

SHEOL

A Full-Length Play

By Matthew Martinez

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Cast of Characters

EMERY: Male, 40s, witty and skittish, possibly British.

ALANA: Female, 30s, stern, professional, she's the leader.

O'BRIEN: Male, 30s, easy going, he avoids conflict, a bit country.

REESE: Non-binary, 20s, excited, eager to make friends, they seem to have things figured out but can get stressed easily.

QUENTIN: Male, 20s, shy and quiet, he secretly has an obsessive personality.

Setting

Time: A near but alternate future.

Place: A camp in the desert.

Note on Intermission

Since the location is the same between Acts 1 and 2, an intermission between them is optional.

Note on Dialogue

A slash (/) indicates the next line overlapping the previous one.

ACT 1

SCENE 1

Lights come up dimly on the sandy Omega Camp. Upstage center there is a giant hole in the ground, and around the stage are four scattered tents. The hole has a wide lip around it that rises up so that the audience can see that this is a hole, but cannot see what's inside or how deep it is. The lights come up further to simulate the rising sun. After a few moments, EMERY emerges from his tent downstage right. He is wearing dusty, solid blue fatigues that contrast with the orange sand. He stretches deeply and looks around, then moves up to the lip of the pit. He stares down into it for a few frozen moments, then shivers and breaks his focus from it. He walks back to his tent and grabs his pack from inside. He pulls out a small butane stove, a metal pot, and a bag of coffee grounds, then sits on the ground and begins to brew coffee with water from his canteen. O'BRIEN crawls out of his tent upstage left. O'Brien wears the same blue fatigues, but a bit looser than Emery does. Emery has not noticed him yet, so O'Brien walks up behind him quietly. As Emery is about to pour his coffee into a metal cup, O'Brien speaks.

O'BRIEN

(Smugly)

Good Morning!

(Emery is startled and spills the hot coffee.)

EMERY

Damnit O'Brien! You made me spill my perfectly brewed coffee, you beast!!

O'BRIEN

I was just greeting my fellow camper!

EMERY

(Wiping his lap)

Well, aren't you just the sweetest? What are you even doing up this early?

O'BRIEN

(Looks out over the audience)

Oh I just wanted to see that beautiful desert sunrise.

EMERY

(Starts brewing more coffee)

I see.

O'BRIEN

Isn't that just gorgeous Emery? It's like God got his paints out and whipped up something special just for us little humans.

EMERY

An endearing thought.

(Looks up from the coffee)

But you're right, it is magnificent.

(They have a moment of watching the sunrise. REESE steps out of their tent downstage left. Their hair is cropped short, they have oval frame glasses, and though their blue fatigues seem a little too big, they wear them confidently.)

REESE

Good morning Emery- morning O'Brien.

EMERY

Good morning.

O'BRIEN

Well hey Reese! How are you this fine morning?

REESE

Oh I'm doing alright, just need some coffee.

EMERY

You'd be having some already if this maniac hadn't made me spill the last pot.

REESE

(to O'Brien)

Did you startle Emery again?

O'BRIEN

I'd be lying if I said I didn't.

(O'Brien chuckles. Emery sneers.)

EMERY

Anyways, the coffee is just about ready if you'd like a cup.

REESE

Ooh, yes please.

(Reese hustles back to their tent and grabs a metal cup from inside. They walk back and plop down on the ground next to Emery and hold the cup up. Emery fills it from the pot. O'Brien grabs his cup as well and stands on the other side of Emery holding it out.)

REESE

Thank you.

EMERY

Always welcome.

O'BRIEN

Ahem.

(A beat. He moves his cup
closer to Emery.)

A-HEM.

EMERY

Oh sorry, did you want some of this coffee?

O'BRIEN

(Quietly)

I wouldn't mind some.

EMERY

What was that? Sorry, you'll have to speak up. I can't hear
you.

O'BRIEN

I SAID- I wouldn't mind some.

EMERY

Say please.

(Reese chuckles as they drink their
coffee.)

O'BRIEN

Hell no/

EMERY

And that you're sorry.

O'BRIEN

HELL. No.

(They glare at each other
intensely. After a moment, O'Brien
sighs and relents.)

O'BRIEN

(Overdramatically

Fineee. Emery, I am SO SORRY that I scared the living shit
out of you and made you spill your pot of coffee.

(MORE)

O'BRIEN (CONT'D)

If you can find it in your heart of hearts to forgive me, could I please- and I mean Pretty Please- have a cup of that delicious coffee that you have brewed for us today?

EMERY

Hmm...

(Thinks for a moment)

No.

O'BRIEN

What the hell?!

REESE

C'mon Emery, I thought his apology seemed pretty sincere.

EMERY

Fine. He can have some, but you have to pour it.

(Emery jumps up and gets an MRE from his tent. O'Brien sits in his place and Reese pours him a cup of coffee.)

EMERY

(Kneels down and starts cooking his MRE)

Also, I'm not making breakfast for any of you. You should know how a damn MRE works by now.

O'BRIEN

Fair enough.

(Takes a sip of coffee)

Hot damn. That is good.

REESE

Mhm.

EMERY

Finally! Some appreciation!

(They drink their coffees for a bit as Emery continues to cook his meal.)

O'BRIEN

So, how many days do we have left?

REESE

I'm not sure, you'll have to ask Alana.

O'BRIEN

I think the replacement crew should turn up soon.

REESE

Are you excited to go home?

O'BRIEN

Definitely excited. Gonna see the wife and kid again.

REESE

That'll be nice. Seems like you never talk about them?

O'BRIEN

Oh there just ain't a lot to talk about- it's a pretty normal life...

EMERY

Besides this.

O'BRIEN

Right, besides this. You excited to leave?

REESE

Kinda.

(Gestures to the pit)

I'm excited to get away from that thing at least.

O'BRIEN

Still gives you the creeps, huh?

REESE

I looked down into it once. Won't make that mistake again.

EMERY

(Sitting and eating his meal)

Fear of heights?

REESE

Oh not at all. It's just so... empty? It swallows light like a fucking black hole or something.

EMERY

It is quite a mystery. What I don't understand is why they need a whole crew of five to watch a hole in the ground. Couldn't just one or two people do it?

O'BRIEN

You know the stories, Emery.

REESE

What stories?

EMERY

Those were the early days, lots of weird things happened. And I'm certain all of that was highly sensationalized.

REESE

(Growing worried)

What happened?

(O'Brien looks over at Emery.)

EMERY

You brought it up, you tell them.

O'BRIEN

Fine.

(Readjusts into "story mode")

When scientists first discovered the pit, they established the Corps to monitor strange energy signatures rising up from it. In the Corps' first years, the crews were only made up of two people, 'cause it was easier for a smaller team to cross the desert. And that worked for a while. But then, those small crews starting disappearing. Replacements would show up and the camp would be empty. No struggle, no blood or nothing like that. They just plain disappeared. Well, it didn't take much thought to figure out where they went. There's only one place they could've gone without a trace.

REESE

Oh my god. You mean-

O'BRIEN

(Gravely)

They jumped in.

EMERY

We don't know that for sure! Maybe they decided to abandon the camp and join a local caravan?

O'BRIEN

There ain't a single caravan that would even think to come within five miles of here! They say it's cursed. And why would the crew leave their equipment behind?

REESE

They wouldn't.

EMERY

Well... they could've... I don't know! Let's just drop it, you two are scaring me now.

O'BRIEN

Alright, fine.

(To Reese)

Anyways, that's why the Corps has crews of five now. We don't just watch the pit, we watch out for each other too.

REESE

Right. So people jumping in and stuff, that would never happen nowadays.

O'BRIEN

Exactly.

(A moment of silence where O'Brien, Emery, and Reese look out at the horizon. Then, at the same time, they all snap back to look at the pit, as if something had crawled out. They slowly turn their heads to look at each other, all of them a bit embarrassed. They all speak at the same time.)

EMERY

Did you two/

O'BRIEN

Were y'all/

REESE

/I was just.

(A beat. They all chuckle.)

O'BRIEN

Look at us, scared of some hole in the ground.

EMERY

Silly us!

REESE

Right, haha.

(The laughs trail off and all three look out at the horizon. ALANA silently steps out of her tent downstage left. Her hair is pulled up tight, her fatigues are spotless, and her boots are shined.)

ALANA

(A bit loud, startling the other three.)

Good Morning Everyone.

EMERY

Jesus Christ! Oh, good morning Alana.

O'BRIEN

Morning, boss.

REESE

Hey Alana, you scared the crap out of us.

ALANA

I noticed. Next time, I'll try to alert you of my presence sooner.

REESE

Thanks.

(Reese and O'Brien start making MREs on stage left. Alana crosses to stand next to Emery and scans the horizon.)

EMERY

Sleep well?

ALANA

(Still looking out)

No, but thanks for asking.

EMERY

No problem.

ALANA

(Looks down at Emery)

Is that coffee?

EMERY

Yes. Would you like some?

ALANA

Sure.

(She pulls out a metal cup hanging on her belt and holds it out. Emery fills it up.)

EMERY

There you are.

(Alana nods and takes a sip. After a moment, she looks around at everyone present, then turns to O'Brien.)

ALANA

O'Brien, where's Quentin?

O'BRIEN

Oh, he's still sleeping in the tent. I heard him slip in late last night.

ALANA

Interesting. Does he slip in late most nights?

O'BRIEN

Seems like it. I wouldn't care if he still had his own tent, but he keeps waking me up ever since I had to start sharing mine. Most of the time it's coming to bed late, but other times he's talking in his sleep.

REESE

I still can't believe his tent got blown away.

EMERY

Maybe another sandstorm will come through and bring it back.

O'BRIEN

I hope so. Y'all know sleep is my sacred time.

REESE

I thought shitting was your sacred time?

O'BRIEN

That too!

ALANA

Well, if Quentin's tent doesn't blow back, would you mind sharing your tent with him in the future, Emery?

EMERY

Sure, I'm a heavy sleeper anyways.

ALANA

Excellent.

O'BRIEN

(With his mouth full)

Why thanks Emery.

EMERY

No problem.

ALANA

Now that that's solved, it's time I had some breakfast as well.

(Alana walks back to her tent and grabs an MRE, then sits next to Emery and starts cooking it. After a few moments, QUENTIN silently steps out of O'Brien's tent upstage left. His hair and fatigues are a mess, and he has a sleep deprived look in his eye. Seeing everyone cooking and eating downstage, he creeps over to the pit and stands next to the edge of it. He leans over and looks down, soaking in the absoluteness of it. He rubs the outside of it, then kneels down and kisses the lip gently. After this, he creeps back to the tent, grabs an MRE, and zips it up loudly to make it seem like he just woke up.)

O'BRIEN

Well look who's finally up!

QUENTIN

Hi.

REESE

Hey Quentin!

EMERY

Morning, sleepyhead. You want some coffee?

QUENTIN

(Standing by the pit)

No thanks. Caffeine makes me anxious.

O'BRIEN

Can't argue with that.

(Quentin walks over to sit on the lip of the pit. After he sits, he starts making his MRE. The others notice his comfortability with the pit.)

REESE

Did you sleep okay? You look tired.

QUENTIN

(Oddly hesitant)

Oh, uh... yes. I had a good rest. Very refreshing.

REESE

Cool.

QUENTIN

Yep.

(Silence. After a moment, Alana sets down her food and approaches Quentin.)

ALANA

You say you slept well, but O'Brien told me that you actually slipped into your shared tent rather late last night.

QUENTIN

I didn't think it was that late.

ALANA

It seemed late to O'Brien.

QUENTIN

Oh.

(To O'Brien)

Sorry.

O'BRIEN

No worries. Sleep is just my sacred time, ya know?

QUENTIN

(After a moment)

Right.

ALANA

(Getting closer to Quentin)

So, what were you doing while everyone else was sleeping?

QUENTIN

Just... stuff.

ALANA

Such as?

QUENTIN

Reading, and, um... Journaling.

ALANA

I've never seen you with any books around before.

QUENTIN

Yeah. It's... private stuff. Private, uh, journals. Yes.

ALANA

I see.

(She backs up a bit)

Well, everyone deserves their privacy. However, coming into O'Brien's tent late disturbs his sleep. Would you mind sleeping in Emery's tent from now on?

QUENTIN

Yeah, that's fine.

ALANA

And you don't mind, Emery?

EMERY

Not a bit. I sleep like the dead.

ALANA

Then it's settled. After breakfast you will move your stuff over to Emery's tent.

QUENTIN

You got it.

(Alana steps back down towards the others and starts eating again. O'Brien, Reese, and Emery clean up from their breakfast, and Emery gathers up all the trash and dumps it into the pit. Quentin stares hard at him as he does, as if this act disrespected him in some way.

Emery turns and smiles at Quentin, then walks back to his tent and grabs a book. He lays down next to the tent and reads.)

O'BRIEN

Hey Reese, you wanna play some cards?

REESE

Sure!

(Reese sits next to their tent as O'Brien grabs a deck of cards from his tent and joins them. The two begin to play as Alana finishes her breakfast. She throws her trash into the pit as well, and Quentin clenches his fists at this. She walks back to her tent and grabs a large two-way radio from inside. She turns some knobs to find the right channel, then speaks into the radio.)

ALANA

Base Camp, this is Omega Camp, over.

(No response)

Base Camp, do you copy? Over.

(No response)

Base Camp, we would like to know the status of the replacement crew, over.

(Again, there is no response.

She checks the signal, sees that it should be working, and tries again.)

ALANA

(Almost afraid)

Hello? Is anyone there?

(She worriedly looks around at the others to see what they think, but they are too distracted to notice the scared look on her face.

Except for Quentin, the last person
she looks at. He just smiles widely
back at her.)

BLACKOUT.

ACT 1

SCENE 2

The lights come up with a mixture of red, gold, and orange to indicate that it's evening now. Emery is asleep next to his tent with his book over his face, Alana is pacing around upstage right and holding the radio up to see if any messages will come through. Quentin is drawing in the sand next to the pit with his finger. O'Brien and Reese are mid conversation, still sitting next to Reese's tent with the pile of cards between them.

O'BRIEN

You ever been in a car accident before? Like a real bad one?

REESE

Nope. I don't even have my license. I'm too scared to drive.

O'BRIEN

I get that.

REESE

What about you? Have you been in a bad accident before?

O'BRIEN

A couple, but there was one that was really bad.

REESE

What happened? If you don't mind me asking.

O'BRIEN

Oh, I don't mind at all.

(Sits up to tell his story)

It was the night of my daughter's fifth birthday.

REESE

Oh no.

O'BRIEN

We lived pretty far out in the middle of nowhere then. We decided to drive into the city so she could have her birthday at this one pizza place with robot rats playing banjos and all that. I had already called ahead and got a table set up so folks could come grab a crappy slice of pizza and wish her happy birthday. We had done that drive probably a million times before, but that night it was raining like a monsoon or something. I'm talking about blinding, can't-see-the-car-in-front-of-you kind of rain. So, we were taking it slow at first, trying to see if it might clear up. Pretty soon we were running late. Little Lanie starts crying in the back because she doesn't wanna miss her birthday, and my wife keeps reminding me to watch the road and asking if we should turn back, and I'm just... angry. Maybe 'cause I was annoyed, or 'cause I didn't wanna be late. Maybe I was just hungry. Whatever the reason, I put my foot down and started driving real fast. And it just keeps raining harder and harder, like God was telling me that I shouldn't be going to this pizza place today, and now my wife is yelling at me to slow down, and Lanie's crying like crazy, and everything is just WRONG. And we slid. Right into the other lane.

REESE

Oh god.

O'BRIEN

We hit another truck head on and flew off the road. When the world finally stopped spinning, we were upside down in a ditch.

REESE

Was your family okay?

O'BRIEN

(Suddenly distant, as if he
can't remember)

Huh? Oh, Yeah. Just a few scratches here and there.

REESE

Wow. That's like a miracle or something.

O'BRIEN

You could say that.

(Stares off for a second)

I haven't really driven since then.

REESE

I wouldn't either.

O'BRIEN

Yeah.

(He stares out again, like he's stuck in a memory. After a moment, tears start welling up in his eyes, and Reese notices.)

REESE

Are you okay?

O'BRIEN

(Snapping out of it)

Huh?

REESE

Are you okay? You're crying a little.

O'BRIEN

(Starts wiping his eyes)

Yeah, I'm okay. I just got some sand in my eyes or something.

REESE

Hate it when that happens.

O'BRIEN

(Standing up)

I'm just gonna go wipe my eyes real quick.

REESE

Okiroke.

(O'Brien dashes up to his tent and climbs inside. Reese looks after him with a concerned look, then turns their gaze on Alana with radio.)

REESE

Hey Alana, any luck?

ALANA

(Sighs)

Not yet. It seems our comms are down, even though my radio has signal. Maybe there's interference at Base Camp.

REESE

Yeah, could be a sandstorm.

ALANA

That's what I thought, except it's not windy at all today. If there was a sandstorm at Base Camp, we would at least have some wind here.

REESE

Right. So, we don't know where the replacement crew is?

ALANA

It seems so. Based on how long it took us to get here, I would say they should be here by tomorrow morning at the latest.

REESE

That's good!

ALANA

Let's just hope there are no delays

REESE

Fingers crossed. And what'll we do if they're not here tomorrow?

ALANA

I'm not sure yet. I should see what everyone thinks just in case.

REESE

Good idea. But, no need to panic yet. Right?

ALANA

Right.

(Alana smiles, then sighs and goes back to messing with the radio.

Reese frowns, then notices Emery still asleep with his book. They stand up and walk over to him.)

REESE

Emery wake up. You're not gonna be able to fall asleep tonight if you keep napping.

(No response. Then, loudly.)

EMERY!

(Emery is startled awake with the book still on his face.)

EMERY

GET IT OFF ME!!

(Throws the book)

Oh, it's just my book. Thank God.

REESE

What did you think it was?

EMERY

A giant squid.

REESE

Why?

EMERY

Squids terrify me. Especially the giant variety. Not scared of octopuses though.

REESE

Intriguing.

EMERY

Is it dinner time yet?

REESE

Just about. Are you hungry Alana?

ALANA

I could eat. I want to talk to everyone before dinner though.

REESE

About the comms?

ALANA

Yes.

(Louder)

Quentin, can you get O'Brien?

QUENTIN

(Looking up from his sand
drawing)

Sure.

(He walks over to O'Brien's tent
and looks inside. He mutters
something, then O'Brien crawls
out.)

O'BRIEN

(To Alana.)

Hey boss, what's up?

ALANA

(Steps up near the pit)

Everyone circle around. I just want to have a quick chat.

(Everyone sits or stands
where they can hear Alana.
After they're all settled,
she speaks.)

ALANA

As you've probably noticed, our comms are down today. I'm not sure why, but considering the fact that our radio has a signal, the problem must be at Base Camp. Our replacement crew is supposed to arrive by tomorrow morning at the latest, but since I haven't been able to communicate with Base Camp, there could be delays. If they don't show up tomorrow, I want to know what each of you thinks we should do. You don't have to tell me today- obviously things might change and we could receive a message sometime tonight- but I want you thinking about whether we should try and stay until the crew eventually arrives, or leave on our own so we don't run out of supplies. I don't want to make this decision for you, considering how dangerous the journey is, so I'm leaving it up to a vote. There's no need to panic yet, but if they don't show, we will reconvene tomorrow and decide. Does anyone have any questions?

(She looks around. No one raises their hand or speaks.)

ALANA

Alright. Well, let's have some dinner then.

(They break and start preparing for another MRE meal as the lights fade.)

BLACKOUT.

ACT 1

SCENE 3

Lights come up with blues and whites to indicate that it is night now. At center stage, O'Brien is trying to start a fire with a small pile of wood and a lighter. Reese, Emery, and Alana sit around him, all of them wrapped up in thick blankets. Quentin also has a blanket on, but he's sitting on the lip of the pit again, staring down into it. Behind them is a smattering of stars against a dark night. Eventually, O'Brien gets the fire going.

O'BRIEN

Let there be light!

(The others around the fire clap for him.)

REESE

Hell yeah!

O'BRIEN

(Sits down next to Reese)

No need to clap, just doing my job.

REESE

So humble. What a gentleman.

EMERY

(Scoots closer to the fire)

Finally, some warmth. I thought I was going to get frostbite!

O'BRIEN

Emery, I know for a fact it ain't that damn cold out here. It's just chilly.

EMERY

You say that now, but let's see if you're so smug when your toes are falling off!

O'BRIEN

You're ridiculous.

ALANA

He might have a point actually.

O'BRIEN

He does?

EMERY

I do?

ALANA

Well, the desert can get cold at night, we all know this firsthand, but most deserts only get down to about twenty-five degrees. While that's certainly cold- cold enough to get frostbite- here we regularly experience nights that are below twenty, especially around two to three A.M.

(She looks back at the pit)

My theory is that this pit is so immensely deep, it actually lowers the temperature of the immediate area around it, much like a deep ocean trench lowers the ambient water temperature of an area. That might also explain why for the most part we have such fair weather here.

EMERY

So, it is possible to get frostbite out here? Oh god...

ALANA

As long as you wear warm clothes, dry socks, and stay bundled up at night, you should be fine. You haven't gotten it so far.

EMERY

I guess that's true. That doesn't mean I'm not scared of it.

REESE

No offense, Emery, but it seems like you're scared of everything. Or at least most things.

O'BRIEN
(Snidely)

Ain't that the truth.

REESE

I was actually wondering- is there a reason why you're so scared? You don't have to answer, of course.

EMERY

Well, if I knew the reason, I probably wouldn't be so afraid anymore! It's always been like this. You've seen how easily I get startled, and on top of that, I worry about the most improbable things- like sharks coming up the drain and attacking me in the bathtub. Most of my fears are actually ocean-related. That's why I decided to come here and work in the desert, so I'd be far away from any large bodies of water. But, of course, I show up for the job and find that there's an enormous hole in the ground that's just as terrifying! I read the stories when it first appeared, and I was briefed before I came, but nothing could prepare me for the reality of it. I just don't get how we're expected to just go about our lives like nothing is wrong while we're standing on the precipice of a literal abyss! We have no idea what's down there, they never briefed on what lies at the bottom, and it technically shouldn't even exist! It's an anomaly. How can I be anything but afraid when I can just look down into the void every morning while I have my coffee? It's absurdity. I can't seem to escape the unknown. It's always over my shoulder, whispering fears into my head and reminding me how tiny and insignificant I am. Sometimes I get so scared I can't even speak. Does that answer your question?

REESE

Uh, yeah. I think so.

EMERY

What about you? You're scared of it too, right?

REESE

I guess? I just don't like to look at it.

O'BRIEN

Same here. Quentin doesn't seem to mind though.

(Quentin looks up from the pit.)

QUENTIN

Did you say something?

O'BRIEN

I said that you don't mind looking into the pit.

QUENTIN

That's right. I kind of like looking at it.

(Looking down)

It's beautiful, in a way.

EMERY

How so?

QUENTIN

(Smiling)

The unknown isn't always a scary thing, sometimes... it's like a big Christmas present. You have no idea what's inside, and you start to imagine all kinds of wonderful things. And all you have to do is be patient, because soon enough, you get to find out what's beneath the sparkly paper. For me, every day here is like Christmas Eve, and I'm sitting next to the biggest present in the world.

EMERY

(After a moment)

That's... certainly an interesting way to look at it.

QUENTIN

Thank you.

(He snaps right back to staring down into the pit intensely, like he's cut off from the rest of the world. The others look at each other to confirm what they just heard.)

O'BRIEN

So Alana, what are you gonna do when you get home?

ALANA

When I get home?

O'BRIEN

Yeah, like after tomorrow when this is all over. Reese and I were talking about it earlier.

ALANA

Oh, I guess I haven't really given it muc thought. I usually just spend some time with my mom for a few weeks until I ship out again.

EMERY

Again?

ALANA

Yes, this is my third expedition with the Corps.

REESE

Really? I didn't know you could do more than one.

ALANA

You can do up to five, but they don't advertise it. I was here for Sigma Camp last year and Zeta Camp earlier this year. They do two expeditions a month, but you have to space it out. Since we're Omega, we're technically the last group this year, but Alpha will be here over Christmas and New Year's.

O'BRIEN

Man, I can't imagine missing Christmas to be here.

REESE

Yeah, that would suck. I love Christmas.

EMERY

I'm not big on the holidays, but I certainly would miss the snow back home.

O'BRIEN

So, you enjoy the snow, but you're scared of getting frostbite?

EMERY

Well, snow is... different. When it snows, your body is already adjusted to the cold. Here it's like jumping out of a hot tub and into an ice bath every night.

O'BRIEN

To each their own.

(A beat. He looks up at the stars.)

I gotta say, I am gonna miss seeing that sky every night.

REESE

(Looking up)

I never knew there were so many stars. At my parent's house the night sky just looks like a glowing green cloud. When I was a kid, I thought that's what the night was supposed to look like.

ALANA

(Looks up as well)

I understand that. There's no light pollution here. When you look at the stars without it, it feels like you've gone back in time, back before there were street lamps and jumbotronns. Our fear of the dark drove us to drown out the stars. Its a shame.

(They all take a moment to look up at the stars. Quentin notices, and looks up too. Eventually, O'Brien yawns and stretches.)

O'BRIEN

Welp. I think it's time for me to hit the hay.

REESE

Me too. Goodnight guys.

ALANA

Goodnight.

EMERY

Night.

O'BRIEN

See y'all in the morning.

(O'Brien and Reese head off to their respective tents. Emery gets up to go sleep as well.)

ALANA
(Softly)

Hey Emery.

EMERY

Yes?

ALANA

If Quentin does anything out of the ordinary tonight, will you let me know?

EMERY

Of course.

ALANA

Thank you.

(Emery nods and heads off to his tent. Alana sits by the fire for a moment, watching the flames flicker. She looks up at Quentin, still staring into the pit. She shakes her head, trying to dismiss her suspicion of him, then stands up. She looks at the small fire for one more moment before stamping it out. The moment she puts her boot down on the fire, the lights go out with a stomp, leaving only dim moonlight and the stars twinkling behind.)

BLACKOUT.

ACT 1

SCENE 4

The lights come up on the camp in the form of pale blue moonlight. Everyone is sleeping in their tents. O'Brien snores for a few moments, then snorts loudly and rolls over. There is a peaceful silence for a while, then the sound of a zipper being quietly opened. Quentin creeps out of Emery's tent and leaves the flap open. He looks around to make sure no one is awake, then dashes up to the pit and peers greedily into it with most of his upper half leaning over the edge. He smiles widely and chuckles with astonishment as he does.

QUENTIN

(Whispering)

It's okay, you can come out now. It's just me.

(He waits for a moment. Then, a faint white glow rises from inside the pit. Quentin's eyes widen as he looks down into the light.)

QUENTIN

You're so beautiful. Which one are you?

(He listens closely)

That's a wonderful name. I can't believe I'm here with you.

(He frowns)

I don't want to leave tomorrow. Can't I just stay here with all of you?

(He listens closely again, just as Emery steps out of the tent and stretches, his hair a mess. He looks over at Quentin.)

EMERY

Careful, you don't want to fall in.

(Quentin quickly steps away from the pit, and the light inside fades away. Emery doesn't seem to have noticed the light.)

QUENTIN

(Breathing heavily)

Yes, I wouldn't want to do that.

EMERY

Are you alright? You seem a bit nervous.

QUENTIN

I'm fine. I just couldn't sleep.

EMERY

Me neither. Figured I'd come out here for a smoke. Do you mind?

QUENTIN

Nope.

(Emery pulls out a pack of cigarettes, then takes one and lights it. He looks up at the moon as he takes a drag. Quentin looks back at the hole nervously, then back to look at Emery.)

EMERY

It sure is a beautiful night.

QUENTIN

Yep.

EMERY

And the moon is so bright at this hour. Wow!

QUENTIN

Yep.

(Emery takes another drag, Quentin keeps snapping his head back and forth between Emery and the hole, as if Emery were encroaching on precious time.)

QUENTIN

Uh, do you smoke often?

EMERY

(Exhales)

Only sometimes. It's the only thing that calms my nerves these days. Especially when I can't sleep.

QUENTIN

I see.

EMERY

Yeah.

(Emery takes another drag and looks out. The pit starts glowing again, and Quentin dashes over to it.)

QUENTIN

(Whispering to the pit)

What are you doing? He's going to see you!

(He listens)

What do you want me to do?

(His eyes go wide)

Yes. With every fiber of my being. Yes.

EMERY

(turning)

What was that?

(Quentin ignores him and climbs up to stand over the pit. He looks down as the light continues to shine.)

EMERY

(Panicking)

Quentin! What are you doing?! What's that light?!

QUENTIN

(Turns to him, still standing
on the edge)

I'm going to see them. They want me to be there.

EMERY

Who?! Quentin- Just step back from the edge there and let's talk about this.

QUENTIN

You wouldn't understand. Everyone has forgotten them. They just want someone to believe in them.

EMERY

Okay, okay, that's fine. Just step/

QUENTIN

It's not fine!! They need me Emery.

(He looks down, then back at
Emery)

Don't worry, I'll see you again soon.

(Quentin extends his arms out and falls into the pit, and the light inside fades. Emery runs up to stop him, but he's too late.)

EMERY

(A yelling whisper)

FUCK!! ShitshitshitshitSHIT!

(Emery looks down into the pit, then turns away in fear. He looks at the other tents to see if anyone's awake, but it seems no one heard. He goes to yell, but his voice fails. He walks up to O'Brien's tent, then steps back. His hands are shaking, he breathes heavily in and out. He tries to calm himself, but he's shaking all over.

After a moment of trying to calm down, he looks around at the tents, looks at the pit, then guiltily climbs back into his tent and closes the flap. The moonlight fades.)

BLACKOUT.

ACT 2

SCENE 1

The lights come up, again indicating morning. Alana is the first to rise. She exits her tent and does some stretches, then pulls out the radio and scans the horizon as she speaks into it.

ALANA

Base Camp, this is Omega Camp, do you copy? Over.

(No Response. She sighs.)

Base Camp, we need to know the location of Team Alpha, do you copy? Over.

(No response. She places the radio against her head and closes her eyes.)

Is anyone out there?

(No response. She puts the radio on her belt and sits down on the sand. She places her head in her hands and breathes slowly in and out.)

ALANA

(Loudly)

Alright, everybody up. Come on.

(O'Brien groans and unzips his tent. Reese comes out of their tent and yawns. Emery does not come out.)

REESE

Is the replacement crew here yet?

ALANA

No. And our comms are still down.

REESE

Oh shit.

O'BRIEN

(Stepping out of his tent)

What's going on?

REESE

Alpha Team never showed up.

O'BRIEN

Uh oh.

(Alana walks over to Emery's tent.)

ALANA

Emery, Quentin, wake up. We're having a meeting.

(No response, then, Emery slowly unzips the tent and steps out. His hair is a mess and his eyes are wide with fear. He keeps his arms close to him.)

EMERY

(Breathy)

G-g-good morning.

ALANA

Emery, are you alright?

EMERY

(Nods, shaking)

Y...yes. I'm. fine.

ALANA

You look like you haven't slept-

(She looks inside the tent)

Where's Quentin?

EMERY

He's- there's- uhh...

(He just shrugs and looks away, still shaking a bit and holding his arms close to him.)

Alana grabs Emery's shoulder and gently turns him to face her.)

ALANA

Emery, look at me. Just breathe okay- in and out, slowly.
(He does)

Okay, now I just want you to tell me what happened to Quentin. Take your time, and just- Breathe.

EMERY

He- he...

(He looks back at the tent, a wave of guilt washing over him)

He wasn't there. When I woke up last night.

ALANA

Okay. Was he outside the tent?

EMERY

(Thinks for a second)

No. He was just- gone.

(Alana ponders this for a moment. She lets go of Emery and turns to the others.)

ALANA

I think we should scout around the camp. He might have wandered off in the night.

REESE

Are you sure Alana? I don't want to assume the worst, but...

(They gesture to the pit. Alana shakes her head.)

ALANA

We can't assume anything right now. We need to at least look. Even if we don't find him, we might run into Alpha Team. Maybe they saw him heading towards Base Camp. What do you think, O'Brien?

O'BRIEN

I trust your judgement, boss. We gotta figure this out, so whatever you think is best.

ALANA

Okay.

(She turns to Emery)

Emery, I know you're a bit shaken up. You can stay here and watch the camp in case Alpha Team shows up or Quentin comes back. How does that sound?

EMERY

Yes... that's fine.

ALANA

And maybe you can try and remember any other details from last night as well.

EMERY

I'll try.

ALANA

(Turns to the others)

Let's grab some supplies and start searching. I want to check those dunes to the South first.

(O'Brien, Reese, and Alana grab packs and throw supplies in them, then hurry off stage right. Emery watches them go, then runs to the pit and looks down frantically. He doesn't see anything and paces around in frustration at this. After a few moments of this, he spots his book and sits down to read, his body shaking all the while. The lights go down as he continues to read.)

BLACKOUT.

ACT 2

SCENE 2

The lights come up in oranges and reds to indicate that it is evening once again. Emery is standing near his tent, shoveling the contents of an MRE into his mouth. He finishes the meal and checks his watch, then looks out to see if the others are approaching. As he does, two hands rise from inside the pit and grab the edge of it. Quentin emerges and stands on the edge, his skin covered in strange ashen runes. After a few moments, he falls onto the floor, startling Emery, who freezes up. Emery turns slowly to see Quentin on the ground. He keeps his distance at first, then realizes that it's Quentin.

EMERY

(Runs up to him)

Quentin!! Are you okay? Please tell me you're okay!

(Emery shakes Quentin but he is unresponsive. Emery checks his pulse, then his breathing. He turns him over on his side, then runs back to the tent and grabs a blanket. He lays the blanket over Quentin's body.)

EMERY

I don't know how you're alive, but I need you to wake up, please.

(No response. Emery sits down on the ground next to him and sighs. A few moments pass, then Emery speaks to the unconscious Quentin.)

EMERY

You should know that I didn't tell them that you jumped into the hole last night. I couldn't believe that I let something like that happen on my watch. I couldn't believe that it happened at all. When I woke up today, I hoped it was a bad dream, or some hallucination from fear or exhaustion or- anything but you actually jumping in! And now you're here, even though there's no way you could have climbed out. Was it just my imagination? I've imagined things before, why couldn't it happen now?

(A beat where he remembers something)

I used to imagine things all the time. When I was a kid, my family and I lived near the ocean, and our house had a little dock that extended out into the water. I've never told anyone this before, but when I would get in trouble, my parents used to tie me up at the end of that dock- so that my legs were dangling in the water just a bit- and they would leave me there for hours. So while I was tied up there, crying and looking at the minnows swimming around my legs, I used to imagine all sorts of creatures coming up from the water: mermaids, sharks, giant squids. Sometimes I imagined that they would come save me, take me to some great underwater city, and teach me how to breathe like them. Other times, I imagined them tearing me apart and eating my pieces while I was still alive. And each time, just as they were about to eat my brain and finish me off for good, my parents would pull me out and give me a scolding about stealing cookies or making my little sister cry. But I never stopped imagining horrible things. That's what this must have been; just another instance of my imagination getting the best of me. Just another horrible thing. That's all it was...

(After a few moments, Alana, O'Brien, and Reese come back from stage right. They look sweaty and tired, and they don't notice Quentin at first.)

ALANA

(Taking her pack off)

So, that was a waste. No sign of Alpha Team, and no sign of-

(She notices Quentin)

Quentin?

EMERY

(Looking relieved)

He came back.

O'BRIEN

Well I'll be damned!

REESE

What's on his skin?

ALANA

Emery, when did he show up?

EMERY

Right before you did. He just, uh... showed up and passed out on the ground.

ALANA

I can't believe we missed him. We circled around for hours.

EMERY

It's certainly strange. I can hardly believe it myself...

(O'Brien bends down and checks
Quentin's pulse.)

O'BRIEN

His pulse is steady. Did you try to wake him up?

EMERY

Yes, but he was unresponsive. He must be exhausted.

REESE

(Still examining the marks)

Weird.

(All except Emery inspect Quentin.
Emery still looks nervous, but less so than before.)

O'Brien stands up and looks up at the sun starting to set, then turns to Alana.)

O'BRIEN

So, whaddya wanna do boss? There's still no Alpha Team.

ALANA

Right, we were going to vote.

(Stands up)

I think maybe we should wait another day to see if they were delayed.

REESE

(Stands up too)

I agree. I also think it would be hard for us to travel while Quentin's still knocked out.

ALANA

Good thinking. What about you O'Brien?

O'BRIEN

(Groups up with Alana and Reese)

I'm with y'all. We still have enough supplies to stay a few more days.

ALANA

Emery?

EMERY

(Still sitting by Quentin)

Well... I only wonder if perhaps Quentin needs some immediate medical attention- staying here any longer might put him at risk.

O'BRIEN

Don't you think dragging him across the damn desert would put him at risk?

EMERY

Perhaps, but-

O'BRIEN

(Harshly)

What? Is there some more random bullshit you're afraid of?

EMERY

No! I'm just trying to consider Quentin's needs...

ALANA

So are we, Emery. You remember how hard that trek was, we would have to carry Quentin if we tried to leave tonight.

O'BRIEN

He's outvoted anyways, let's just get some food and some sleep already.

REESE

He's not outvoted if I change my mind. Emery has a point- I think we should at least consider getting Quentin back to Base sooner rather than later.

EMERY

Exactly.

(From here on, O'Brien and Reese's arguing grows in intensity, and Alana tries to interject, but she cannot find a space in the argument. Emery seems to get smaller and smaller as this happens.)

O'BRIEN

Didn't you just say it would be hard to travel with Quentin earlier?

REESE

Yes, but/

O'BRIEN

But now you're ready to change your mind at the drop of a hat? Why don't you stand your ground Reese?

REESE

I AM standing my ground. I'm saying that we should consider the needs of everyone here before we jump to a decision.

ALANA

(Losing control)

I see what/

O'BRIEN

(Getting up in Reese's face)

What about my needs then?! I don't wanna break my back carrying some half dead kid across the desert because he wanted to play explorer one night and got lost!

ALANA

I don't think/

REESE

It's just all about you then, huh? Quentin could die and you're just concerned about breaking your back, or your fucking sacred time! Y'know, if you would've spoken up about Quentin acting weird earlier, we might've known what was wrong before any of this shit even happened!

O'BRIEN

So now it's my fault this idiot got lost in the desert?

REESE

Maybe it is!!

O'BRIEN

(Shoves Reese)

FUCK YOU!

(Reese goes to shove O'Brien back, but Alana has had enough of it, and jumps between the two.)

ALANA

(Fully taking back control)

STOP!! Both of you stop it. Now.

(Reese and O'Brien stop in their tracks. As Alana scolds the two, they both look ashamed.)

ALANA

(Intensely)

I don't know what has gotten into either of you, but this is not the sort of behavior that I will allow in my camp. This was supposed to be a civil vote so I could receive everyone's input on the situation, but obviously that was too much to ask of you.

(MORE)

ALANA (CONT'D)

From now on, I will be deciding what is best for this team, and if you have any thoughts about my decisions, you can take it up with me personally. For now, I have decided that we will be staying another night so that we can monitor Quentin's condition. If his condition changes, or if Alpha Team arrives, we will be leaving tomorrow. If neither of those happen, I will decide our next course of action. The two of you will take tonight to consider your actions, and should this vitriolic behavior persist, I will see to it that the brig at Base Camp is ready for your arrival. Do I make myself clear?

O'BRIEN & REESE

(Quietly)

Yes ma'am.

ALANA

Good. You're both dismissed.

(O'Brien nods and heads straight for his tent. Reese lingers for a while, then plops down next to their tent and starts idly picking their fingernails. Alana looks over at Emery on the ground, and he looks away quickly in shame. Alana then looks around at the camp, mouths "shit" to herself, and the lights go down.)

BLACKOUT.

ACT 2

SCENE 3

The lights come up in blues and whites to indicate that it's night once again. Another small fire has been built near where Quentin lays. Emery sits next to him, and Alana sits on the other side of the fire, finishing an MRE and staring into the flames. After a few moments, Emery looks over at Alana and speaks.

EMERY

Alana?

ALANA

Yes, Emery?

EMERY

I hope you're not angry with me for suggesting that we leave. I didn't mean to cause any trouble.

ALANA

It's alright. You had every right to suggest something different. That was the point of voting, after all.

EMERY

Right.

(A moment passes)

Also... there's something I need to tell you. It's about Quentin.

ALANA

(Concerned)

What is it?

EMERY

Remember how you told me to tell you if Quentin did anything out of the ordinary last night?

ALANA

Yes, I do. Did something happen?

EMERY

Uh, yes, but I didn't tell you earlier because... well because I couldn't believe that it had actually happened.

ALANA

What do you mean?

EMERY

I saw something... strange, and- and I thought that it was some sort of nightmare, and/

ALANA

Emery, it's okay. Just tell me what you saw.

EMERY

I- I saw...

(He leans in close)

I saw Quentin jump into the pit last night.

ALANA

What?

EMERY

It doesn't make any sense, right?

ALANA

No, it doesn't. Because that's impossible, Emery. If he jumped into the pit, he wouldn't be able to just climb back out. No one has ever climbed out.

EMERY

So, people have jumped in before?

ALANA

Of course they have. Haven't you heard the stories?

EMERY

I assumed they were just that: stories...

ALANA

True stories. Trust me, I've read the journals.

EMERY

What journals?

ALANA

The journals that those jumpers left behind.

EMERY

What did they say?

ALANA

Most of them are just incoherent ramblings about voices coming from the pit, voices telling them to jump in. All of it points to extreme exhaustion leading to temporary psychosis.

EMERY

Temporary psychosis, huh?

ALANA

But again, there's no way they could climb back out.

EMERY

Of course. I must have been seeing things.

ALANA

(Reassuringly)

It happens.

EMERY

Yeah.

(Alana nods and puts a hand on Emery's shoulder. He nods back, and she puts her hand down. They both stare into the fire, then they both slowly turn their gaze on Quentin. After a moment, O'Brien comes out of his tent. He walks over and sits by the fire. Emery avoids looking at him, Alana just looks at the fire. After a moment, O'Brien sighs, then speaks to Alana.)

O'BRIEN

Hey Boss, I just wanted to apologize for my behavior earlier. It was pretty shitty of me to get all worked up like that. I'm sorry.

ALANA

(After a moment)

I accept your apology. But you should know that I stand by what I said. I will decide what's best for all of us.

O'BRIEN

Of course. You're the boss, boss.

(Alana smiles at this.)

ALANA

I'm not the only one who deserves an apology here.

(Alana gestures towards Reese's tent. O'Brien nods.)

O'BRIEN

Right.

(He gets up and walks over to Reese's tent)

Hey Reese, you alright in there?

(The zipper opens slowly, then Reese pokes their head out.)

REESE

I'm fine. What's up?

O'BRIEN

Oh I just- I just wanted to say sorry for yelling earlier. Sorry.

(Reese processes this for a moment.)

REESE

Don't do it again. You promise?

O'BRIEN

Promise.

(Reese thinks for another moment.)

REESE

Okay.

O'BRIEN

Alright.

(A beat)

Do you want some dinner?

REESE

Sure.

(They climb out of their tent. O'Brien holds out a hand, Reese looks at it, then back up at him. Reese shakes his hand. Suddenly, Quentin sits up and gasps loudly. O'Brien and Reese turn at this while Emery jumps back a good five feet. Alana stands up and backs away instinctively. Quentin jumps to his feet, his torso leaning brokenly to one side, his arms and wrists twisting slowly. Everyone stares at him for a moment, watching him twist his limbs, his head weaving back and forth like a snake. He stomps on the fire and extinguishes it, and the only light left comes from the moon and stars. He waits a moment, then darts over to Emery on the ground. Emery shouts and covers his face, but Quentin just looks him up and down with wide eyes. All of Quentin's movements are like a man possessed. He twists his spine around slowly to look at the others, eyes them, then speaks in a strangely low and dry voice.)

QUENTIN

What... are you... running from...?

(No one answers. They look at each other. Emery is still covering his face.)

QUENTIN

Why... are you... here...?

ALANA

(Approaching slowly)

Quentin, whatever this is, you need to stop it. You're not well.

QUENTIN

Quentin... is dead. This... is my shell.

O'BRIEN

(Quietly)

What the fuck.

QUENTIN

(Yelling)

I KNOW. WHY YOU. ARE HERE!!!

(Steps towards O'Brien)

You... are running from your shame.

O'BRIEN

(Steps up)

I don't know what the hell you're talking about.

QUENTIN

You killed them.

(O'Brien is silent at this. Quentin takes a step closer and continues.)

QUENTIN

That night that it rained... you were drunk.

O'BRIEN

Shut up.

QUENTIN

(Even closer)

You killed them... your own family.

O'BRIEN
(Yelling)

SHUT THE FUCK UP!!

(O'Brien goes to choke Quentin, but Quentin snatches his hands with an unnatural speed, then bends both of his wrists upwards with a disgusting pop. Alana and Reese take a step forward to stop this, but O'Brien yells out and falls to the ground, holding his broken wrists close to his chest. Alana and Reese are stopped in their tracks, and Quentin towers over O'Brien.)

QUENTIN

You came here... to hide from your shame. You prayed for forgiveness. Did anyone ever answer?

(At this point, from both physical and emotional pain, O'Brien is crying to himself.)

QUENTIN

There is no forgiveness. Not from Him.

(O'Brien stays on his knees, defeated. Quentin turns his attention to Emery, but Emery simply cannot face him.)

QUENTIN

This one... is dominated by fear. His own mind... has already destroyed itself. I have nothing for you... coward.

REESE
(Stepping up)

Leave him alone!

QUENTIN

Ahhhh... Reese.

REESE

So you show up after a night in the desert, and now suddenly you have some dirt on us? What is this?

QUENTIN

Quentin... never went into the desert. He was visiting... us.

(He gestures to Emery)

The coward... saw the whole thing. Tell them.

EMERY

(Terrified)

I... I saw... he jumped.

(With a shaky hand, Emery points at the pit.)

ALANA

That's impossible.

QUENTIN

The best things are... Alana. You experience the impossible... every time you come here. How long has it been... since the cancer disappeared?

ALANA

(After a moment)

It's been two years now.

REESE

What?

QUENTIN

No family... no prospects... you came here to throw your life away. But when you returned home... the tumors were gone. You were healed. So you kept coming back... and it kept buying you more time. Because WE kept healing you.

ALANA

There's a logical explanation for that. Maybe it was dumb luck that it went away while I was here. It's just a coincidence.

QUENTIN

(Gets closer to her)

So... why come back?

(MORE)

QUENTIN (CONT'D)

Would you say that it's a coincidence that every time you return home... you feel that lumps growing in your throat? A few weeks ago... you were coughing up blood into your mother's sink.

ALANA

I...

QUENTIN

But suddenly... you can breathe again! And what about the marks?

ALANA

(Grabs her upper arm)

They're nothing.

QUENTIN

If it's nothing, then show us...

ALANA

Fine.

(She lifts up her sleeve to reveal her upper arm. There are ashen runes that are identical to the ones all over Quentin's body.)

QUENTIN

That's our mark. We signed you like a portrait... so others might know our handiwork.

(Alana looks at the marks, then back at Quentin. She goes quiet. Then, Reese speaks up.)

REESE

Who are you? Can you at least tell us that?

QUENTIN

We are the gilded playthings you mortals left behind. Once... you worshipped us. Then, when you stopped believing... we were banished to the pit. You can't kill gods... but you can forget them. We call out to you... and leave signs. To remind you that we're still here... in the desert where you left us with our crumbling ziggurats.

REESE

So what? Are you gonna kill us?

QUENTIN

No. That would be too easy. I'm going to make all of you jump into the pit.

REESE

There's no way in hell we're doing that.

QUENTIN

What choice do you have? Reese... you have no home. Where else will you go?

REESE

There's/

QUENTIN

(Steps closer)

Here's another question... are you a runaway if your parents forced you out? Is there even a word for that?

(Reese doesn't respond)

You're unwanted... like us. You're looking for somewhere to belong. Why not here? You'll be safe... you see what we have done for Alana, for Quentin. All you have to do is jump in.

REESE

No way.

QUENTIN

(Even closer)

You don't have to be anyone but yourself down there. Your parents hated you because you didn't conform to their trivial expectations... with us, the only expectation is that you believe. What do you have to lose?

REESE

Nothing...

(Quentin smiles, but Reese clenches their fists)

But that's where you and I differ. I might not have a place to call home, but at least I know that I'm in control of my life. I make my own choices. Can you say the same? Whatever the fuck is going on here- whatever weird supernatural bullshit is happening with you, you need people to believe in you. You're a pawn in a game of belief, and I refuse to play.

(MORE)

REESE (CONT'D)

I'm leaving. And I'm taking my friends with me. I won't let you tear them down so you can build them back up in your sick and twisted image. I've heard it plenty of times before, and I'm done with it. Goodbye Quentin, or whoever you are now.

QUENTIN

(Runs right up to Reese's face)

You don't get to leave! We'll throw you in there ourselves!

REESE

So there was never a choice then? No wonder you were left behind.

(Quentin goes to grab Reese's arm in a rage, but they step back and punch Quentin squarely in the jaw. Emery jumps back and stands up, O'Brien moves out of the way, and Alana sprints for her tent. Quentin pushes Reese down hard and stands over them, O'Brien tries to grab Quentin but is thrown back. Alana grabs a pistol from her tent and aims it at Quentin. Quentin takes a step towards Reese, and Alana pulls the trigger. BANG. Quentin is hit and is stunned for a moment, then he stands up straight. He turns to Alana, who pulls the trigger again, but the gun only clicks. Quentin dashes at her, wrestles the gun from her grip and knocks her down. He then jumps onto the lip of the pit, holding the pistol up tauntingly. Then he drops it in the pit. Everyone stays on the ground, stunned and breathing hard, except Emery who stands off to the side.)

QUENTIN

Well... that was fun. But now it's time to decide. Who is going in first?

(He holds his arms out to each side. Emery looks at him, then back at the others still on the ground. He is still shaking, but something in him has changed after what Reese said about choices. He makes one. As Quentin holds his defiant pose, Emery rushes at him and shoves him backwards into the pit. He falls without a sound. Everyone is still for a moment. Emery looks down at his shaking hands, then back to the others.)

EMERY

(Between breaths)

I guess... it was his turn first.

(Emery sits on the edge of the pit and catches his breath. Alana and Reese help O'Brien up, and they all sit on the edge with Emery. Reese turns to Emery.)

REESE

Are you okay?

EMERY

No. But thanks for asking.

O'BRIEN

You saved us Emery. Thank you.

ALANA

Yes, thank you Emery.

EMERY

Of course.

(Emery smiles. A brief pause, then Reese speaks.)

REESE

O'Brien, what he said about your family...

O'BRIEN

He was telling the truth. I... I shouldn't be alive. I don't really know if I am. I'm sorry for lying to you, but the lie was all I had left.

REESE

I honestly don't know what to say...

O'BRIEN

Me neither.

(They all sit in silence for a while. Then, Alana stands.)

ALANA

We should leave. If Quentin really did climb out of the pit before, he can do it again.

EMERY

Yes, let's get the hell out of here.

REESE

I couldn't agree more.

O'BRIEN

(Holds up his broken wrists)

I think I'm gonna need someone to help me carry my stuff.

EMERY

Yeah, that looks pretty bad.

ALANA

I'll put your wrists in a sling once we get some distance from here. And we'll all carry something for you.

O'BRIEN

Thanks.

(Alana nods. Emery looks down into the pit, then shakes his head. Reese smiles at O'Brien, and Alana looks at her crew. Then everyone stands up, and together they pack their things quickly. They leave the tents behind and march offstage with their bags as the lights begin to dim. In the dim light, the pit glows again faintly. Then the stage is plunged into full darkness.)

END OF PLAY.