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*For Marjorie and Aaron*

## **Cast of Characters**

KANSAS, 14 female

JAMES, 14 male

LAURA, 40s female

MR. FATHER, 40s male

MRS. MOTHER, 40s female

MS. ANALYST, 40s female

*Note:* The cast may also include an ensemble, of which Ms. Analyst, Mr. Father, and Mrs. Mother are a part. Ensemble members create applause, “confusion & consternation,” whispered slogans, distortions of James’s noises, and the sucking sound of Language being lost. They are responsible for creating the overall environment of the Realm, as well as Kansas’s dream sequence in scene six. If an ensemble is not employed, design elements (including video projection) may be used in its place, though the creation of live sound should still rest in the hands of the adult characters.

## **Setting**

A future not so far from now. Mostly underground.

## Production Notes

### *James's Noises:*

They are superhuman sound effects. But we should know somehow that he creates them. When, later in the play, there are distortions of James-like noises, they should be different enough from James's original noises that we can tell the difference, even if Kansas can't. One way to solve the sound puzzle is to have all of James's noises played through a sound system and all other sounds created live by an ensemble (perhaps with a series of cheap noisemakers)—a reversal of aural expectation. The important thing is that we can differentiate between James's noises and the sounds created by the Realm.

### *General Notes:*

*The Realm* contains a number of stage directions that require both creative and collaborative problem solving. The script is designed to elicit active engagement from a director, actors, and designers eager to treat challenges like imaginative possibilities. Though the use of video projection is certainly a viable option for the more fantastic effects, whenever possible an ensemble of actors should *play* the Realm—the walls of underground caves, the invisible (or visible) audience to Kansas's scenes with Ms. Analyst, and even the wash of water that pushes Kansas through the ground. With a large enough ensemble, the character of Ms. Analyst might be split among several actors to multiply and abstract the power system in place.

The more suggestive the staging is, the more successful it will be. Kansas's flying sequence in scene six, for example, might be a brief dance piece done by a double in the ensemble. It is less important that we see her literally fly than we get a sense of the freedom of movement she does not have in the Realm. Kansas can then begin to replicate this movement sequence in the last moments of the play—a suggestion, though not a promise, that she is moving towards escape of some kind. So too in scene fifteen when the flowers rise around James, it is more important that he *believes* they are flying—perhaps with

a little help from a creative lighting designer. But the *affect* is more important than the effect.

These are only suggestions, of course. *The Realm* invites you to create your own imaginative solutions to these puzzles of staging, light, and sound.

## Acknowledgments

*The Realm* was a winner of the 2005 National Waldo M. and Grace C. Bonderman Playwriting Workshop and was featured in a rehearsed reading at the Indiana Repertory Theatre, Indianapolis. It was directed by Doug Zschiegner; the dramaturg was Lenora Inez Brown; and the intern was Alisa Weinstein.

*The Realm* premiered at the University Co-Op/Cohen New Works Festival at the University of Texas at Austin. It was directed by Katie Dawson. The set design was by Karen LaShelle; the costume design was by Candida Nichols; the lighting design was by Peter Knox; the sound design was by Bob O'Dair; the dramaturg was Rebecca Hewett; the movement director was Jaclyn Pryor; and the production stage manager was Charlotte Benbenek-Price. The cast was as follows:

KANSAS.....	Marjorie Maxwell
JAMES.....	Aaron Forbath
LAURA .....	Michelle Ludwig
MS. ANALYST/ENSEMBLE.....	Claire Canavan
MS. ANALYST/ENSEMBLE.....	Lara Greene
MR. FATHER/ENSEMBLE .....	Hunter Davis
MRS. MOTHER/ENSEMBLE.....	Kelly Howe
ENSEMBLE .....	Lizzi Biggers, Patrick Finn-McKelvey, Sarah Tooley

# THE REALM

by Sarah Myers

## Scene 1

*(This world is dark. Darker than dark. One by one, eyes appear in the darkness, small and glittering, blinking, squinting. Human eyes. Before we are sure the eyes are really there at all, whispers begin in the darkness—looping in and out and over themselves, an endless almost-echo:)*

**WHISPERS.** Don't Be Afraid to Dream!

The First Step You Take is the Furthest!

Only *You* are Accountable.

The Future is Yours.

Open Your Eyes!

There are No Shortcuts.

Life Rewards Action.

If You Don't Know Where You're Going, You'll Never Know When You Get There.

*(Underneath the whispers, LAURA begins to hum The Itsy, Bitsy Spider. No words yet, but here they are for reference:)*

The itsy bitsy spider went up the water spout.  
Down came the rain and washed the spider out.  
Out came the sun and dried up all the rain.  
And the itsy bitsy spider went up the spout again.

*(A ladder. To somewhere else. Upwards towards a tiny door. A young woman climbs. This is KANSAS. She reaches out an arm. Her fingers find flowers, just above the doorframe. She yanks them out and starts to lose grasp of the ladder. And then, SLAM. The door above. Closed. Darkness. And a firm THUD. Something has fallen. The whispers say:)*

**WHISPERS.** If You Don't Know Where You're Going, You'll Never Know When You Get There.

*(Lights up, fast and bright, on Scene 2.)*

**Scene 2**

(JAMES, MRS. MOTHER, and MR. FATHER sit eating dinner. Both MRS. MOTHER and MR. FATHER wear cheerful plastic masks that partially obscure their faces. The dining room table, utensils, and plates are all made of brightly colored plastic. There are plastic posters on the walls: computer-generated imitations of scenes from nature. Everything is sleek, light-weight, compact, colorful. The only door is on the ceiling, which is just low enough for a tallish person to reach. There is no natural light in the room but plenty of rosy fluorescence. Portions on plates are noticeably small, and water sits in tiny plastic vials. No one speaks. Everyone eats. Actually, they spend more time chewing and cutting than eating. Everyone chews at least twenty times before swallowing and cuts pieces the size of small fingernails. JAMES starts drumming his fingers on the table.)

**MR. FATHER.** Jimmy.

**JAMES.** Sorry.

**MR. FATHER.** School was pleasant, I assume?

**JAMES.** Sure.

**MR. FATHER.** What's that?

**MRS. MOTHER.** Speak up so your father can hear you, Jimmy.

**JAMES.** It was fine. It was great.

**MR. FATHER.** Which was it?

**JAMES.** What?

**MR. FATHER.** Fine or great.

**JAMES.** Great. It was great.

**MR. FATHER.** Good.

**MRS. MOTHER.** Did you have a pleasant day, Mr. Father?

**MR. FATHER.** Every day is a pleasant day, Mrs. Mother.

**MRS. MOTHER.** That's wonderful, Mr. Father. I had a pleasant day as well.

**MR. FATHER.** Ol' Bertrum's retiring.

**MRS. MOTHER.** Is the funeral this weekend?

**MR. FATHER.** I'd expect as much.

**MRS. MOTHER.** Will his son be the one to kill him?

**MR. FATHER.** The daughter's going to do it.

**MRS. MOTHER.** I didn't know he had Authorization for two.

**JAMES.** I thought he was your age.

**MR. FATHER.** What's that?

**JAMES.** I thought you and Mr. Bertrum were the same age.

**MR. FATHER.** George Bertrum?

**JAMES.** Yeah.

**MRS. MOTHER.** Say *yes*, Jimmy.

**JAMES.** Yes.

**MR. FATHER.** No. No, we're not the same age.

*(JAMES waits for elaboration. There is none. He goes back to eating.)*

**MR. FATHER.** No, George Bertrum's at least three months my senior.

**JAMES.** That's what I meant when—

**MR. FATHER.** What's that?

**MRS. MOTHER.** Don't talk with food in your mouth, Jimmy. And don't mumble.

*(JAMES starts drumming his fingers on the table.)*

**MR. FATHER.** I've had enough of the fingers.

**MRS. MOTHER.** Your father asked you a question, young man.

**JAMES.** Never mind.

**MRS. MOTHER.** Jimmy.

**JAMES.** Does that mean I'll kill you soon?

**MR. FATHER.** You know I'm not due for retirement yet. George Bertrum traded in years on his life for an extra child.

**MRS. MOTHER.** How lovely!

**MR. FATHER.** You don't deserve to kill me.

**JAMES.** Yes, I do.

**MR. FATHER.** Killing your parent is an honor and a duty, and you haven't shown you're capable of either.

*(JAMES stares straight at MR. FATHER. With his mouth, his hands, something, he makes the noise of a doorbell ringing. However it is made, this noise is uncanny in its similarity to an actual doorbell. MRS. MOTHER gives MR. FATHER a meaningful glance.)*

**MRS. MOTHER.** Oh MY. What. Was. That?

*(No answer.)*

**MRS. MOTHER.** I SAID, What Was That?

**MR. FATHER.** The alarm.

**MRS. MOTHER.** Self-testing! Of Course.

**JAMES.** It's not the alarm. The alarm is louder.

**MRS. MOTHER.** Of Course It's the Alarm.

**JAMES.** It's the doorbell.

**MRS. MOTHER.** Don't be Ridiculous, Jimmy. We Don't Have a, a, a—

**JAMES.** Doorbell?

**MRS. MOTHER.** Shhhh. There haven't been...any of those things for ages. And it's only 5:30. Still plenty of sun. No one could survive outside at this hour. Even with a clean air supply.

**JAMES.** I could.

*(JAMES makes the doorbell noise, followed by some furious knocking.)*

**MR. FATHER.** That's *it*. I don't know what kind of work they do at that Mind Review, but this boy is the same way he was when we sent him there.

**MRS. MOTHER.** If We Pretend We're Not Here, Maybe They'll Go Away.

**MR. FATHER.** Stop playing that ridiculous game.

**MRS. MOTHER.** It's not a game. It's what they told us to do if it started again.

**MR. FATHER.** He's only been home for two days, for earthssake.

**MRS. MOTHER.** He's Testing the Waters. That's what they said might happen. We Have to Roll With the Punches.

*(JAMES starts drumming his fingers on the table again.)*

**MR. FATHER.** Damnit, Jimmy, would you stop that?

**JAMES.** *(Doorbell three times in quick succession.)*

**MR. FATHER.** I'm warning you, Mister.

**JAMES.** Want to know who's at the door?

**MR. FATHER.** NO, we do NOT want to know who's at the door.

**JAMES.** It's my real mother.

**MRS. MOTHER.** Jimmy, darling, remember to take deep breaths.

*(Heavy knocking.)*

**MR. FATHER.** Why, you—

**JAMES.** I'm going to have to get that.

**MR. FATHER.** Now, wait just one earthforsaken minute. This is your mother. She's got Digital Imprints of your feet and fingers from the day you came to term.

**MRS. MOTHER.** I carried you around in a Petri Womb for nine months of my life.

**JAMES.** No, you didn't.

*(JAMES reaches out to the door on the ceiling.)*

**MR. FATHER.** Stop.

**MRS. MOTHER.** Don't.

**MR. FATHER.** Step away from the door, son.

*(JAMES swings the door open. MRS. MOTHER covers her eyes and mouth, drops to the ground, and curls into a ball. White sunlight streams into the room. JAMES breathes it in. No one is at the door.)*

### Scene 3

*(MS. ANALYST sits on a brightly colored, plastic piece of furniture. She wears a perky but imposing plastic mask and moves with a certain set of gestures she repeats over and over for emphasis. Opposite MS. ANALYST is KANSAS on another piece of plastic furniture. Everything in sight is bright and rosy and entirely artificial. There are colorful posters on the walls with brave images skirted in slogans: DON'T BE AFRAID TO DREAM!, THE FIRST STEP YOU TAKE IS THE FURTHEST!, THERE ARE NO SHORTCUTS., THE FUTURE IS YOURS. The sign at center says: MIND REVIEW: YOU EITHER GET IT OR YOU DON'T. A booming voice sounds in the air:)*

**VOICE.** THIS IS MIND REVIEW.

*(Peppy music pipes in, followed by applause. Throughout the scene, we hear this same applause, as well as the sounds of "confusion and consternation.")*

**MS. ANALYST.** Thank you for taking the step to join us today, Maxine.

**KANSAS.** I had no choice.

**MS. ANALYST.** You Always Have a Choice. Life is Full of Choices. It's Up to You to Take Advantage of Them!

*(Applause.)*

**KANSAS.** *(Mimicking MS. ANALYST's smile.)* The First Step You Take Is the Furthest!

**MS. ANALYST.** Very good! Now, tell us why you're here.

**KANSAS.** Because you brought me here.

**MS. ANALYST.** Maxine's mother is a well-known Designer, but Maxine doesn't think she has enough talent to follow in her footsteps. Isn't that right, Maxine?

**KANSAS.** No. It isn't.

*(Confusion and consternation.)*

**MS. ANALYST.** Of course it is.

**KANSAS.** My mother makes plastic faces for ugly people. I don't.

**MS. ANALYST.** Repeat after me. There Are No "ugly people" in the Realm, Only Ugly Dispositions.

**KANSAS.** There are no ugly people in the Realm, only ugly dispositions.

*(Applause.)*

**MS. ANALYST.** Very good!

**KANSAS.** My mother makes plastic faces for ugly dispositions.

**MS. ANALYST.** Remember. You'll Never Kill Your Mother Until You Show Her Some Respect.

**KANSAS.** Then I guess she'll live forever.

*(Confusion and consternation.)*

**MS. ANALYST.** People Who Feel Inadequate Often Try to "Level" Those They Think Threaten Them. But Resentment Hurts the Giver Much More than the Receiver. Stand up, Maxine. Show everyone how you hurt yourself.

*(KANSAS stands. She has bruises on her arms and legs and several cuts caked with blood. Confusion and consternation.)*

**MS. ANALYST.** And where did those injuries come from?

**KANSAS.** It was an accident.

**MS. ANALYST.** There Are No Accidents.

**KANSAS.** Yes, there are.

**MS. ANALYST.** You Can't Change What You Don't Acknowledge. Stop Making Excuses and Start Making Results!

*(Applause.)*

**MS. ANALYST.** Now tell us what *really* happened.

**KANSAS.** I was flying too high and I fell.

**MS. ANALYST.** Remember. Human Beings Cannot Fly.

**KANSAS.** That is your opinion.

**MS. ANALYST.** That is Scientific Fact.

**KANSAS.** Then I must not be a human being.

**MS. ANALYST.** People Who Succeed Have No Room in their Lives for Fantasy.

*(Applause.)*

**KANSAS.** Maybe I don't want to succeed.

**MS. ANALYST.** Everyone Wants to Succeed, Maxine.

**KANSAS.** Kansas. My name is Kansas.

**MS. ANALYST.** Your mother didn't name you Kansas.

**KANSAS.** My mother wears a prosthetic face to breakfast.

**MS. ANALYST.** Repeat after me. Names are Given by Parents to Children. Kansas is a Fantasy. And You Know How the Realm Feels about Fantasy.

**KANSAS.** Has anyone ever told you how ugly you are?

*(Confusion and consternation.)*

**MS. ANALYST.** Maxine.

**KANSAS.** Model #673 wasn't one of my mother's best. You're behind the times.

*(More confusion and consternation.)*

**MS. ANALYST.** That's enough.

**KANSAS.** I flew. Above ground.

**MS. ANALYST.** You did not.

**KANSAS.** In. The. Sun.

**MS. ANALYST.** *(Bright smile.)* Repeat after me. You are Lying. You are Lying to Me, and You are Lying to Yourself.

**KANSAS.** *(Same smile.)* You are Lying. You are Lying to Me, and You are Lying to Yourself.

**MS. ANALYST.** Very good! I think you've taught yourself an important lesson today. You Alone Are Accountable for Your Actions... If You Don't Know Where You're Going, You'll Never Know When You Get There.

*(Huge applause. Mind Review music up and out.)*

#### Scene 4

*(LAURA alone. Sounds of weeds growing, cockroaches crawling. A flower or two. The open air. Mostly sparse, dry ground. LAURA is very still, but there is the sense of movement in her body, like she could flee at any moment.)*

**LAURA.** Back when there were actually days of the week, I used to watch egg sacs outside my window with specks of waiting spiders inside. When they hatched, they stuck to each other in their little cotton web and waved their arms in the air. Like tentacles. There's a better word for that. Tentacles. I just don't know it anymore. I was only able to hold on to half my Language, so I leave what's left in the air, in your ears, offered up and around and ahead and because when you see what you see what my life used to be used to see used to be like. Before.

The spiders left empty cotton globes of air, stuck between the pane and the screened-in sky outside. There was sky outside then. There was a thing called inside, and we lived in it, and then we went outside. And there were windows with glass panes. Not plastic. And no real notion of life lived underground. So now I dream of days of the week. Just days of the week. A real week. And trees. Traffic. Sandwiches. Simple things that need no explanation. Someone singing nursery rhymes.

*(She hums the opening bars of The Itsy Bitsy Spider.)*

There was a song I sang when you were young. I can't remember the words, but I remember when I started to forget them. It was back when we discovered that everything was as easy to lose as daylight. After the seven-day week ended and the fourteen-day week began, we waited for a new era when there might be children who ate sandwiches and sang. But by the time the days of the week ended altogether, we only wished we'd never wanted water.

### Scene 5

*(A warm, small space. Cramped but comfortable. Holes leading off in different directions. Are there eyes glowing in the dark? It's hard to tell. KANSAS enters with a bunch of dandelions in her teeth. After a minute, JAMES burrows up from the ground.)*

**KANSAS.** You're late.

**JAMES.** By a minute.

**KANSAS.** A minute matters.

**JAMES.** Doorbell rang again.

**KANSAS.** You have to stop it.

**JAMES.** I can't. It's—uh, cuh, cuh—

**KANSAS.** Compulsive.

**JAMES.** Right.

**KANSAS.** It's weird.

**JAMES.** I like to see the look on his face when I open the door.

**KANSAS.** The Light Could Kill You!!

**JAMES.** *(Not a laugh.)* Ha, ha. How was the session?

**KANSAS.** They put me on the air.

**JAMES.** Again?

**KANSAS.** I fell.

**JAMES.** What is that—number ten or something?

**KANSAS.** Or something.

**JAMES.** Ten is a lot.

**KANSAS.** What can I say? I'm a go-getter.

**JAMES.** Go get what?

**KANSAS.** It's not literal.

**JAMES.** Not what?

**KANSAS.** Never mind. *(holding out the flowers to him.)* Here.

**JAMES.** What's this?

**KANSAS.** Flowers.

**JAMES.** How do you know?

**KANSAS.** I got them on the outside.

**JAMES.** Before or after you fell?

**KANSAS.** Smell them.

*(He does.)*

**KANSAS.** So?

**JAMES.** Earth. They smell like earth.

**KANSAS.** We're inside the earth. That doesn't mean anything.

**JAMES.** Sun.

**KANSAS.** They can't smell like sun *and* earth.

**JAMES.** They do.

**KANSAS.** Sun doesn't smell. Sun burns.

**JAMES.** *(For the flowers.)* Thank you.

**KANSAS.** You're welcome.

**JAMES.** *(The injuries.)* Do they hurt?

**KANSAS.** Not too much.

**JAMES.** Here.

*(JAMES reaches out and rubs KANSAS's arm, like he's trying to make the cuts go away, but he doesn't know how.)*

**KANSAS.** Thanks.

*(JAMES continues to rub KANSAS's arm.)*

**KANSAS.** Don't be weird.

**JAMES.** I'm not.

*(JAMES stops. Awkward pause.)*

**KANSAS.** I'm thirsty.

**JAMES.** You're always thirsty.

**KANSAS.** Did you steal any extra after school?

**JAMES.** Not today. They were watching.

**KANSAS.** They're always watching.

**JAMES.** Not always. Not here.

*(KANSAS looks around, squints, shrugs. She's not sure.)*

**JAMES.** Let's try southwest today.

**KANSAS.** We don't know which way southwest is.

**JAMES.** It's away.

**KANSAS.** Away isn't a direction.

**JAMES.** A what?

**KANSAS.** A...route.

**JAMES.** No.

**KANSAS.** A path.

**JAMES.** Hunh-unh.

**KANSAS.** A way.

**JAMES.** Away isn't a way?

**KANSAS.** Never mind.

**JAMES.** No, what?

**KANSAS.** Away might be just as bad as nearby.

**JAMES.** What's wrong with you today?

**KANSAS.** Going on the air takes a lot of energy.

**JAMES.** So don't go on the air.

**KANSAS.** Easy for you to say.

**JAMES.** If we leave now, you'll never have to go on the air again.

**KANSAS.** We don't have any water.

**JAMES.** We'll drink flowers.

**KANSAS.** You don't drink flowers.

**JAMES.** We'll drink dirt.

**KANSAS.** James.

**JAMES.** Dirt's not so bad.

**KANSAS.** You drank dirt?

**JAMES.** No. But the Revolvers drank dirt.

**KANSAS.** *Ate* dirt. The Revolvers ate dirt.

**JAMES.** Same thing.

**KANSAS.** I've got to go.

**JAMES.** Already?

**KANSAS.** Already.

**JAMES.** You won't keep falling forever.

*(Beat.)*

**KANSAS.** I know.

*(JAMES makes the noise of an orangutan, then the sound of an orchestra. KANSAS laughs.)*

**KANSAS.** Those sounds don't go together.

**JAMES.** What do you mean?

**KANSAS.** Orangutan. And orchestra. They don't have anything in common.

**JAMES.** They don't exist anymore. That's in common.

**KANSAS.** Yeah.

**JAMES.** Be careful.

**KANSAS.** You too.

*(She crawls off. JAMES smells his flowers.)*

### Scene 6

*(An empty hallway in Mind Review. A plastic tile rises from the floor. KANSAS crawls up. MS. ANALYST enters and watches.)*

**MS. ANALYST.** Congratulations, Kansas! Welcome to the Second Stage!

**KANSAS.** I was just...What?

**MS. ANALYST.** We admire your determination! It takes tenacity to hold on to so much desire. You must be tired.

*(The plastic furniture appears. It is covered with a ridiculous number of pillows. MS. ANALYST pats a pillow and smiles for KANSAS to sit.)*

**KANSAS.** Did you call me Kansas?

**MS. ANALYST.** We all get tired. By the time I got to the Second Stage, I was so exhausted I had to drink a whole gallon of water.

*(A whole gallon of water appears. MS. ANALYST drinks a big drink.)*

**MS. ANALYST.** Thirsty?

*(She holds it out to KANSAS. KANSAS has never seen this much water.)*

**KANSAS.** Is that—? What is that?

**MS. ANALYST.** It's a perk of the Second Stage.

**KANSAS.** What's going on?

**MS. ANALYST.** You're not Losing the way the others do by breathing. And putting you on the air doesn't seem to do any good. So we're giving you another option. The Second Stage: a Choice.

**KANSAS.** What choice?

**MS. ANALYST.** To Give or Receive. Dispossession.

**KANSAS.** Dispo-what?

**MS. ANALYST.** Dispossession—as in removing the possession, as in taking away the want. It's a Process Designed to Streamline the Lives of Our Citizens and Give Them the Opportunity to Become Productive Members of Society!

*(A special on MRS. MOTHER here, poised and perfect, cutting food into teeny, tiny bites, measuring water into microscopic vials.)*

**MS. ANALYST.** You've noticed, I know, that right around your age Citizens Lose the last of their Language. Like your friend. They begin wanting less.

**KANSAS.** James isn't losing anything.

**MS. ANALYST.** No?

**KANSAS.** No.

**MS. ANALYST.** He can't help it. It happens through the air itself.

*(MRS. MOTHER in her special, cutting and measuring. She starts to slow down, until she stands sadly and looks at the food. Why is she doing this? She doesn't know. Then, there is the sudden sound of air being sucked out of MRS. MOTHER. Her lungs collapse, like she's had the wind knocked out of her. She starts measuring and cutting the food again—even faster and faster and more and more meticulously.)*

**MS. ANALYST.** There are two basic components of Dispossession: 1. Control of Base Physical Desires, *thirst* being the most significant, and 2. Language Loss. It's a reciprocal, almost simultaneous proc-

ess. We've found that there's a direct link between Language and desire.

**KANSAS.** Then why do I have them both?

**MS. ANALYST.** Immunity, my dear. We know you know you have it now. Your type is a little harder to handle. That's why we offer you a choice: Give or Receive.

**KANSAS.** So if I Give—

**MS. ANALYST.** You monitor those who Receive. (*Pointing to MRS. MOTHER.*) And there's a little acting involved. In public, you'll have to pretend you're one of them.

*(MR. FATHER appears in the special with MRS. MOTHER. He looks at her for a moment and imitates her careful food ritual.)*

**MS. ANALYST.** It makes it easier. Creates less confusion. Less opportunity for jealousy.

*(MR. FATHER and MRS. MOTHER smile politely at each other. Lights fade on them.)*

**MS. ANALYST.** After the water shortage began, we had to take precautions to be sure that there was enough for everyone. Certain Citizens weren't able to put aside their greed. So Dispossession evolved. No need to worry about water when you don't want it.

**KANSAS.** Why would I ever choose to Receive if I don't have to?

**MS. ANALYST.** The Receivers seem so peaceful sometimes. That, and you'd be in the same boat with your friend.

**KANSAS.** James is in the same boat with *me*.

**MS. ANALYST.** Really.

**KANSAS.** Really.

**MS. ANALYST.** We know you know that isn't true.

**KANSAS.** If I'm immune, it should be impossible for me to Receive.

**MS. ANALYST.** Even if we can't control your Language, recent tests have proven we can catalyze Dispossession through alternate

means. We call it Keeping the Present Present! Or Deducting Dream and Memory! We're only now discovering how much desire is manifest in dreams.

**KANSAS.** What does that mean?

**MS. ANALYST.** I'm glad you asked.

*(MS. ANALYST makes a pointed gesture and freezes KANSAS to her spot. All of Mind Review goes dark.)*

*(A child appears in a big wild field of flowers. This too is KANSAS. The sky is bright with sun. The child climbs a long ladder, or stairs, or something else steep and daunting. It isn't important what she climbs, just that she does. She climbs until she reaches a precipice, where she stands looking down. She stands for a long Beat, and then she jumps. But she doesn't fall. She hovers in the air for a moment and then starts rising. By inches, and then feet. She swims through the air, pushes it away from her face. She twists and summersaults. The ground is far below her.)*

*(Blackout on the child. Lights up on KANSAS. She stumbles and holds her head.)*

**KANSAS.** That...what was that.

**MS. ANALYST.** What do you think?

**KANSAS.** What did you do to—

**MS. ANALYST.** Your mind?

**KANSAS.** It...hurts.

**MS. ANALYST.** The pain will pass. Only the absence of the idea is permanent.

**KANSAS.** What idea?

**MS. ANALYST.** How many times have you dreamt of flying?

**KANSAS.** It's not a *dream*. It's real.

**MS. ANALYST.** It's one time less now. Just remember. Life is Full of Choices. It's Up to You to Take Advantage of Them!

**Scene 7**

*(LAURA alone again—now in a different place on stage, as though she is constantly moving.)*

**LAURA.** When water went where water went when water went, we followed—took back what wasn't anyone else's to take. And so, for this, we were the first to find that, in the new world, there would be those who would speak too much at times and not enough at others, who would keep drinking in all that was left, keep smelling even when everything tasted the same. And then there were those who would take only tiny steps, live little lives, walk heel-to-toe-to-heel-to-toe-to only forward always forward toward the ever-after in straight and measured lines. Even those we once loved very much.

Dispossession. Life made simple. Life made plain. What they came to call to claim to tame to take to freeing the foul the sick the sickly, peeling off layers of *invasion*, making the person *pure*. The mess of the maze of emotion, religion, superstition: words from a world now gone. They took the words they wanted and renamed the ones that we could keep.

After the days of the week ended altogether and we were underground, someone heard you say, "Can I have a cookie?" And that's why I hoped you wouldn't lose the way they wanted. I couldn't we wouldn't I wasn't supposed to remember cookies and never to teach you to want them. The more words we know, the more ways we have to say what it is we want. I knew then that you'd be one who *wanted* things. It is dangerous now—to want things. It is a crime against ourselves.

*(LAURA looks around, as though she has heard something. She dashes off.)*

**Scene 8**

*(JAMES in a sparse, bright bedroom with Mind Review-like posters on the walls. He lies in bed, humming the first few notes of The Itsy Bitsy Spider.)*

**JAMES.** She smells like water, and she wore a coat made of...cloth. Is that a word? Cloth. And she sang a, a song, and my father called

her, he called her, um, love. He called her love? No. Or be-au-tiful. Maybe he called her beautiful\*.

*(There is the sudden sound of air being sucked out of the space. The word beautiful is pulled from JAMES's lips. His lungs collapse, like he's had the wind knocked out of him, but he keeps talking as though nothing has happened.<sup>1</sup>)*

**JAMES.** He called her, uh, buh-buh...Huh. What did he call her?

*(KANSAS enters through a door on the ceiling.)*

**KANSAS.** Beautiful.

**JAMES.** What are—?

**KANSAS.** Quiet.

**JAMES.** What are you doing here?

**KANSAS.** Pack a bag. We've got to go.

**JAMES.** I thought you said you didn't want to leave today.

**KANSAS.** They're going to steal my brain matter.

**JAMES.** What? Who?

**KANSAS.** Mind Review.

**JAMES.** You always say that, and then you find out you're wrong the next day, and you say, "Why didn't you tell me to stop freaking out?" And I say, "Well, Kansas, you didn't exactly—"

**KANSAS.** It's different this time. They found a way around my immunity.

**JAMES.** How?

**KANSAS.** There was a...I can't explain it...a thing. They reached inside my brain and took something out I didn't even know they

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<sup>1</sup> From this point forward, words that James "loses" are marked with an asterisk. The loss should sound like someone saying the word while inhaling, like language is disintegrating in the air, separating out into consonants and vowels and floating away. James's reaction to this process should be the same every time. Kansas notices the effect of the loss, but not the sound of the sucking itself.

knew was there. *Dispossession*. And now they want me to do it to everybody else.

**JAMES.** Dispo-what?

**KANSAS.** It's something Analysts and Ideal Citizens do...I guess.

**JAMES.** You're not an Ideal Citizen.

**KANSAS.** I *know*, James.

**JAMES.** I mean, you break laws every other hour. You can't be an Ideal Citizen.

**KANSAS.** I didn't say I was one, but who says I couldn't be if I wanted to? You act like I'm a Criminal or something.

**JAMES.** You are.

**KANSAS.** Like you're one to talk.

**JAMES.** Look, it's not a, uh, um—

**KANSAS.** Insult? Yes, it is.

**JAMES.** Do I have time to kill him first?

**KANSAS.** What? No.

**JAMES.** I want to kill him before we go.

**KANSAS.** Why?

**JAMES.** Because I do.

**KANSAS.** Because you're *programmed* to.

**JAMES.** Because he took me away from my mother.

**KANSAS.** That's not why you want to kill him. That's why you don't like him, but it's not why you want to kill him.

**JAMES.** Oh, *OK*, so why do I want to kill him?

**KANSAS.** Because the Realm wants you to want to kill him: *Population Control, Scarcity of Resources*. Wake up, James. It doesn't make sense to want to do what the Realm tells you to.

**JAMES.** Well, I say it doesn't make sense to think that Mind Review found a way around your community all of a sudden.

**KANSAS.** Immunity. And I didn't say it made sense. But that doesn't mean they didn't do it.

**JAMES.** Why didn't they do it to me?

**KANSAS.** They didn't need to. You're not immune.

**JAMES.** What about the noises?

**KANSAS.** No one cares about the noises.

**JAMES.** Thanks.

**KANSAS.** They just don't have anything to do with *desire*.

**JAMES.** I've been to Mind Review too.

**KANSAS.** Only once. And you never made it on the air.

**JAMES.** Well, you can't smell.

**KANSAS.** But I can fly.

*(Silence. JAMES sort of smiles.)*

**KANSAS.** What?

**JAMES.** Nothing.

**KANSAS.** You don't believe me.

**JAMES.** I didn't say that.

**KANSAS.** I can't believe you don't believe me.

**JAMES.** I *do* believe you.

**KANSAS.** That's right...People can't fly, real mothers are a Fantasy, and there's nothing you can do about Losing Language besides accept the fact that you're just like everyone else.

*(Silence.)*

**KANSAS.** I didn't mean that.

*(No response.)*

**KANSAS.** You're not like everyone else.

*(JAMES stares at KANSAS and makes the uncanny doorbell noise, followed by the noise of a telephone, a sousaphone, and a vacuum cleaner.)*

**KANSAS.** I know. *(Beat.)* Are you coming?

**JAMES.** No.

**KANSAS.** This is your chance to find your real mother.

**JAMES.** That's not going to get me to go with you.

**KANSAS.** Fine.

**JAMES.** Beg.

**KANSAS.** What?

**JAMES.** Beg me.

**KANSAS.** Please.

**JAMES.** Oh, come on.

**KANSAS.** Pleaseohpleaseohpleaseohpleaseohpleaseohpleaseoh-  
pleaseohpleaseohpleaseohpleaseohplease.

**JAMES.** OK.

*(JAMES looks under his bed and pulls out a large plastic package composed of many smaller plastic packages.)*

**KANSAS.** What's that?

**JAMES.** Water.

**KANSAS.** Where'd you get it?

**JAMES.** Every week, I stole an extra set of Rations after school.

**KANSAS.** You said you didn't have any water.

**JAMES.** Not *with* me.

**KANSAS.** You're a Criminal.

**JAMES.** I know.

**KANSAS.** I'm proud of you.

**JAMES.** Thanks.

*(They head out.)*

**JAMES.** You know, we still have no sense of direction.

**KANSAS.** Maybe *away* is a direction after all.

### Scene 9

*(LAURA alone again. Another hiding place.)*

**LAURA.** We didn't stop stealing once water went where water went because there was nothing they could take that they didn't already. Take. We not knowing of course that that wasn't the right question at all, that the question was what could they give that they did not already. Give. A gift. Dispossession. And so we watched and waited—he did, I did—while those we loved turned into other things we never thought they'd ever be. Until he decided, your father, that there was nothing left to do but choose between two choices.

I left before they found a way to take what was left of my words. And even though I wasn't given any choice except choicelessness, I found one of my own. *(Gesturing to her environment.)* Where there was light and longer life and even air itself again—a world where I could wander all I wanted, on the ground and in my mind.

I gave you. To him. Knowing you'd have enough to survive, while I would wonder, wander, try to find what water I could, what water was left, wait for a time when I might take you back, when you would have the chance to choose. Yourself. Because now I know there's no worse thirst than for knowledge just outside your reach.

*(LAURA looks around, listens to the air, exits quickly.)*

### Scene 10

*(Another cramped cave space. More eyes peer out from the darkness. KANSAS surfaces first. JAMES follows.)*

**KANSAS.** We're back where we started.

**JAMES.** No, we're not.

**KANSAS.** We don't know how to navigate.

**JAMES.** How to what?

**KANSAS.** We're going in circles, James.

**JAMES.** It's not the same. It looks the same, but it's not the same.

*(JAMES touches the walls of the tunnel, then sniffs the air.)*

**JAMES.** The walls are soft. And they...smell weird.

**KANSAS.** Weird how?

**JAMES.** I can't explain it.

**KANSAS.** Try.

**JAMES.** I don't know...like they have more...new things inside them. Like *(Makes the noise of the walls).*<sup>2</sup>

**KANSAS.** Give me a *word*, James.

**JAMES.** I don't have a word.

**KANSAS.** Maybe we should dig our own tunnel instead of following the ones that are already here.

**JAMES.** Maybe we should go above ground.

**KANSAS.** That's the first place they'll look.

**JAMES.** What—are you scared\*?

*(There is the sudden sound of air being sucked out of the tunnel. The word "scared" is pulled from JAMES's mouth.)*

**KANSAS.** Why would I be scared?

**JAMES.** Why would you be what?

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<sup>2</sup> The noises that James makes from this point forward are not traditionally human-like noises, as much as they are sound effects—just like the telephone and vacuum cleaner from earlier scenes, except now James is filling in noises where words used to sit. The noises may or may not have any logical connection to the words they represent.

**KANSAS.** Scared.

**JAMES.** What's cared?

**KANSAS.** *Scared.*

**JAMES.** What?

**KANSAS.** You just *said* it.

**JAMES.** I didn't say it because I couldn't say it because I don't know what it means.

*(KANSAS doesn't know how to respond. She reaches for JAMES's backpack.)*

**JAMES.** What are you doing?

**KANSAS.** I'm thirsty.

**JAMES.** You *had* your Rations.

**KANSAS.** We're not in the Realm anymore.

**JAMES.** It's not that. We could run out.

**KANSAS.** I'd rather die satisfied.

**JAMES.** Die how?

**KANSAS.** Content.

**JAMES.** What?

**KANSAS.** *Happy.* I'd rather die happy.

**JAMES.** No, you wouldn't.

*(KANSAS reaches for the backpack again.)*

**JAMES.** Stop it.

**KANSAS.** Give it over.

**JAMES.** No.

**KANSAS.** Yes.

**JAMES.** No.

*(The two start struggling for the backpack. JAMES pulls it away, just as whispers begin in the darkness: a round of Mind Review slogans: (Don't Be Afraid to Dream! The First Step You Take is the Furthest! Only You are Accountable...) mixed with eerie distortions of sounds JAMES made earlier in the play. These sounds should be markedly different from JAMES's noises. JAMES doesn't notice, but KANSAS does.)*

**KANSAS.** Um. James.

**JAMES.** Um. Kansas.

**KANSAS.** No. Seriously. Stop it.

**JAMES.** Stop what?

**KANSAS.** That, that, *that*—

**JAMES.** *What?*

**KANSAS.** *(Loud.)* I know you know how to make noises or whatever. Doorbells and all that. But that's not funny.

*(The whispers stop suddenly.)*

**JAMES.** Are you OK?

**KANSAS.** *Just give me some water.*

*(JAMES hands KANSAS the water. She takes it, gulps it down.)*

**JAMES.** I wasn't making any noises.

**KANSAS.** That was everything I get for today?

**JAMES.** Today and tomorrow.

**KANSAS.** Oh.

**JAMES.** It's OK. You can have some of mine.

**KANSAS.** I don't want some of yours.

**JAMES.** Well, you can have it anyway.

*(JAMES offers KANSAS his hand. She looks at it and stands on her own without it.)*

**JAMES.** You want to tell me what just happened?

**KANSAS.** No.

**JAMES.** Are you sure?

**KANSAS.** I just want to go.

**JAMES.** Where are we going?

**KANSAS.** Away.

### Scene 11

*(Dark space. Eyes everywhere. KANSAS and JAMES tunnel. Days pass. We witness pieces of their conversation over time with days passing between. It should be clear that the conversation excerpts are not part of the same discussion.)*

**KANSAS.** You think she really exists—your real mother?

**JAMES.** What do you mean?

**KANSAS.** Do you ever wonder if you invented her? Like you didn't like your mother-mother—your Realm mother—so you just made another up?

**JAMES.** If that was true, I would've made up another father.

**KANSAS.** Yeah. Right. *(Beat.)* What if we don't find her?

**JAMES.** We will.

**KANSAS.** What if we find her and it's not enough.

**JAMES.** Enough what?

**KANSAS.** I don't know how you have so much confidence sometimes.

**JAMES.** So much what?

**KANSAS.** Never mind.

*(Beat.)*

**KANSAS.** What was she like.

**JAMES.** She was like *(the noise of a soft heartbeat.)*

**KANSAS.** She was like *(a bad imitation of a heartbeat)*?

**JAMES.** Not exactly.

**KANSAS.** Do you know you're using more sounds now than you used to?

**JAMES.** What do you mean?

**KANSAS.** Less Language. More sounds.

**JAMES.** Sounds *are* Lllllann\*.

*(The word "Language" is pulled from JAMES's mouth before he can say it. He coughs.)*

**KANSAS.** Language.

**JAMES.** What?

**KANSAS.** Never mind.

*(Days pass.)*

**KANSAS.** Don't you ever get thirsty?

**JAMES.** A little\*.

**KANSAS.** But not a lot.

**JAMES.** Define a lot.

**KANSAS.** Like you can't think about anything else until you get what you want.

**JAMES.** No. Not like that.

**KANSAS.** Isn't there anything you want a lot?

**JAMES.** To kill my father.

**KANSAS.** Do you even know what that means? To kill someone?

**JAMES.** It means they leave\* and never come back.

**KANSAS.** It's not as simple as that.

**JAMES.** Yes, it is.

**KANSAS.** Isn't there anything you want a lot that you're *not* supposed to want?

**JAMES.** To find my mother.

**KANSAS.** Which one do you want more?

**JAMES.** Why do I have to want one more\*.

**KANSAS.** You don't. But everyone *says* you have to want one more. Never both. And never neither. Never what's unknown, or unbelievable.

**JAMES.** You Know How the Realm feels about Fantasy.

**KANSAS.** Right. The biggest cliché I've ever heard.

**JAMES.** The biggest what?

**KANSAS.** Cliché. Like all the stuff they say at Mind Review. The first step you take is the furthest! The future is yours.

**JAMES.** Only You Are Accountable!

**KANSAS.** Right.

*(Beat.)*

**KANSAS.** Wait. Are you serious?

*(Days pass.)*

**JAMES.** Do you really fly?

**KANSAS.** I told you I did.

**JAMES.** But do you *really*? I mean *really* fly?

**KANSAS.** That doesn't mean anything. *Really* fly. Do you *really* have a mother somewhere?

**JAMES.** Tell me. I tell you everything\*.

**KANSAS.** You don't *know* everything.

**JAMES.** I tell you *(the noise of everything.)*

**KANSAS.** What?

**JAMES.** Have you done it before?

**KANSAS.** That doesn't matter.

**JAMES.** It does to me.

**KANSAS.** Why? So you can say, *I knew it. Here's one thing Kansas thinks she can do, but she can't?* So you can know that I've tried a million times—pictured it over and over in my head—and every time I try, I'm so sure I can, but I can't, and I fall? (*Not to JAMES anymore:*) It's like all I can see is this big sky that doesn't exist anymore. And I have all these words to describe it, but there's no IT. There's only words. And even if there was an IT, even if I could fly, I'd have to decide where to go and that's impossible because there isn't anywhere to go and I need help and I don't have it and all I have instead are these words that suffocate me.

*(JAMES stares at her.)*

**KANSAS.** Don't look at me like that. It's not like you didn't know it already anyway.

*(JAMES still stares.)*

**KANSAS.** *What are you staring at?*

**JAMES.** (*Apologetic—he knows it was a big deal.*) I didn't get what you just said.

**KANSAS.** Just once I wish you'd understand me without my having to explain it over and over.

**JAMES.** I do understand you.

**KANSAS.** You just said you didn't.

**JAMES.** I said I didn't understand what you said, not that I don't understand *you*.

## Scene 12

*(LAURA alone. Another hiding place.)*

**LAURA.** The Realm cannot keep me from talking. Every word I utter reminds me of another, and so piece by piece, I piece my mind together again, move from half to whole, grow back what's gone

away. The only thing that *could* keep me from talking is the fact that everything I say, once I say it, cannot be taken back. It lives in the air. I have given birth to an idea. And if that idea as it lives out loud in my words doesn't match the idea as it lives inside of my mind, there is nothing to be done. I've said it. It is real. It is real because it is heard. I remember this to try to keep quiet sometimes. Because what if I've said the wrong thing—given the air what it won't want or need? The word floats around, has no home. We are supposed to be careful what we give life to. We do not waste. We always save. A person. A word. The air itself. But people die. And words float on forever. A birth without a death. A sigh released into the sky. A message.

Before I left, I whispered as many words as I could—*ameliorate* and *obfuscate* and *dandelion* and *nursery rhyme*, *orangutan* and *orchestra* and *beautiful* and *love*—so you'd know there were so many reasons to want to be alive. Words made from memory for the mind: belief in what is and isn't there at once.

*(LAURA stops talking and pricks her ears to the air. There is panic in her eyes. MR. FATHER enters. They share a look across the space. LAURA runs off. MR. FATHER follows.)*

### Scene 13

*(JAMES and KANSAS traveling through a tunnel. Eyes, eyes everywhere.)*

**KANSAS.** Let's stop for a second. I need some water.

*(JAMES looks at KANSAS for a moment, evaluates whether she really needs it.)*

**KANSAS.** I said—

**JAMES.** I heard what you *(noise of said)*.

*(JAMES looks in his backpack. He looks up at KANSAS.)*

**KANSAS.** What?

**JAMES.** Have you been going through my *(noise of bag)?*

**KANSAS.** No. Why?

*(JAMES flips the backpack upside down. It's empty.)*

**JAMES.** Someone has.

**KANSAS.** Well, it wasn't me.

**JAMES.** Oh, well it must be the people who live in the *walls*.

**KANSAS.** If this is your way to keep my Rations away from me—

**JAMES.** You don't *have* any Rations. You've been drinking mine.

*(Whispered slogans begin behind, in front, on either side: (The Future is Yours. Open Your Eyes! There are No Shortcuts. Life Rewards Action), along with distorted JAMES-like sound effects. They seep into the space, weave themselves toward KANSAS. They are not coming from JAMES.)*

**KANSAS.** Stop it.

*(JAMES stares.)*

**KANSAS.** It's not funny.

*(The whispers and distorted effects grow louder, faster.)*

**KANSAS.** Why are you doing this to me?

**JAMES.** I'm not doing anything.

**KANSAS.** I thought you were my friend.

**JAMES.** Your what?

**KANSAS.** My *friend*.

*(The noises stop abruptly.)*

**JAMES.** What's friend?

*(KANSAS yanks JAMES's backpack away and sees that it is indeed empty.)*

**JAMES.** It's really *(noise of gone.)*

**KANSAS.** Then I'll get some more.

**JAMES.** *(Noise of how)?*

**KANSAS.** I'll go above ground.

**JAMES.** And then what? Fly?

*(Silence.)*

**JAMES.** I didn't mean that.

**KANSAS.** It's too late. You already said it.

**JAMES.** I take it back.

**KANSAS.** You can't take it back.

**JAMES.** You say lots of things you try to take back.

**KANSAS.** Everything you say, once you say it, can't be taken back. It's real.

**JAMES.** It's not real. Words aren't made of anything. Open Your Eyes!

*(Silence.)*

**KANSAS.** Something's happening to you. You're really confused.

**JAMES.** Con- *(noise of -fused)?*

**KANSAS.** And you won't stop making noises when I ask you over and over to stop.

**JAMES.** I'm not making noises.

**KANSAS.** You just did.

**JAMES.** But I wasn't before.

**KANSAS.** Then who was?

**JAMES.** I don't know.

*(KANSAS says nothing.)*

**JAMES.** Maybe we should split up.

**KANSAS.** What?

**JAMES.** If you keep hearing the noises, then you'll know it isn't me.

**KANSAS.** I don't think that's a good idea.

**JAMES.** We need to find water anyway. It might be easier *(noise of apart.)*

**KANSAS.** I can't leave you alone.

**JAMES.** Why?

**KANSAS.** How will we find each other again?

**JAMES.** We'll come back here.

**KANSAS.** When?

**JAMES.** As soon as we can.

*(Beat. They're both kind of bluffing.)*

**KANSAS.** OK.

**JAMES.** OK?

**KANSAS.** Yeah.

*(KANSAS won't be out-bluffed. She turns.)*

**JAMES.** Bye.

**KANSAS.** Bye.

**JAMES.** Be careful.

**KANSAS.** You too.

**JAMES.** See you soon.

**KANSAS.** Yeah.

*(She starts to leave. She pauses.)*

**KANSAS.** Friend. It's an important word. Try really hard to remember.

*(She exits. JAMES stands alone. He starts to move after her. He stops. He takes his dandelions out of the backpack. He smells them.)*

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**Scene 14**

*(KANSAS and JAMES tunnel, each in different spheres. JAMES smells the air as he goes, like he's tracking something. During this, LAURA appears in a separate sphere. She stops to catch her breath, as though she has been running.)*

**LAURA.** They cannot hold on to all of the voices at once, so they keep coming, trying to take from the air what I leave there. Words from a world now gone. Ameliorate and obfuscate and dandelion and nursery rhyme, orangutan and orchestra and beautiful and love. Telephone and sousaphone and ice cream cone and flying saucer, madness stranger savior aspirin photograph contamination, argument and confident and circumvent and vacuum cleaner, doorbell mailbox crickets traffic sandwiches asparagus, chocolate bee buzz tree top door knock moonbeam car horn sunspot airborne.

*(KANSAS arrives at the end of her tunnel. She reaches out and feels the walls. She draws her hand back and licks her palm. Simultaneously, JAMES reaches the top of his tunnel. There is an opening or hatch above. He takes one last long smell and pushes the hatch open. Bright light showers him. A second later, a huge gush of water flows into KANSAS's tunnel. It is monstrous. It washes over her and pushes her back down her path.)*

**Scene 15**

*(JAMES stands in bright sunlight. He has surfaced above ground into the whole, big, sunlit sky. He finds a small patch of dandelions, kneels, and smells them. He takes the flowers he's been carrying, and "plants" them in the ground next to the others. He sees that the flowers are made up of tiny wings. The wings fly right off the stems of the flowers and rise slowly in a cloud. Or maybe it's just the smell that rises and flies. JAMES follows the flowers' scent with his nose. He closes his eyes and smells. He smells the sun. The air. He smells and smells.)*

*(MR. FATHER enters, looks at his son, grabs him and takes him off.)*

**Scene 16**

*(KANSAS alone. She is dripping wet. But her throat is dry. She wheezes and coughs. MS. ANALYST enters with a gallon jug of water.)*

**MS. ANALYST.** Welcome to Stage Three! The Final Stage. Now the choosing begins!

**KANSAS.** Where am I?

**MS. ANALYST.** The Realm.

**KANSAS.** I left the Realm.

**MS. ANALYST.** You can't leave the Realm, silly. The Realm is everywhere. We let you take a little trip during the Second Stage, so you can see firsthand what it's like when someone Receives. Like your friend. And you can make a better choice.

**KANSAS.** Where's James?

**MS. ANALYST.** He's in good hands.

**KANSAS.** Whose hands?

**MS. ANALYST.** Just look at you. You're—

**KANSAS.** *(Not a word she's used to using.)* Wet.

**MS. ANALYST.** You came across our Water Reserves.

**KANSAS.** There are no water reserves. There's a shortage.

**MS. ANALYST.** That's why we have reserves!

*(KANSAS starts coughing.)*

**MS. ANALYST.** Poor thing. You're thirsty.

*(MS. ANALYST starts pouring the water down KANSAS's throat. She fills her mouth so full of water that KANSAS chokes.)*

**MS. ANALYST.** If you weren't immune to the air underground, you'd feel it less. The thirst. Or you'd learn to live with it.

*(KANSAS tries to swallow everything she can through her coughing.)*

**MS. ANALYST.** Now...Your choice. Give? Or Receive?

**KANSAS.** There has to be another option.

**MS. ANALYST.** Nope. Sorry.

**KANSAS.** What if I refuse to choose.

**MS. ANALYST.** Refusing is choosing Receiving.

**KANSAS.** What about the outside?

**MS. ANALYST.** What about it.

**KANSAS.** That's where I was going.

**MS. ANALYST.** That's where you've always *wanted* to go, but you never made it all the way above ground. Fingers don't count. We've been watching.

**KANSAS.** Just because I've never done it doesn't mean I never will.

**MS. ANALYST.** You'd have to find a way to survive outside without water.

**KANSAS.** I could find water.

(MS. ANALYST *laughs.*)

**MS. ANALYST.** How?

**KANSAS.** However *you* find it.

**MS. ANALYST.** And how do I find it?

**KANSAS.** There must be other people who live outside.

**MS. ANALYST.** I wouldn't call it *living*.

**KANSAS.** So there are.

**MS. ANALYST.** It's not a mystery. They're the last of the Criminals. Some people call them the "Revolters."

**KANSAS.** Where is James?

**MS. ANALYST.** He doesn't have a choice to make. Like you. Those who respond to the air Receive automatically over time.

*(A special on JAMES here, poised and perfect, cutting food into teeny, tiny bites, measuring water into microscopic vials.)*

**KANSAS.** What is that?

**MS. ANALYST.** What do you think?

*(JAMES cuts and measures. He starts to slow down, until he stands sadly and looks at the food. Why is he doing this? He doesn't know. Then, there is the sudden sound of air being sucked out. JAMES's lungs collapse, like he's had the wind knocked out of him. He starts measuring and cutting the food again—even faster and faster and more and more meticulously.)*

**MS. ANALYST.** I thought I made it clear before your little trip. There's a direct link between Language and desire.

**KANSAS.** That's not really him.

**MS. ANALYST.** No?

**KANSAS.** No.

**MS. ANALYST.** Are you sure?

**KANSAS.** You're lying.

**MS. ANALYST.** You know how the Realm feels about Fantasy.

**KANSAS.** You're still lying.

**MS. ANALYST.** We know you want things, Kansas. But your pragmatism traps you. Self-doubt. The flying fantasy is a manifestation of that.

**KANSAS.** It's not a...

**MS. ANALYST.** Manifestation?

**KANSAS.** No. Yes. *No.* How do you know those words?

**MS. ANALYST.** We're more alike than you know.

**KANSAS.** It's not a manifestation of anything.

**MS. ANALYST.** If you want us to stop you from wanting, we will...

**KANSAS.** Do you hear me?!

**MS. ANALYST.** ...but we'd rather you use your gifts to the advantage of all—find a way to channel your desire. It's a win-win situation!

**KANSAS.** It's REAL.

**MS. ANALYST.** *(Dark.) Saying something over and over again doesn't make it real.*

**KANSAS.** *(Strong & slow.)* Then why do you say things over and over again.

*(MS. ANALYST laughs. Whispered slogans sound in the air as if they're responding to KANSAS, trying to unnerve her. These are like the sounds KANSAS heard earlier—the ones she thought JAMES was making. She now realizes he wasn't.)*

**WHISPERS.** You always have a choice.

Life is full of choices.

There are no shortcuts.

The future is yours.

Give or Receive...

**KANSAS.** Where is James?

*(Quick shift to LAURA, still reciting words.)*

**LAURA.** History and chemistry and memory and chamomile—

*(MR. FATHER enters. LAURA starts to run. Then she sees MR. FATHER has JAMES with him.)*

**MR. FATHER.** *(Not cruel...they knew each other once.)* Give them up. And you can keep him.

**LAURA.** The words aren't hurting anyone out here.

**MR. FATHER.** Language travels.

**LAURA.** If you try to take it away from me, it's only going to go somewhere else.

**MR. FATHER.** Exactly.

**LAURA.** Is that really him?

## **THIS PLAY IS NOT OVER!**

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