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Playscripts, Inc.
325 W. 38th Street, Suite 305
New York, NY 10018

Phone: 1-866-NEW-PLAY (639-7529)
Email: info@playscripts.com
Web: www.playscripts.com

Cast of Characters

EDDIE MARKS (20)

ALLISON MARKS, the mother (forties)

FRANK MARKS, the father (forties)

LAURA MARKS, the sister (23)

DEBBIE TURRELL, the aunt (thirties)

RICHARD STEELE, the scientist (thirties)

Setting

The Marks' living room

Time

The present

Acknowledgments

All production groups performing this play are required to include the following credits on the title page of every program:

House of Wonder was the 1999 winner of the Kennedy Center ACT Festival, Region II, Best Play.

HOUSE OF WONDER

by Rinne Groff

Scene 1

(The Marks' Living Room.)

(EDDIE MARKS, a young man of twenty, wearing a knit wool cap, lies sleeping in a big bed. He is hooked up to some sort of medical contraption. EDDIE, his bed, and the medical equipment have taken over the living room, pushing the sofa, coffee table, and TV into a cramped space. On the coffee table: stacks of pamphlets and an unopened box of doughnuts. The front door stands open. There is a podium facing out to the audience in a space that is somehow separate from the living room.)

(RICHARD STEELE crosses to the podium. His legs are apparently atrophied, and he walks supporting himself on two metal crutches. He addresses the audience.)

RICHARD. What I want is for you to listen. You may take notes if you wish. However, frankly, it is my belief, if I'm allowed to have beliefs, that if I present an idea in such a way that it will be meaningful to you in the future, something will crystallize in your brain and you'll remember it. My hope, if I'm allowed to have hope, is that you will be inspired to go beyond what's being done here and in the lab section, or to put it more succinctly, that you will become scientists. I assume that you're coming out of high school with some exposure to the laws of motion, electro-magnetic theory, simple chemical equations, maybe geometrical optics. But the validity of that assumption will become apparent soon enough. Now. How to develop a methodology in which to investigate the phenomena of basic physics?

(A Bright Flash of Light.)

ALLISON. *(Calling from off-stage:)* Who's down there? Who let you in?

(RICHARD *turns to the voice.*)

RICHARD. I'm sorry. The door was wide open.

(RICHARD *walks into the living room, using his crutches.*)

(ALLISON MARKS *enters.*)

RICHARD. You must be Allison Marks.

ALLISON. I thought you were those girls again.

RICHARD. Girls?

ALLISON. From the high school. They're obsessed with Eddie. I don't know who is raising those girls, but they have it in their minds to... (*Noticing the box:*) Doughnuts.

RICHARD. I picked them up.

ALLISON. That's sweet. I shouldn't. I get the sugar powder all over my face. Will you have one?

RICHARD. I'm fine.

ALLISON. A man of strength. Did Debbie say you're first today?

RICHARD. Debbie?

ALLISON. My sister. Ms. Turrell.

RICHARD. Is she in charge?

ALLISON. She said she was bringing some out-of-towner. Tucson? (*Taking a doughnut:*) You'll tell me if I get powder on my face.

RICHARD. I will. But I'm from Palo Alto.

ALLISON. Huh. We thought Tucson was far.

RICHARD. I'm Richard Steele. I wrote to Eddie.

ALLISON. Huh. Debbie handles all that mail now.

RICHARD. Eddie wrote me back.

ALLISON. That must've been a while ago.

RICHARD. Is it a problem?

ALLISON. Nah, I doubt it. But Eddie's still sleeping. He sleeps so much now. Used to be I'd wake up and he'd already be watching TV. He's gotten weaker these last few weeks. It's almost like when he first came home from the hospital.

RICHARD. Are you worried?

ALLISON. A mother's always worried.

RICHARD. Does Eddie see a doctor?

ALLISON. Oh, you can't trust what they say. They had him pegged for a goner years ago. Here. I'm supposed to give you this.

(ALLISON hands him a pamphlet.)

(He looks at it.)

ALLISON. There's a lot of visitors, I'm pretty sure, today. Debbie will know for certain. She says today's an auspicious day.

RICHARD. What does that mean?

ALLISON. Auspicious means like good luck. *(Pause.)* Eddie fixed someone like you last year. Car accident.

RICHARD. I'm no accident.

ALLISON. Excuse me?

RICHARD. I was born this way.

ALLISON. Huh. Well, he did heal someone like you. Crutches. You'll probably walk right out of here on your own two legs. Is that what you want?

(EDDIE stirs in bed.)

ALLISON. Good morning, sunshine.

EDDIE. *(Waking up:)* Morning, Mrs. Marks.

(From a shoe box kept under the bed, ALLISON removes several prescription bottles and begins administering doses of medication to EDDIE. He swallows them all down.)

RICHARD. Mrs. Marks?

ALLISON. Ever since the accident, he's been real polite.

(DEBBIE TURRELL comes in the front door. She wears a smart outfit and carries a purse.)

(She sees RICHARD and his crutches.)

DEBBIE. Who's this?

ALLISON. That's, uh, Richard?

RICHARD. Richard Steele.

DEBBIE. I have people coming in from Tucson.

ALLISON. We know. You have a five? I'm going to run to the bank. *(To EDDIE:)* Did you have sweet dreams?

EDDIE. No dreams. Good morning, Ms. Turrell.

DEBBIE. Morning, EDDIE. *(Holding the cash out to ALLISON:)* Here's a twenty.

ALLISON. Twenty?

DEBBIE. It's going to be a busy day.

ALLISON. But it's only been three weeks since the last session. There can't be twenty people.

DEBBIE. Trust me.

(As ALLISON takes the money, DEBBIE speaks to her privately.)

DEBBIE. You can't add extra clients willy-nilly without telling me. I have press coming. You've got sugar powder on your face.

(ALLISON rubs her cheek with spit.)

ALLISON. Those girls were here again this morning.

DEBBIE. They want to be near Eddie. Who can blame them?

ALLISON. They want more than that.

(ALLISON removes a pile of lacy panties from a cupboard and shows DEBBIE.)

ALLISON. They leave these on the stoop. And I've found worse. Who is raising these girls?

(DEBBIE takes the panties.)

DEBBIE. I'll talk to them.

ALLISON. Mom's going to run to the bank, Eddie.

EDDIE. Are there a lot of people today?

ALLISON. You don't have to see anyone unless you feel up to it.

DEBBIE. You feel up to it, don't you?

EDDIE. May I have a doughnut?

RICHARD. Jelly?

EDDIE. We'll save those for when Mrs. Marks gets back.

(ALLISON kisses EDDIE and leaves.)

(RICHARD picks up a chocolate doughnut and grabs his crutches.)

DEBBIE. Let me help you.

RICHARD. I've got it. You get pretty good with these things over the course of a lifetime.

DEBBIE. It must be awful.

(DEBBIE takes the doughnut from RICHARD and brings it to EDDIE. RICHARD remains standing.)

EDDIE. Have you always had those crutches?

RICHARD. Not these here, specifically, but you got the idea.

(FRANK MARKS comes in wearing work clothes.)

EDDIE. Morning, Mr. Marks.

FRANK. Morning, son.

DEBBIE. Allison went to the bank. We have lots of folks lined up at my house.

(FRANK goes over to EDDIE and wipes chocolate off his mouth.)

FRANK. You want milk?

EDDIE. That would be super.

DEBBIE. I got it, Frank.

(DEBBIE goes into the kitchen.)

FRANK. Tell your mom I'll be back normal for lunch.

(FRANK leaves through the front door.)

(DEBBIE returns with the milk.)

DEBBIE. Where did Frank...? I need to talk to him. No one is taking this day seriously.

(EDDIE has fallen asleep again.)

(RICHARD looks at the pamphlet.)

DEBBIE. You said you were from...?

RICHARD. I didn't. California.

DEBBIE. Great. How did you hear about us?

RICHARD. I grew up in Franklin County.

DEBBIE. *(Disappointed:)* Oh.

RICHARD. Local news covered the shooting, when was that? A few years back now.

DEBBIE. *(Whispering:)* Seven.

RICHARD. It was one of those "Don't keep firearms in the home" kinds of stories, covering the robbery and...

DEBBIE. *(Whispering:)* Exactly seven years today.

RICHARD. Why are you whispering?

DEBBIE. They don't mention that event much in this house. You can imagine how Frank feels.

RICHARD. No, I guess I can't.

DEBBIE. I mean, Frank's the one bought that gun, no matter who fires it.

RICHARD. The robbers got the gun out of Eddie's hands?

DEBBIE. He was hardly a teenager, no match for seasoned hoodlums.

RICHARD. Trying to defend the homestead.

DEBBIE. A little angel.

RICHARD. Yeah. My aunt sent me a newspaper clipping about the burn victim.

DEBBIE. David Marcus. That was our first.

RICHARD. He's a Franklin kid.

DEBBIE. Eddie wiped that man's skin smooth as a baby's. You're here on a very auspicious day.

RICHARD. What are the auspices?

DEBBIE. It's auspicious. Seven years to the day. I'm surprised it hasn't gotten more notice in the press.

RICHARD. Well, in Franklin...

DEBBIE. I mean, nationally.

RICHARD. In Franklin, they say Eddie's health has taken a turn for the worse. They say he's going to die.

DEBBIE. And then?

RICHARD. And then, they don't say much after that. A bullet through his skull, they say it's amazing he made it this long.

DEBBIE. And what do you say?

RICHARD. I'm reserving judgment.

DEBBIE. What's your profession, Mr. Steele?

RICHARD. My profession?

DEBBIE. What do you do?

RICHARD. For a living?

DEBBIE. I'm asking what you are, Mr. Steele.

RICHARD. I'm an entertainer.

DEBBIE. And you're here to be healed?

(RICHARD gestures to his crutches as if it's self-evident.)

DEBBIE. I'm asking if you believe.

RICHARD. I believe what I see.

DEBBIE. *(Shaking her head:)* California of all places.

RICHARD. What does that mean?

DEBBIE. I watch the news: children stealing cars, killing each other. How can you bear witness to all that and refuse to see the signs? *(Quoting the pamphlet from memory:)* This world is in labor. It throbs with the pangs of birth, and that birth is the coming of the savior...

RICHARD. *(Overlapping:)* The savior?

DEBBIE. ...into this house of wonder.

RICHARD. And then?

DEBBIE. Read the pamphlet. Signs and wonders. The moment Eddie dies, and it won't be like death at all, more like a birth, he's going to rise.

RICHARD. Into the air?

DEBBIE. Upward to the heavens, the songs of angels all around him.

RICHARD. There's going to be music?

DEBBIE. And rewards for the faithful.

RICHARD. Monetary rewards?

DEBBIE. We can't even imagine the many forms paradise will come in.

RICHARD. And Eddie says he's the savior?

DEBBIE. Wouldn't that be tacky?

RICHARD. So he doesn't claim...

DEBBIE. Do you like to gamble?

RICHARD. If I know the odds.

DEBBIE. Lay your money on a revelation before the end of the day. But first off, there's going to be lots of healing taking place, you mark my words.

RICHARD. Eddie's going to reveal something before the end of the day?

DEBBIE. Are you here to be saved?

(Pause.)

RICHARD. Yes.

(EDDIE wakes up.)

(ALLISON comes in the front door, brandishing a stack of twenty crisp one-dollar bills.)

ALLISON. Look what I've got.

EDDIE. Ready to roll, Ms. Turrell.

DEBBIE. I'll get the Tucson girl.

ALLISON. Can't we at least sit and have some doughnuts before we get going?

DEBBIE. Not today, Allison. *(Re: RICHARD:)* He's going to have to leave.

RICHARD. I'd like to stay and watch if that's all right.

ALLISON. We don't do that.

RICHARD. No?

ALLISON. But you can wait outside with me if you like.

(DEBBIE hesitates.)

EDDIE. Ready to roll.

DEBBIE. Yes, Eddie's right. Time's a-wasting.

ALLISON. You just gather your strength, sweetheart.

DEBBIE. And we've no time to waste.

(DEBBIE rushes out the front door.)

Scene 2

(RICHARD crosses to the podium.)

RICHARD. I trust that you are finding the work in your lab sections with my esteemed colleagues to be exciting and fruitful. It occurred to me that before we delve any deeper into the subject matter at hand, we, or that is, I, should take a step back. What does it mean to be a scientist in this day and age? *(Pause:)* When I was a boy, I was intrigued by rocks. I had a collection of rocks that I kept in a shoe box. Every day, I would take the shoe box from under the bed and carefully lay out all the rocks according to that day's schema: color, size, beauty, etc. I sat there with these rocks spread before me, and I pondered the connection between the rocks I had collected and the earth where I had picked them up. That's when I became a scientist. A scientist strives to find the links between things which are superficially disparate, and that's the struggle which I, in a primitive way, was engaged in. Those rocks did contain information about the earth where I had found them, and about the earth in general. Those rocks could even teach me about the moon beyond my reach, even about the stars beyond my gaze. But how much could those rocks teach me about the universe in its entirety? That's a question. I'm asking you. That's the question before us today as scientists. Can the truths of one thing unlock the secrets of all things? I want to say, yes. Trouble is I've yet to discover that "one thing."

(A Bright Flash of Light.)

(ALLISON rushes to Eddie's side, with DEBBIE close on her heels. RICHARD, too, enters the scene.)

(EDDIE lies quietly in bed. His woolen cap is off his head, revealing a shaved scalp and grotesque scars. There is a large wound right in the center of his forehead.)

(ALLISON places the cap back on Eddie's head. She grabs a pill from under the bed, sticks it in his mouth.)

ALLISON. Eddie.

DEBBIE. That was completely auspicious.

ALLISON. Eddie, can you hear me?

DEBBIE. Did you see that lady from the Tribune, writing it all down? She knew she had a scoop.

EDDIE. *(Coming to:)* Did the girl get the dollar?

DEBBIE. The dollar, he's asking about the dollar.

ALLISON. Of course, sweetie. Debbie gave it to her.

DEBBIE. Eddie, you healed that girl. She recognized her mother for the first time in twelve years, the woman said. She didn't care about the dollar.

EDDIE. Everyone who comes to see me gets a dollar. Shouldn't she know that by now?

DEBBIE. They got so much more, Eddie. They weren't thinking about any dollar. They want to give you a thousand dollars.

EDDIE. In case it doesn't stick. At least, a dollar.

RICHARD. I'll find the girl. I'll make sure she gets it.

EDDIE. It has to be a new dollar. Clean from the bank, Mr. Steele.

(ALLISON hands RICHARD a dollar bill, and he leaves.)

(EDDIE leans back and falls asleep. DEBBIE and ALLISON watch him.)

DEBBIE. Wasn't that something?

ALLISON. He's healed people before.

DEBBIE. Never that fast. That was something.

ALLISON. I didn't understand what was supposed to be wrong with her anyway. She seemed a little high-strung was all, shaking like that.

DEBBIE. Seven years to the day. Eddie's been getting sicker for weeks now, but never like this. He can barely hold his head up.

ALLISON. You say that with happiness.

DEBBIE. You should be proud of what your son is.

ALLISON. Dying? *(Stopping herself:)* I know. I am. Proud of everything he is.

DEBBIE. Eddie took all that violence and hatred that's in this world, he took it into his body, and he turned it into love.

ALLISON. That's pretty, Debbie.

DEBBIE. It's not me.

ALLISON. I know. It's in the pamphlet.

DEBBIE. It's Eddie moving through me. He took the bullets of those vicious hoodlums and melted them into plowshares.

ALLISON. They were a bunch of local kids trying to steal a TV.

DEBBIE. You have to think in metaphors.

(FRANK comes in the front door, sweaty in his work clothes.)

(The women quiet.)

ALLISON. Hi.

FRANK. Hi.

ALLISON. *(To DEBBIE:)* I've got to get on lunch.

(FRANK heads into the house.)

DEBBIE. I'll bring the next pilgrim over in...

ALLISON. Pilgrim?

DEBBIE. That's what the Tribune lady called them.

ALLISON. It seems so...

DEBBIE. Important, I know. I like it, too. I'll see you in half an hour.

ALLISON. Or so.

(ALLISON goes into the kitchen.)

(DEBBIE heads for the door, then stops. She makes sure she is alone.)

DEBBIE. *(Quietly:)* Eddie?

(No response.)

(DEBBIE walks softly over to the bed. She places her hands on Eddie's head. Gently, she removes his wool cap. She runs her finger along the scars.)

(EDDIE stirs a bit in bed.)

DEBBIE. It's me, hon.

(DEBBIE continues touching Eddie's scalp, exploring his scars with her hands.)

(She presses her mouth against his head. EDDIE's eyes open.)

DEBBIE. I can feel it coming. It's coming so soon.

(EDDIE closes his eyes.)

(DEBBIE lies on the bed, pressing her body against his. She kisses his head.)

DEBBIE. Your breath feels so soft. It feels so weak. It's like God's breath: you can hardly feel it, but you feel it. I was crawling around this earth like a rat before I felt your breath so close like this. Your breath made me stand, like a woman stands. Because I was finally a part of something. You made this family something. Oh, Eddie, it's an auspicious day. And

people have got to see, see it like we saw it. Jesus rose, and nobody but a few people even knew to go and look in that tomb. If it wasn't for them, no one would have noticed how He'd risen. But they did. They noticed. And they documented it. A few folks, they knew to document it, and they got the word out. If no one'd documented it, we'd still be walking around in a desert, eating with our hands, killing with our hands. I had to make sure and get it documented. That's how grace comes. Getting the word out. Tell me your old aunt did okay. Whisper it in my ear. Just once. Tell me how it's okay, and how good it's going to be real soon.

(DEBBIE hears a noise off-stage. She puts Eddie's cap back on him and gets up.)

(She sees RICHARD standing in the front doorway. He holds the dollar bill.)

DEBBIE. How long have you been standing there?

RICHARD. I couldn't find the Tucson people. *(Pause.)* I thought you might want the dollar back.

(FRANK enters from inside the house.)

DEBBIE. Frank, I was just taking Mr. Steele over to my house. He'll wait with the others.

(DEBBIE walks out the front door, taking RICHARD with her.)

(FRANK straightens Eddie's cap. EDDIE seems to be sleeping.)

(ALLISON comes in. She looks at FRANK.)

ALLISON. It'll be a little while still. It's defrosting.

(FRANK nods.)

ALLISON. Sorry it's late. It's been hectic.

FRANK. More than usual?

ALLISON. Hard to say usual.

(FRANK nods.)

ALLISON. Are you just going to stand there and wait?

(FRANK nods.)

ALLISON. You can speak about it, you know, say words. Even if two people know something, know the exact same thing, sometimes it's nice to say words about it.

(Silence.)

ALLISON. *(Laughing gently:)* Remember how you and Eddie used to go at it before? Boy, oh boy, all that yelling. I used to wish my house was quiet back then. That time he used your wrenches to work on his bike and left it all outside when it started raining. This little ten year old kid, denying and denying and then crying. You let him have it until he went out there in the lightning and cleaned it all up. He was so mad. What did he used to say? Bull-something. Bullfrogs. "Bullfrogs," he said, "you don't love me." Bullfrogs. It could have been worse. It got worse, but it took years. Years to get to bullcrap. Bullshit. Eat shit. Fuck off. Fuck you. Fuck you.

(Silence.)

ALLISON. I'll check on the ground beef.

(ALLISON exits.)

(FRANK remains watching EDDIE for a while.)

Scene 3

(LAURA, a 24 year old woman, wearing a tight mini-skirt and carrying a purse, enters and stands in the open front door.)

(She looks around the room, makes sure no one's there. She approaches Eddie's bed.)

LAURA. Jesus.

(She pulls off his wool cap and leans over and kisses his head.)

LAURA. Poor bastard.

(EDDIE's eyes open.)

(They look at each other.)

LAURA. Hey, there.

EDDIE. Hello.

LAURA. You recognize me?

EDDIE. Yes.

LAURA. Have you missed me?

EDDIE. Yes.

LAURA. I bet. You really recognize me?

EDDIE. Yes.

LAURA. Your head is gross.

EDDIE. I've never seen it.

LAURA. Never?

EDDIE. I've touched it.

LAURA. It's gross. You want to see it?

EDDIE. What do you mean?

LAURA. Do you want to look at it?

EDDIE. I don't know.

LAURA. Seven years and you've never seen it and you don't know. Are you on drugs?

EDDIE. Yes.

LAURA. They give you drugs?

EDDIE. Some.

LAURA. Figures. *(Touching his medical equipment:)* I dig your high-tech stuff.

EDDIE. Mrs. Marks doesn't want me to see it.

LAURA. Mrs. Marks? You mean Mom?

EDDIE. She thinks it would upset me.

(LAURA takes a mirror out of her purse and offers it to him.)

LAURA. She doesn't have to know.

EDDIE. She'd find out.

LAURA. Who's going to tell her?

EDDIE. Knock it off.

LAURA. Fine.

(LAURA looks at herself in the mirror.)

LAURA. I look old. You sure you recognize me?

EDDIE. Yes.

LAURA. *(Flashing the mirror at him:)* Quick, close your eyes or you'll see.

EDDIE. Stop it, Ms. Marks.

LAURA. Ms. Marks? Hey, I got married.

EDDIE. You did not.

(She shows him a ring on her hand.)

EDDIE. We didn't know you were married.

LAURA. Well, I'm not. Divorced.

EDDIE. Sorry.

(LAURA gets up and looks around the house. She picks up the collection jar.)

LAURA. You got some sweet racket running here.

(EDDIE doesn't answer.)

LAURA. All you got to do is live through a bullet to the brain, and you're set for life. Maybe I'll try it. Tried everything else.

EDDIE. We don't abuse our situation like that. Mr. Marks is still working.

LAURA. Guilt.

EDDIE. He's been real nice.

LAURA. Oh, yeah.

EDDIE. Don't say it like that.

LAURA. Like what?

EDDIE. He's been real nice, and Mrs. Marks is happy, too.

LAURA. And you? Happy?

EDDIE. Yes.

LAURA. Eddie, you're hooked up to a god damn machine.

EDDIE. It doesn't hurt. Do you know I help people?

LAURA. That's what they say in town, Mr. Savior. I figured it was another of Aunt Deb's get-rich-quick jobs.

EDDIE. Ms. Turrell doesn't care about cash anymore. She wants to help people, and I'm the way.

LAURA. You?

EDDIE. Yes.

LAURA. You can't even get your homework in on time.

EDDIE. I'm not in school anymore.

LAURA. They suspend you for smoking pot?

EDDIE. Things have changed.

LAURA. Oh, yeah?

EDDIE. Things are good.

LAURA. Mom wrote me a letter said you're dying.

(Pause.)

EDDIE. I thought we didn't know where you were.

LAURA. She found me Eddie. It wasn't that hard. She found me because of how you're dying. Finally. I mean, Christ, when I got the letter I didn't know you were alive enough to be dying.

EDDIE. Did you write her back?

LAURA. No. No, I got nothing to say to either of them.

EDDIE. But that's why you came?

LAURA. Parked in front of the McGovern's lawn.

EDDIE. The McGoverns moved.

LAURA. Whatever. It's still a good spot to scope out all the crap going on in here.

EDDIE. It's not cr... It's not what you said.

LAURA. Are you dying?

EDDIE. What does it look like?

LAURA. You're a screwed-up kid.

EDDIE. I'm not a kid anymore.

LAURA. What, you stopped masturbating over that Brooke Shields poster?

EDDIE. Don't talk that way.

LAURA. I saw those high school chicks peeking in the window this morning, all longing to be saved, if you know what I mean. You do it with real live girls now?

EDDIE. That's inappropriate.

LAURA. Right here in this bed? Do they like your "medical equipment?"

EDDIE. I can heal people with my touch.

LAURA. Men tell me that, too, Eddie. It's just a line.

EDDIE. You're so full of it.

DEBBIE. Am not.

EDDIE. Yes, you are, Ms. Marks. Full of anger.

LAURA. Quit calling me Ms. You make me sound like a secretary.

EDDIE. Then quit talking vulgar.

LAURA. Vulgar like screwing?

EDDIE. Ms. Marks.

LAURA. Blow jobs?

EDDIE. Ms. Marks.

LAURA. You are still such a little snot nose.

EDDIE. You haven't changed that much either.

LAURA. You are speaking to a divorced woman. I've been through a world of change.

EDDIE. Was he nice?

LAURA. He was a good fuck.

EDDIE. Laura.

LAURA. Ah hah. So you don't *have* to say Ms., Mr. all the time. Faker.

EDDIE. Nothing's that simple. Nothing's just one thing.

(Silence.)

LAURA. What are you doing?

EDDIE. Healing people. What about you?

LAURA. I wish. How do you do it?

EDDIE. It happens through me. I don't do anything.

(Pause. LAURA studies him.)

LAURA. I still cannot tell if you are completely full of shit or not.

EDDIE. How can I convince you?

LAURA. You want to heal me?

EDDIE. More than anything. *(Pause.)* When did you leave?

LAURA. You know when I left.

EDDIE. When I came back from the hospital, you were gone.

LAURA. That's when I left.

EDDIE. When?

LAURA. Right then. Right when that guy killed you.

EDDIE. He didn't kill me.

LAURA. He shot you in the head and blood all over the place.

EDDIE. That boy's still in jail.

LAURA. And Mom screaming her lungs out at Dad about a gun in the house: I told you, I begged you.

EDDIE. The gun's gone now.

LAURA. How the hell aren't you dead?

EDDIE. I don't know. Nobody knows.

LAURA. Are you normal?

EDDIE. Except for how I heal people.

LAURA. Do you get erections?

EDDIE. Ms. Marks.

LAURA. Laura.

EDDIE. Laura.

LAURA. Answer me that and I swear I won't so much as talk about my period for the rest of the time I'm here.

EDDIE. No.

LAURA. Not even if you stroke it?

EDDIE. Laura.

LAURA. Jesus, I'm sorry.

EDDIE. She said I was dying?

LAURA. Yeah.

EDDIE. I feel it. More tired mostly. This is the first time I've been awake for this long in a month.

LAURA. I must be good for your health. Either that or you're dreaming.

EDDIE. I never dream anymore.

LAURA. You're dreaming now.

EDDIE. I'm not.

LAURA. Sure, it's only a dream.

(LAURA stands up. She puts the cap back on his head.)

LAURA. It's good to see you, Eddie, but your head really is gross. You should check it out sometime.

EDDIE. Don't leave.

LAURA. Who says I'm leaving?

EDDIE. Are you here to cause trouble?

LAURA. Is that what you want?

EDDIE. Are you?

(LAURA looks up and sees RICHARD standing in the open front door. He holds a pair of panties in his hands.)

LAURA. Truth is, I haven't decided yet. *(To RICHARD:)* Shhhh. Eddie's sleeping.

(EDDIE closes his eyes.)

(LAURA walks to the front door.)

LAURA. *(Indicating the panties:)* Those yours, mister?

RICHARD. I found them on the stoop.

LAURA. More booty for the savior.

RICHARD. Are you a pilgrim?

LAURA. A pilgrim? Nah, I'm an Indian. Are you a pilgrim?

RICHARD. Are you here to be healed by Eddie?

LAURA. Oh. Yeah, I'm a pilgrim. *(Sticking out her hand:)* You can call me, "Ms."

(LAURA shakes hands with RICHARD, blows a kiss to EDDIE, and leaves through the front door.)

(RICHARD remains in the doorway with the panties in his hand.)

Scene 4

(EDDIE sleeps. RICHARD goes to the bed and sets the underwear down.)

(He removes Eddie's cap and examines his head, studying his scars, noting where the bullet entered.)

(He whips a small pad out of his pocket and jots down some notes.)

ALLISON. *(Calling from off-stage:)* You want sugar, no sugar?

RICHARD. *(Turning to the voice:)* Whatever you're having.

(RICHARD quickly places the cap back on Eddie's head and puts his notepad away.)

ALLISON. *(Off-stage:)* I have it both ways.

RICHARD. No sugar. *(Changing his mind:)* Sugar.

(ALLISON enters with two glasses of iced tea.)

ALLISON. I thought you'd say that.

RICHARD. I seem like a "Sugar?"

ALLISON. You seem like a "No sugar. Sugar."

(ALLISON hands him a glass. They clink cheers.)

(ALLISON notices the underwear on the bed.)

ALLISON. They must've been in here again. Who is raising those girls?

(ALLISON stashes the underwear away in a cupboard.)

ALLISON. Too bad you couldn't find those Tucson people.

RICHARD. Yeah.

ALLISON. Where could they have got to?

(RICHARD shrugs.)

RICHARD. You're holding that glass in your left hand.

ALLISON. Is that bad luck?

RICHARD. No. But you're left-handed?

ALLISON. It just wound up here.

(She switches the glass to her right hand.)

ALLISON. You?

RICHARD. No. Eddie?

ALLISON. Yeah, left-handed.

RICHARD. That explains it.

ALLISON. What?

RICHARD. It's nothing.

ALLISON. Tell me what.

RICHARD. Most people, no matter which hand they write with, carry language in the front left part of their brain. The path of the bullet...Does it offend you to talk about this?

(She speaks gently as she traces the path of the bullet on Richard's head.)

ALLISON. It entered through his forehead, right here in the middle. It went straight on the inside of his brain. And it stopped somewhere around here.

(ALLISON winds up touching Richard's head just above the ear. Her hand lingers a few moments in Richard's hair before she pulls it away.)

RICHARD. Approximately one third of those people with left-handed proclivities carry language on the right side of their

brains. That might explain why Eddie maintains language capabilities.

ALLISON. Huh. What's a proclivity?

(EDDIE's eyes open. Neither ALLISON nor RICHARD notices. EDDIE watches them.)

RICHARD. Left-handed people, I should have said.

ALLISON. And it means that's why he can still talk?

RICHARD. Right. Or that's one viable explanation.

ALLISON. It's amazing the stuff people figure out these days.

RICHARD. Yes, it is.

ALLISON. But they can't figure out everything.

RICHARD. That's the truth.

ALLISON. Anyway, lucky left. Lucky for us.

RICHARD. Indeed.

ALLISON. You have a real scientific mind.

RICHARD. What do you mean? I...

ALLISON. Don't be offended. I was meaning to give you a compliment. No one's ever been so curious like you.

RICHARD. Really?

ALLISON. You have so many words. Most folks just get what they came for and get out. They don't say so much.

RICHARD. The process interests me.

ALLISON. I see that.

RICHARD. I appreciate you letting me be in here when Eddie's not with a pilgrim.

ALLISON. I like the company. Frank's working. Debbie's in and out, in and out. Eddie sleeps so much now.

RICHARD. I wish I could sit in when it actually happens.

ALLISON. You'll get your turn.

RICHARD. You've never seen it?

ALLISON. I don't need healing.

RICHARD. You're not curious?

ALLISON. Eddie doesn't let us. And I'm not sure I'd want to.

RICHARD. Miracles don't entice you?

ALLISON. Sure. I don't like to think about them though. If you're in the room with it, you've got to think about it too much.

RICHARD. But maybe you could explain it. Might change the world.

ALLISON. How?

RICHARD. To understand how something works.

ALLISON. It already works. It doesn't work any more if you understand it.

RICHARD. But you understand it.

ALLISON. Men are funny. When Eddie was little...I remember when he was just born, and I would look at him, and I would think he is a miracle. That smell of baby. It's a miracle. I never tried to understand that one. This one's the same.

RICHARD. But it's not the same.

ALLISON. Why not?

RICHARD. Because every parent thinks his baby is beautiful.

ALLISON. Huh. You have kids?

RICHARD. No.

ALLISON. Your way of looking at it, I have to think about what it means, and my sister says what it means is that I have to lose him, lose my baby, and be happy about it because some angels are going to sing or some lights flash or something. So I'd just as soon it's not your kind of miracle. My way, the thing

of how he heals people is just beautiful, like he's always been beautiful. That's all.

RICHARD. Your husband's the same, I guess.

ALLISON. What makes you say that?

RICHARD. He doesn't seem interested in what Eddie does.

ALLISON. Men are funny, I told you. 'Specially men with their boys. Do you believe in psychology?

RICHARD. What do you mean, believe?

ALLISON. My daughter used to give me all these books about explaining why men go at it with their sons. All that yelling and hitting.

RICHARD. You have a daughter?

ALLISON. Not anymore. I mean, she's older now.

RICHARD. Frank used to yell?

ALLISON. You'd never guess it to look at him now. And Eddie had a mean temper, too.

RICHARD. People change.

ALLISON. You never got married?

RICHARD. No.

ALLISON. Ever fall in love?

RICHARD. Not the way you described.

ALLISON. What did I described?

RICHARD. About looking at a person, looking and only thinking of how beautiful that person is. Seeing the miracle of a person.

ALLISON. Huh. That was about Eddie. That's a mother's love.

RICHARD. It's very compelling, that love.

(Silence. They look at each other.)

(DEBBIE sticks her head in the door.)

DEBBIE. Chop chop, lunch break's over.

ALLISON. No, he's still sleeping.

EDDIE. I'm not.

ALLISON. Eddie.

EDDIE. I woke up. Ready to roll, Ms. Turrell.

ALLISON. (*Nervously:*) How long have you been awake, sunshine?

DEBBIE. I'll bring over the next pilgrim. He's a plumber and he's real nervous.

(DEBBIE exits.)

EDDIE. You two sure have a lot to talk about.

ALLISON. You were eavesdropping on us?

EDDIE. I wouldn't call it eavesdropping.

ALLISON. It's very rude, Eddie.

EDDIE. I'm sorry. And I'm sorry I can't invite you to pull up a chair and watch the healing, Mr. Steele. I know miracles "entice" you, but you're going to have to wait your turn like everyone else.

Scene 5

(RICHARD crosses to the podium.)

RICHARD. The universe on the subatomic level is a terrifying thing. Terrifying for the same reason that anything is terrifying: because it is uncertain. It lacks certainty. You can't know both where something is and how fast it's moving at the same time. It might be helpful if we look at a specific example. Why are atoms so big? By big, I mean, why all this space in an atom? Who can tell me that? And it's not the nucleus. If we took an atom and blew it up to the size of this room—imagine

a single atom as big as this whole room—the nucleus would be the size of the dust on your shirt. And the rest is space. So why all this space? Why don't the electrons sit right on the nucleus, stay close? Why? Any responses? Because then we'd know where they are. And we can't. We can't know. We must remain uncertain. That's the law. And as physicist Niels Bohr said, if that doesn't shock and horrify you, you haven't understood it.

(Bright Flash of Light.)

(ALLISON and DEBBIE rush in. RICHARD hangs back.)

(ALLISON gives EDDIE drugs from the shoe box.)

EDDIE. I couldn't make him see.

ALLISON. Sweetheart, it's okay.

EDDIE. He wouldn't.

DEBBIE. Sometimes these things manifest later.

EDDIE. Did he get the dollar?

DEBBIE. I handed it to him myself. Allison, we're running low. You'd better go to the bank.

ALLISON. Bank's closed. The others can wait 'til next month.

DEBBIE. There is no next month.

EDDIE. I tried, but he wouldn't see.

ALLISON. Shhh, baby.

EDDIE. I'm going to be sick.

ALLISON. Sick how?

(EDDIE nods. ALLISON grabs a garbage pail, and EDDIE leans over it, still. Pause.)

EDDIE. *(Looking down in the pail:)* Ms. Turrell, what did you mean about next month?

DEBBIE. What, what did I say?

RICHARD. You said, "There is no next month."

DEBBIE. Did I? I don't think so.

(EDDIE leans back in bed and closes his eyes.)

RICHARD. You did.

(Pause.)

DEBBIE. *(Pointing at RICHARD:)* There is something you should know about this man.

ALLISON. Can't it wait? Eddie needs to rest.

DEBBIE. This man is using you.

RICHARD. Me using?

EDDIE. Mrs. Marks?

ALLISON. See? Now hush.

EDDIE. Mrs. Marks?

ALLISON. I'm right here, baby.

EDDIE. I don't feel so good.

ALLISON. You want some juice?

EDDIE. Maybe.

ALLISON. I'll be back in one shake.

(ALLISON goes into the kitchen.)

DEBBIE. You want me to rub your back, Eddie?

EDDIE. No thank you.

(EDDIE rolls over on his side, away from them.)

(DEBBIE waits a beat. EDDIE doesn't move.)

DEBBIE. *(Addressing RICHARD:)* You are a liar. I know where you come from.

RICHARD. I find it odd that you're throwing accusations around. I located the girl from "Tucson."

DEBBIE. I don't know what you're talking about.

RICHARD. You paid those people a hundred bucks for two hours of faking it; you must have quite a budget.

DEBBIE. Leave this house.

RICHARD. The girl and her “mother” confessed. You staged that whole thing for the press.

DEBBIE. You don’t understand our mission.

RICHARD. Explain it to me. Explain it to your sister.

DEBBIE. Don’t threaten me. I know why you’re here.

RICHARD. I am here to find the truth.

DEBBIE. The truth is that Eddie heals people. And that is a miracle. And before he dies, as many people as humanly possible ought to know that and let that touch their lives, so that when he rises... You want us all to stay in the dark ages for the rest of eternity, wandering around down here, all alone? What if I finally got one of those morons from the Tribune to actually agree to come here, and what if it was one of those times, one in seven, that it didn’t work, that Eddie couldn’t help them? What if that’s what those newspaper people wrote about? Is that the truth? Is that the Truth? Making it into a big joke? In the media, no less. Because if that’s the truth you’re looking for, Mr. Professor, that is nothing but a lie. I am being totally honest, and you, you...

(DEBBIE grabs Richard’s crutches out of his hands.)

(He falls to the ground.)

RICHARD. What are you doing?

DEBBIE. Come get them.

(EDDIE’s eyes open. He turns to watch RICHARD and DEBBIE.)

(RICHARD reaches for his crutches. DEBBIE moves away.)

DEBBIE. Get up. Get up. I know it’s an act. You’re no more crippled than I am.

RICHARD. Don’t do this.

DEBBIE. You're a fraud.

(RICHARD chases DEBBIE on his hands.)

RICHARD. I'm not the one who paid people off. No matter how you justify it.

DEBBIE. Walk. You come from a university. You can walk.

RICHARD. *(Diving at DEBBIE:)* You crazy bitch.

(ALLISON comes in with a glass.)

(EDDIE vomits noisily into the pail.)

(ALLISON screams.)

(DEBBIE drops the crutches and rushes to Eddie's side.)

DEBBIE. This is it.

ALLISON. Call Dr. Zimmer.

(RICHARD crawls to his crutches.)

DEBBIE. We discussed this, Allison.

ALLISON. What?

DEBBIE. No more doctors.

ALLISON. God damn it, Debbie, please.

DEBBIE. Eddie knows it's time.

RICHARD. I'll call.

ALLISON. Number's on the refrigerator.

(RICHARD exits into the kitchen.)

DEBBIE. That man...

ALLISON. Not now, Debbie.

DEBBIE. There's something you've got to know.

(ALLISON tries to get EDDIE to drink some juice. He retches.)

ALLISON. Oh, sweetie.

DEBBIE. It's happening. It's happening.

ALLISON. Quiet. Everybody quiet.

(EDDIE retches and retches, but nothing comes out.)

ALLISON. Oh, God.

DEBBIE. Calling that doctor shows a lack of faith. Have faith.

ALLISON. I have faith. I have faith.

(EDDIE stops retching and collapses back on the bed, eyes closed.)

(Silence.)

(RICHARD enters from the kitchen.)

RICHARD. The doctor's on his way.

ALLISON. I'd like to be alone with Eddie now.

DEBBIE. Allison.

ALLISON. I'd like to be alone with my son.

(RICHARD walks to the door. He waits there for DEBBIE.)

DEBBIE. Don't do anything stupid, Allison. You can't fight destiny.

ALLISON. I'll keep that in mind.

(DEBBIE turns and breezes past RICHARD who follows.)

(ALLISON and EDDIE are alone.)

(ALLISON sits on the bed. She cradles EDDIE like a little boy.)

ALLISON. Eddie. Eddie, can you hear me?

(EDDIE opens his eyes.)

EDDIE. Yes, Mrs. Marks.

ALLISON. Mrs. Marks. You call me Mrs. Marks, but you know I'm your mamma, right?

EDDIE. I know you're the best woman in the whole world.

ALLISON. Eddie, I'm going to ask you something now. Do you remember a time when you couldn't heal people?

EDDIE. I could always do it. Even if I didn't always know I could.

ALLISON. Something happened that changed you, something big. Do you remember that?

EDDIE. You mean the bullet?

ALLISON. You remember.

EDDIE. A knife cutting through all my body at exactly the same time. I was in two parts.

ALLISON. My baby.

EDDIE. The boys ran off, but Mr. Marks was here. And you. You were crying but also yelling. You tried to push my two parts back together.

ALLISON. That was seven years ago today.

EDDIE. I know.

ALLISON. Am I going to lose you tonight?

EDDIE. You'll never lose me.

ALLISON. Do you know what's going to happen? Because I want to know.

EDDIE. How many more dollar bills do we have?

(ALLISON reaches in her pocket and counts the bills.)

ALLISON. Seven.

EDDIE. Then we can still get some work done. That's all I know for sure. And you want Mr. Steele up and walking before the day is over, don't you?

ALLISON. I suppose.

EDDIE. I thought so. Go call Ms. Turrell back. She has something she needs to tell you.

Scene 6

(LAURA comes in the front door.)

LAURA. I've figured it out.

EDDIE. What?

LAURA. It's time to hit the road.

EDDIE. Ms. Marks.

LAURA. We've been through this.

EDDIE. Laura.

(LAURA unhooks the medical contraption from his arm.)

EDDIE. Don't.

LAURA. Mom's going to be back from Debbie's any second.

EDDIE. *(Holding onto his medical equipment:)* I need this.

LAURA. Bullfrogs. They want you dead, Eddie. That's what they're all waiting for.

EDDIE. That's what you figured out?

LAURA. Yeah.

EDDIE. Everybody dies sometime.

LAURA. You could live with me.

EDDIE. Where?

LAURA. With me.

EDDIE. You're not making any sense.

LAURA. With me. With me. That's sense. Away from here.

EDDIE. This is our home.

LAURA. This is a hell-hole. You can't heal this place, Eddie. I know Aunt Deb's telling you how it's possible, and you want to believe that. Who wouldn't? But sometimes, too much has

happened, too much, and the only thing to do is give up and get out.

EDDIE. You already tried that, and it didn't do you much good.

(LAURA slaps EDDIE hard.)

LAURA. Shit. Shit, I'm sorry. Look, I'm sorry. I'm not saying I'm the smartest girl in the world. But I'm smarter than you. And you know that. And I know for a fact that leaving with me is your last chance.

EDDIE. Chance for what?

LAURA. I'm saving your life here.

EDDIE. I don't need to be saved.

LAURA. Everybody needs...

EDDIE. *(Interrupting:)* I save others.

(Pause.)

LAURA. Well, excuse me.

EDDIE. I don't mean to hurt your feelings.

LAURA. No, no. It's no big thing.

EDDIE. Laura.

LAURA. You're the friggin' messiah, right? You do what you want.

EDDIE. I never said I was the messiah.

LAURA. Savior, whatever those stupid pamphlets say. God damn pilgrims.

EDDIE. I never said anything.

LAURA. So deny it.

EDDIE. What?

LAURA. Say, I'm no savior or nothing.

EDDIE. What difference does it make what I say?

LAURA. You like the attention.

EDDIE. You're being ridiculous.

LAURA. You eat it up.

EDDIE. You're jealous.

LAURA. Hog.

(FRANK comes in the front door, sweaty in work clothes.)

(LAURA leaps up.)

FRANK. Laura.

LAURA. Good memory.

FRANK. Where have you been?

LAURA. Me? I've been sitting here with Eddie.

FRANK. I mean, all this time, seven years.

LAURA. I know what you meant, Dad. It's called sarcasm.

(She pulls a gun out of her purse.)

(FRANK stops in his tracks.)

LAURA. Remember this?

EDDIE. Where did you get that?

FRANK. That's the gun?

LAURA. Eddie remembers it. Real well.

EDDIE. You took it.

FRANK. I want it out of this house.

LAURA. I thought you'd want it back.

FRANK. I promised your mother.

LAURA. Haven't you missed it? What's a man without his gun?

FRANK. What do you want from me, Laura?

LAURA. I don't want anything. I came to give something.

(She points the gun at FRANK.)

EDDIE. Ms. Marks, stop it.

LAURA. Don't tell me what to do.

EDDIE. This is not the way to save anyone.

LAURA. It's the way to save me. *(To FRANK:)* Are you afraid?

FRANK. Put it away, Laura.

LAURA. Scared of guns?

EDDIE. Put it away.

LAURA. "I'll teach you to use this thing if it kills me."

(She cocks the gun.)

LAURA. "Wimp. Sissy. I've got a Sissy Mary for a son."

EDDIE. Don't do this.

LAURA. You sure taught him, Dad. He wasn't scared of guns no more.

FRANK. Laura, no.

EDDIE. Please stop.

LAURA. Don't you see? This is what has to happen.

(She pulls the trigger.)

(FRANK throws his hands in front of his face.)

(The gun isn't loaded. No bang.)

FRANK. *(Falling to his knees:)* Oh, Christ.

LAURA. You don't think I'm dumb enough to bring a loaded gun into the house.

(LAURA throws the gun at FRANK.)

LAURA. What did you want from us? Yelling all the time. What did you want us to be?

EDDIE. He knows now.

LAURA. He doesn't. No one knows a god damn thing.

(She runs out the front door.)

(Silence.)

(FRANK is still on the ground.)

EDDIE. Mr. Marks, are you all right?

(FRANK pulls himself up slowly.)

EDDIE. You're all right.

FRANK. How long has she been back?

EDDIE. She's leaving.

FRANK. Oh.

EDDIE. She wants me to leave with her.

FRANK. Oh.

EDDIE. I won't.

FRANK. Why the hell not? *(Pause:)* You think you'd die?
(Pause:) Or you think we'd die?

(Silence.)

FRANK. Does your mom know?

EDDIE. No.

FRANK. Where's she at?

EDDIE. Not here.

FRANK. What do you mean?

EDDIE. She's not here.

(Silence.)

FRANK. Do you mind if I sit with you until she comes home?

EDDIE. I don't mind.

(FRANK sits on the sofa.)

FRANK. Is this what your mom does? Sits here?

EDDIE. Sometimes.

FRANK. You must be pretty worn out.

EDDIE. Yeah.

FRANK. I'm pretty worn out myself.

EDDIE. You want to lie down?

FRANK. Nah.

EDDIE. Here.

(EDDIE indicates the bed.)

FRANK. Does your mom do that?

EDDIE. When she needs to rest.

(FRANK crosses to the bed. He sits on the edge.)

FRANK. Sometimes she needs to rest, huh?

EDDIE. Yes.

(FRANK lies down next to EDDIE.)

(They close their eyes.)

Scene 7

(RICHARD crosses to the podium.)

RICHARD. At the end of class today, my esteemed colleagues will be returning your mid-terms. I apologize that they are so late in coming. I've, frankly, been somewhat...overwhelmed. I've been pulled in several directions lately and for that, I apologize. *(Pause.)* Let's press on. *(Launching into lecture mode:)* There was a time when scientists believed that all living creatures were so glorious, so amazing in every way, that they

couldn't possibly be created from the same stuff that non-living things were made of.

But it turns out, that's an incorrect assumption. It's all the same stuff; it's all atoms, arranged in different combinations. We can take the processes, that seem so mysterious and complex in living physiological individuals, and break them down so that they occur in a test tube. There is nothing that any organism does, even a truly heroic organism like a cheetah or a human, that can't be reduced to atoms responding to the laws of physics.

(Bright Flash of Light.)

(ALLISON enters.)

ALLISON. I think the things you say are depressing.

(RICHARD turns to her.)

RICHARD. You do?

ALLISON. Don't you?

RICHARD. I think they're beautiful.

ALLISON. Atoms?

RICHARD. The laws of science.

ALLISON. Men are funny.

RICHARD. I didn't intend to lecture you.

ALLISON. Didn't you? Debbie told me about your proclivities.

RICHARD. Proclivities.

ALLISON. For deceiving people. She told me.

RICHARD. What did she tell you?

ALLISON. You lied.

RICHARD. No. No matter how she might frame it, I never lied to you directly.

ALLISON. I imagine you're right in saying that. A man like you probably watches his words pretty carefully.

RICHARD. And there's something you should know about what your sister is doing.

ALLISON. All your talk about science. You must think I'm stupid.

RICHARD. No.

ALLISON. Then you don't need to tell me anything about my sister.

RICHARD. You know?

ALLISON. If you're going to keep at talking about her, I'll know that you think I'm a dumb woman.

RICHARD. I think you're...you're too trusting.

ALLISON. Like how I trusted you?

RICHARD. I was trying to protect you, you and Eddie both.

ALLISON. Why is that?

RICHARD. Why?

ALLISON. Yeah, why? You always go around protecting strangers?

RICHARD. I feel people have a right to know the truth.

ALLISON. And that's the only reason?

RICHARD. Yes.

ALLISON. Are you faking?

RICHARD. Faking? (*Gesturing to his crutches:*) You mean about these?

ALLISON. Debbie says you are.

RICHARD. No.

ALLISON. Huh. All the stuff you guys are doing nowadays, and you can't make yourself walk?

RICHARD. I get around fine.

ALLISON. You don't care about walking?

RICHARD. I care about other things more.

ALLISON. Walking's how Frank and I got to know each other. He'd walk me home from school. When your legs are moving, your mouth starts talking about all sorts of plans.

RICHARD. And that's how you fell in love?

ALLISON. That's how I *saw* love. I saw it so clear. Young girls see love probably better than anyone because they're looking for it so hard. When Frank came over to meet my mom and dad, he brought doughnuts. Like you. And I caught him looking at me eating his doughnuts. His heart opened like a flower. For one second I looked straight into his mind, and I saw that in that second if he could have had his dream, all of forever would be him and me, me eating doughnuts and him watching. I saw his heart pressing out of his chest, flowering right there in our living room.

RICHARD. And it's always been like that?

ALLISON. Stuff happens in life, not always what you could imagine in a million years. But it's good to have something you can count on.

RICHARD. I thought I had that.

ALLISON. You said you never got married.

RICHARD. In my work, I thought.

ALLISON. Huh.

RICHARD. I want my turn with Eddie.

ALLISON. Why?

RICHARD. I don't know.

ALLISON. You want your turn?

RICHARD. I do. I want that.

ALLISON. You are so confused.

RICHARD. Will you allow me?

ALLISON. If you want to be healed, Richard, I will. I'll tell Debbie to shut up and everything. But I can't if you're going to poke at him like Debbie says you want to, writing everything down. There are people waiting who want his touch for real reasons.

(RICHARD touches Allison's hand.)

RICHARD. I have real reasons.

ALLISON. You'd better. It's always a bit sad for me when he heals people now. Specially now. Specially today. When the end is lurking. Sometimes I feel like I would rather have my son call me Mom again than to see him rise up with angels. Is that selfish?

RICHARD. You are not selfish.

ALLISON. Are you crying?

RICHARD. I have real reasons.

ALLISON. I said I'd take you to him. You'll get your turn.

RICHARD. Look at me. Look at me like when you were a girl and your whole life was before you.

(Silence. ALLISON closes her eyes.)

ALLISON. Don't say that.

RICHARD. From the first moment I heard your voice.

ALLISON. It doesn't matter.

RICHARD. It must.

ALLISON. I'm not a girl anymore.

RICHARD. But you see it.

ALLISON. I'm a mother.

RICHARD. All of forever.

ALLISON. My son is dying. There is no more forever.

RICHARD. You are not dying.

ALLISON. Stop it.

RICHARD. I can't.

ALLISON. It hurts.

RICHARD. Me, too.

ALLISON. My life is gone. Isn't it gone?

(He kisses her.)

ALLISON. What are you doing?

RICHARD. It's not gone. It's here. Me, too.

(They kiss.)

Scene 8

(EDDIE sleeps.)

(FRANK sits, with the gun resting in his lap.)

(FRANK rises. He walks up to EDDIE and removes Eddie's cap. He lines the gun up with Eddie's forehead wound and puts his fingers on the trigger.)

(He pulls the gun away and puts the cap back on Eddie's head.)

(He walks around the living room.)

(FRANK points the gun at the same spot in the center of his own forehead. He cocks the gun. Pause. He releases the hammer and pulls the gun away.)

(He points the gun at his heart and holds it there.)

(DEBBIE comes in the front door. She doesn't see FRANK.)

(FRANK points the gun at her and keeps it trained on her as she walks to the bed. She puts her hands on Eddie's head. FRANK cocks the gun. DEBBIE is about to take Eddie's cap off.)

(FRANK releases the hammer and hides the gun behind his back.)

FRANK. Hiya, Debbie.

DEBBIE. Jesus Christ, Frank, you scared the sense out of me.

FRANK. How're you doing?

DEBBIE. Busy. I've gathered the rest of the folks together. And a bunch of girls from the high school are going to come.

FRANK. Dr. Zimmer gave Eddie a sedative.

DEBBIE. Where's Allison?

FRANK. I don't know.

DEBBIE. Frank, I have tried to be patient with you and Allison both. I know today is difficult for you, but we're running out of time.

FRANK. I know the hour, Debbie, and I'm telling you I do not know where my wife is.

(DEBBIE grabs EDDIE and shakes him.)

DEBBIE. Eddie.

(EDDIE is listless.)

DEBBIE. Wake up.

FRANK. Leave him alone.

DEBBIE. Frank, this isn't about you.

(FRANK lifts the gun and points it at DEBBIE.)

FRANK. Debbie Turrell.

(She turns to him and sees the gun.)

DEBBIE. You are determined to give me a heart attack. Put that thing away.

FRANK. Thing? This thing made Eddie what he is today.

DEBBIE. That's the gun?

FRANK. The genuine article.

DEBBIE. Where did it come from?

FRANK. It was thrown in my face.

DEBBIE. Can I touch it?

FRANK. You like guns?

(She reaches to touch it, but then quickly pulls her hand away.)

DEBBIE. You saw it happen.

FRANK. With my own eyes.

DEBBIE. How did the murderers get a hold of it?

FRANK. Things happen differently from how you plan sometimes.

DEBBIE. You came in from the bedroom.

FRANK. Just in time. Just too late.

DEBBIE. I wish I would've seen it.

FRANK. We should've switched places.

DEBBIE. I've never held a gun before.

FRANK. There's nothing to it.

DEBBIE. But this one's holy.

FRANK. They're all holy. They decide life and death.

(FRANK stands behind her. He puts the gun in her hands.)

FRANK. It'll make a man out of you. *(Fake-shooting at different targets:)* Pow. Pow. Pow.

DEBBIE. Pow.

FRANK. You're getting the hang of it.

(He steps away. She continues.)

DEBBIE. Pow.

FRANK. You want to pull the trigger?

DEBBIE. I couldn't.

FRANK. It's safe.

DEBBIE. It's not loaded?

FRANK. Here. *(Pointing at his chest:)* Point it over here.

DEBBIE. Frank, this is creepy.

FRANK. It's rigged to make it smooth.

(DEBBIE points the gun at FRANK.)

(ALLISON comes in the front door.)

(DEBBIE spins around. She slips the gun in her purse.)

(EDDIE's eyes open.)

(FRANK looks at ALLISON.)

FRANK. We've been worried about you.

ALLISON. All of a sudden, you have words?

(RICHARD enters.)

FRANK. *(To ALLISON:)* Where have you been?

(ALLISON walks past FRANK and goes to EDDIE.)

ALLISON. How you feeling, sunshine?

EDDIE. Sleepy.

ALLISON. I brought Mr. Steele.

FRANK. We see that.

ALLISON. He's ready to be healed.

Scene 9

(ALLISON props EDDIE up on pillows.)

(RICHARD stands by the sofa with DEBBIE, before him, in a stand-off.)

DEBBIE. Do you want this to work or not?

ALLISON. Of course, we do.

DEBBIE. Just because today's an auspicious day doesn't mean we can neglect protocol.

(DEBBIE pulls the crutches from RICHARD's hands. He falls back onto the sofa.)

RICHARD. Hey.

ALLISON. She knows what she's doing.

DEBBIE. Metal interferes with the process. *(Holding out her hand:)* Do you have keys?

(He hands over keys.)

DEBBIE. Wallet?

RICHARD. There's no metal in my wallet.

DEBBIE. Wallet.

(RICHARD hands it over.)

DEBBIE. Take off your shoes.

RICHARD. I can't.

DEBBIE. Shoes.

RICHARD. I need a brace to hold my feet steady.

DEBBIE. Faker.

ALLISON. *(Kneeling down:)* I'll help.

(Together, they get his shoes off.)

DEBBIE. He's okay to go.

EDDIE. Ready to roll, Ms. Turrell.

(ALLISON *smiles at RICHARD.*)

ALLISON. I'll be just outside.

(*She kisses EDDIE on the cheek.*)

ALLISON. Take good care.

(*ALLISON leaves.*)

(*DEBBIE dims the lights. She places the crutches, keys, and wallet in a cabinet before exiting.*)

(*RICHARD and EDDIE sit in the dimly lit room.*)

(*Long silence.*)

(*EDDIE's eyes close.*)

(*RICHARD looks at him intently, expectantly.*)

(*The lights flicker.*)

(*Silence.*)

RICHARD. Eddie.

EDDIE. What, what is it?

RICHARD. Did I interrupt it?

EDDIE. Oh, sorry. No. I think I fell asleep.

RICHARD. What?

EDDIE. I'm getting so tired.

RICHARD. Are we doing this?

EDDIE. Yes.

(*Long silence.*)

(*The lights flicker.*)

EDDIE. I'm sorry. That light's distracting me. Does it bother you?

RICHARD. What?

EDDIE. Nothing. Forget it.

RICHARD. Should I be over there?

EDDIE. If you want to touch my head.

RICHARD. Is that what I'm supposed to do?

EDDIE. People like to.

RICHARD. I need my crutches.

EDDIE. Do the best you can.

(RICHARD slides himself off the couch and makes his way along the floor to Eddie's bed.)

(The lights flicker.)

RICHARD. Should I remove your cap?

EDDIE. You didn't ask the first time.

RICHARD. *(Stammering:)* I apologize about that. I wanted to examine the bullet entrance site. I was...

EDDIE. Go on, take it off.

(RICHARD removes Eddie's cap.)

(The light bulb flashes and goes out.)

(Darkness.)

EDDIE. I was afraid that was going to happen.

RICHARD. What was going to happen?

EDDIE. *(Calling off-stage:)* Ms. Turrell.

RICHARD. Did something happen?

EDDIE. Ms. Turrell.

(DEBBIE enters.)

DEBBIE. Who turned out the lights? Eddie, are you okay?

EDDIE. The bulb blew.

DEBBIE. Shoot. Well, we'll change it. Allison, you have the spare bulbs?

ALLISON. *(Entering:)* What? What happened to the lights?

DEBBIE. That's what I'm saying, where'd you put those extra bulbs I bought?

ALLISON. Huh.

EDDIE. Light some candles.

ALLISON. Candles we have.

(ALLISON and DEBBIE leave.)

EDDIE. It'll be one second, Mr. Steele. *(Pause.)* Mr. Steele?

RICHARD. I'm right here.

EDDIE. Did that frighten you?

RICHARD. It startled me, yes.

EDDIE. We'll get going soon.

(ALLISON enters with candles. She begins to light them around the bed.)

EDDIE. Thank you, Mrs. Marks.

ALLISON. How's it going?

EDDIE. We're just getting started.

ALLISON. Let us know if you need anything else.

(The candles light the area around the bed.)

(ALLISON leaves.)

EDDIE. You were going to touch my head.

(RICHARD pulls himself back up on the bed and places his hands on Eddie's scalp.)

EDDIE. You can touch the hole.

RICHARD. What?

EDDIE. The entrance site, like you said.

(RICHARD touches his finger to the wound in the center of Eddie's forehead.)

EDDIE. Do you want to kiss me?

RICHARD. Is that part of the process?

EDDIE. Most people want to.

(RICHARD leans in. He screams and rocks back.)

RICHARD. I'm on fire.

(He bangs out the flame that lit up the tail of his shirt.)

EDDIE. Are you okay?

RICHARD. Yeah. I caught on fire.

EDDIE. Be careful.

RICHARD. Okay. Okay.

EDDIE. Are you ready?

RICHARD. I'm supposed to kiss you?

EDDIE. Feel free.

(Pause. Once again, RICHARD leans in. He holds on to Eddie's face. He presses his lips against Eddie's wound.)

(He remains with his mouth against Eddie's forehead.)

EDDIE. Mr. Steele. *(Pause.)* Are you crying?

RICHARD. I can't do this.

EDDIE. It's already done.

RICHARD. *(Not hearing him:)* I don't want this.

EDDIE. You don't believe me?

RICHARD. I don't believe.

(RICHARD pushes himself back from EDDIE.)

(Pause.)

RICHARD. Do you know why I came to your house?

EDDIE. To be saved.

RICHARD. I came here to check you out. I'm a scientist. I'm a professor.

EDDIE. And you think I take advantage of people.

RICHARD. Not you.

EDDIE. Ms. Turrell.

RICHARD. Ms. Turrell takes advantage of you.

EDDIE. Did you know that she cares for the sicker ones for days, nursing them until they're strong enough to see me?

RICHARD. No.

EDDIE. She responds to every thank-you letter, every Christmas card.

RICHARD. Do you hate me?

EDDIE. I want you to leave this house.

RICHARD. Is that why you're healing me? You want to fix my legs for walking?

EDDIE. I'll be happy when you go, but nothing is just one thing.

RICHARD. You don't need to bother. I'll walk out the way I walked in.

EDDIE. If you prefer.

RICHARD. Eddie, my legs don't work.

EDDIE. That's why I healed you.

RICHARD. You actually believe you're a savior? You think you're going to rise up tonight, lights flashing...

EDDIE. I know, I know, songs of angels.

RICHARD. Do you?

EDDIE. Maybe.

RICHARD. Maybe.

EDDIE. It could be me. I'd say I'm a good candidate as far as those things go. I've been through a lot. I've suffered. Why not me?

RICHARD. Why not on the seven year anniversary?

EDDIE. Exactly.

RICHARD. I'm not going to stick around to find out.

EDDIE. Is Mrs. Marks going with you?

RICHARD. What do you know about that?

EDDIE. It's a question.

RICHARD. I want her to.

EDDIE. What does she want?

RICHARD. She deserves happiness.

EDDIE. Amen. *(Pause.)* It's time for you to leave.

(RICHARD crawls toward the cabinet. He gets his crutches.)

EDDIE. I don't understand why you don't walk.

RICHARD. This is one of those times when whatever it was that's supposed to happen didn't work. What did your aunt say: that one time in seven?

EDDIE. Did you expect some big sound and light show? Miracles don't always come with theatrics. I figured a scientist would know that.

(RICHARD stands using his crutches.)

EDDIE. You can still collect your dollar.

RICHARD. I don't want it.

EDDIE. It comes with the service.

RICHARD. I won't take your money.

EDDIE. Only my mother. Or that's what you think anyway.

RICHARD. That's what I hope.

(EDDIE pushes himself up out of bed. His legs shake beneath him.)

(He stands facing RICHARD who supports himself on his crutches.)

EDDIE. Put down your crutches.

RICHARD. Eddie.

EDDIE. Put them down and walk out of this house.

RICHARD. You shouldn't strain yourself.

EDDIE. Get out of my house of wonder.

Scene 10

(The living room remains lit by candles.)

(RICHARD crosses to the podium. He addresses the audience. His speech is tentative.)

RICHARD. At this juncture, I feel that it's important to take a step back. What does it mean to be a scientist in this day and age? I, for one, became a scientist when I was quite young. I...
(Pause.) Have I told you about this before?

(RICHARD remains at the podium, piecing his lecture together. He does not see the action which now begins to unfold behind him in the living room. His words overlap with the scene.)

(EDDIE stands by the bed.)

(LAURA comes in the front door, wearing a coat, with a bag over her shoulder.)

LAURA. Are you ready?

EDDIE. Yes. I'm ready.

(EDDIE begins to unhook himself from his medical equipment.)

(LAURA takes sneakers and jeans out of the bag. She helps EDDIE dress.)

THIS PLAY IS NOT OVER!

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