**Abortion Stories from the Campaign**

a project of

**1in3campaign.org/outofsilence**

# the 1 in 3 Campaign

In 1995, at age 35, I found myself alone, pregnant and caring for my six-month old son. My husband had gone to work one day and did not return. Weeks passed without word. For more than a month, I didn’t tell anyone that he was gone. Not my family, not my co-workers, not my friends. I simply went to work each day, attended to my job, and pretended everything was fine at home. Each evening, I left work, picked up my son from day care and did my best to care for him without distraction. Six weeks had passed when I realized I was pregnant. Alone, with little money and a baby to care for, it was clear to me that I could not care for another child. I did not know where my husband was; I did not know what would happen to my marriage;

I wasn’t sure I could make ends meet. How could I add another child to such an untenable situation? I chose to have an abortion then and there. It was the best choice given my circumstances.

For more than 15 years I did not share this story.

One day, the staff at Advocates for Youth, frustrated with the politicized debate that continued to threaten abortion access, began a discussion about what was needed to create a new cultural narrative around abortion—one steeped in empathy, cognizant of the complexities of women’s lives and supportive of safe abortion access for all women. We recognized that we needed to speak more from our hearts—to tell our personal stories, to give a face to the experiences of women throughout the ages. A young woman of 20 on staff began to share with us her experience as a teen parent who one day found she was pregnant again and sought an abortion. In response, I told her my story. We were not so different. That day, as we shared our stories across generations we found our voices. We also found community.

The 1 in 3 Campaign was born out of this discussion—out of our frustration and our hope for a better future. Built on the success of prior social change movements, harnessing the power of storytelling to engage and inspire action, and determined to put women’s real-life experiences with abortion back at the center of a national

dialogue, the Campaign has engaged student activists, reproductive rights and justice organizations, health care providers, journalists and policymakers to begin a new dialogue about the need for safe abortion care in our lives.

Now, as I share my story around the country, more often than not, other women offer up theirs in response. Some are family and friends whom I have known for years; others are complete strangers. The result is a bond, stronger than the anti-

abortion rhetoric or the fear of retaliation or violence that too often finds its way into the political debate. In its place is empathy for the complexity of our lives, for the commonalities that bind us, for the need to keep abortion care safe and available.

Won’t you join us?

Debra Hauser

*President, Advocates for Youth*

Sioleu tno fc. e

**Abortion Stories from the Campaign**

*Proponents and advocates on both sides of the contested issue have often argued in ways that are more polemical than true, more point- scoring than personal, more partisan than humanly honest. And until I saw a remarkable original theater piece called* Out of Silence: Abortion Stories from the 1 in 3 Campaign*, I had not realized what has been missing: the compelling and illuminating focus on character, motivation, and story that live theater does best.*

(John Stoltenberg, reporter)

# synopsis

Inspired by the more than 700 stories submitted to the 1 in 3 Campaign, *Out of Silence* confronts the divisive political rhetoric and asks us instead to listen to the voices of women and their families, and to explore with them the situations, relationships, emotions and logistics they weigh as they make their decisions to seek abortion care.

Heartbreaking. Inspiring. Messy. Funny. The stories in *Out of Silence* are many things, but they are always thought-provoking and honest. Each vignette is a unique and compelling moment in time. Together this collection puts real-life stories back where they need to be: at the center of a new national dialogue about abortion, one steeped in empathy and demonstrative of the importance abortion care has played in the lives of so many across generations. One in three women will have an abortion in her lifetime. These are our stories.

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# Playwrights

**Allyson Currin** is the author of over twenty plays including CAESAR AND DADA (WSC Avant Bard), HERCULES IN RUSSIA (Doorway Arts Ensemble), TREADWELL: BRIGHT AND DARK (The American Century

Theatre), UNLEASHED (The Kennedy Center), THE DANCING PRINCESSES (Imagination Stage), BENCHED (Pinky Swear Productions), LOVE AND WHISKEY (Equity Workshop), CHURCH OF THE OPEN MIND\* and THE SUBJECT (Charter Theatre), LEARNING CURVES (Washington Shakespeare

Company), AMSTEL IN TEL AVIV\* and DANCING WITH OURSELVES (Source Theatre Company). She has twice been nominated for the Helen Hayes’ Charles D. MacArthur Award for Outstanding New Play and has been Playwright-in-Residence with First Draft at Charter Theatre and Theatre J’s “Locally Grown” Initiative. She is currently working on a new musical, with Matt Conner, for Tony Award-winning Signature Theatre, and a new commissioned

play for Cincinnati Playhouse. She is a founding member of The Welders, a DC-based playwrights collective, which produced her new play, THE CAROLINA LAYAWAY GRAIL, as its inaugural production this past spring. As an actor, she has appeared on such DC-area

stages as Signature Theatre, Olney, Arena Stage, Studio, Washington Stage Guild, Washington Shakespeare Company, Everyman, Rep Stage, and others, in addition to her work in television and film. She teaches theatre at The George Washington University.

**D.W. Gregory** writes in a variety of styles and genres, from the historical epic RADIUM GIRLS to the psychological thriller OCTOBER 1962. A resident playwright at New Jersey Rep, she received a Pulitzer Prize nomination

for The Rep’s production of her impressionistic family drama THE GOOD DAUGHTER in 2003. Her comedy MOLUMBY’S MILLION, produced by Iron Age Theatre, was nominated for Philadelphia’s Barrymore Award for

Outstanding New Play in 2011. Plays for youth include five plays commissioned by Imagination Stage for its Speak Out on Stage program (among them, PENNY CANDY, MIRACLE IN MUDVILLE and SECRET LIVES OF TOADS) and SALVATION ROAD, winner of the American Alliance for Theatre and Education’s Playwrights in Our Schools award. A member of

the Dramatists Guild, Gregory is also an affiliated writer with the Playwrights Center in Minneapolis. Her work is available through Dramatic Publishing and online from Playscripts. com and YouthPLAYS.com.

**Caleen Sinnette Jennings** is Professor of Theatre at American University. She received the Heideman Award from Actor’s Theatre of Louisville for her play Classyass. She is a two-time Helen Hayes Award nominee for Outstanding New Play. Her play PLAYING JULIET/CASTING OTHELLO was produced at the Folger Shakespeare Theatre in 1998. In 2012, Ms. Jennings’ play HAIR, NAILS & DRESS, was produced by Uprooted Theatre Company of Milwaukee and by the D.C. Black Theatre Festival. Her most recent publication is UNCOVERED,

in the 2011 Eric Lane and Nina Shengold anthology Shorter, Faster, Funnier. Dramatic Publishing Company has published: CHEM MYSTERY, ELSEWHERE IN ELSINORE: THE UNSEEN WOMEN OF HAMLET, INNS & OUTS, PLAYING JULIET/CASTING OTHELLO, SUNDAY

DINNER, A LUNCH LINE, AND SAME BUT DIFFERENT. Ms. Jennings received her BA in drama from Bennington College and her MFA in Acting from the NYU Tisch School of the Arts.

**Nicole Jost** is a playwright, teaching artist, producer, and director. Her play THE TERROR FANTASTIC was read as part of the inaugural DC Queer Theatre Festival, named as a finalist for the 2013 Source Festival, and showcased

in a 2013 “Inkreading” by The Inkwell. She has also worked with other local theater companies including dog & pony dc, Forum Theatre, and Roundhouse Theatre. Nicole has been recognized by The Washingtonian as a “Woman

to Watch.” She received her BA in Theater and Cultural Politics from the University of California, Santa Cruz. Nicole is the Artistic Director of Young Playwrights’ Theater (YPT), the only professional theater in Washington, DC dedicated entirely to arts education, and an alumna of YPT’s In-School Playwriting Program.

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**Jacqueline E. Lawton** was named one of the top 30 national leading black playwrights by Arena Stage’s American Voices New Play Institute. She received her MFA in Playwriting from the University of Texas at Austin, where she was a James A. Michener Fellow. Lawton has worked as a dramaturg and research consultant at Active Cultures, Actors Theatre of Louisville - Humana Festival of New American Plays, African Continuum Theater Company, the Arden Theater, Arena Stage, Discovery Theater, Ensemble Studio Theater,

Folger Shakespeare Library, the Ford’s Theatre, Horizons Theater, Howard University, the Hub Theatre, Interact Theatre, Kennedy Center VSA Program, Morgan State University, Redshift Productions, Rorschach Theater Company, Round House Theatre, Theater Alliance, Theater of the First Amendment, Theater J, Tribute Productions, University of Maryland, Virginia Stage Company, and Woolly Mammoth Theatre Company. She serves on the Advisory Board of African Continuum Theatre Company and as the Diversity and Inclusion Online Conference Curator for TCG. She is a proud member of Arena Stage’s Playwright’s Arena and the Dramatist Guild of America. [www.jacquelinelawton.com](http://www.jacquelinelawton.com/)

**Kristen LePine** is a playwright, novelist, and educator. Often inspired by history and current events, Kristen writes to probe unconformable truths, to gain a greater understanding, and to build more empathy into the human psyche. Her plays have been presented, developed, and commissioned regionally by Active Cultures, the Hub Theatre, Inkwell, Intersections Art Festival, the Pittsburgh New Works Festival, Roundhouse Theatre’s First One- Minute Play Festival, The Source Theatre Festival, Spooky Action Theatre,

and Woolly Mammoth Theatre Company. She is a company member the award winning the Hub Theatre in Fairfax, Virginia. Currently, Kristen is writing a play about mental illness called CRACKED POTS for Theatre J’s 2015 Locally Grown Festival. Her first historical fiction novel, *Daughter of Spart*a, is set to be released in 2014 by Zoozil Media. She teaches theatre at the University of Mary Washington. You can visit her website at kristenlepine.com.

**Jennifer L. Nelson** is a Washington DC-based theatre professional. She has worked for more than 40 years as an actor, playwright, administrator,

professor and director. In addition to her stage work, Ms. Nelson has taught at Georgetown University, George Washington University, and American University. She is past president of the League of Washington Theatres and served on the Board of Directors of the Theatre Communications Group. She is a graduate of the University of California at Davis.

**Anu Yadav** is critically-acclaimed actress, playwright and teaching artist dedicated to fun and social transformation. Her devised projects include ‘Capers, Classlines, and Meena’s Dream. She is a 2014 DC Artist Fellow and holds a M.F.A. degree in Performance from University of Maryland, College Park. [www.anuyadav.com.](http://www.anuyadav.com/)

**Karen Zacarías** is one of the most produced Latina playwrights in the nation. Her plays include THE BOOK CLUB PLAY, LEGACY OF LIGHT, MARIELA

IN THE DESERT, THE SINS OF SOR JUANA, the adaptations of JUST LIKE US, and HOW THE GARCIA GIRLS LOST THEIR ACCENT .She is one of the

inaugural Resident Playwrights at Arena Stage in Washington, DC, and is a core founder of the LATINO THEATRE COMMONS. She is the founder of

Young Playwrights’ Theater, an award winning theater company that teaches playwriting in local public schools in Washington, DC. Karen lives in Washington, D.C. with her husband and three children.

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**6 #outofsilence**

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**Ruah**

a short play by allyson Currin

#### The Characters:

alExIS - now and as a college student in 1997 SabrIna – her college roommate

#### The Play:

*Alexis enters and addresses the audience.*

alExIS

ruah. It’s a Hebrew word and it means two things at once – breath and spirit.

I like the word because I used to feel like I was two things at once.

I was raised in Catholic schools.

I can recite doctrine, encyclicals, prayers, backwards and forwards.

but I was also raised to think and search and question.

The side effect of a Jesuit education, one that my mother didn’t intend.

They taught me Hebrew, for starters! and I learned in Catholic school that I have a mind and a will and a choice. a choice that I had to exercise that week when I was a student at the University of Texas all those years ago.

*The scene shifts to a dorm room. Sabrina runs in with a shopping bag.*

alExIS

Where have you bEEn? Where did you GO?

SabrIna *(opening pregnancy test from bag)*

I couldn’t go to the drugstore on The Drag. What if I ran into a Kappa?

alExIS Sure.

**Ruah #outofsilence 9**

*Beat*

SabrIna

all of West Campus was out.

alExIS yeah.

SabrIna

Hyde Park was close, but I know grad students too…

alExIS

you’re killing me, bri!

SabrIna

I drove to north austin. I bought two.

alExIS

I’ll pay you back. Two?

SabrIna

Just to be sure. and you will nOT pay me back.

*(Hands her the pregnancy test)* Did you drink water? alExIS

Three glasses.

SabrIna

Okay, good! So let’s do this thing!

alExIS

yes, good, but…. Problem?

SabrIna What?

alExIS I can’t pee.

SabrIna

are you kidding me?

Three glasses of water and you can’t pee on a stick. you’re three weeks late already.

alExIS

I don’t want to know.

**10 #outofsilence**

**Ruah**

SabrIna

Okay. Okay, okay, you just…need to relax, that’s all! *(Produces a can of beer)* Drink this. It’ll take the edge off.

*Alexis hesitates.*

SabrIna What?

alExIS

you’re not supposed to drink alone…

SabrIna *(exasperated, going for another beer)*

FInE! Cheers.

*They pop open the beers and drink.*

alExIS

I’m really scared.

SabrIna Drink your beer.

alExIS

What if someone finds out?

SabrIna

No one will find out.

alExIS

What if I get kicked out of the sorority?

SabrIna Won’t happen.

alExIS

I can’t be pregnant! I have student loans and a job and it’s still barely enough – how can I possibly pay for another person! another whole little person! I’m 19…

SabrIna I get it.

alExIS

My mother will kill me.

SabrIna I know.

**Ruah #outofsilence 11**

*Beat*

alExIS

I mean, she will literally wring my neck.

SabrIna

Quoting scripture the whole while.

alExIS yeah.

SabrIna

That’s not what’s scaring you, is it? The bible stuff?

This is 1997, abortion is legal, no one can tell you what to do with your own belly—

alExIS

I don’t know…

SabrIna

Is it Joe? Has he changed his mind? I swear to God, I’ll kill him if he—

alExIS

no, it’s not Joe—

SabrIna Then what? Tell me.

alExIS *(breaking down into sobs)*

What if it’s the wrong thing to do?

*Sabrina puts her arms around Alexis and lets her cry for a bit.*

SabrIna

Take a breath. That’s all you have to do right now. Take one breath, and then another, and then another. Until you know what your heart and your spirit tell you what to do. If you listen to them, you won’t go wrong. I swear it.

you need to say the word.

It’s not a bad word. abortion. It’s a choice. That’s all it is.

*After a moment…*

**12 #outofsilence**

**Ruah**

alExIS bri?

SabrIna yeah?

alExIS

I really have to pee.

*The two girls fall into slightly hysterical laughter.*

SabrIna

Don’t look at me like that. I bought the tests, I found the clinic in the yellow Pages, and I made the appointment. I ain’t holding the damn stick too!

*Alexis rises with the test. Pause.*

SabrIna

you’re going to be okay. you’re going to be amazing. after this is done, I can’t wait to see how amazing you are going to be.

*Alexis turns to the audience and Sabrina fades away.*

alExIS

you know the story by now. I was pregnant. I had the abortion.

Sabrina held my hand the whole time.

Millions of women have abortions. Why don’t we hear about the “success stories”?

I figured my life out. Graduated with honors.

I have a career I care deeply about, I make a difference in the world.

I’m married to a great guy, I’ve got a beautiful baby.

I AM FINE. No: WE are fine.

We are judges, doctors, lawyers, teachers, pilots, congresswomen, professors, social workers, nurses…we are success stories.

Why don’t we hear about the “success stories”?

The girl I was and the woman I am are tied to that decision, sure.

**Ruah #outofsilence 13**

alExIS *(cont.)*

I am breath anD spirit.

and I’m bigger than the choice I made all those years ago. and I HaD a choice.

So here I am to say what I struggled to find the words for that night with Sabrina.

I had an abortion.

and my life wouldn’t have been the same if I hadn’t. I am so grateful. For ruah.

THE EnD

**14 #outofsilence**

**Ruah**

## Wrestling with Choice

a short play by anu yadav

#### The Characters:

anITa KIran

#### The Play:

aT rISE: A house. A living room. Kiran making the bed, a deflated air mattress in the middle of the living room with blankets. anita enters.

anITa

They are bringing the kids back around 9 tonight.

KIran

your parents were generous to take them to the movies. I just felt bad we couldn’t pay for it.

anITa

They wanted to. They know things are tight for us. Kiran, do you hear that?

KIran

I don’t hear anything.

anITa

Exactly. Silence. Just you and me. no one else talking or listening. This is our one moment of having an adult

conversation without kids or parents. I don’t know what to do with myself.

KIran

Well, do you want to tell me about the test?

anITa

let’s make the bed.

KIran

I made it already.

anITa

How long are we going to be sleeping on their living room floor?

**Wrestling with Choice #outofsilence 15**

KIran

I don’t know. We didn’t really plan on the foreclosure. Or me getting laid off.

anITa

We are homeless.

KIran Couchsurfing.

anITa

Floorsurfing. Kiran, there hasn’t been air in that air mattress for days.

KIran

look, I know the air pump is a bit slower than usual.

anITa Slower than usual?

KIran

It just needs more time to charge.

anITa

It’s been plugged in all day. you are living a lie.

*KIRAN turns the air pump on in one last desperate attempt. The air pump makes a slow guttural pathetic sound of something dying.*

KIran

Ok, maybe you’re right. anita, we should talk about the test.

anITa

How did this happen?

KIran

anita, what did the test say? anITa

I can’t think about it.

KIran We have to.

anITa

no, *we* don’t have to. I have to.

**16 #outofsilence**

**Wrestling with Choice**

KIran

Don’t do that, anita. We are partners. You keep saying we need to think about the future, we should plan. anita? look at me.

Whatever happens, we handle it together.

anITa I’m pregnant.

KIran are you sure?

anITa

Yes. I’m positive. I took the test a few times. I’m definitely pregnant.

KIran

What do you want to do?

anITa

I wish it was about what I wanted. Every day I keep thinking, is this the bottom? and then something else happens. Every day. We have no health insurance. your job is gone. We are still in debt from nelina’s hospital bills. Everything is just piling on top of everything and I feel like I’m drowning. We can’t afford our lives right now. We cannot afford another child. I think I should get an abortion.

KIran That is an option.

anITa

bringing another child into this chaos right now would break us. That baby deserves better. nelina and raj deserve better. We do too.

KIran

If you are sure about this, then you know I support you. but if I could get this job—

anITa

Kiran, we can’t afford this right now. We don’t even have money to go to the clinic.

KIran

Look, we can figure that part out. It’s more important that this is what you want.

**Wrestling with Choice #outofsilence 17**

anITa

Kiran, this isn’t what I want. but I think this is what has to happen.

*ANITA begins to take off her wedding ring.*

KIran

anita, what are you doing?

anITa

We can sell it. It will cover the cost of the abortion.

KIran

no, anita, we’ll sell something else.

anITa

What? The only other things we have are the laptops and cell phones, but we need those to find work. Mine has the diamond in it. We’ll get more for it. We can replace it later.

*ANITA sets it on the table.*

Given everything, this is best choice we have.

KIran

We are in this together, ok?

anITa

I should call the clinic now. We can go to the pawn shop on the way.

*ANITA digs out a business card from her purse, and nervously makes the phone call as KIRAN stays connected to her.*

End of scene.

anITa

yes, I’d like to make an appointment.

**18 #outofsilence**

**Wrestling with Choice**

## Brandy & The Bear

a 5-minute play by Caleen Sinnette Jennings

#### The Characters:

Two females of contrasting looks and/or ethnicities play branDy at age 15

branDy at age 21

#### The Play:

aT rISE: *The actors enter. They hug, then inhale/exhale.*

bOTH

brandy. That’s my name.

b-15

like the drink.

b-21

Sweet and strong to get you through a storm.

b-21

I’m 15, and the more Mom and Daddy fight…

b-15

(*As she reads and writes).* The more a’s I get on my report card.

b-21

and it feels a little strange…

b-15

because my body starts to change

*The actors stand facing the audience as if naked in front of a mirror. They discover their budding breasts, the hair on their legs, their new backsides. They look at each other in confusion.*

b-15

and because HE’s been looking at me.

b-21

and he’s been saying my name!

*In unison, they imitate his physicality and speak in his deep voice.*

**Brandy & The Bear #outofsilence 19**

bOTH

“Hey brandy” *(Pause)* Wow.

b-15

and he’s invited me to his house!

*Both scream. They look in their mirrors to prepare themselves for a first date. Once they are perfect, they high five each other nervously. They turn and walk a few steps upstage. They inhale and exhale. They sit on the floor with their backs to the audience. They hug themselves as if it was someone else’s arms around them. Each speaks over her shoulder to the audience.*

b-21

I feel his heart beat in his chest.

b-15

His mouth is warm, hot and wet on mine.

*BOTH lay down on their backs and speak to ceiling.*

b-21

Suddenly all of who I am is bare beneath him.

b-15

His hands move over me …

b-21

…like a flock of birds landing on a field.

bOTH

and then…

*In unison, they take a long inhalation – of surprise, wonder, and maybe a little fear. They rise, steady themselves, adjust their clothes, then giggle and scream for joy as they run downstage*

b-15

I am 15.

b-21

I am his.

bOTH *spin in place with arms outstretched*

b-15

…and I feel beautiful

b-21

…and I feel loved.

b-15

…and I feel safe.

**20 #outofsilence**

**Brandy & The Bear**

bOTH *stop abruptly*

bOTH

… ‘til he dumps me

bOTH

*huddle together and sob and comfort each other. As they pull themselves together, they look in the mirror.*

b-21

I’ve been so caught up with him that I haven’t noticed the rest of my life.

b-15

… my parents’ divorce

b-21

…my body changing.

b-15

… my missing my period.

b-21

Wait, what?!

b-15

Oh, it’s okay.

b-21

no it’s not. How. late. am. I?

b-15

6 weeks.

bOTH

noooo!

*Their conflicting, overlapping lines start as a whisper and crescendo to a shouting chant.*

b-15

but he pulled out.

b-21

What was I thinking?

b-15

Maybe I’m just really, really late.

b-21

Maybe I’m just really, really pregnant.

**Brandy & The Bear #outofsilence 21**

bOTH

I HaVE TO TaKE THE TEST!

*Each actor holds an imaginary pregnancy test strip. Each whispers rapidly in turn.*

b-15

Positive

b-21

Positive

*They look at themselves in their mirrors.*

b-15

I’m 15.

b-25

I am pregnant.

*As before, their conflicting, overlapping lines start as a whisper and crescendo to a shouting chant.*

b-21

I can’t have it.

b-15

I can’t get rid of it.

b-21

I can’t give it up for adoption. I’d always wonder where it is.

b-15

I can’t tell Mom

b-21

He’s with somebody else.

bOTH

but it’s his baby. you have to tell him.

*B-15 is Brandy. B-21 plays the boyfriend – with his physicality and voice.*

b-15

“I’m pregnant. I cannot have your baby. you have to help me and it has to be nOW.”

*As B-15 speaks, B-21 move upstage to what will be the office*

**22 #outofsilence**

**Brandy & The Bear**

b-15

I found a place far from my hometown. He got the money. He got a car. He drove me and dropped me off. He said he’d hangout with some friends in San Francisco. He said to call and he’d pick me up…after. I watched him drive away.

b-21

(*As a nurse*) are you brandy? What a nice name. brandy’s sweet and strong to get you through a storm. Is anyone with you?

*B-15 shakes her head negatively.*

b-21

Well, you have to fill out some papers. Then we’re going to put you to sleep….

*B-21 escorts B-15 upstage. B-21 gently lays B-15 on the floor then stands in front of her body, looking directly at the audience. Pause. The lights blink on and off. B-21 turns and gradually helps a groggy B-15 to her feet. B-21 walks her gently downstage.*

bOTH

I call him. I wait. He comes for me... (*Pause*) …with a great big teddy bear in his arms.

(*Weak but sort of happy*) yay!

*BOTH actors take their imaginary bears and place them at the edge of the stage. They walk towards each other and hug, inhaling and exhaling in unison. They face the audience and walk downstage.*

bOTH

I stayed with him 6 years.

b-15

Do you believe it?

b-21

Through the cheating and lying…

b-15

Through the verbal abuse…

b-21

Even through the…

*B-21 raises a fist as if to hit someone and B-15 cowers*

b-21

Maybe it was because my parents divorced…

**Brandy & The Bear #outofsilence 23**

b-15

Maybe because of the secret we share.

b-21

Maybe I was scared to be alone…

b-15

Maybe it was because of the bear…

*They begin to adjust themselves in the mirror – getting themselves together*

b-21

but when I turned 21…

bOTH

…I finally dumped his sorry ass!

b-15

after he’d gone, sometimes I’d look at that bear…

b-21

…and the sadness rained down on me…

b-15

….and I’d remember what I’d lost.

*They adjust themselves in the mirror again – now even more confident and strong*

bOTH

SO I DUMPED THE bEar TOO!

*They each pick up their imaginary bear, turn and fling it behind them. The actors turn to face their mirrors again. They now look confident and radiant.*

bOTH

I stand here now, aged 25 Confident, clear and fully alive.

I know where I’m going, I know where I stand Married to a sweet, smart, loving man Owning my body, owning my voice

Glad all that is past, glad I had a choice.

*They hug as they did in the beginning of the play. They inhale/exhale in unison, then take their bows.*

End of scene

**24 #outofsilence**

**Brandy & The Bear**

## Lizzy and Charlie

a short play by Jacqueline E. lawton

#### The Characters:

lIzzy CHarlIE

#### The Play:

aT rISE: a small, cozy independent coffee shop. Handwritten menu in chalk. a few round tables and chairs. On the center table, there are empty vases and a large bouquet of multi-color Gerber daisies. There is also a laptop and a large

cup of coffee. In the corner, there is a broom and dustpan. lizzy enters from the bathroom. She has just thrown up and feels awful, but she’s pushing through.

She cuts flowers and places them in their vases. She sets the vases out on each table. Then she sits and opens her laptop. She goes over the accounting. after a moment, the sound of keys is heard and the chime of a door opening. He has a toolbox, two paint cans and a paint brush. He is tired from traveling. lizzy turns and is surprised to see Charlie.

CHarlIE

I hope I didn’t scare you.

lIzzy

no, it’s just … I wasn’t expecting you back until Tuesday.

CHarlIE

I know. I just had to get out of there.

lIzzy

you must’ve been driving all night.

CHarlIE

I’ve got a buddy in Philly. I slept on his sofa for a few hours.

lIzzy

Why didn’t you call me?

CHarlIE

I was a wreck. I just needed to drive.

lIzzy

I should’ve come with you.

CHarlIE

no, lizzy, I didn’t want you around all of that.

**Lizzy and Charlie #outofsilence 25**

lIzzy

Do you want some coffee?

CHarlIE yeah.

*Lizzy crosses to the coffee station and pours him a cup of coffee.*

lIzzy

What’s with all the hardware?

CHarlIE

Figured, since I’ve got the rest of the week off, might as well get some work done.

lIzzy

Good thinking. It’ll save us a fortune.

*They sit. He stares into his cup. She runs her hand through his hair and takes his hand.*

CHarlIE

It was awful. She’s still blaming me.

lIzzy

baby, it’s not your fault.

CHarlIE

I keep going over and over that day. We played football in the park, had lunch at Chuckie Cheese, and saw that robot movie he’d been going on and on about. I dropped him off at six like I was supposed to.

lIzzy Charlie, don’t do—

CHarlIE

Damn it, it was her boyfriend’s gun. I didn’t even know it was in the house. now, she’s going around telling everybody, if I hadn’t dumped her, she never would’ve started dating that lowlife in the first place.

lIzzy

He wasn’t a lowlife when he put a ring on her finger and threatened to adopt your son. *(Beat.)* I’m sorry, she just …

CHarlIE

I know. *(He takes a drink of his coffee.)* They’re burying him near her folks.

**26 #outofsilence**

**Lizzy and Charlie**

lIzzy

Good. The cemetery is only a couple of hours from my parent’s house. We’ll visit at Christmas. *(Beat.)* Did you tell your family?

CHarlIE

no, I didn’t get a chance. It didn’t feel right.

lIzzy

It’s okay. I haven’t told mine either.

CHarlIE

I thought you already had.

lIzzy

no, I … I was going to, but then … *(She removes a letter from her purse and hands it to him.)* I wanted to wait to tell you. We didn’t get the loan. We can’t buy the house.

CHarlIE

Well, we won’t be the first couple to raise a kid in a one bedroom.

We can always dip into savings.

lIzzy

no, we can’t. We haven’t built our savings back up since you were out of work and …

CHarlIE

The child support payments. are you saying we’re broke?

lIzzy

not broke. not exactly. We can get by if we cut back and it’s just the two of us.

CHarlIE

but it won’t be just the two of us for long.

lIzzy I know.

CHarlIE What are you saying?

lIzzy

What we’ve both been thinking for the past week. What we both knew the second we found out I was pregnant, but were too scared to say.

CHarlIE

Why didn’t you say anything before?

**Lizzy and Charlie #outofsilence 27**

lIzzy

The same reason you didn’t. We want a family.

CHarlIE

I was hoping we’d get the loan. at least we’d have a cushion. but then we lost billy.

lIzzy

I know. neither of us has been thinking straight.

CHarlIE What do we do?

*Lizzy takes his hand.*

lIzzy

We have an abortion. We work hard. We build up our finances. We have that little wedding we dreamed about in your parent’s back yard. and we try again in a couple of years.

CHarlIE are you sure?

lIzzy

I am if you are.

CHarlIE

I don’t see any other way through it.

lIzzy

Me either. Even if we sell this place, we’d only be breaking even.

*He takes her hand.*

CHarlIE

This isn’t what I wanted for us.

lIzzy

I know. but it’s okay. We’re going to be okay.

*She takes his hand in hers and smiles reassuringly. He looks at her and smiles.*

End of scene.

**28 #outofsilence**

**Lizzy and Charlie**

## Charlie

a short play by nicole Jost

#### The Characters:

JaSMInE, a gay woman in her 30s. any race.

rEGGIE, a gay woman also in her 30s. african american. Jasmine’s partner. Her given name is regina, but no one’s called her that for years.

#### The Play:

aT rISE: Charlie’s room. It’s halfway done: some furnishings, maybe a crib, but no paint on the walls yet. Jasmine paces. after a moment, reggie enters.

rEGGIE

Jas. C’mon.

JaSMInE

lesbians don’t have abortions.

rEGGIE

baby–

JaSMInE

It doesn’t make sense. What are we even talking about here? lesbians don’t have abortions. because, we don’t have

“unplanned” pregnancies. Our pregnancies are very “planned.” Painstakingly and inescapably “planned.” Which makes a lesbian abortion… ridiculous.

rEGGIE

you’re not wrong.

JaSMInE

We’ve given up too much, we’ve gone too far. We’ve sacrificed time and money and sanity and dignity. and now… It’s a nightmare.

rEGGIE

I know.

JaSMInE

I just… I can’t, reggie. It makes no sense. lesbians don’t have abortions.

**Charlie #outofsilence 29**

rEGGIE

I hear you. I really do. … Can we talk about what the doctor said?

JaSMInE

I can’t.

rEGGIE

babe, we have to do this.

JaSMInE

“This.” “abortion.”

rEGGIE

Fine: we have to get the abortion. We have to. If we don’t, then, I can tell you the whole story of our son’s life. His whole story. It’s a short one.

JaSMInE

Don’t.

rEGGIE

He’ll be born. He’ll feel cold. He’ll scream, he’ll gasp for air, and he’ll die.

JaSMInE

Please.

rEGGIE

you love our son so much. He needs your love now. He needs your mercy. To bring him into the world, it would be cowardly. We want him so bad. We’re so ready for him to come. but what life could he have? Only suffering, only pain. We’d be bringing him into the world only to die.

JaSMInE

I just want to meet him.

rEGGIE

I do too.

JaSMInE

I want to hold him.

rEGGIE

I know.

JaSMInE

but I don’t…

**30 #outofsilence**

**Charlie**

*Beat.*

*Beat.*

JaSMInE

If we… Could we… Could we, bury, him? lay him to rest?

rEGGIE

We could do that.

JaSMInE

because, he has a name. and if you have a name, you can be buried, right?

rEGGIE

We can bury him.

JaSMInE

Will you tell him? He should know. He should, but, I don’t think I can tell him. I can’t tell him I don’t / I just can’t I can’t I don’t…

rEGGIE

Shhh. Shhh. Shhh. I’ll tell him.

*Reggie speaks to Jasmine’s belly.*

rEGGIE

Charlie baby. Charlie. Hey, lil man. your mom and I love you so much. We wished for you so much. you are so wanted. you are so loved. Charlie. Charlie. Charlie…

*Flashback. Two years ago. Jasmine and Reggie are having a tickle fight. They are cracking up. Reggie is stronger than Jasmine, and she gets her hands behind her back. She tickles Jasmine ruthlessly.*

JaSMInE

Mercy!

rEGGIE

yeah?

JaSMInE

Mercy! Mercy mercy mercy! rEGGIE

If you’re sure…

*Reggie releases her. Jasmine grins. Reggie kisses her. After a moment, still in the kiss, Jasmine sneakily begins to tickle Reggie again.*

**Charlie #outofsilence 31**

*Beat.*

rEGGIE

Oh ho ho – I see you.

JaSMInE

Me?

rEGGIE

you’re gonna get it now!

JaSMInE

I want to have a baby.

rEGGIE

What??

JaSMInE

I want to have a baby with you.

rEGGIE

you said you’d never want a baby. you said you hate kids.

JaSMInE

I would like our kid.

rEGGIE

you’re crazy. Do you have any idea how hard it would be? There would be donors and clinics and treatments and, oh, so much money…

JaSMInE

So? This is you and me. We can do anything. We’re a team.

rEGGIE

a team, huh?

JaSMInE

We can do anything.

rEGGIE

a baby, huh? yeah. a baby.

End of scene.

**32 #outofsilence**

**Charlie**

## Darnell And Shenay

a 4-Minute Play by Jennifer l. nelson

#### The Characters:

SHEnay, 19-21

DarnEll, 19-21

aT rISE: DarnEll comes rushing into an emergency waiting room, looking at his watch. It is clear he is late for something. Shenay, seated, appears to be in shock. Shenay is wearing a fast food chain restaurant uniform.

DarnEll (*out of breath*)

Oh, honey, I’m sorry it took me so long to get here: the bus got a flat tire, my phone is out of minutes and I didn’t have enough money to get a cab. I ran all the way here. are you okay? (*she doesn’t speak)*

Come on baby, don’t be mad. I got here as fast as I could and you know I got to get back to work as soon as possible. If old man Copeland finds out I’m not in the warehouse I don’t know what he’ll do.

*Shenay begins to cry.*

DarnEll Shenay? baby, I’m sorry…

SHEnay

you shoulda been in there with me, Darnell!

DarnEll

I know, I know. Don’t be mad, sweetheart! What happened?

When I left this morning you were fine…

SHEnay

*(Hysterically fast*) Oh, it was so awful: I started throwing up right after you left the house and I couldn’t stop! I had a cup of tea and tried to get dressed for work but I stepped out into the hall just when Mrs. Mendoza came out of her room and I threw up all over her! She said I should go to the hospital and I told her

I didn’t have any insurance so she said go to the emergency room that’s what she does when her kids get sick so I said okay but I was throwing up so much I couldn’t hardly walk so Mrs. Mendoza gave me 4 dollars and 50 cents and put me in a cab — but I threw up in the cab and the driver was so scared I might

**Darnell And Shenay #outofsilence 33**

have ebola he wouldn’t take the money he just made me get out and walk the last 4 blocks….

DarnEll

Shenay! Shenay! Slow down, slow down! you’re okay now, right? Did you see a doctor? What they say? Some kind of food poisoning? I knew we shouldn’t have eaten that pizza from last week…

SHEnay

Darnell…it wasn’t the pepperoni…

DarnEll What then?

SHEnay

*(in a whisper)* I’m pregnant.

DarnEll What?

SHEnay I’m pregnant.

*Stunned speechless, DARNELL drops into a chair.*

DarnEll

*(disbelief)* you’re pregnant…

SHEnay yeah

DarnEll

Oh God, the timing could not be worse.

SHEnay

I know, honey.

DarnEll

I thought we were being so careful!

SHEnay

So did I…I mean we were! We were being careful...just not careful enough.

DarnEll

Just eight more months—eight more months and I’ll be finished with my class and I can start apprenticing! Eight months! That would be right about the time a baby would come, right? Then I got another 2 years to get a license! How’s that gonna work, Shenay?

**34 #outofsilence**

**Darnell And Shenay**

SHEnay

I don’t know..

DarnEll

My pops is already breathing down my neck about paying him back for the rent. What am I supposed to tell him?

SHEnay

Don’t act like you’re the only one who’s got pressure: what if I can’t finish my GED? What if I have trouble like my sister did with her first baby? 6 months of bed rest?! My moms says it runs in the family…but six months with no pay?!

*They sit in silence with only an occasional sniff from Shenay.*

DarnEll

Oh man, you got to finish that GED this time! (*teasing)* you’re getting kinda old for high school.

SHEnay Shut up, fool!

DarnEll

Shenay, girl, you know I want kids.

SHEnay So do I.

DarnEll

lots of kids…like my grandparents: so they’ll all have lots cousins and nieces and nephews…

SHEnay

*Begins to cry again, but silently.*

So they can have their own softball team… DarnEll

…with reserves…

SHEnay

yeah. like the Duggars

DarnEll

Well, maybe not that many…

*They sit together holding hands in silence*

SHEnay Darnell…

**Darnell And Shenay #outofsilence 35**

*pause*

DarnEll What?

SHEnay

The doctor gave me some pamphlets about… terminating.

DarnEll

Terminating? you mean like…like abortion?

SHEnay

yeah. and if we want to do it, sooner would be easier than later.

DarnEll

(*after a long pause*) Wow. I never thought I’d hear you say that.

SHEnay

Me neither. but I want that future we been talking about. The one where we come home from work in the evening and help the kids with their homework, take them to Disneyworld on

summer vacations and then they go to college and all that brady bunch stuff. I just don’t see us getting there if we let all our plans change now.

There will be other babies in our future.

DarnEll

all good looking like their daddy…

SHEnay

you are so silly. This is serious!

DarnEll

I didn’t mean to sound like I don’t care. Girl, I love you and I want what you want. and I want what’s best for the family we signed up for. I’m thinking about what kind of life could we give a baby right now when the best home we afford is in a boarding house. *(they sit in silence, holding hands)*

SHEnay

So what are you saying?

DarnEll

let’s look at those pamphlets. I like what you said about there will be other babies in our future. If you’re okay with terminating, I’m with you

EnD OF Play

**36 #outofsilence**

**Darnell And Shenay**

## The Line

a 4-Minute Play by D.W. Gregory

**The Characters:** MEllIE nOrMa

#### The Play:

aT rISE: a diner. norma sits at a table nursing a cup of coffee. Mellie, her old friend, is at the door watching a crowd across the street. She opens the door slightly. Sounds of protesters outside. She pulls back.

MEllIE

How long do they stay out there, do you think?

nOrMa

They’re out there every day.

MEllIE

but it isn’t the same people. It can’t be. They must rotate out or something. Get relief. Don’t you think?

nOrMa

you want a coffee, Mel?

MEllIE no thanks.

nOrMa

Or a little pie? blueberry. That’s the specialty here. Wild Maine blueberries. They put it in everything. Pie, muffins, pancakes— even the hamburgers. It’s in the sauce.

MEllIE I can’t. nOrMa

It’s only a local. you’re allowed to eat something.

MEllIE

I don’t want anything. really.

**The Line #outofsilence 37**

*A beat.*

nOrMa

They do homemade jam, too. (brightly) Maybe we should get some jam.

MEllIE

Jam? What the hell— what do I need with jam?

nOrMa To take home.

MEllIE What, a souvenir?

nOrMa

I don’t know—I just thought you’d like some jam.

MEllIE

I don’t want any jam.

nOrMa Okay, fine. No jam.

nOrMa

you’re not having second thoughts?

MEllIE no, norma.

nOrMa

because if you’re having second thoughts, Mellie—

MEllIE

I‘m not having second thoughts.

nOrMa

*(overlapping)* It would be okay. We can come back another day, I‘m good with that.

MEllIE

I am not having second thoughts. Just don’t talk to me about jam.

nOrMa

Okay. *(a longer beat)* What should we talk about?

**38 #outofsilence**

**The Line**

MEllIE

nothing. Don’t talk about anything. There is no need to have an extended conversation right now. I’m good with a meditative silence. That would be really good. a zen moment.

nOrMa

righto. *(beat)* Would you at least sit down then?

*A moment. Mellie sits. Norma relaxes. A silence. Mellie shifts in her seat. Norma fiddles with her coffee spoon.*

nOrMa

It’s those pictures, isn’t it?

MEllIE

*(softly)* God.

nOrMa

They got to you. I can see why. Oh my good lord. I mean, what do those people think? you need to see something like that? On a morning like this? I mean, who needs to see that?

MEllIE

They think I’m a slut, that’s what they think. Okay? They think I’m a whore, that I’m garbage—that I’m a brainless, slutty twitty piece of trash who needs a visual aid to figure out what is going to happen when I go into the clinic. That’s what they think. and you know what? I don’t give a shit what those people think.

nOrMa

Good. *(helplessly)* Good for you.

*Another beat.*

MEllIE

and I don’t give a shit what you think either. you don’t want to go in with me—fine. Wait here.

nOrMa Oh no, Mellie—

MEllIE

you don’t want to cross that line, I get it. I don’t want to cross it either. but I have to. you don’t.

nOrMa

I am going in with you. I am here for you. I told you that. I don’t turn my back on my friends, no matter what they’ve done. I’ve

**The Line #outofsilence 39**

nOrMa *(cont.)*

always been loyal that way, you know that. If you don’t want a coffee, do you want anything else? a tea, or a—I’m driving—so. If you want a glass of wine. I will not tell.

MEllIE

I thought you were with me on this.

nOrMa I’m here.

MEllIE

but you think I’m making a mistake. nOrMa

I think you should tell alex.

*A silence.*

nOrMa

you always wanted kids. He always wanted kids—

MEllIE

We’re over. So we’re not doing the kid thing. nOrMa

but shouldn’t he? Shouldn’t a father, Mel, shouldn’t he have some say?

MEllIE

no. *(off Norma)* alex doesn’t get a say.

nOrMa

Then what were you doing getting into bed with him?

MEllIE Oh, God.

nOrMa

I mean if it was really over – then it should have been totally completely absolutely over.

MEllIE

It was—the next morning.

*Norma shakes her head. A moment.*

**40 #outofsilence**

**The Line**

MEllIE

you know what? I don’t need you for this.

nOrMa no, Mel—.

MEllIE really, I’m good.

nOrMa

Don’t cop that attitude.

MEllIE

you’re the one with the attitude.

nOrMa

I’m just trying to make sense of things here.

MEllIE

Hey: Here’s a news bulletin. not everything makes sense.

*(at the door.)*

MEllIE

look at those idiots. They don’t have a clue. *(beat)* Gawd. I just need a break in that line!

*She kicks the door in frustration. Norma goes to her, but Mel shakes her off and pushes through. Loud sounds of angry protesters. Norma lingers, ashamed but too afraid to move.*

*Fade to dark.*

**The Line #outofsilence 41**

## Maria

a short play by nicole Jost

#### The Characters:

MarIa, 24 years old. Daughter of Mexican parents, raised in suburban Texas, now living in Houston.

lETICIa, her older sister.

#### The Play:

aT rISE: Maria faces us.

MarIa

The nurse asked, “Do you plan to continue with the pregnancy?” and I said… “no.” Picture me then: I was eighteen, and very ignorant. Mis padres nunca me dieron (My parents never gave me) the “sex talk.” I didn’t know anything about sex. For a while, I just tried to pretend like it wasn’t happening. ¿Embarazada?

Me dolía pensarlo. (Pregnant? It hurt me to think it.) I couldn’t be pregnant. I wasn’t one of those girls, las malcriadas (the ill- mannered ones). I was about to graduate. I was going to college to study photography. I was so close.

Pues (Well), after a while I couldn’t just pretend anymore. I bought the test at Walmart. I was so nerviosa (nervous), I took it right there in the Walmart bathroom. Picture me: staring at the little stick. no lo creo. (I don’t believe it.) I took another test. I took all the tests in the box. no puede ser. (It can’t be.) Gracias a dios, mi hermana (Thank God, my sister) answered her phone on the first ring.

lETICIa

Mari, ¿qué te pasa? (what happened?) Something is wrong.

MarIa

Cometí un error (I made a mistake), leti. a mistake. I made a mistake. I’ve never heard silence so loud. leti?

lETICIa

¿no le dices a mamá, oyes? (Don’t tell mom, do you hear me?)

MarIa

My family is very religious.

**Maria #outofsilence 43**

*Beat.*

lETICIa

you can’t tell mom. She won’t understand.

MarIa

When leti and I called the clinic, they told me an abortion cost four hundred dollars. Four hundred. How was I supposed to afford that? I was barely able to afford the pregnancy test. and then there was the money to get to the clinic, muy lejos (very far), almost an hour away in Houston.

lETICIa

¿y el papá? (and the father?) Why don’t you ask him to drive you?

MarIa

¡ay, leti, déjalo! (Oh, leti, leave it alone!) I didn’t want to explain myself to him, I knew I couldn’t raise a baby in college. and I knew he wasn’t gonna help me out with that, ¿sabes? (you know?)

lETICIa

¡Cabezona! (Pigheaded!)

MarIa

She was right: I was pigheaded. but she still agreed to borrow the money from this rico (rich guy) she knew, prometiéndole (promising him) that she’d pay him back really soon.

Picture me, finalmente (finally), when we made it to the clinic: I’m lying on the table like a fresh caught fish. Nurses pulling on my body like it isn’t even mine. I feel like such a tonta (fool)

with my legs spread like this. Que bien chiste (What a good joke), don’t they know? That’s how I got into this mess in the first place.

When I saw that little stick, I saw solamente oscuridad (only darkness), darkness falling around me. but now, as I lie here on the table, even with my eyes closed I can see this… light. My light. I’m going to college. I’m going to be a photographer. El dolor, la vergüenza (The pain, the shame) – it’s just the price I pay to get to my future. The one I choose.

MarIa

Picture me now: I’m 24. I know some things about sex. but my period is late... ¡Estúpida! (Stupid!) How could I be so dumb? I have a degree and a job and a car, I take care of myself and I pay

**44 #outofsilence**

**Maria**

*Beat.*

*Beat.*

MarIa *(cont.)*

my own bills, but still I messed up my pills como idiota (like an idiot). I stare at the little stick. no lo creo. (I don’t believe it.) This can’t be happening again.

It’s been six years since el aborto (the abortion) and here I am. I remember so clearly sitting right here, pequeñita (very small), like a small child in a paper dress. and just like before, the nurse

asks: “Do you plan to continue with the pregnancy?”

MarIa

In Spanish, to say “have a baby” is dar a luz. Dar a luz, literally, that means “give to light.” I’m not the same person I was six years ago. I’m still scared. I still call mi hermana (my sister).

lETICIa

¿Qué quieres hacer, hermanita? (What do you want to do, little sister?) What do you want to do?

MarIa

but something is different. I feel some ancient fuerza (strength) I didn’t have before. algún deseo (Some wish). Some yearning.

It’s hard to explain, ¿sabes? (you know?)

The nurse asks, “Do you plan to continue with the pregnancy?” and I say… “yes.” When she’s older, I will tell mi hija (my daughter) about her light. Su luz (her light). That it is her gift to give, or to keep. Puede elegir. (She can choose.) always, she can choose.

End of scene.

**Maria #outofsilence 45**

## Checks And Balances

a comedy by Karen zacarías

#### Characters:

TErESa COrTEz: a 21 year old college graduate. Smart, quirky, pragmatic, with a touch of deadpan.

CHARLES PETERSON: A very enthusiastic financial advisor who becomes flustered.

**Setting:** An office at a bank. There is a heightened energy; a light touch of absurdity. This is a comedy.

TErESa

Hello, I have a 3pm appointment?

CHarlES

There you are! Hello, I’m Charles Peterson.

TErESa

Teresa Cortez. They told me you were the person to talk to about personal finance.

CHarlES

you are at the right place. let me check your checking! Ha! a customer since 2011.

TErESa

Freshman year. I wanted the big stuffed horse for my sister.

CHarlES

ah yes, my daughter still has hers. (*Shows her the picture*) light of my life. So, what can I help you with today?

TErESa

I have a big decision to make and I need to… take stock. I see those commercials where people call you for advice. I want that.

CHarlES

We are here to tailor our services for your needs and wants and offer you the best options to reach secure financial goals. As you know, financially planning has to be personal to be professional. at our bank, Miss Cortez we value: you.

TErESa

How much do I have in my account?

**Checks And Balances #outofsilence 47**

CHarlES

$408. Checking and $127 in savings.

TErESa So I have $535.

CHarlES you’re good at math.

TErESa

Thank you. Then, I have to pay $350 in rent. and $100 in groceries. Which leaves $135. That’s not very much.

CHarlES

To maintain a free checking account, your balance does have to be above $500!

TErESa

I just got a two-year internship at the atlantic magazine. It was very competitive. It’s my dream job. Since I was little. I wanted to be a writer.

CHarlES

I read THE aTlanTIC often!!!

TErESa

I couldn’t believe it when I got it. after all those interviews and essays. and I celebrated. I celebrated just a little too much.

CHarlES Well, that’s youth.

TErESa

My internship pays net $1000 a month. not much I know. but I will get my first pay-check tomorrow.

CHarlES

Potential earning capacity is important. and your current job is definitely a great INVESTMENT in your future.

TErESa

I like that word: Investment. It gives me hope.

CHarlES

So those are your expenses and assets?

TErESa

Oh I have $110,000 in school loans to pay back.

**48 #outofsilence**

**Checks And Balances**

*(CHARLES drops his folder. Paper scatter)*

CHarlES Oh my.

TErESa

and I’m pregnant. by accident.

CHarlES

Ms. Cortez, that’s very personal!

TErESa

I know. So I have one simple finance question for you: do I make enough money to afford a baby?

CHarlES Well…

TErESa

because to my naked eye, the answer is no. I see my balance and I don’t see how I can I pay for diapers, and bottles, and onesies? How can I pay for day care and strollers, and doctors’ visits? all on my own?

CHarlES

Miss Cortez, we at the bank can’t-

TErESa

and what about the cost of letting go of this internship? How much does having a baby right now really cost for me? In dollars and cents? In dreams, and expectations and possibilities? What happens to my net worth if I stop to have a baby?

CHarlES I cannot say.

TErESa

Of course you can. You’re a financial advisor. You talk about assets and liabilities, stocks and futures. you advise people whether they should buy a house or go on vacation. I mean, how much does it cost to raise a child?

CHarlES

On average, around $250,000. not including college.

TErESa

a quarter of a million dollars…how do I even start to do that?

**Checks And Balances #outofsilence 49**

CHarlES

you would have to reconsider your living arrangements. and find alternative employment. You would have to re-evaluate all of your daily expenses.

TErESa

you mean, give up absolutely everything I have been working for?

CHarlES

You would definitely need to allow for a big “correction” in the market, so to speak. and prepare for the dip. Economically, you will experience a personal recession.

TErESa

Or worse, a real depression.

CHarlES

but there can be a recovery. With hard work.

TErESa

How can the world expect me to find the $250,000 to have a baby, when I can barely muster the $500 I need for an abortion?

CHarlES

(*Beat*) May I ask you a personal question, Miss Cortez?

TErESa Sure.

CHarlES

Money and finances aside, do you want to have a baby?

TErESa

no. I don’t. It will sink me. Financially. Emotionally.

CHarlES

Then, my advice to you - as a finance advisor and as a father - is don’t have one.

TErESa

*(Relief)* Thank you. *(Beat)* That’s not what I was expecting from a family man.

CHarlES

You don’t need advice. You are here to confirm a decision that you’ve already made.

**50 #outofsilence**

**Checks And Balances**

TErESa

yes. I feel guilty for being so…logical. but having an abortion is the only thing that makes sense to me, on every level.

CHarlES

Ms. Cortez, personal finance is about making choices in an unpredictable market. The only sound advice I can give you is: know your own value. you are your own greatest asset. Invest wisely in your future.

*(TERESA shakes his hand)*

TErESa I will.

**Checks And Balances #outofsilence 51**

**52 #outofsilence**

**Checks And Balances**

## Dinnertime

a short play by anu yadav

#### The Characters:

nIna VEra

#### The Play:

aT rISE: a house. The master bedroom. Vera is sitting at her vanity tissuing off her makeup. nina, her daughter, enters.

nIna

Mom? Do you have a minute?

VEra

Of course dear. but we are having dinner soon. We don’t want to make your father wait too long. you know how he is.

*NINA stumbles, she looks distraught.*

VEra

nina? are you okay?

nIna

I – I think I’m pregnant.

VEra Oh my God.

nIna

I haven’t gotten my period in awhile, I got a test and it’s positive.

He—he raped me.

*VERA is struck silent.*

nIna

I didn’t want to. He said it’s not rape because we are together. I didn’t—

VEra

Enough. Just don’t tell your father.

*VERA goes back to tissuing her makeup off.*

**Dinnertime #outofsilence 53**

nIna

Mom, I don’t know what to do. I need to talk to you about this.

VEra

Keep your voice down. What will the neighbors say.

nIna but—

VEra

These pearls are gorgeous, don’t you think? Why don’t you try these on for dinner tonight? your father will be so happy to see you dress up for once—

nIna

Mom, stop! I don’t care.

VEra

nina! What’s gotten into you? I said keep your voice down. The neighbors—

nIna

no, I don’t care about the neighbors!

VEra

I can’t hear this, nina. I just can’t.

nIna

If you were in my shoes maybe you would understand.

VEra Stop.

nIna

no, I won’t stop. you have no idea what it feels like to date someone who—

VEra Don’t you dare—

nIna

you don’t get it. you just act like it’s no big deal, how can you understand—

VEra

How do you think I had you? love? you dated your rapist. Well I married mine. Don’t look so shocked. What was my choice? raise you by myself with no money? They didn’t call it rape

**54 Dinnertime**

VEra *(cont.)*

back then. They didn’t call it anything. It just was. I had no one to talk to. I am your mother and I have been through hell and back for you and I would do it again. but don’t you ever stand there and assume you have any idea what I do or do not understand.

nIna

So help me. I don’t want this. I could have an abortion. and you could come with me.

VEra

I can’t do this, nina. We are going to be late for dinner.

nIna

Stop pretending. For this moment, Mom. Please. I need you to be with me.

VEra

Everything is fine, Nina. It is dinnertime and we will be late.

Everything will be fine.

nIna

No! It’s not fine. It hasn’t been fine. Can you just talk to me?

VEra your father—

nIna

I’m not talking to Dad. I’m talking to you. be with me! Tell me you love me. Hold my hand in the clinic.

VEra

nina, don’t do this to me.

nIna

Wouldn’t you have wanted your mother to do the same for you?

VEra

There is no way my mother would ever have done that for me.

nIna

but you wanted her to.

VEra

Of course. but after I told her what happened she stood there and told me how I disappointed her. and we never spoke about it again. It was like a knife in my heart. It broke me.

**Dinnertime 55**

VEra *(cont.)*

your father was the only one who was willing to help me. He, I’m not apologizing for him, but out of everyone, he was the one who was there for me.

Twisted, isn’t it? I can’t believe we are having this conversation.

I have to pull myself together. I’m a mess.

nIna be with me.

VEra

I have been with you, nina. always. you know, you are the only person in my life that I trust. you’ve always been so strong, spoke your mind. Even when you were a baby. Things were different when I was growing up. We didn’t have options. and I did what I could figure out. So you could have everything.

nIna

right now, Mom, I just want you.

VEra

This just brings up so much for me. Everything just rushing back, all those memories. I have held it for so long. I don’t want the same for you. I will not be my mother. I will not do to you what she did to me. I’m so sorry, this happened to you.

nIna

Will you come with me to the clinic.

VEra

I don’t know, nina.

nIna

This is what I want. I don’t want a child growing up like this. I’m not ready. you always told me to stand up for myself. Can you stand up with me?

VEra

you keep teaching me. My beautiful daughter. Every day. let me get my purse.

nIna

We will probably miss dinner. I know dad always—

VEra

your father can make his own dinner tonight.

*NINA and VERA exit together. End of scene.*

**56 Dinnertime**

## Dear Harriet

a 4-Minute Play by Kristen lePine

#### The Characters:

HarrIET

#### The Play:

aT rISE: HarrIET is a mature woman. She shares letters.

HarrIET

Dear Harriet,

you disgusting slut! If you were raped or felt a shred of guilt, I could understand why you had an abortion. Instead you made a convenient choice. Well, I am making a choice, too. I am burning all of your books. and I am choosing to never read another word you write again.

That was the first letter I received.

after reading it, my cheeks burned. nobody had ever called me a slut before.

Perhaps I was naïve about publishing my abortion story.

Honestly, I’m not sure what I was expecting. I just felt compelled to share. I didn’t have to. I wanted to.

and my readers felt compelled to respond in kind. Soon my desk was overflowing with letters. Never in my life had I received so much mail.

My husband felt compelled to help me sort and read through everything. you see, I didn’t just share my abortion story, I shared our story.

We just celebrated our silver anniversary with a cruise.

We returned to death threats.

Dear Harriet,

I know where you live, you murderous whore. If I see you, I will do what you did to your innocent unborn baby. you deserve to die for bragging about your abortion. all baby killers deserve to die.

**Dear Harriet 57**

HarrIET *(cont.)*

My husband was visibly shaken when he read that, “Hate mail is one thing, Harriet, but this crosses a line,” he said dialing the police.

Threats and harassment are weapons, you see. They are meant to silence one’s voice – my voice.

Dear Harriet,

My story is similar to yours. When I was in my early thirties,

I too had a toddler and a newborn. both of whom needed my full attention. Then I was unexpectedly pregnant with a third. I didn’t think this was possible so soon after giving birth.

neither did I. I remember saying to the doctor, “I thought this wasn’t supposed to happen if I breastfed.” My doctor told me to stop breastfeeding. I remember feeling like a terrible mother.

My husband and I decided to terminate the pregnancy. and after, I felt relief. I could be the mother I wanted to be.

I know exactly what you mean. I felt that, too.

However, I would never publically share my story. like my mother told me after I confessed to her, “you don’t need to talk about it. nobody needs to know. It is a private matter.” I agree with my mother.

Sincerely, anonymous.

I felt compelled to write back.

Dear anonymous,

We could have been neighbors, you and I. I could have had you over to my house for lemonade and cake while our little ones played on one of those nap-less afternoons. We traded dinner recipes and flu remedies. We bemoaned our husbands and confided our fears. But we never talked about our abortions.

We locked them away because we were told to keep quiet. We were expected to hide our choices. And, I can see that there are benefits to our silence – there is no judgment.

Still, when I look back, I wish I could have talked to someone. Perhaps I would have felt less alone.

**58 #outofsilence**

**Dear Harriet**

HarrIET *(cont.)*

not long ago, my husband asked me, “Do you have any regrets?”

none.

He wasn’t asking me if I regretted our abortion. He knows better.

He was asking me if I regretted sharing my story.

The fallout is worse than I expected. I wonder if my readers are still out there. Will anyone still want to read my stories?

“It’s more than that, Harriet,” he said. “I just don’t know if it was worth it.”

I squeezed his hand and assured him that it was worth it.

Dear Harriet,

Thank you for your story. I too had an abortion that I do not regret. Sometimes I think that I should feel remorse or shame, but I don’t. Still, I don’t talk about it with anyone. I know that you and I will never meet, but I want you to know that today you have touched me. you have made me feel less alone.

I became a writer because I believe in the power of a story. It lightens burdens. It spreads love.

My name is Harriet. This is my story: nearly 20 years ago, I had a safe and legal abortion.

End of play.

**Dear Harriet #outofsilence 59**

**Big Life Things**

a 4-Minute Play by Jacqueline E. lawton

**The Characters:**

JUlIE ErIC

**The Play:**

aT rISE: an apartment. a living room. Julie and Eric are on the sofa. They’re making out. It’s fun and passionate. Suddenly, Julie stops and stands.

JUlIE

Okay, Eric, sit down.

ErIC

I am sitting.

JUlIE

no, I mean, over there.

ErIC

but I can kiss you better from here. Come back.

JUlIE

no, there will be no more kissing.

ErIC

Ever?

JUlIE

not tonight. So sit over there.

*He moves over on the sofa.*

JUlIE

no, further.

ErIC

Why?

JUlIE

because you’re too sexy. I need you as far away as possible so I can concentrate.

*Eric crosses further away.*

ErIC

Should I put a bag over my head?

JUlIE

yes.

**Big Life Things #outofsilence 61**

ErIC

yes?

JUlIE

That’ll help.

ErIC

Julie, I’m not putting a bag over my head.

JUlIE

Okay, fine. Just don’t move.

ErIC

I won’t move.

JUlIE

and don’t look sexy.

ErIC Um ...

JUlIE

Maybe put your shirt back on.

ErIC

you’re the one who took it off.

JUlIE

I know. Sorry. Can you put it back on?

ErIC

Well, it’s right there by you. *(He starts to cross to her.)* So, I have to walk over to you to get it.

JUlIE

Oh, no, you don’t. Here.

*She throws the shirt to him. He puts it on and crosses back.*

ErIC

better?

JUlIE

Kind of. your arms look good in that shirt. and that color brings out your eyes. Okay, focus. I have to tell you something.

ErIC

I’m listening.

**62 #outofsilence**

**Big Life Things**

JUlIE

You remember six weeks ago? After the office party. The rain storm. The backseat of your car.

ErIC

yeah, I remember. I was kinda hoping we’d recreate that moment.

JUlIE

and I wasn’t on the pill yet and we didn’t have condoms.

ErIC

yeah, but you said—

JUlIE

I know. I was on my period. Well, the nun’s were wrong.

ErIC

What nuns?

JUlIE

The nuns in school who told me I couldn’t get pregnant on my period.

ErIC

Wait, you’re pregnant?

JUlIE

yeah.

ErIC

How do you know?

JUlIE

I took a test. Well, three actually.

ErIC

Where? let me see them.

*She crosses to the bathroom and returns with the pregnancy tests. She throws them at him.*

ErIC

Wait, gross. you peed on them?

JUlIE

Seriously? you had your tongue—

**Big Life Things #outofsilence 63**

ErIC

right. Okay. Context. yeah, you’re pregnant. Holy shit. My apartment’s not big enough for a baby.

JUlIE

Wait, you want me to move in with you?

ErIC

Well, no because my apartment—but we could all fit here. You’ll have to kick out your roommate.

JUlIE

I can’t do that.

ErIC

but you don’t like her.

JUlIE

Shh ...

ErIC

Oh shit, is she here?

JUlIE

no, but her cat can hear us.

ErIC

Um …

JUlIE

Shut up. They’re close.

ErIC

look, we can get our own place. Closer to work. We’ll save a ton of money.

JUlIE

but ... I don’t want to have a baby.

ErIC

you don’t?

JUlIE

no, not yet. and we just met.

ErIC

We’ve known each other a year.

JUlIE

yeah, as colleagues, but not … intimately.

**64 #outofsilence**

**Big Life Things**

ErIC

Sure, but it’s been fun, right?

JUlIE

Of course.

ErIC

and romantic.

JUlIE

Very. I’ve had a great time and I like you. but to have a baby together … it needs to be serious too. We need to go through big life things.

ErIC

This is a pretty big one.

JUlIE

I know. But I’m not in the best place financially. Car payments, student loans, credit card debt.

ErIC

Tell me about it.

JUlIE

and … we haven’t even said, “I love you.”

ErIC

right.

JUlIE

I need to have an abortion, Eric. I think it’s for the best.

ErIC *(Relieved.)*

Okay, I’m really glad you said that.

JUlIE

What? you just asked me to move in with you.

ErIC

I know, and that offer still stands, but a baby. I work in the mail room.

JUlIE

no, you don’t.

ErIC

Just about. Hold up, does this mean we’re going to break up?

**Big Life Things #outofsilence 65**

JUlIE

Do you want to break up?

ErIC

no, I like you. I want to see where this is going.

JUlIE

Me too.

ErIC

Okay, so what do we do now?

JUlIE

I’ll call the clinic tomorrow to make an appointment.

ErIC

Can I come with you?

JUlIE

yes.

ErIC

I’m glad you told me.

JUlIE

Good. I was nervous.

ErIC

I could see that. I can also help you pay for it.

JUlIE

Thank you.

ErIC

Okay, can I kiss you now?

JUlIE

yes, please!

*He smiles and crosses to her. They embrace. He kisses her.*

End of scene.

EnD OF Play

**66 #outofsilence**

**Big Life Things**