonnie: Can it wait? I mean, I don't want to get sick out on the road.

Holden: You'll come with me?

Bonnie: In, like, two weeks. Two weeks to get things straightened out and then we'll go.

Holden: We'll just go. Not even a see you later, just a fuck off.

Bonnie: Is it hard to go clean?

Holden: I did it, didn't I? I mean, how hard could it be? It kills you for five days and then you're a new person.

Bonnie: I'll need help. I need someone to-

Holden: I'll be right here with you. I won't leave. I'll be here, no matter what. We can just fix it together.

Bonnie: What will we tell Jen?

Holden: You could, uh, say you're pregnant.

Bonnie: I don't want to lie to her.

(Holden leans in and kisses her cheek.)

Holden: Then I'll have to get you pregnant.

Bonnie: Boring, Sidney. Boring, boring.

Holden: Just think how great life will be without needing a shot every three hours. Think about life on the coast, where the sun shines every day and people actually believe in art.

Bonnie: I can't do any of that alone.

Holden: Me neither. We'll do it together.

Bonnie: Just drive into the sun.

Holden: Drive into the people, the forests, the mountains, the oceans. Drive into disappearance.

Bonnie: Somehow I feel like you just want to get rid of yourself

Holden: I do. You should do the same.

(Blackout.)

End ACT II

ACT III

Scene 1:

(Bedroom. Mattress on floor. Tv on chair. Junk food wrappers and empty soda bottles litter the floor.

Holden lays in bed. Jen sits at foot of bed.)

Holden: I'm serious, we're going to leave. We're going to pick up and go. We'll see constellations we didn't know about.

Jen: Omaha is like 200 miles, Holden. There won't be new constellations.

Holden: We'll be out in the country. We'll be far away from the city. This city sucks the stars out of the sky.

(Jen faces away from him.)

Holden: It's not goodbye forever.

Jen: You won't come back. You know that.

Holden: I always know where it is. I'll have to come back eventually.

(Jen buries her face in her hands and begins sobbing.)

Holden: Hey, don't cry. Don't. Don't make this final. Don't make this running away from something.

Jen: Then what is it?

Holden: It's murder. I have too many versions of me here that I hate.

Jen: And you're just going to throw it all away?

Holden: Throw what away? What would I be throwing away?

Jen: Do you hate this place or do you hate me?

Holden: I hate having to call you a whore to get you off.

Jen: Who else can I trust to call me a whore if you're not here?

Holden: I don't want to talk about it. I don't want to talk about either of us owing anything to each other. Because we don't.

Jen: You're so fucking confusing.

Holden: I think I've got it straight for once. That's why you hate it.

(Jen turns to face him.)

Jen: Can you just hold me? Can you put your arms around me like you love me?

Holden: I- I feel like this is harsh and I don't want to hurt you, but you have to stop asking me to give more than I can. Your happiness isn't my responsibility.

Jen: You're an asshole.

Holden: Look, there's nothing I can do. I'm trying to be honest. If you love me, then you should stop trying to remake me.

Jen: You're right, I don't love who you are. I love who you could be. Fucking be a man and stop running away.

Holden: Okay. Fine. You have me all figured out. It would be wrong for me to walk away from this fucking honeymoon. What about you, though? Huh?

(Jen turns away again.)

Jen: You back me into corners all the time. Just because you can't let me be right.

Holden: Yeah, it must be real frustrating to get called out on your bullshit.

(They are silent for several seconds.)

Holden: I'm going to forgive you for everything in Omaha.

Jen: I won't be in Omaha.

(Pause.)

Holden: That's why I'll be able to forgive you.

(Blackout.)

Scene 2:

(Bedroom. Mattress on floor. Tv on chair. Junk food wrappers and empty soda bottles litter the floor.

Bonnie and Holden lay on the bed, holding each other. Bonnie is panting and covered with sweat. She is going through withdrawal.)

Bonnie: (Moans in pain.)

Holden: It's gonna be okay.

Bonnie (clearly in pain): It's like there's fireants in my joints.

Holden: It's just the junk giving you a farewell. It'll pass.

Bonnie: I can't do this. I can't, Holden. I can't do it, I can't, I can't, I can't icanticanticanticantic-

Holden: Baby, you can do anything. Just calm down. You need distraction.

Bonnie: Nothing will work. It's killing me.

Holden: You can make it through this. You can do it.

Bonnie: I'm not strong like you and Jen.

Holden: Oh, don't go thinking Jen is the queen of the world. I've seen her much worse than this, begging to suck dick just to get a hit.

Bonnie: She could do this better than me- (Moans in pain.)

Holden: So one time, Jen and I had a picnic. We're out at this park and we have a little picnic and we haven't shot up since morning so I'm feeling a bit...sexually charged, I guess you could say. I could get it up for once. And so it's dark and the park is empty. It's that one park over by the elementary, you know the one? Nobody goes there at night, nobody even drives past it. So I'm really putting it to her heavy and I've got a hand up under her shirt and this is awesome, right? So I get her pants off and I get my pants off, and I'm in fine form that day, rock hard. So I whip out my condom. I've had this condom in my wallet since I was twelve years old and I'm ready to use the fucker finally. But it snaps as soon as I put it on. I don't even get inside before it breaks. So you know what Jen says?

(Bonnie remains mute, but looks thoughtful, a bit relieved to be focusing on something besides the pain.)

Holden: Jen says, "It's not a problem. Just grab one of those Ziplock bags the sandwiches were in."

(Bonnie and Holden laugh together.)

Holden (running his hands over Bonnie, very loving and comforting): And another time, we're out at this creek. We really just went out to get away from this scene, from having all the dirtbags interrupting us all day long. So we're at this creek and I'm totally on. You know how sometimes you're just on and everything you say is funny? This was one of those days and I've got Jen convulsing, she's pitching a fit, she's got snot running out of her nose and tears in her eyes. And I don't even remember what I said, but it was the funniest thing ever. It was so funny that Jen laughed so hard that...oh god, I shouldn't tell you this.

Bonnie: What? What happened? She laughed so hard that she farted?

Holden: Oh, she *wishes*.

Bonnie: She pee'd herself?

Holden: Oh, *I wish*. No, what happened was...she laughed so fucking hard that her tampon shot out.

(Bonnie bursts into giggles, burying her face against Holden's shoulder.)

Holden: It took me a few seconds to even figure out what happened. I thought she had a fucking baby or something, I had no idea. It was like a missile.

Bonnie: How come you never tell me these stories?

Holden: I saved them for when you need them the most.

Bonnie: Tell me a few more.

Holden: One time we were both wasted and she was trying to seduce me. So she was giving me a blowjob and she passed out in the middle of it. And she impaled herself on my dick and started choking so she bit me really hard.

Bonnie: What did you do?

Holden: I passed out too but that woke me up really quick. I managed to leap about six inches in the air using the muscles in my ass.

Bonnie: That must have hurt so bad.

Holden: She's a bitey kind of girl. I'll probably have scars from her biting me. She was once biting my thumb for so long it looked like I just got out of a bath.

Bonnie: This is making me feel better.

Holden: You know, Jen was born with both sex organs and raised as a boy until she was 8.

Bonnie: Really?

Holden: Her parents had the penis removed and they keep it in a jar of formaldehyde.

Bonnie: You're fucking with me.

Holden: It's bigger than my penis is. It looks like Rasputin's.

Bonnie: That's not true.

Holden: You're right. Rasputin's dick has nothing on Jen's.

Bonnie (playfully reproachful): Don't fuck with me. We were connecting.

Holden: Once I owed this girl some money and I didn't have it so I told her that I was Raphael, Holden's twin brother that lives in Spain.

(Bonnie laughs.)

Holden: I also convinced a girl at work that I make one dollar an hour because I'm an illegal alien from Canada. She asked where I was from and I said, "From about Toronto, eh." She totally bought it.

Bonnie: You're terrible.

Holden: And I also convinced this guy that Jen was my sister. The look on his face when Jen and I started making out...

Bonnie: Do you EVER tell the truth?

Holden: You know, the concept of truth wasn't formally introduced until a Philosophy, Theology, and 20th Century Lexicon convention held in Seacaucus, New Jersey, in 1956. And I'll be damned if I'll recognize anything that comes out of New Jersey.

Bonnie: Is the room spinning?

Holden: That's just me. I'm doing that to you.

Bonnie: The room is definitely spinning.

Holden: I'll help.

(Holden stands directly in Bonnie's line of sight. He seems relaxed. He abruptly leaps into a stance, miming the act of throwing up his hands against a wall and stopping the room from spinning.)

(Bonnie screams.)

Holden: Is that better?

Bonnie: Don't ever do that without warning me first! I damn near flew off the bed!

Holden: That's the way The Kid operates. The Kid doesn't have time for questions, he just acts. I'll stop every damn thing in the world if the spinning bothers you.

Bonnie: You're The Kid now?

Holden: Apparently.

(Pause. Holden crawls back into bed and begins talking while putting his arms around Bonnie again.)

Holden: You know how I got my name?

Bonnie: Catcher in the Rye?

Holden: Boring, Sidney. Boring, boring. No, what happened was my parents decided to do natural childbirth at home, with a midwife. But the damn midwife won half a million in Vegas the week before I arrived and she just never came home. So my parents didn't prepare beyond Lamaze classes. When my mom went into labor, my dad called the police but it was during a snow storm. So he ended up on hold for the entire birth. They named me Holden in honor of my dad being on hold while my mother delivered me. Incidentally, that's about as much as my dad's ever participated in my life.

Bonnie: Is that true?

Holden: Everything except for all of what I just said.

(Pause.)

Holden: What's the most embarrassing thing that's ever happened to you?

Bonnie: I got my period in gym class.

Holden: That's happened to me too.

Bonnie: I got it in the swimming pool. They had to drain the pool and gave me an AIDS test.

Holden: Holy shit.

Bonnie: What was your most embarrassing moment?

Holden: When I laughed so hard I shot out a tampon.

Bonnie: I couldn't do this without you.

(Pause.)

Holden: When I was ten, I'd take like ten Oreos and scoop out the cream and make a big ball of it. And I'd keep it in the freezer for a couple hours. Then I'd eat a couple bites and pass out. I was a weird kid.

(Bonnie laughs.)

Holden: And then one time I freaked out when we were playing Scrabble. I had two U's and the Z and a few E's and A's. And I just freaked out because I wanted to put down the word "pederast" but I didn't have the letters.

Bonnie: What happened?

Holden: I don't even know. I just got up and walked into the bathroom and screamed. I woke up four days later and I was wearing nothing but boxer shorts and a tie.

Bonnie: You're such a liar.

Holden: Apparently I wrote threatening letters to a Senator in that time. The Secret Service came and showed me the letter. He looked a lot like a fish and I had threatened to scale him and gut him.

(Bonnie laughs.)

Holden: You know, I was the first person in my high school to qualify for a boat loan.

(Bonnie laughs uproariously.)

Holden: See, what happened was I went down to the bank to open a savings account for my frog. He was kind of like a pimp, but instead of selling sex he sold frog legs. I thought it was shady, selling out the other frogs he knew and shit. But it's not as bad as rabbits. They sell their feet for liquor and gambling money. And they probably only get half of that money. But shit, I'd sell my right nut for the ability to make people burst into flames. Not that rabbits have that ability, I just want it. And then, as long as we're on the subject of testicles, I freaked out about that too. My brother asked if I'd rather have twelve miniature testicles or one massive one and I just freaked out. I went to the garage and huffed antifreeze. Which doesn't even do anything. I started running and running. And they found me like six hours later at a gas station sixteen miles away. I was trying to buy a Coke from a vending machine with a library card and there were vultures circling above me.

(Bonnie is giggling hysterically as Holden rants on and on.)

Holden: But about that frog: He made an anti-Semitic remark and my brother heard it. My brother is just really against free speech and he also hates frogs. One time I came home from a date type thing and he was

in the driveway burning a frog in a cup filled with gasoline. And it wasn't even the same frog! So what he did to my frog was stick him in the freezer, with the Oreo ice cream balls, for a few hours to think about his actions. We did that a lot, we had to get in there sometimes when we pissed off our parents. We called it "The Cooler". But the frog couldn't handle it. It pee'd and got frozen to the spot.

Bonnie: You're insane!

Holden: Well you would be too if your parents worked for a traveling carnival.

Bonnie: They do NOT!

Holden: Well not anymore. Ever since my mom shaved off her beard, they've had trouble getting work, despite the fact that my dad can still take a cannonball to the stomach. I tell ya, after my mom shaved off the beard, my dad just lost interest in her. But now my brother's growing a beard and he's my dad's new best friend.

(Bonnie laughs very hard.)

Holden: But they've got good connections from all the people they met traveling. I can get you a Russian nuclear submarine if you want. Or pictures of Ronald Reagan picking his nose while Nancy gives him an enema. Oddly enough, he has a tattoo on his left shoulder that says, "I'd give my right arm to be ambidextrous." Seriously, I can get you anything. I can get you a gun that shoots water and a water gun that shoots bullets! My dad got an advance copy of Windows 95 in 1989. My mom got a dog that could talk.

Bonnie: And what happened to it?

Holden: It was a total Zionist so my brother put it in the oven for a few hours to think about what it had done. We called that "The Hot Box." It escaped though. I think it convinced my dad to let it out when he went in the kitchen to get some wax paper.

Bonnie: Why did he need wax paper?

(Pause.)

Holden: It's best not to ask those kinds of questions about my dad. He wears his sneakers in the pool.

Bonnie: You're really making me feel better.

Holden: That's all I want. You'll feel better, we'll leave, our lives will be better. This town sucks the energy out of you.

(They hold each other closely.)

Holden: I'll be right back. I'm gonna go upstairs and see if Jen has any Oreos.

(Blackout.)

Scene 3:

(Black stage. Jen stands stage right, facing audience. Spotlight slowly begins to rise on her. Holden and Bonnie sit on bed, no light on them yet.)

Jen: Breathe. Keep breathing. Move. Keep moving. You know the best you ever were was in his arms. You know the best you ever did was find a way to make him smile. But do you know why he's leaving? Is it because you didn't love enough? Is it because you loved too much and some birds shouldn't be caged? He says the same thing over and over. "I don't want to hear any junk talk anymore because it's all been done before and it's pointless." Yes, it has all been done before. What you have to do is allow things to be new again. You have to find a way to make a drugstore pick up not be a backstab moment.

(Blue light begins to rise on Holden and Bonnie.)

Holden: I think I'm going to die in ice water. Cold and alone and drowned.

Jen: Have you ever held a heart? What hurts you?

Holden: Why do we find it so much easier to forgive the people who don't deserve it?

Jen: Why can't you win back the people you need the most?

Holden: Chasing your own shadow your whole life....well, where the hell does that get you? How did I start waking up in a prison room?

Jen: What is he running from? Why is he treating me like a house on fire?

Holden: What am I chasing?

Jen: Why is he fleeing?

Holden: There has to be something better. I don't know much but I know that much.

Jen: No, no, no. It's not right. Why can't I be enough?

Holden: I have to believe that love is real and that history doesn't always repeat itself.

Bonnie: But hands spread open before me, I can't trust him. He's reaching for me, but I'm watching his sleeves. I'm trying to see what he's dealing from there.

Holden: Why do I have to prove anything to either of them?

Jen: It can't be a coincidence. Our bodies were shaped so well to fit together. Why would you walk out on that?

Holden: I built this life and now it's finally mine.

Jen: He makes it look like it's so natural to just drop who you were and be someone new. I'm glad he got away, but I'm still stuck here. I need him even if he swears he doesn't need me.

Holden: All this time, I thought she was the one that changed. She grew bitter and severe and nasty. She wraps me up in webs.

Bonnie: He kissed me on the cheek. I think he missed my lips.

Holden: I was probably just scared. Why doesn't anyone ever think I'm fucking frightened?

Jen: My best friend, my lover, my angel, my beautiful, fearless boy.

Holden: She doesn't love me, she wants to own me. Nobody else can afford to tell her to fuck off. And, like all things that are in limited supply, she needs to own it.

Bonnie: Why can't he kiss me? And why can't I kiss him? Am I starstruck by him? He's offering something, but I'm not sure it's what he claims.

Jen: If he would just stay another week, he'll see I've changed. He'll see it's not like it was and he doesn't have to go.

Bonnie: When we get away, he'll probably kiss me then. We're like vampires here. We're trapped here, feeding off each other. And we have to avoid mirrors.

Jen: If I could get him to do another hit, that would change everything. It would keep him here.

Holden: If you're a vampire, the only ethical thing to do is face the sun.

Bonnie: Could he forget me? Could he leave me behind like Jen? Why does he think there are no risks?

Holden: When you face the sun, people can see all of you. It burns you alive but you're pure.

Bonnie: Does he even want me or does he just want someone? I've already blown things with Jen. How could she take me back after all this? How could we do anything like we used to? We're not a group anymore, we're factions. And it really seems like we're ganging up on her. I still love her but I get why she hates me.

Jen: Just one shot. One shot would keep him here.

Holden: Needle streaks and tinfoil, a crooked smile in scorch marks. It covers me like a ghost in a warehouse, there to remind you of everyone that's been fucked before, doing just what you do. This is a craziness only I can feel. I'm sick of watching it fall apart. That's the best reason to leave.

Bonnie: If I could just see into his heart. If I could just know where those words come from and what they really mean. But he keeps that secure. He keeps that safe from the picklocks of intimacy. How am I supposed to know him?

Jen: One shot. One little shot, like a thousand others he's had. If he's going to convict me regardless, I might as well commit the crime, right? It's all I have anymore, this one last fix to keep him from leaving me here.

Holden: I know what she wants. It makes her less sad for me to die by her hand. But I can't do that anymore.

Jen: I could live with him leaving, maybe, if it was the right way. I want to be missed, not escaped.

Holden: I know I didn't handle this right. She's hurt. Fine. That's my fault. But I can't stay here because of guilt. I can't make empty threats anymore. I can't kill time until I die here.

Jen: Everything he doesn't say is coming through loud and clear. And if I have to force his hands into the dirt of our gravesite to make him acknowledge it, at least I'll feel his touch one more time.

(Blackout.)

Scene 4:

(Bedroom. Mattress on floor. Tv on floor next to chair. Empty soda bottles and candy wrappers litter the floor. Stage remains black for up to a minute while Fade Into You by Mazzy Star plays. In the blackness, Holden sits in chair. Jen stands behind mattress, gathering clothes off the floor and loading into a suitcase. Bonnie lays dead on mattress. Stage remains in darkness for at least a minute. As blue light begins to raise

on Bonnie, the music slowly lowers in volume. After another thirty seconds, lights open on Holden and Jen.)

Jen: We can go. We can start a new life. Not Omaha, they'll look for us there because you've told people.

(Pause. Jen stops picking up clothes and turns to Holden.)

Jen: It was nobody's fault. We all know the risks.

(Holden remains silent, staring down at the floor.)

Jen: Look. We can leave. That was already your plan. We'll just do it.

(Holden remains silent.)

Jen: If you're not going to talk to me, how are we supposed to communicate? I need your help now. You know how we always pretend we don't need anyone? Well I fucking do need you. More than ever.

(Jen stops putting clothes in the suitcase again and turns back to Holden.)

Jen: Holden, talk to me. Tell me what you're thinking.

(Holden considers and then says)

Holden: Don't leave.

Jen: I don't have any choice. I gave her the drugs. That means I get an involuntary manslaughter charge. I can't go back to jail, Holden, I can't. I can't face twenty years this time.

Holden: If you go- Someone has to answer for this, Jen. This isn't going to disappear.

Jen: You only have to answer the phone, Holden. And you want everything here to disappear. Nothing has changed.

(Jen begins packing again.)

Holden: Yeah it has.

Jen: So it's just me? You just wanted to get away from me. Even though you swore that's not what it was.

Holden: I don't want you to go. I don't want to be here without you.

Jen: Holden. Just...come with me?

Holden: She's dead, Jen.

Jen: I know, baby. I hate it.

Holden: You can't go. You can't walk out. I won't let you.

Jen: Come with me or stay here but stop making promises you won't keep.

(Jen closes the suitcase and lays it on the bed next to Bonnie's body. She walks over to Holden and crouches before him, grasping his hands.)

Jen: Baby, we've gotta get out of here. We've gotta go someplace they'll never find us. Right now.

Holden: This is one time when we can't just walk away. Someone has to answer for this.

Jen: I have to leave. And I want you to come with me. The worst is over. Let's start fresh.

Holden: I can't. And you can't.

Jen: I'm walking out the door. Come with me.

(Pause.)

Then stay the hell out of my way. You never wanted me.

Holden: This will be behind everything you ever do after this. You're going to carry her in your heart.

(Jen stands and looks down into Holden's eyes.)

Jen: You wanna give me a goodbye kiss?

Holden: Would it make any difference if I took the blame? If I said that I was the one that supplied it?

Jen: Neither of us is going to jail, Holden. Neither of us deserves it. We don't owe anybody anything.

(Jen walks to the mattress and picks up the suitcase.)

Jen: I'll page you. I'll put in the zip code where I'm staying and you can send a letter to me, general delivery. I'll just pick it up at the post office.

Holden: This is going to be the end. I can't write you if you walk out that door. I can't forgive you.

Jen: It's not the end. You'll...

Holden: Forget all this?

Jen: I'll make sure you know how to find me. I will see you again.

(Jen exits.)

(Blackout.)

Scene 5:

(Stage remains exactly as it is. Holden and Bonnie maintain positions. A police officer stands between mattress and chair, talking to Holden.)

Policeman 1: Come on, Holden, be a pal. Good guys tell the truth.

(Holden is clearly in shock over what's happened. He does not respond.)

Policeman 2: It could have been an air bubble. But that can be painful. Not always, but a lot of the time. You ever seen one of those? Did she twitch or scream? Was she uncomfortable at all? Holden?

(Holden remains silent, staring at the floor with disbelief.)

Policeman 2: Sometimes you addicts burn your bridges and piss off your connection, end up with a hot shot. You ever seen one of those? We had a case in metro where the junkie got a hot dose and the dealer charged \$10 apiece to watch it from the fire escape. Did Jen and Bonnie have a fight? Did Bonnie rip her off?

Policeman 1: Protecting her won't do you any good. Look what happened to Bonnie. She'd do the same to you, you know? So just tell us where she is. You know Bonnie, right? She was a friend, right? So do her the favor of not letting her die in vain.

(Holden is visibly affected when he hears the word "vain".)

Policeman 1: So to speak.

(Policeman 3 enters through door, stage right.)

Policeman 3: What have we got here?

Policeman 2: Just another overdose.

Policeman 3: What's his story? Girlfriend?

Policeman 1: I think they both were.

Policeman 3: You live with your parents, son? Or are you homeless?

Holden (staring down at his feet): With my parents, yeah.

Policeman 1: We're going to have to take you down to the station, Holden. If you want to call your parents, we'll let you. We're not arresting you.

(Holden looks up.)

Holden: I'm not under arrest?

Policeman 1: Have you broken any laws?

Holden: No.

Policeman 1: Then don't be scared. We just want to ask some questions and get a statement.

Policeman 2 (poking at Bonnie's body): She's got scars but only one fresh mark. That's probably what did it. You junkies will quit and then go back and do the same hit you were doing before. You've got no tolerance left and that's it. Game over.

Policeman 1: Do you want to call your parents, Holden?

(Holden nods. Policeman 1 hands him the phone. Holden dials and then waits several seconds.)

Holden: Mom, it's me. I need to... Something bad happened.

(Pause.)

Holden: No, I'm not hurt. I'm in some trouble though.

(Pause.)

Holden: Can you just stop?

(Pause.)

Holden: Just stop yelling at me for a second.

(Holden begins to cry.)

Holden: Mom, I need help. I'm in a lot of trouble and I need your help.

(Pause. Holden cries harder.)

Holden: Mom can you just come meet me? Please? I can't do this alone. I can't handle this. I need your help.

(Holden cries harder. He sounds desperate and at his most vulnerable.)

Holden: Will you come down to the police station and help me? I need- I'm in some trouble. I need- I'm in a lot of trouble and I need your help to get out of it.

(Pause.)

Holden (calmly, recovering himself): I think there's something I should tell you. Can you just let me say this? I want to tell you something.

(Holden exhales.)

Holden (picking up speed and increasing emotion throughout): I want to be honest with you. Something has happened. Something more than this, something more than whatever you think is going on with me. I'm a user, mom. I use people and drugs and sex and music and art and conversation and I'm a con man

and I swindle everyone I meet so I can keep using. And something broke inside me. Something has slipped off track and now I'm not even giving back, I'm just take take taking all the time. And I don't know what to do because it's not getting any better, it's just getting worse and there are voices in my head and they tell me that I'm letting everyone down. And I know you think I'm doing okay but I'm not because this has happened and now I'm in all this trouble when all I did was try to save her. And I know this comes at, like, the worst time, but I can't just not say it anymore. I can't wait until tomorrow because I may be gone tomorrow, this is moving that fast. And I can't sleep and I can't breathe right now. I can't feel my hands and I know I'm ruining your vision of me but I need- I don't even know if I can get help. And I'm not asking for pity or anything; I want care, genuine care and concern for me. Can you do that? Can you just hug me and tell me that I'll be alright? Because if you say it I might believe it. And I know that you don't want to hear any of this but if I don't tell you now then I may never tell you and I may just vanish. And I don't want to leave without you really getting to know me. This is me, mom. I'm a fuck up and a nervous wreck and I'm falling apart in front of everyone and I came close to saving her but I lost us both. And I won't just get better. I've tried and it's not getting better! I don't know what to do! I don't know if I can get any better and-

(Policeman 1 puts his hand on Holden's shoulder. Holden stops cold and recovers himself as best he can.)

Holden: So, yeah. I need you to meet me down at the police station. If you can just be there for me right now, I'll do better. We can start over and I swear I'm going to be better.

(Music begins to raise. Tom Traubert's Blues by Tom Waits.)

Holden: Thank you. Thank you for coming. I know. I know. I'm okay. I'm okay. I'm going to be okay.

(Pause. Exhaling with relief, a bit of nervous laughter.)

Holden: Thank you. Thank you. I love you too.

(Blackout.)

END.