

THE CONFESSIONS

A Play in One Act

by

Antoine Barger

THE CONFESSIONS – Antoine Bargel

Cast of Characters

Main Characters:

<u>Dennis:</u>	a proper self-made small business owner.
<u>Donna:</u>	his wife, a part-time librarian.
<u>Lisa:</u>	their only daughter, extremely cute and overweight.
<u>Mikey:</u>	Dennis' brother, a lone wolf.
<u>Father Mercer:</u>	a Catholic priest.

Appearing briefly in the last scene:

<u>Mr. and Mrs. Mercer:</u>	Father Mercer's parents.
<u>Sheriff Purcell:</u>	the town's sheriff.

Scene

A small semi-rural town in Oklahoma, with some suburban-type developments as well as more rustic lodgings (aka, trailers).

Time

The present.

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Prelude

SETTING: GHOST OF LISA is front stage, CURTAIN CLOSED.

AT RISE: GHOST OF LISA is sitting on a chair. With a razor blade, she he is cutting herself on her upper thighs, counting as she goes.

GHOST OF LISA

And one for the donut... And one for making Daddy mad... And one for the other donut... And one for not going on that morning run...

(Thinks.)

And one for being a fat pig...

(Noticing the audience.)

Oh, it's you! Hello! No, just because I'm up here, I haven't lost contact with you. I still feel you looking at me and see, I still hate myself as much as before. And we all know what that is about, and that you are all responsible for it.

(Thinks for a moment.)

Want a cut yourself? Then here is my story. Don't be fooled, even though it talks more about everybody else, in the end it's all about me.

The past doesn't exist, only the future, and all we do is but a way to tell it again and again, that same, eternal, foreseeable future of ours. I know that, now that I'm here.

So let me cut your soul, just a little. You'll see, it feels good. Relaxes you... Makes you able to enjoy everything until the end, that sweet, bitter end, when we meet again.

(Leaving.)

Cheerio!

GHOST OF LISA goes to bed as CURTAIN OPENS into beginning of Scene One.

END OF PRELUDE

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Scene One

SETTING: The inside of DENNIS and DONNA's home, a cheap suburban house. In the back are a master bedroom and LISA's bedroom, in the front are a large kitchen and a hallway.

AT RISE: DENNIS and DONNA are asleep. Weak morning light filters through venetian blinds. DENNIS' phone vibrates on his bedside table and wakes him. He looks at it and picks up.

DENNIS

(Whispering throughout.)

Are you alright, Mikey?

(Listens.)

Can't it wait? You know what time it is?

(Listens.)

Alright, hang on.

Groggily, DENNIS sits up, looks at DONNA who is still asleep, puts slippers on and a robe, then quietly goes to the kitchen, using the phone's screen glow to light the way. In the kitchen, he closes the door behind him, turns the stove light on, and sits at the table.

Yeah, what's going on?

(Listens.)

Oh, Mike, I'm sorry... How are you holding up?

(Listens for a while. His face expresses first confusion, then pain, then panic.)

No, Mike, are you crazy? You can't do that!

(Listens.)

But, but Mikey! Did you think about what it's gonna do to me? I'll lose everything! Everything! Can't you see that?

(Listens.)

No, we have to talk about it. Fuck, Mike! Fuck! Just promise me you won't do

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anything until we talk. I'll come see you this morning. Promise me. Okay. Bye.

DENNIS stays still for a while, staring into space, then zombie-like he gets up and grabs a bottle of bourbon and a glass, pours a full drink, swallows it, pours another, sits back down.

Fuck, Mike. Fuck *you*!

Stays there, staring and drinking. LISA enters from the hallway. She sees her father sitting at the table with his drink. She stops for a second, looks pained. Then steps forward.

LISA

Hi Daddy.

DENNIS jumps at hearing her. Still in a daze, he gets up and pours his drink in a mug, puts the glass in the sink, then turns on the coffee machine. Gets a box of donuts from the counter and sets it on the table.

DENNIS

Good morning, Princess! You're up early.

LISA

(energetic)

Yes, I wanted to go for a run before school.

DENNIS

Oh. Good. That's good.

Silence.

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LISA

Dad, I'm worried about you.

DENNIS

Don't worry, honey. Everything's gonna be alright.

LISA

Dad, I can tell something's wrong. I'm not a child anymore. Dad, is it about Uncle Mikey? We're all worried about him.

DENNIS tenses up and takes a sip from his mug.

DENNIS

I know, honey.

LISA

Dad, if there was something else, you'd tell me, right? I love you, you know.

DENNIS

I love you too, honey. Everything's fine. It's just that times are tough, you know, with the economy. I'm a bit stressed out, that's all. It'll get better, I promise.

LISA

Dad, you don't have to promise anything. I just want you to be well.

LISA gets up and pours coffee in his mug, then some for herself. She stuffs a donut in her face and goes for a sip of coffee.

DENNIS

Should you be eating that if you're going for a run?

LISA

Dad!

DENNIS

I'm only saying you might get sick. The donut might make you vomit.

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LISA is embarrassed and finishes
chewing, swallows, drinks some coffee.

LISA
Thanks a lot, Dad, now I *do* feel nauseous.

DENNIS doesn't respond. A long
silence. Then LISA takes another donut.

I'll go for a run tomorrow, then.

LISA sits down at the table.

Aren't you eating anything?

DENNIS pops out of his reverie.

DENNIS
No, honey, I'm not hungry. I'll eat something later, I guess.

DONNA enters.

DONNA
Who was that on the phone?

DENNIS
It was Mikey.

LISA
Uncle Mikey! How is he doing?

DENNIS thinks about it.
His panic reappears.

DENNIS
(in a controlled voice)
He's fine. Go get ready for school.

LISA
But why was he calling? Is something wrong with his treatment? Is he responding

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well to the chemo?

DENNIS

(barking)

I said go get ready! Mikey's fine.

LISA exits. DONNA says nothing
and pours herself some coffee.
Lights a cigarette. Looks at
DENNIS. Her tone when she speaks
expresses both love and authority.

DONNA

So, what did Mikey want?

DENNIS

Well, he *ain't* doing fine, really. He saw his doctor yesterday. Treatment's not working.

DONNA

Oh my God. Did the doctor say anything else?

DENNIS

Gave him three months to live.

DONNA

Oh my God.

DENNIS

Yep.

DONNA

That's awful. How is he taking it?

Suddenly, DENNIS can't speak.
Has a knot in his throat. Tears up
with repressed rage. DONNA steps
toward him, reaching out.

DONNA

Oh, honey...

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DENNIS

Don't!

DENNIS jumps up from his chair to get away from DONNA. A moment of surprise and pain on both sides. Then DENNIS crumbles and, sobbing loudly, crouches and catches himself on the table. The noise attracts LISA who shows up in the hallway, then, seeing what is happening, retreats. After a moment, DONNA comes tentatively closer and DENNIS grabs on to her, still sobbing, and buries his head in her lap.

DENNIS

Oh Donna! Donna!

DENNIS starts sobbing.

I'm sorry! I'm so sorry!

DONNA

But what for? I don't understand... It's not your fault, honey. I'm sad for Mikey too, but we all have to go someday, there's nothing you could have done to prevent it.

DENNIS

Oh, Donna...

DENNIS calms down progressively. Pulls back slightly, still holding DONNA by the waist.

DENNIS

It's not that. I mean, it's about his dying, but there's something else. Something I wish you'd never had to know...

DONNA

What is it? You're scaring me.

DENNIS

Is Lisa gone? I don't want her to hear this.

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DONNA pulls away, puts a hand on his shoulder.

DONNA
I'll go check. But then you're gonna tell me everything.

DENNIS
Okay, honey.

DONNA exits. DENNIS gets up, grabs his mug. Pours more bourbon, thinks about it, pours more coffee as well.

And a good fucking morning to you.

Drinks. After a while, DONNA comes back. She gets more coffee, sits down, lights another cigarette.

DONNA
Lisa's left for school.

Silence. Throughout his speech, DENNIS drinks from his mug and refills it alternatively with coffee and bourbon. Gets drunker.

DENNIS
There's this thing that we've done, Mike and I. When we were ten, twelve years old. Something really bad, someone died. No one ever found us out. But now Mikey says he wants to confess the truth before he passes on. To get clean. He says he has to.

DONNA
Confess? But to whom?

DENNIS
To everybody, I guess. To the cops in particular. I got him to wait until we talk some more. But if he tells, my life is over. I'll lose everything.

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Pauses, then adds matter-of-factly,
figuring this out as he speaks:

Even you, you'll never forgive me.

DONNA

Forgive you for what, Dennis. What is it that you've done?

DENNIS

(all the while keeping his head down, avoiding DONNA's
gaze)

We didn't mean to do it. I swear, we didn't think it through. It was a hot Summer day, school was out and we were bored and I don't know whose idea it was, more like we thought of it together. We must have seen it on TV or something, cause all I remember is that we got it in our heads to do a “drive-by” on a house in the neighborhood. We just thought that people would get scared and it would be fun. We picked this girl's house, she was in Mike's class and she was pretty, a little proper, you know, always cleanly dressed with her blond hair in a perm – it made us laugh to think of her pissing herself while laying on the floor with all hell breaking loose around her. We assumed she'd be home, we didn't really think about her family: her parents would have been at work and she had an older brother whom we didn't really know. As I said, we didn't think it through.

We took Dad's gun from the shoe box in his closet and went to grandpa's house to borrow his car. He was so old he never used it and we'd taken it more than once for a ride. Mikey wanted to be the one doing the shooting, but my legs were too short to reach the pedals, so he had to agree that he'd drive and I'd shoot.

We went to the house, it was just a few blocks from here, on the side of the hill and Mike got us there from the top: as we approached he cut off the engine so that there wasn't any noise, just the tires rolling on the asphalt. My window was down and I could feel the hot air blowing on my face. Then the house got in my sight and I emptied a whole clip, barely aiming, hitting the walls and the windows, I remember the sound of broken glass beneath the loud bangs of Dad's .45, then Mike started the engine and we drove away, tires screeching, like gangsters in a movie.

I sat there holding the smoking gun in my hand until Mike told me: “Put the gun down, someone's gonna see you”. He drove to a field out of town and stopped the car. That's when we looked at each other and realized that we hadn't had fun. We stared and didn't say anything: I think we were both in shock of what we'd done. Then Mike said: “All right, let's go home”.

Then that night when Dad got back, he told us that someone had shot up a

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house, just a few blocks from us. A girl was dead. No one knew what happened, the police was there investigating. Apparently she'd been alone when it happened, and her brother, who was visiting from college, had found her dead in the living room, hit by a single bullet to the chest. Everybody was going to go to the funeral. The whole town was in shock.

Mike and I never talked about it. I saw him look at me when Dad told us the news, a look that meant “keep your mouth shut or I'll kill you as well”, but there was no way that I'd say anything, I was too terrified by what we'd done. Not just by the possible consequences, but by what happened to Tricia. I imagined her now, not scared shitless, but all shot up with bullet holes. It wasn't the same thing at all.

We went to the funeral and I thought about Tricia every night before going to sleep for about a year, and often I would wet my bed during the night, but no one ever suspected anything and after a while, it receded, I sort of forgot about her. I mean I was still ashamed anytime anyone mentioned what happened or I went by the house or I saw someone from her family, but it became something outside of me, part of the past I guess.

And now this.

Silence. Then DONNA speaks
hesitantly, figuring it out.

DONNA

Well, I suppose you were just a child. And it was an accident, really, you didn't mean to kill her.

DENNIS looks up. Drunk and
grateful.

DENNIS

Oh, honey, I feel so bad. I should be thinking about her, but all I have in mind is what's going to happen if Mikey tells everyone.

DENNIS shivers.

DONNA

Isn't there a time limit on the police prosecuting this sort of thing?

DENNIS

Not for killing someone, I don't think. No Ma'am. Plus even if legally they did put it down as an accident that happened long ago, when we were minors – you think

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the people around here will forgive me? Mikey will be gone, that selfish prick, but me? They'll run me out of town on a rail, if I'm lucky. And the business. It will be the death of it all. No one will hire us. Five guys, I got, with families, who'll lose their jobs – in this economy? If the townsfolk don't straight shoot me, one of the five surely will. Why wouldn't they, when I ruined their lives by killing a teenage girl. – she was Lisa's age, pretty much. Can you imagine if that happened to us? My God.

DENNIS cries. DONNA could imagine, but she doesn't want to. She is focused on keeping her man as sane as possible, on controlling the situation.

DONNA

Don't be too hard on yourself, Dennis. You're a good man. You've led a good life since then. It won't bring her back if you crumble now.

DENNIS looks at her, impressed.
Morally sobered, physically tilting.
DONNA embraces him again, in a motherly way.

It's gonna be alright. We're going to figure this out. You and me. Everything's gonna be just fine.

CURTAIN

END OF SCENE

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Scene Two

SETTING: Three days later, in the sacristy of FATHER MERCER's church, after mass.

AT RISE: FATHER MERCER is removing his cassock and alb when DONNA appears at the door, hesitant.

FATHER MERCER
(seeing DONNA)

May I help you, my child?

DONNA

Yes, Father. My name is Donna, Donna Garner. I know I haven't been coming to mass, but I was hoping that I could talk to you about something. It's a rather... delicate issue, and I don't know what to do.

FATHER MERCER

Certainly, Donna, come in, please. I'll be happy to help you if I can. What is troubling you?

Silence.

DONNA

I apologize, Father, but I need to ask you something first. I'm not here to talk about my own sins, so this can't be like a normal confession, but I do need everything I say to remain absolutely between us. May I ask this of you, Father? I'm sorry for this unusual... request.

FATHER MERCER

Don't worry, Donna. Even outside the sacrament of confession, I can assure you of my complete discretion. You can speak freely, my child.

DONNA

Thank you, Father. Well, it's about my husband, actually. He... he's done something bad.

FATHER MERCER

Pardon me, my child, but should he not speak about this himself? Are you sure it

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is your place to share with me what he did?

DONNA

He won't speak about it. And it's eating him up. It's been three days since... since he told me, and I'm not sure what to do, Father. I need advice. My role is to help him, but I can't see a solution. I support him, but he's going nowhere, he's just... crushed.

FATHER MERCER

Go on.

As DONNA gets more specific,
FATHER MERCER's face and body tense
up. He begins sweating visibly.

DONNA

He and his brother, when they were kids, they shot up a house in the neighborhood. I didn't live here at the time, but you must have heard about it.

(No response from FATHER MERCER.)

A young girl died. They didn't mean to kill her, of course, they were just being stupid, it was more like an accident, really. But now my husband's brother, Mike, he's losing his battle with cancer and he wants to confess everything to the police before he passes on – which I would encourage him to do, of course, if my husband wasn't caught in the crossfire, so to speak.

(embarrassed)

I mean, my husband should really want to confess as well, if it were just him, but he's not thinking of himself, he's thinking of his employees. His business will go under, you know, if people learn about this. Already, with the economy the way it is, he's barely keeping the ship afloat...

(with renewed energy)

And of course there is our daughter, Lisa, to think about. She's at such a fragile age – she's 17 – and her heart is so pure, and yet she's... tortured by weight issues and... trouble relating with her schoolmates, because of her weight. It would break her heart, if she were to find out what her dad and uncle were capable of, killing a nice girl just like her. I don't even want to think about how she'd react.

(Pauses.)

I really don't know what to do, Father.

FATHER MERCER is sweating, all tense.

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FATHER MERCER

I'm sorry, Donna, I don't know how to tell you this...

DONNA

I don't understand...

FATHER MERCER grabs DONNA's arm
nervously.

FATHER MERCER

I can't tell you how I feel. I have a moral obligation to...

FATHER MERCER breaks into sobs.

DONNA

Father ! Really, I...

FATHER MERCER

(trying to contain his tears)

I'm sorry Donna... I just... can't.

DONNA

I don't understand. I...

FATHER MERCER

(with rage, through his tears)

Please leave, Donna! I really can't talk to you right now!

Perplexed, DONNA exits. FATHER MERCER
takes his head in his hand and moans
ragefully. As soon as DONNA is
out of sight, FATHER MERCER falls
to his knees.

FATHER MERCER

(sobbing)

Tricia... Tricia...

(Kneels up straight.)

Our Father, Who art in heaven, Hallowed be Thy Name; Thy kingdom come, Thy
will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread, and

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forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive...

(Pauses.)

...those who trespass against us; and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. Amen.

Lord, I came to you the day that Tricia died, I am coming to you now. You have grounded me here to serve this community, I surrendered to your will and you made me who I am now. Lord, I need your help.

(Sobs.)

The day I found Tricia, her shattered body dead on the carpet in our living room, bloody as Christ hanging on the Cross, I surrendered my rage to you. I swore that I would use that rage for good, to help people, to give them the love that Tricia felt for you, that I felt for her. Have I failed you to this day? Have I broken my promise?

(Rages. Tries to control himself.)

De profundis clamavi ad te, Domine, Domine, exaudi vocem meam. Fiant aures tuæ intendentes in vocem deprecationis meæ.

Lord, bless Tricia's soul in this day of reckoning, and bless the souls of Donna and her husband Dennis, Tricia's killer... in their struggle... Help me help them...

(Rages big time. Collapses to the floor.)

Eli, eli, lama sabachthani! Have you forsaken me? Father, without you I am lost. Without you I am but a madman talking to himself. Help me, Father, in my hour of need. Help me find the love that my heart needs to continue serving your purpose...

(pauses, then yells)

I'LL FUCKING KILL HIM!

FATHER MERCER gets up and goes to fetch a gun from behind a holy picture. Cocks the weapon and exits.

CURTAIN

END OF SCENE

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Scene Three

SETTING: DENNIS and DONNA's house, later that same day.

AT RISE: DENNIS is alone in the kitchen, drinking. Pale and worn out. Agitated.

DENNIS
(mumbling)

Motherfucker...

DENNIS begins pacing the room. The bell rings. DENNIS jumps. Fear is visible in his demeanor as he downs his drink and walks to the hallway. He hesitates. Might be the police.

Who is it?

Silence. Then:

FATHER MERCER
It's Father Mercer. Peter Mercer.

A pause. Relieved, DENNIS goes to open the door.

DENNIS
I thought you might come.

FATHER MERCER
Really?

DENNIS
My wife said she went to ask you for advice.
(grimaces)
But you weren't very helpful. Come in.

Surprised, FATHER MERCER follows

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DENNIS into the kitchen, silently.

Drink?

FATHER MERCER

No, thank you.

DENNIS

Suit yourself.

Pours himself another bourbon.

So, did you bring a gun?

FATHER MERCER blushes. Doesn't respond.

I know how you must feel, Pete, I know what I'd do in your place.

A pause.

And I'm okay with it.

A spark of interest in FATHER MERCER's eyes. Leans forward.

FATHER MERCER

Are you really?

DENNIS sees that now FATHER MERCER is interested. Nods.

DENNIS

I deserve it, that's no contest. But beyond that, it ain't the worst option for me. At least it makes sense. Like when Wilbur from across the street, the day he killed my dog? Cause Raffles kept snatching his chicken? Well it made sense for me to shoot him, Wilbur, I tell ya: he knew it too, as when he saw me coming across the yard he ran to his car and drove straight to the sheriff's office and I tell ya, he saved my life, that day, he saved my life.

(realizes he's drunk rambling)

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So anyways, yeah, I get it. If it were my sister and you'd killed her, you'd be dead already.

FATHER MERCER

And your brother?

DENNIS

Oh, he's going to die on his own pretty soon, but if you can't wait...

FATHER MERCER

I mean, have you talked to him?

DENNIS

Why, yes, Peter, as a matter of fact I have. Sure you won't drink with me? No?
(pours again)

Yeah, my brother: he ain't my keeper for sure, that I can tell ya. Well, you know about him. Wants to confess. You should like that. Prim and proper. Twist and turn. Last call before the grave. Con, fessing up! Feels bad and all. Hadn't seen him cry in years.

FATHER MERCER

And you don't?

DENNIS

What, cry?

FATHER MERCER

Feel bad.

Silence.

DENNIS

That's my business.

Drinks up. There is a long pause.
A mad, intent look from DENNIS.

How about we get to what you've come here for? Have your gun with you, want to borrow mine?

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FATHER MERCER

I've come here to help you, Dennis. I'm here to tell you that you are loved. In... spite of what you've done, you are loved. Donna loves you. Lisa loves you. Jesus loves you. I'm here to tell you that.

A pause.

DENNIS

(defiant)

You love me? With what I've done, can you say you love me?

A pause. FATHER MERCER looks in DENNIS' eyes, puts a hand on his shoulder.

FATHER MERCER

Yes. I love you, Dennis.

Silence. Then DENNIS breaks up in tears. FATHER MERCER comforts him physically.

DENNIS

I'm sorry, Peter, I'm so sorry. We didn't mean to kill Tricia, we liked her. We were just boys, playing with fire. And then all these years, bearing this secret...

FATHER MERCER

Would you like to confess, Dennis? Only divine absolution can relieve your soul of its pain.

DENNIS

To confess? To you?

FATHER MERCER

Yes, I can absolve you in the name of the Lord. It will help you.

Confused, DENNIS thinks.

DENNIS

Nothing will help, Peter. Unless you've brought a gun...

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A pause. FATHER MERCER thinks.

FATHER MERCER

I have brought a gun.

Physical start from DENNIS.

DENNIS

Really?

FATHER MERCER

Really. But I'm offering you my love instead.

DENNIS

(sneering)

Your love. Here's my dick, Father Pete, suck it or get out. Your love can't help me. I am sorry about your sister, but your love can't help me. GET OUT! I said...

FATHER MERCER

Fine, fine, Dennis. I'll go. But think about it. Talk to Donna. There is always hope
—

DENNIS pushes FATHER MERCER out
and slams the door. As he returns
to the kitchen, he sees DONNA who has
entered from the bedroom.

DENNIS

How long have you been here?

DONNA

A while.

Silence. DONNA dominates DENNIS
with an intent look.

How dare you speak this way to Father Mercer? And how dare you give up on us? Give up on Lisa? You don't think she needs her father? You've made a mistake, Dennis, years ago: you think that letting it destroy you will make up for it? That's not making amends. That's being a coward. And I didn't marry a coward.

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Silence. Intent looks. DENNIS
rebels/shakes it off.

DENNIS
Yelling at me's not gonna help, woman. As I told your priest friend, I'm running
outta options. You want a non-cowardly con for a hubby? Lisa needs a father
who's in prison for killing a young dove just like her? That's not working out for
me. Better if I have a random accident or something. Fall on my sword like one
of'em *brave* Dixie officers of times past.

DONNA
(conciliatory)
Have you talked to Mikey?

DENNIS
Of course I've talked to Mikey. Nothing doing. The man's feeling self-righteous
for the first time in his life. Wheeled and dealt with his conscience all these
years, now won't budge. It's like he's seen Jesus or somethin'. I could only have
him agree not to do it today. Give me some time to get my ducks in a row.

DONNA
Well, we have to talk to him again. You and I. There has to be a way to make him
understand...

LISA enters from the hallway.

LISA
(upbeat)
Hi Dad! Hi Mom!

DENNIS
Hi honey.

DONNA
Darling, go to your room, please. Your Dad and I are talking.

LISA
About Uncle Mikey?

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DONNA

Yes, now go do your homework.

LISA

But... I wanted to tell you all something. It's about Uncle Mikey too.

DONNA and DENNIS look at each other.

DENNIS

What is it, hon'?

LISA

(eagerly)

I was thinking on the way back from school, I want to do something for Uncle Mikey and I thought, how about one of them “cancer drives”, like they do for breast cancer in the Fall, or like they did for that kid with leukemia? A cancer drive for Uncle Mikey: raising awareness of lung cancer and raising money for Uncle Mikey as well, to get him something nice, I don't know, maybe he needs some care or somethin'? Something comforting? Anyways, maybe I can bake a cake, and you'll bake one too, Mom? People always love your cakes.

(realizes something is off)

What's wrong? I haven't thought it all through, but...

DENNIS is apoplectic and can't speak. Donna takes over.

DONNA

Nothing's wrong, honey. It's a real nice idea, so sweet of you. We can talk about it again later, okay?

LISA

Su... Sure.

Thinking that DENNIS is sad because of his brother's death, LISA goes up to him and hugs him.

I'm so sorry, Dad.

DENNIS grasps her, repressing a sob. He struggles to keep it together,

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clumsily taps her biceps.

DENNIS

Thanks, honey, I know.

Silence.

LISA

Okay. I'll leave y'all be. Do my homework.

LISA looks at her mom.

Think about that cake, Mom.

DONNA

All right, honey. I will.

LISA exits. DONNA turns to DENNIS,
decidedly.

We're going to talk to Mikey, you hear me? Lisa needs you, he needs to see that.
(somberly)

We gotta make him understand what's right.

CURTAIN

END OF SCENE

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Scene Four

SETTING: MIKEY's trailer, on the edge of town and woods. There is an outdoor space, then a few steps to climb inside the trailer's main room.

AT RISE: MIKEY is resting on a bunk inside his trailer. A cigarette is smoking in the ashtray next to him. Enter DENNIS and DONNA.

MIKEY
(opening an eye)

Hello, brother.

DENNIS shuffles in, followed by DONNA.

And Donna too, hi.

MIKEY sits up. Feels woozy. Grabs his cigarette and lays back down.

Y'all look like death incarnate. You come to fetch my mortal soul?

Silence.

DONNA
We've come to talk to you, Mikey.

MIKEY looks at DONNA, then at DENNIS.

MIKEY
I thought we'd already had that conversation.

DENNIS
We did...

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DONNA

...but we can't leave it at that. Mikey. We know that you're going through a tough time. We understand. But you need to think about your family. The world doesn't end with you, you need to respect that.

MIKEY

“Going through a tough time”? Such a nice way to put it, dear Donna. Actually, I ain't “going through” anything. No Saint Peter at the pearly gate for me. No: that shit ends. I'm ending. And *you* need to respect my right to get out in the way I see fit.

Silence. DONNA looks at DENNIS,
who shrugs.

DONNA

(mustering courage)

But what are you hoping to achieve, Mikey? Tell me. What good do you think comes out of you telling that story? You'll reopen old wounds for everyone. How does this bring you peace?

MIKEY

It would bring me peace if you got off my back and let me get on with it. This is about me not carrying what I did to the grave. I don't see what's so damn hard to understand about that. (*Pause.*) And don't you think the parents might like to know what happened? Have you thought about how *they* feel?

DONNA

(thinking)

Well, they probably know by now.

MIKEY, surprised, looks at
DENNIS and DONNA.

DENNIS

Donna told the priest at Saint-Mary. Priest happens to be Peter Mercer, Tricia's brother. I talked to him an hour ago.

MIKEY

Really?

(thinks)

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I'd heard he'd gone to seminary... And how did it go?

DENNIS

What?

MIKEY

Your conversation. How did it go?

DENNIS

(getting mad)

How do you think!

DENNIS makes an effort to contain himself. DONNA takes over.

DONNA

You see, he's probably told his folks, Mikey. They already know. You could probably talk to them privately, if you want to say you're sorry... What need is there to get the cops involved?

MIKEY

You don't think they will?

DONNA

I don't think so. Father Mercer is... a good man. Bent on forgiveness. You should talk to him instead. Even ask for absolution. When he sees your remorse, I'm sure he'll give it to you.

MIKEY

No, I'm not going for that kind of private bullshit. What good is your church to me? I ain't gone there in over forty years. It ain't gonna do me no good now. (*pauses.*) No. I broke the law of my fellow man, and my fellow man shall judge me. Not for the family: for *her*.

He looks at DENNIS.

We owe *her* that much.

DONNA

(furious)

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Really? You think that what you owe her outweighs everything you're going to cost everyone else? Dennis? His business? His employees? Six families, including yours, Mikey. You think we all owe that to *her*?

MIKEY

(tired)

My mind is set, Donna. Please stop yelling.

DONNA

And Lisa? Have you even thought about her? You know what she's doing? She's having a cancer fund drive at her school, in honor of her loving uncle. How do you think she'll feel when you tell her and everyone the truth?

MIKEY

(feeling bad)

Lisa... Yes, I should talk to her.

Pauses. Sees DONNA soften.

But it won't change my mind, Donna. I'll talk to her, that's all.

DONNA nods. MIKEY shows that he's done with this conversation.
Silence ensues.

DENNIS

(getting progressively angrier)

So that's it? You're done with us? You're gonna do what you want, the hell with us? You realize what you're doing, Mikey? You're not just dying, you're taking me with you. I won't go to prison. I won't spend the rest of my life behind bars and watch all I've built go to shit. I'll kill myself, Mikey. If you go through with this, you're killing me. You hear? I'll shoot myself right here in your fucking trailer, see how moral you feel then, you son of a bitch!

DONNA puts a hand on DENNIS' shoulder. Signals for him to follow her outside. MIKEY watches them leave, then sighs and closes his eyes.
Once outside the trailer, DENNIS walks toward their car, but DONNA

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stops him halfway.

Dennis. DONNA

Yes. DENNIS

Let's talk for a second. DONNA

Yes. DENNIS

You're not serious about killing yourself, are you? DONNA

Er... No. Maybe. DENNIS

Because if you are, we need to talk. DONNA

Sure. DENNIS

I mean, we need to weigh our options. DONNA

Yes. What options? DENNIS

Well, the various ways this can end. DONNA

I don't get it. DENNIS

I know. I'm happy that you don't. But we have to consider it anyways. DONNA

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DENNIS

Consider what.

DONNA

If Mikey talks to the police, you'll go to prison for ever, and as you said, everything that we've lived for will be destroyed.

DENNIS

Yes.

DONNA

On the other hand, Mikey is dying.

DENNIS

Yes.

DONNA

So we have to ask ourselves this: what if he died a bit earlier?

DENNIS

Earlier? You mean before he talks to the cops?

DONNA

That's right.

DENNIS

But...

(gets it)

Donna.

DONNA

Yes.

DENNIS

Are you saying what I think you're saying?

DONNA

Yes. Probably.

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DENNIS

And you realize how horrible it is?

DONNA

Yes.

DENNIS

But you're suggesting it anyway?

DONNA

Yes. I'm not thinking about myself. I'm thinking about you, about your business, your employees, but above all I'm thinking of Lisa. Sure, I'll get a job and help her out, but what will happen of her? I won't be able to pay for community college as we planned. She won't find a job in this town, not once the story is out. Where would we go? How would she start in life with no money, a father in prison, and the weight of this crime tainting everything she knew growing up? She's not made for that, not the way we raised her. We wanted her to grow to a better life than ours. With this, she'll drown in the mud that we quite didn't shake off our boots.

Now Mikey only has a few weeks left to live, at best. What would we be taking from him, really. A few hundred hours more lounging about in his trailer and smoking cigarettes? Is that worth our daughter's life? Our lives, the lives of your employees and their families?

Are we not criminals if we do nothing? If knowing what we know, we let our daughter's life be destroyed?

This is a question worth asking, don't you think?

DENNIS

Yes. But I'm afraid to answer it.

DONNA

I know. You don't have to. I'll answer for us both.

Pauses.

But after I've answered, you need to lend me your hands. Your strength. I can't do it alone. It has to look natural.

DENNIS

Yes.

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DONNA

You understand what I'm talking about?

DENNIS

Yes.

DONNA

And you'll do it?

DENNIS

If that is the answer, I'll do it.

DONNA

And no one will ever know?

DENNIS

No one will know.

DONNA

And you'll be fine with it going forward? This is important.

DENNIS

I... will.

DONNA

All right. So let me ask the question again.

Gets ready to.

DENNIS

A car!

DONNA

What?

DENNIS

A car's coming!

They wait. A car pulls up. FATHER
MERCER gets out and walks toward them.

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FATHER MERCER

Donna! Dennis! I'm glad I found you.

DONNA

(unhappy to see him)

Hello, Father.

DENNIS

Hey.

FATHER MERCER

I went to your place and didn't find you, your neighbors told me how to get here. This is your brother Mikey's trailer, right?

DENNIS

Yes it is.

FATHER MERCER

How is he doing?

DENNIS

All... right. He's resting right now. Did you need something?

FATHER MERCER

Yes. I've... been thinking about your situation. I thought: what would I do if I were in your shoes? And I think I had an idea that might help you. But we shouldn't talk about it here. Would you drive back to the church with me?

DENNIS is visibly relieved.

DONNA worried but resigned.

DENNIS

Yeah, sure. Let's go.

DONNA follows.

CURTAIN

END OF SCENE

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Scene Five

SETTING: MIKEY's trailer, the next day.

AT RISE: LISA is sitting at MIKEY's
bunkside, arranging his pillows.

MIKEY

So what's the matter, honey? There seems to be something weighing you down.

LISA

Uncle Mikey, you know I love you, right?

MIKEY

Of course I do, honey.

LISA

And, because you're sick and all, I really wanted to do something special for you. So I tried to organize a cancer drive at school, to raise funds for you, but the other kids said they didn't want to. They were pretty mean, actually. They said that if I wanted to raise money, I should organize a charity run and run it myself, they would pay to see *that*. Then someone called me a fat pig and a boy started making piggy noises. I'm sorry it didn't work out, Uncle Mikey.

MIKEY

Oh, honey, don't you worry. You didn't need to do that. And don't listen to them kids, they're jealous, that's all. Look, your father gave me one of your graduation pictures, you look so pretty. A real movie star.

LISA

I don't know, I feel a little bit bad about those pictures. Daddy said it was no problem, but I know how expensive they were, because he told everyone but me, and they're very nice, but... they don't feel like I'm really me, with my hair like that and the dress and make-up.

MIKEY

Na, of course it's you! Maybe you don't see yourself that way, but others do. That's why kids are so mean, sometimes, they're envious. I remember when I was a bit younger than you, there was this girl I liked, she was pretty, and proper, always trying to be a good girl, and you know what I did? Instead of admitting my

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admiration for her, I was mean and even aggressive – just to hide my feelings. Boys can be stupid that way.

LISA

(smiling)

You mean you were in love, Uncle Mikey?

MIKEY

Sure, I guess I was. But what I mean to tell you is that sometimes people do strange things, things they'll deeply regret later, out of misguided feelings, and shame about themselves. It's important that you understand that, and don't let it affect you if it happens to you or around you. Know that you're beautiful and stick to your guns, you know what I mean?

LISA

I think I do. I wonder if that's what's happening to Mom and Dad. They've been acting very strange lately. Dad's drinking all the time. Sometimes he seems sad, and sometimes he seems angry, angry at you I think. I don't know, maybe I'm reading it wrong. Mom is just sticking by him and I can't get an explanation out of her. You've talked to them recently, right?

MIKEY

Yes, Lisa. You know, you need to be patient with them. I've not always been good and maybe I deserve that they be mad at me too. Just give them time.

LISA

Oh, you don't deserve for them to be angry! You deserve everything that's good in the world. And for starters, you deserve a kiss.

LISA leans in and kisses MIKEY
on the cheek, flushing a bit.
MIKEY is happy.

And now, rest. I'll clean up a bit, your kitchen is a mess. Rest, I said.

She tucks him in, then goes to the
kitchenette, wherefrom she will hear
every word that follows.

MIKEY dozes off for a minute.

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Enter DENNIS, DONNA, FATHER MERCER,
MR. and MRS. MERCER, SHERIFF
PURCELL.

DONNA

Mikey, are you awake?

MIKEY

(a bit confused)

Sure, sure. Lisa was here.

DONNA

Yes, I know, she must have left while you were asleep. We brought you some visitors, Mikey. After we saw you yesterday, we talked with Father Mercer and he convinced us that we ought to let you confess, the way that you want. So we brought Sheriff Purcell here to hear your confession, and these are Father Mercer's parents, Tricia's parents, Mr and Mrs Mercer, to serve as witnesses.

MIKEY

You mean you want to do this here and now?

DONNA

Yes, Mikey. This way we can all stop worrying. And as you're sick, Sheriff Purcell agreed to come to you.

MIKEY

(to DENNIS)

And you're okay with this?

DENNIS

(forcibly containing himself)

Y-yes. Father Mercer, and myself, we all of us believe that, all in all, well, it's your choice.

MIKEY

Father Mercer, you've done quite a number on these two. Yesterday, I felt like they'd rather choke me than let me do this.

FATHER MERCER

We've prayed on it and we're all agreed to help you do the right thing. And we'll all help Dennis and Donna with the consequences. For those who have the Lord as

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their shepherd will never get lost in darkness.

MIKEY

(ironic)

May the force be with you too, Father.

Looks at the parents.

Mr and Mrs Mercer. I'm sorry for your loss. I truly am.

Silence.

FATHER MERCER

Hem. Sheriff?

SHERIFF PURCELL

Certainly.

Steps up to MIKEY's bunkside.

Mr. Garner, I've been told that you wish to confess a crime?

MIKEY

That's right, Sheriff. Nice to see you again. Let's see now: I am responsible for the death of Miss Tricia Mercer, of Fairview, Oklahoma, on August 11th 1971.

SHERIFF PURCELL

(getting out his notepad)

Please continue.

MIKEY

My brother and I shot at Mr. and Mrs. Mercer's house, on 134 Camellia Drive, not knowing that someone was inside. We later learned that Miss Mercer was hit by a bullet and subsequently passed away.

SHERIFF PURCELL

But you didn't come forward?

MIKEY

No, we didn't. We expected to be arrested, but then nothing happened and we kept quiet.

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SHERIFF PURCELL

What weapon did you use?

MIKEY

A Glock .45 belonging to our father.

SHERIFF PURCELL

And where is that weapon now?

MIKEY

We put it back and our father never knew anything about it. I have it now. I took it after he passed away. It's in my kitchen drawer, I'll remand it to your custody in a minute.

SHERIFF PURCELL

Very well. And did you both use the weapon to shoot at the house in question?

MIKEY

No, I was driving our grandfather's car, and it was Dennis who pulled the trigger. But I insist that the idea was ours, and that I share equal responsibility.

SHERIFF PURCELL

I'll write this down, but I can't promise that the D.A. will listen. He'll probably charge you with accessory and your brother with murder. You okay with that?

MIKEY

(grimacing and looking briefly at DENNIS)

I insist that we were both actively involved.

SHERIFF PURCELL

Right. Noted. Well, I have what I need here. We'll be in touch after it's processed.

MIKEY

You mean you're not going to arrest me?

SHERIFF PURCELL

Well, no. Not at this time. We'll process your confession and get back to you.

MIKEY

And leave me free to run away?

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SHERIFF PURCELL

(uncomfortable)

Well, in your condition, and considering your voluntary confession, we don't consider you a flight risk. We know where to find you.

MIKEY

Really.

Uneasy silence.

MR. MERCER

We want to tell you, my wife and I, that we forgive you for what you've done.

MIKEY is surprised.

We think about Tricia every day, we pray for her. And we know that she would want us to forgive you. There wasn't a more generous soul than our Tricia.

MIKEY still stares silently.

Well, we hope that this brings you peace in your final moments. God bless you.

MIKEY starts laughing hysterically.

EVERYONE is perplexed.

MIKEY

Ah... Y'all almost got me.

DONNA

What do you mean, Mikey?

MIKEY

(still laughing)

Oh, quit it now. I'm on to y'all. You're faking all of this, this “confession”. You don't want me ruining your lives, you and Dennis, and God knows how, you've convinced Father Mercer and his parents, and the Sheriff, to play along. Nicely done, really. You had no intention of ever making my confession public, did you? Coming back to arrest me soon, Sheriff? What a joke!

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FATHER MERCER

Actually, Mikey, this was our idea, my parents and I. We wanted you to receive the forgiveness that you seek, without destroying any more lives. So we offered Dennis and Donna this opportunity to help you. This on us, son. It cost us a lie to forgive you, but the forgiveness is real. Won't you accept it?

Silence.

MIKEY

Father...

LISA enters, cutting him off:
she storms out of the kitchenette,
holding MIKEY's gun in her hand.

LISA

Liars!

MIKEY

Lisa, what are you doing? Put that gun down!

LISA

Liars! You're all liars! How could you do that to Uncle Mikey? Stand there and lie, all of you, to a dying man!

And you, Uncle Mikey?... You... killed her? That girl that you told me about? That you were in love with? Shame on you too!

And Dad... Mom... Was anything real that you taught me?

DENNIS makes a step toward her,
holding his hand out for the gun.

DENNIS

Honey, listen...

But LISA cuts him off and puts the
gun to her head: under her chin.

LISA

Don't touch me! Stay back! You're liars, murderers, all of you all! Everything, since the beginning, it was all a bloody murderer's lie!

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DENNIS

Honey, please, listen to me. We love you. We all do. I know it must seem strange, what you've heard us all say, but we all meant well, really. Let me explain...

LISA

Dad, you were lying all this time!

DENNIS

We lied, it's true, but we didn't want to cause more pain, we were trying to make things right, in our way. We wanted to protect you. We never meant to hurt you. We never meant to hurt anyone, really.

LISA

Dad, you killed that girl!

DENNIS

I know, and I'll pay for it if I have to. I see that now, that I have to. But you put this gun down. You're our beautiful daughter and we love you. Our beautiful movie star...

LISA

Dad, I'm fat!

Gunshot and simultaneous BLACKOUT

CURTAIN

END OF PLAY