Joie de Vivre;
or,
A Play with a Dead Man

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements
For the degree of Master of Art in English,
Creative Writing

By

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California State University, Northridge
Dedication

This play is for Alex, Jackson, and Abraham.

“Once we believe in ourselves, we can risk curiosity, wonder, spontaneous delight, or any experience that reveals the human spirit”-E.E. Cummings
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ABSTRACT

Joie de Vivre;
or,
A Play with a Dead Man

By
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Master of Art in English,
Creative Writing

At its core, *Joie de Vivre; or, A Play with a Dead Man* is about people coming to terms with their individual connections with both life and death. *Joie de Vivre* is a Cajun term meaning “the Joy of Living,” and signifies the Cajun obsession with both life and death. This play explores the emotional after-effects of death, revealing that both the living and dead grieve. This play moves briskly through mundane routines revealing the “everyday” as something marvelous. This play follows the crumbling marriage of Fabian and Lily, and also Isaac, a dead man who leaves behind a wife and a mistress. This play mixes the absurdity of a dead man who still acts alive and the crippling emotions of sadness and jealousy. Tinged in fantasy, this play presents normal interactions as something bizarre and mysterious, exploring the possibility of exceptionality and mystery.
Cast of Characters

FABIAN: a man in his late thirties
LILY: his wife, a woman in her mid-thirties
KAY: her mother, a woman in her fifties
RORY: a woman in her mid-twenties
TRUVY: a woman in her fifties
ISAAC: a dead man in his fifties

Place

West Monroe, Louisiana

Time

Now

Set

On stage at all times there should be a small table with a picture of Isaac, framed in angel figurines, or something equally gaud to denote that this picture serves as shrine for a dead man. While only a few characters interact with the picture, the picture should always have a dominant presence on stage.

All scenes require chairs, and sometimes a basic table; therefore, all scenes should be able to recycle set pieces without confusing where we are. Often, sounds (or absence of sounds) will be used to signify specific rooms/places. For example, zydeco music will always be played in Kay’s kitchen.

Scenes should transition fluid-like.
Introduction. Truvy

TRUVY enters wearing mourning attire.

She will dress in black until otherwise stated.

TRUVY

When someone dies, there’s an amount of time set aside for mourning. Problem is no one really knows how much time.

My boyfriend’s name was Isaac. He was a handsome man with a sweet nature and too many teeth.

I lived in an apartment, he in a house. With his wife.

(Isaac was an asshole, you might think.)

He wasn’t consumed with lust or great passions. He was plain, drank coffee, and took out the trash.

We got on well. We were in love.

About thirty years ago, Isaac went and got himself killed. Just like that.

And here I am still stuck in veils and black. Black. Black. Black.

(It’s very disconcerting, you might think.)

Isaac is dead.

I don’t know how that makes him feel, but it makes me feel mad. And a little bit sad.

Lights fade to black.
1. Lily and Kay

Kay’s Kitchen, zydeco music plays.

LILY and KAY sit at a table shelling snap beans.

ISAAC enters wearing a yellow coat.

The women do not notice.

He walks around with a sense of familiarity, and a sense of sadness.

He removes his yellow coat, hangs it on the back of a nearby chair.

He sits and eats an apple.

The women do not notice.

LILY and KAY still sit shelling snap beans.

KAY

How's Fabian?

LILY

Why you askin’?

KAY

No reason.

LILY

He's fine.

KAY

That's nice.

LILY

Fabian. Do you think he's—

KAY

Did I tell you? Ran into Mary-Pat at the Piggly Wiggly—
LILY

I just sometimes think that Fabian might be—

KAY

And she's invited us to a party!

LILY

I don't feel like a party.

KAY

It's just for us ladies. Doesn't that sound nice?

LILY

Do you think that Fabian's a good man?

KAY

Mary-Pat is just crazy about you! And it was nice of her to invite you, seein' as you never did send her a thank-you note for those weddin' presents she sent up.

LILY

Compulsory manners—

KAY

Are never out of style.

LILY

Look, I don't want you to think-I'm not even remotely considering that Fabian's—(laughs) He has an appetite for life and I am not about to become one of those insecure wives.

KAY

Baby girl—

(motions to beans)

You best start snappin' faster; I've got to have these beans ready for tomorrow.
LILY

(works faster)

Anyway, I've decided he isn't. This is Fabian we're talkin' about.

KAY

Tomorrow I want you to stop on by and pick up some beans for him. Poor thing is just too skinny. You don't feed him enough.

LILY

He isn't. I've decided.

KAY

You know how much Fabian likes my beans.

LILY

Fabian hates beans.

KAY

Men like beans. Everybody in the world knows that. Your Daddy loved my beans.

ISAAC lets out a small cough.

In fact, he loved everything I cooked. Isaac always did say that my cooking was his favorite thing about me.

ISAAC is overcome with coughing.

ISAAC is quiet again.

LILY

It depresses me whenever I think about it.

KAY

Then don't think about it.

LILY

All this isn't easy to live with.
KAY

Don’t you have nice things to think about?

LILY

What kind of things did Daddy say about me? He would have been fine with a daughter, right? Or…did he want a son? (long pause)

ISAAC throws his apple away and exits.

His yellow coat still hangs on the back of the chair.

KAY

Where'd you learn to snap beans? It's snap. Snap. Snap. (long pause)

LILY

I think Fabian's a good husband.

KAY

Good. You listen to me. Being a wife is easy. You feed your man and you have sex with him. That's it.

LILY

That's it?

KAY

That's it.

LILY

Well, is there room for anything else?

KAY

How come you don't like to cook?

LILY

I like to cook. I cook my own food.
KAY

That's not the same.

LILY

Fabian gets home so late.

KAY

He eats at work?

LILY

Yes. Probably with a student.

KAY

What?

LILY

A student.

KAY

Oh—

LILY

Yes.

KAY

Well that's—

LILY

A man of his position probably shouldn't—

KAY

Well he is good looking—

LILY

Momma!
KAY

I'm sorry.

LILY

I hate being jealous.

KAY

I'm sure Fabian doesn't want a student. He wants a housewife.

LILY

He's too peculiar for such normalecy.

*Lights fade to black.*
2. Fabian and Truvy

*FABIAN is sitting at desk grading papers.*

*There are sounds of air compressors and various other sounds heard at an auto-shop.*

*TRUVY enters and sits.*

*FABIAN does not notice.*

*A phone rings and rings.*

**TRUVY**

You gonna get that?

*FABIAN continues to grade papers.*

*Phone shuts off.*

**TRUVY**

Professor?

*FABIAN continues to grade papers.*

*Phone rings.*

**TRUVY answers.**

Hello.

No. I'm his...I'm answering his phone.

*(covering the receiver)*

Do you have time to answer a quick survey?

*FABIAN does not answer.*

*(into phone, altering voice)*

Yes. I have time.

Yes.

No.
Most certainly not!

Maybe.

Fifty-seven.

Yes.

Yes.

No.

Okay. Goodbye.

TRUVY hangs up.

That was fun! (laughs) It's fun assuming an identity. Except that well—(long pause) Professor?

FABIAN

(noticing Truvy)

What?

TRUVY

How are you, Professor?

FABIAN

I'm sorry. I don't recognize you. Are you in one of my classes?

TRUVY

Yes. Advanced Emissions Control. Monday/Wednesday 9:30 a.m.

FABIAN

Really?

TRUVY

I sit in the back.

FABIAN

Would you say that you sit in the back as a means to blend in with a crowd?
TRUVY

What?

FABIAN

I don't blend in with a crowd. I tend to wear bright clothing.

TRUVY

What about at a funeral?

FABIAN

(beat) Why are you in my office?

TRUVY

I need to ask you something—

FABIAN

It's an odd habit to wear black to a funeral, don't you think?

TRUVY

I think black symbolizes mourning.

FABIAN

It does. (beat) My father-in-law died.

TRUVY

I am so very sorry to hear that.

FABIAN

He died before I knew him.

TRUVY

Oh—

FABIAN

Please, have a seat.

TRUVY shifts in her seat uncomfortably.
TRUVY
I have a question, but I can't stay long.

FABIAN
Oh—

TRUVY
Last class, the whole time you talked about sentiment—

FABIAN
Yes?

TRUVY
Why?

FABIAN
As a professor—how old are you?

TRUVY
Excuse me?

*Phone rings again.*

Are you gonna get that?

FABIAN
Are you married?

TRUVY
Yes. You gonna get that?

FABIAN
I'm married, too.

TRUVY
I'm here to learn to work on cars. I want to make money.

*Ringing stops.*
FABIAN
Do you find that time often slips away from you?

TRUVY
I find that others often waste my time.

FABIAN
When someone dies, do you think they still remember things?

TRUVY
Advanced Emissions Control, Monday/Wednesday 9:30 a.m. I have a question.

FABIAN
Do you like your husband?

TRUVY
We have our moments.

FABIAN
Tell me a story about him.

TRUVY
He's a big man, with big muscles. And he eats strawberry ice-cream cones on Saturdays.

FABIAN
Does he wear black?

TRUVY
At funerals.

FABIAN
You're very pretty.

TRUVY
I'm an old woman.
Does it surprise you that I say that?

*The phone rings.*

*FABIAN ignores it.*

TRUVY

You gonna get that?

*The phone rings again.*

*FABIAN continues to ignore it.*

TRUVY finally answers it.

Hello?

(covers receiver with hand)

It's your wife.

FABIAN

Tell her I am busy under a lift.

TRUVY

(into phone)

He's busy under a lift.

Okay, I'll tell him.

(covers receiver with hand)

She says you forgot your lunch box.

FABIAN

Tell her I'll go out for lunch.

TRUVY

(into phone)

He's says he's going out for lunch.
TRUVY (cont.)

Okay. I'll let him know. Goodbye.

*TRUVY hangs up.*

She told me to tell you that she loves you.

*The phone rings.*

FABIAN

Don't answer that.

*Lights fade to black.*
3. Lily and Isaac, then Fabian and Rory

*LILY sits drinking coffee from a paper cup.*

*The space is silent, as this is Lily’s thinking space.*

ISAAC enters.

*LILY does not know who he is.*

ISAAC does not know who she is.

ISAAC

Hello.

LILY

Oh, hi.

ISAAC begins to sit.

I'm on my way to a party.

*Long pause as Lily drinks her coffee.*

ISAAC

Shouldn't you be leaving soon, then?

LILY

I guess.

ISAAC

You seem like an interesting person.

LILY

Oh, no. I'm normal.

ISAAC

A lot of people are.

LILY

That's true.
ISAAC
What's your name?

LILY
Lily.

ISAAC
Lily?

LILY
Lily.

ISAAC
Lily. How's the coffee?

LILY
Good.

ISAAC
You're very quiet.

LILY
I want to be alone. (beat) Not to be rude.

ISAAC
No you don't.

LILY
Yes I do.

ISAAC
What are you thinking about?

LILY
My father.
Really?

He died. A very long time ago.

Oh? What was his name?

Isaac.

Isaac?

Isaac.

I've heard that name before. (long pause) I'm sorry. I'm not very interesting. I just feel a little dizzy.

Dizzy?

And forgetful. I'm sorry, what's your name again?

Lily.

Oh yeah. Your name is Lily. And you're sad.
ISAAC
You’re sad because your husband died.

LILY
No. My father died. (beat) My husband is having an affair.

ISAAC
Really?

*LILY softly cries.*

LILY
I shouldn’t be crying.

ISAAC
No, you shouldn’t.

You were invited to a party. That sounds like fun!

LILY
I don’t feel like a party.

ISAAC
Because you’re sad.

LILY
(stops crying)

No. Because I want to think. I like to sit alone and imagine my father. But nothing comes to mind, so I imagine my husband with his girlfriend.

*Lights up stage right, Fabian and Rory sit drinking coffee.*

*LILY and ISAAC, stage left, watch.*

RORY
I like seeing you here, outside of school.
FABIAN

Did you know that my wife's name is just Lily. Not Lillian. Just plain Lily.

RORY

When are you going home to plain Lily? (beat) Did I just sound like a nag?

FABIAN

Do you know what I'm thinking about?

RORY

Me—

FABIAN

The last time I had sex with my wife.

RORY

Oh.

FABIAN

I pretended I was someone else.

RORY

No, no, no. The magazines say that you have to pretend she's someone else. Someone like me.

FABIAN

I pretended Lily was having an affair. Like, with a co-worker. She brings a co-worker home and rips the buttons off their shirt. And takes them. Takes them without worrying about expectations. It's just Lily. Plain Lily. And what Lily wants.

RORY

What about Fabian?

FABIAN

What about me?
RORY
I'm sure that Lily is a nice person.

FABIAN
Yeah?

RORY
She's just in the wrong space, or something.

FABIAN
What about me?

RORY
I like you, so what’s it matter?

FABIAN
Do you know what it's like marrying the wrong person?

RORY
I think I might love you.
Can I comb your hair?

FABIAN
Okay.

*RORY combs FABIAN's hair.*
That feels nice.

RORY
You have really nice hair.

FABIAN
Where do you work?

RORY
A greeting card store.
FABIAN

Do you like it?

RORY

Your hair smells nice.

FABIAN

Is it a sad job?

RORY

No. It's nice.

FABIAN

I would think it's a sad job.

RORY

Sentimental, yes. But not sad.

FABIAN

Want to hear something sad?

RORY

No.

FABIAN

Everyone my age has a wife. And one day I'll be old. I'll be old and I'll be buying greeting cards from you. And the worst part is, I won't even want to buy them. You'll think it's sweet. And I'll think it's sad.

*RORY stops combing FABIAN's hair.*

*RORY lays FABIAN's head in her lap.*

FABIAN

Tell me a story.
RORY
An old man bought a young woman a greeting card. Was that nice?

FABIAN
I guess so.

RORY
You're full of shit.

FABIAN
I have to go home soon.

RORY
Do you mind if I hold your hand? Just a little touch-like this-

*RORY holds FABIAN's hand.*

RORY
Are you nervous?

FABIAN
A little.

RORY
I'm not accustomed to going out with a married man.

FABIAN
Really?

RORY
No. I like sleeping with married men, actually. When a married man is sleeping with you, he isn't thinking about you. I mean, he has to think about you a little because you're there, naked. But really, he's thinking about his wife. He holds you the way he used to hold her. Or, the way he wants to hold her. He tells you he loves you, because for that moment he does love you, just like he loves her. (long pause)

Kiss me, Fabian.
FABIAN

It wouldn't be appropriate.

_They kiss, anyway._

_Lights fade on Rory and Fabian._

ISAAC

Is this uncomfortable for you?

LILY

A little.

ISAAC

I like seeing your thoughts.

LILY

Can I see yours?

ISAAC

Okay.

_LILY tries to read ISAAC’s thoughts._

_Nothing happens._

ISAAC

Try again.

_LILY tries again._

_Nothing happens._

ISAAC

I was thinking about a yellow coat. I think I lost it.

LILY

Oh?
ISAAC

Are we friends?

LILY

No. But I feel like I know you. Or that I should know you.

ISAAC

What's your name again?

LILY

Lily.

ISAAC

Do you want to be alone?

LILY

Yes. Please.

ISAAC

Okay. Goodbye.

LILY

Goodbye.

ISAAC

Goodbye.

LILY

Goodbye.

*Lights fade to black.*
4. Isaac and Fabian, then Lily

*Bare stage, except for Isaac’s picture.*

*This space is Lily and Fabian’s bedroom.*

ISAAC

So you kissed—

FABIAN

Rory.

ISAAC

You kissed Rory?

FABIAN

Yes.

ISAAC

Rory?

FABIAN

She's a nice girl.

ISAAC

Strange name.

FABIAN

Yes.

ISAAC

Is she a good kisser? Does she use her tongue or does she do that little bird thing where she barely opens her mouth, like she's too polite to be kissed.

FABIAN

Mmm. I would say—
LILY

(off stage)

Fabes! I’m home!

ISAAC

I think I know your wife. But I can’t be too sure.

ISAAC exits.

LILY enters.

LILY and FABIAN awkwardly hug.

LILY

How was your day?

LILY and FABIAN prepare for bed.

LILY (cont.)

You’re going to want coffee in the morning, right?

FABIAN

No—

LILY

No?

FABIAN leaves a pile of clothes on the floor.

FABIAN

Tea.

LILY

We always have coffee in the morning.

FABIAN

No.

FABIAN starts putting on socks.
LILY

Of course we have coffee. Why'd you put on socks?

FABIAN

Feet are cold. I love you.

LILY

We can go out for breakfast.

FABIAN

I love you.

LILY

It would be real nice to go out, that way I don't have to worry about a big mess in the kitchen.

FABIAN

I love you.

LILY

I can set the alarm early and (pause) I think it's a great idea that you're switchin' from tea to coffee. Feet warm?

FABIAN

We're going out in the morning?

LILY

You love me?

FABIAN

Yes.

LILY

Do you think I'm pretty?

FABIAN

Yes.
LILY

Do you think I'm too pretty?

FABIAN

You're gorgeous. Gimme a kiss—

LILY

Did you know that my Momma knew everything about my Daddy?

FABIAN

Everything.

LILY

It's true. Everything. Momma knew his favorite meals, what size clothes he wore, and what would happen if he ate a grapefruit. (pause) I don't do any of that.

FABIAN

What?

LILY

You're right Fabian. (laughs) You always have tea in the morning. How could I forget that?

FABIAN

And you always coffee.

LILY

Do you want to have sex?

FABIAN

You know I love you. Right?

*Lights fade to black.*
5. Lily and Kay, then Fabian

*Inside Kay’s kitchen, zydeco music plays.*

*LILY and KAY sit knitting.*

*Nearby is a chair with ISAAC’s yellow coat.*

LILY

Tell me about Daddy.

KAY

Lily, I don’t want you up in my house cryin’.

LILY

I cry all the time, anyway.

KAY

What do you want to know?

LILY

Everything.

KAY

No cryin’.

LILY

No crying.

KAY

Isaac was everybody’s best friend. He couldn’t go anywhere without somebody stoppin’ and talkin’ to him.

LILY

Was he smart?

KAY

I guess.
LILY

Oh—

KAY

He was a nice man and lived a happy life.

LILY

What was his favorite color?

KAY

Green.

Brown.

Pink. It was pink.

LILY

You sure?

KAY

He was my husband, I would know.

LILY

You loved him?

KAY

Of course I did!

LILY

Did he love other people too?

KAY

Isaac was a good man.

LILY

I don’t want to upset you.
How’s Fabian?

Fine.

He still busy a lot?

Why are you mean to me?

I’m not mean to you. I love you.

* LILY is upset.

* The women continue to knit.

* FABIAN enters.

* The women do not notice.

* FABIAN takes the yellow coat and puts it on.

* FABIAN exits.

* Lights fade to black.
6. Fabian and Truvy

FABIAN sits at a desk grading papers, wearing the yellow coat.

There are sounds of air compressors and various other sounds heard at an auto-shop.

TRUVY enters, wearing black, and sits.

TRUVY

I’ve thought about my old boyfriend twenty-six times today.

FABIAN

Why?

TRUVY

He died.

FABIAN

I’m sorry.

TRUVY

Thank you. He was on his way to see me.

FABIAN

To catch up on old times?

TRUVY

I suppose.

FABIAN

Would you like to stop talking about sad things?

TRUVY

I’m mad.

FABIAN

Yeah?
TRUVY

My boyfriend was always—

FABIAN

What?

TRUVY

Stop interrupting me!

I wonder when I became such a bitch…it’s just, a small part of me, I think, enjoyed the fact that he had a wife.

FABIAN

What?

TRUVY

If he was married, he couldn’t get too attached to me.

FABIAN

Your boyfriend?

TRUVY

Thing is, I love him. And it makes me mad!

FABIAN

Are you gonna be okay?

TRUVY

Sorry.

My husband is like a fruit cake at Christmas. You don’t like the taste of them, but there they are, at every party, every dinner. Fruit cake.

I can’t love my husband the way I loved Isaac.

FABIAN

Isaac?

The phone rings.
TRUVY answers it.

Hello?

(covers receiver with hand)

It's your wife.

FABIAN

Tell her I am busy under a lift.

TRUVY

(into phone)

He's busy under a lift.

Okay, I'll tell him.

(covers receiver with hand)

She says you forgot to kiss her goodbye.

FABIAN

Tell her I'll I won’t forget to kiss her goodbye tomorrow.

TRUVY

(into phone)

He's says he's won’t forget to kiss you tomorrow.

TRUVY (cont.)

Okay. I'll let him know. Goodbye.

TRUVY hangs up.

She told me to tell you that she misses you.

Lights fade to black.
Inside Kay’s kitchen, zydeco music plays.

TRUVY and KAY sit doing nothing.

KAY

Hey.

TRUVY

Hi. You were his wife.

KAY

Yeah. And you were the other woman.

TRUVY

Obviously.

KAY

Nice to see you.

TRUVY

Nice to see you, too—

KAY


TRUVY

Truvy.

KAY

I know.

TRUVY

Oh. Of course you know that. I came to see you-

KAY

Because I'm so sad all the time?
KAY (cont.)

Do you miss him as much as I do?

TRUVY

Of course I do.

KAY

It's just—

TRUVY

Go on—

KAY

I-I don't know if I really miss him. Not really.

TRUVY

No?

KAY

Yes.

TRUVY

I don't think so.

KAY

I've never liked to be alone.

TRUVY

Most people don't.

KAY

When I'm alone, I'm sad. And when I'm sad I'm not sure what to think about, so I think about Isaac. But thinking about Isaac with Fabian (ya know, my son-in-law) running around makes me feel—
TRUVY

What?

KAY

Funny. But I'm not one to be in a funny mood.

TRUVY

I would love a cup of coffee.

*KAY exits and returns with coffee.*

KAY

There you are.

TRUVY

Thank you.

KAY

You're welcome. I wanted to ask you, Isaac, did he like your cooking?

TRUVY

I never cooked for him.

*TRUVY tries the coffee.*

This is good coffee.

KAY

If you didn't cook for him, what did you do with him?

TRUVY

Does this help you, to be askin' so many questions?

KAY

I don't know. What did you come here for?

TRUVY

I'm studying mechanical theory. Did you know?
Really?

Automotive repair, actually.

Fabian teaches that.

I want to make money.

I've never worked.

Really?

Do you want to hear some stories about Isaac?

Not really.

Why?

That's not why I came here.

Then why are you here?

I'm married.
KAY

Oh—

TRUVY

He's plain. Not too beautiful, but not ugly either.

KAY

Fabian's beautiful.

TRUVY

Isaac was too.

KAY

I wonder if I could ever get used to another man.

TRUVY

I did.

KAY

You weren't married to Isaac.

TRUVY

I used to pretend I was you. Did you know?

KAY

No you didn't.

TRUVY

Yes I did. I pretended that I washed his underwear and cooked his food.

Did you ever pretend to be me?

KAY

No.

TRUVY

Liar.
KAY

I'm not a jealous person.

TRUVY

Liar.

KAY

Granted, I was always suspicious of Isaac. But I was his wife. I’m pretty. (I’ve aged well, yes?) And I'm a good cook. Isaac loved being my husband.

TRUVY

No one likes being a husband. Not even mine.

Can I have some more coffee?

KAY

I have to make a new pot.

*KAY exits.*

TRUVY, using a pocket mirror, applies lipstick.

ISAAC enters.

TRUVY

You all right?

ISAAC

I’ve lost something.

TRUVY

What?

TRUVY

I don’t like that shirt on you.

ISAAC

I’m wearing black because I’m dead.
ISAAC
No?

TRUVY
I miss you.

ISSAC
Yeah?

TRUVY
But more than anything, I'm mad at you.

ISAAC
Mad at me?

TRUVY
Yes! Mad! You were supposed to come see me! You were supposed to buy me flowers! You were supposed to stay! Here. With me. But you went off and died!

ISAAC
It must be hard for you.

TRUVY
Your wife, the grief, the black clothes, it's just dreadful.

ISAAC
How's your husband?

TRUVY
Fine.

ISAAC
There's these jokes about dead guys.

TRUVY
That they're stiff?
ISAAC

I can never remember the punch line.

TRUVY

I came here—

ISAAC

If you're going to cry, please don't.

TRUVY

Shut-up.

ISAAC

Never mind. It's okay to cry.

TRUVY

I don't know how to cry when I'm supposed to.

ISAAC

Just try.

TRUVY tries to cry, unsuccessfully.

TRUVY

I can't.

ISAAC

Try again.

TRUVY tries to cry, unsuccessfully, again.

ISAAC

Oh.

TRUVY

I'm not a home wrecker, am I?
ISAAC

I don't think so.

TRUVY

I said that I would never love again. And it's true. My husband is a bore.

ISAAC

I have a terrible memory now.

TRUVY

And you're dead.

ISAAC

Yeah.

TRUVY

Why do we think about you so much?

ISAAC

Did you ever feel like you were second best?

TRUVY

I—(long pause) It doesn’t matter either way.

ISAAC

I wonder how long it takes before people stop talkin' about me.

TRUVY

It's not good for you. And it's not good for us. Life is for the living.

ISAAC

You think so?

TRUVY

You’ll have to leave soon—
ISAAC

For good?

TRUVY

I have a husband. And I’m trying to make money.

ISAAC

Okay. Well, goodbye, then.

TRUVY

Goodbye.

They kiss.

The kiss is happiness, sadness, and anger all in one.

TRUVY (cont.)

Time for you to go, now.

ISAAC exits.

KAY enters with coffee, gives it to TRUVY.

KAY

Here we are, the two people who loved Isaac the most. I wonder what he would say.

TRUVY

Before I go, I want you to know that I always hated that Isaac had a wife.

KAY

And now?

TRUVY

He’s dead. So what does it matter?

KAY

I dunno.

Lights fade to black.
8. Rory and Lily

Lily’s thinking space.

LILY sits alone drinking coffee.

RORY enters, and sits.

LILY

My name’s Lily.

RORY

I’m Rory.

LILY

I like your lipstick. I suppose that surprises you.

RORY

I don’t know what you mean.

LILY

Course you do.
You’re very pretty.

RORY begins to rub off her lipstick.

LILY gives RORY a tube of lipstick.

LILY

A girl should know she’s pretty.

RORY

It always embarrasses me to look at myself.

LILY

I don’t believe you.

RORY

I’m very sorry about Fabian.
LILY
I hate sentiment.

RORY
No you don't.

LILY
My husband loves me.
Still, you're very pretty.

RORY
What's the worst thing you've ever done?

LILY
Marry someone I'm not sure I like.

RORY
Can I brush your hair?

LILY
Okay.

RORY brushes LILY's hair.

RORY
Does that feel nice?

LILY
Yes.

RORY
I love brushing hair. It relaxes me.

LILY
Are you a nervous person?
RORY

A little.

LILY

I’m a sad person. It’s like there is something that follows me everywhere I go and it says, “Lily, be sad.”

What's Fabian like with you?

RORY

Will you be mad?

LILY

No.

RORY

He's strange.

LILY

And?

RORY

That's about it. I like to be people’s favorite.

You want to take care of him, don't you?

LILY

I think so.

RORY

Does all of this upset you?

LILY

I'm not a jealous person.

RORY

You always seem sad.
LILY

I don’t care what you do with Fabian. (pause) I think. But let's get one thing straight. I'm tired of thinking about my dead father.

Lights fade to black.
9. Truvy and Fabian

TRUVY sits at FABIAN's desk, wearing a black trench coat.

FABIAN enters wearing the yellow coat.

There are sounds of air compressors and various other noises heard at an auto-shop.

TRUVY

You're late.

FABIAN

I know. I'm sorry.

TRUVY

Your wife, what's her name again?

FABIAN

Lily.

TRUVY

That's right. Lily. I think I'd like her.

FABIAN

Her cooking is horrible.

TRUVY

I have a headache.

FABIAN

Shops are loud places.

TRUVY

Lately it seems like all I get are headaches.

FABIAN

Would you like an aspirin?
TRUVY

I'm forgetting things, too. Like my phone number and the name of my first boyfriend. Does that happen to you?

FABIAN

No.

TRUVY

I try to think about my husband instead.

FABIAN

That's nice.

TRUVY

My husband’s gross.

FABIAN

That’s bad.

TRUVY

Life is—

FABIAN

What?

TRUVY

Do you ever want to cry?

FABIAN

No.

TRUVY

It's okay if you want to kiss me.

FABIAN

Not right now.
TRUVY

(touching FABIAN's coat)

You just remind me of someone. Problem is, I'm forgetting—(long pause)

What's your wife like?

FABIAN

Would it be strange to tell you?

TRUVY

No.

FABIAN

Lily is depressed. But she's sexy-

TRUVY

Sexy?

FABIAN

She has these white laced nightgowns.

TRUVY

Oh—

FABIAN

And she moves, in sadness, in these little, white laced nightgowns. It's very charming and beautiful.

TRUVY

And sexy.

FABIAN

Does this upset you?

TRUVY

I'd love to meet her.
FABIAN

I dunno.

TRUVY

I'm not a jealous person. I just-

FABIAN

I dunno. Maybe we can have tea.

TRUVY

Have you ever been to a funeral?

FABAIN

Once.

TRUVY

Have you ever seen a person once they take off all their black, funeral clothes?

FABIAN

No.

TRUVY removes her trench coat, revealing bright colored lingerie.

TRUVY

You're the only person I know that's ever worn a yellow coat. I think.

Phone rings.

TRUVY answers.

TRUVY

Hello?

(covers receiver with hand)

It's your wife.

FABIAN

Tell her I am busy with a student.
TRUVY

(into phone)

He's busy with a student.

TRUVY hangs up.

TRUVY and FABIAN kiss, a superficial kiss with no meaning.

Lights fade to black.
Inside Kay’s kitchen, zydeco music plays.

RORY and KAY politely sit together.

KAY
It's so nice to meet you.

RORY
Likewise.

KAY
Would you like some tea?

RORY
Very much.

Are they really in love?

KAY
Fabian and Lily?

RORY
Yes.

KAY
Oh, they are very much in love.

RORY
How can you tell?

KAY
Husbands always love their wives.

RORY
How terrible.
KAY

How's your appetite?

RORY

Pretty good.

KAY

You hungry?

RORY

Yeah—

KAY

I'll make you something.

*KAY prepares food.*

*RORY watches, as if she's KAY's lover.*

RORY

I like being here with you.

KAY

I hate being alone.

RORY

Do you find me attractive, Kay?

KAY

No.

Yes.

RORY

You must be an interesting person, having a dead husband and all.

KAY

People talk about dead husbands like they're something special. God knows I do. I
don't have anything else to do but grieve. So life becomes memories, memories,
KAY (cont.)

memories. What he looked like. How he acted. Whether he preferred apples to plums. Blah, blah, blah. But the thing is, you forget. Little things first, then big things, then everything. So I make everything up. And in the end, you don't have a dead husband, you have an invention.

ISAAC enters.

RORY watches KAY jealously.

ISAAC

Smells good.

KAY

Shrimp. Have you seen Truvy?

ISAAC

Yeah.

KAY

I think she's weird.

ISAAC

A little bit. But what's it matter?

KAY

I always wanted to know everything about you.

ISAAC

Everything?

KAY

But I make it all up now. And Lily believes me.

ISAAC

Who?

KAY

Lily.
KAY gives ISAAC a plate of food.

He doesn’t eat it.

KAY

I didn’t know you were coming for dinner.

ISAAC

I should have called.

KAY

Were you happy?

ISAAC

I think so.

KAY

Don’t fret over it. I always say you were.

ISAAC

Thank you.

KAY

When you die, are you homeless?

ISAAC

No. But I get headaches a lot.

KAY

Oh.

KAY readies another plate of food.

ISAAC

That for her?

KAY

Rory? Yeah.
ISAAC

You’re free to let go whenever you’d like.

KAY

I know. But I’m afraid.

ISAAC

You shouldn’t be.

(looking around)

I think I’ve lost something.

KAY

We all have.

ISAAC

I have to go now. Goodbye, Kay.

KAY

Can you kiss me?

*KAY and ISAAC kiss. Not a kiss of finality, but a sweet, gentle kiss.*

*Lights fade to black.*
11. Lily

*Lily’s thinking space.*

* LILY sits drinking coffee, thinking.

* LILY gets up and begins to dust ISAAC’S picture.

**LILY**

When I was a baby, it was just me and Momma.

She sang songs and kissed my cheeks.

And I loved her then.

Through a series of sounds I learned to talk. After all that babble came nouns.

* Mommy.

* Kitty.

* Doggy.

But never *Daddy*.

What could anyone say?

His death feels like homesickness.
12. Lily, Kay, Rory, then Fabian

*LILY, KAY, and RORY are in a flurry of activity while everyone gets plates, saucers, tea cups, and cloth napkins.*

*All wear fancy hats, with some sort of veil covering.*

*LILY and RORY sit.*

*KAY looks at the set up.*

KAY

Somethin' is missin'; I'll be right back.

*KAY exits.*

RORY

Where do you work?

LILY

Nowhere.

RORY

Looking?

LILY

No.

RORY

What do you do now?

*KAY returns with a bottle of whiskey.*

*She sets a tea pot and a plate of finger foods on the table, serving all tea and snacks.*

*KAY sits.*

*All spike their tea with whiskey and sip their tea often. The women become inebriated quickly.*
KAY

(to RORY)

You're very comforting to me.

LILY

Mmm—

KAY

(to LILY)

Do you agree?

LILY

A little.

*LILY, KAY, and RORY continue to sip and eat.*

*All pour more whiskey into their cups.*

LILY

I read somethin' in a magazine the other day.

KAY

(patting her face)

An article on wrinkles?

LILY

Extra-marital affairs. Article said that an affair could rekindle desire in a marriage.

RORY

Who has to do the cheating, the husband or the wife?

LILY

A bond between a husband and a wife can endure cheating-

RORY

Well how ‘bout that.

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KAY
My husband would have never cheated on me.

RORY
(squeezing KAY's hand)
Of course he wouldn't.

*KAY tops off her tea cup with whiskey.*

KAY
(pointing to RORY)
Isaac used to sit there—

RORY
Should I move?

LILY
Growing up father-less is—

RORY
Kay, I'm sure Isaac would rather be here with you than...wherever he is.

KAY
I don't think I'll get over Isaac being dead. But you are such a comfort to me, Rory.

LILY
I—I think Daddy is sad that I grew up without him.

KAY
Oh Lily, let's not ruin our little party with such sad sentiment—

*LILY is suddenly overcome with a fit of hiccups.*

KAY
Go gargle—

*LILY exits.*
KAY and RORY top off their tea cups.

RORY

I'm havin' a nice time.

KAY

I am so glad. I feel like I've always known you.

RORY

Is Fabian coming over?

KAY

I think so. Let me tell you all you need to know about a man-

RORY

All I need to know?

KAY

At supper time give a man some supper.

RORY

And later?

KAY

You mean like a midnight snack?

RORY

(being sexually suggestive with her tea cup)

Somethin' like that.

KAY

I'm not sure I know what you mean—

RORY

Lily and Fabian-
KAY
I just adore Fabian.

RORY
You give him supper; she gives him snacks—

KAY
And you don't?

RORY
The tech school has strict policies against this.

KAY
Bull—

RORY
I adore you.

KAY
I miss havin' sex.

RORY
You still can.

KAY
With a man—

RORY
There are ways—

KAY
A real man—

RORY
You must miss Isaac.
This house is too quiet.

I like you—

Wanna hear somethin' terrible.

No.

I didn't go to his funeral.

Too sad?

LILY returns. She has applied dark lip stick.

(being sexually suggestive with her tea cup)

Welcome back, beautiful.

LILY sits, topping off teacup.

Rory-Boo, you are just the prettiest little thing! And talented, too, I'm sure-

Tell me about Isaac.

He was very talented. And beautiful. Men aren't supposed to be beautiful, I suppose. But Isaac-

Tell us everything about him—
OH, you don't want to hear all this—

I bet it's hard for you to re-live it.

More than anything, I wish for a chance to grieve—

FABIAN enters wearing the yellow coat.

There is a shuffle as everyone tries to make room for FABIAN.

Plates, saucers, and the whiskey bottle trade hands, everyone says things like, "That's my foot!" and "I want to sit there."

All take sips from the whiskey bottle.

Even in a room full of people, I feel all alone.

(squeezing KAY’s hand)

I’m here with you.

Rory—

Oh, Fabes honey, kind souls just want to make others feel better, is all. No need to get jealous.

Not jealous. My stomach just hurts.

Whenever I’m jealous my stomach hurts.
KAY

(handing FABIAN a cookie)

Have another cookie, sweetheart.

LILY

(squeezing FABIAN’s hand)

Better?

RORY

Oh, Kay, when do you think we can do this again?

FABIAN

Rory, there’s a lot of school stuff—

KAY

What’s all this school nonsense?

LILY

(to FABIAN)

I don’t like it when you’re at school all the time.

FABIAN

(to LILY)

Do you have a stomach ache, too?

RORY

Oh, Fabian, I like you, too.

I know what Miss Kay needs. We need to host a funeral.

All ‘yall need to do what I say.

RORY seats LILY and KAY giving them cups of whiskey.
RORY

(to LILY and KAY)

You two are the mourners. Kay will be Kay. And Lily, I guess you’ll be Lily.

*RORY takes FABIAN by the hand and lies him on the table.*

RORY (cont.)

(to FABIAN)

You’re going to be Isaac. So just lie there, like a dead man.

*FABIAN lies corpse like.*

RORY (cont.)

Let’s get started—

LILY

Wait! I have to pee—

*LILY exits.*

RORY

What an odd woman—

KAY

Stop bein’ ugly. Her Daddy is dead.

RORY

Are you sad?

KAY

Yes. Are you?

*LILY returns and sits.*

*RORY leans over LILY and squeezes KAY’s hand.*
RORY

I am so glad I can share this with you.

*RORY prepares to give a eulogy.*

*LILY and KAY pass the whiskey bottle back and forth the remainder of the scene.*

RORY

Every long night leads to dawn.

LILY

You're all weirdoes.

RORY

People need a chance to heal.

KAY

Yeah.

(to LILY)

I need a chance to heal.

RORY

(to FABIAN)

You doin' okay?

FABIAN

Yeah.

KAY

This feels wrong—

LILY

Thank you!

KAY

Well, that coat. It’s nice—
RORY

Yes. He looks very beautiful—

KAY

Handsome—

RORY

He looks handsome—

KAY

I agree. It's just that, Isaac wore hats—

RORY

(to LILY)

Give him a hat—

*LILY produces a hat and tries to put it on FABIAN's head.*

KAY

No, no. He's got to hold it—

LILY

(to FABIAN)

Hold it—

KAY

Don't talk to your Daddy that way. He's dead.

*LILY positions the hat in FABIAN's hands.*

*LILY sits.*

FABIAN

This good?

RORY

Oh, Fabian! You're perfect at this!
KAY

(to FABIAN)

Don't talk anymore. You're dead.

_FABIAN wiggles his toes._

_FABIAN fidgets throughout the remainder of the scene._

LILY

He's supposed to be my Daddy?

KAY

Somethin's missin'—

RORY

Close your eyes.

_KAY closes her eyes._

Imagine Isaac. What does he have that Fabian doesn't?

LILY

A heartbeat.

KAY

(opening her eyes)

His coloring is all wrong. Isaac was pink.

LILY

Daddy was pink?

KAY

Pink-ish.

RORY

(to FABIAN)

Can you be more pinkish?
FABIAN

(not moving)

Like this?

RORY

(to FABIAN)

Sit up.

_FABIAN sits up._

RORY

Here—

_RORY hands FABIAN a tube of pink lipstick._

RORY

(to LILY)

Get him a mirror.

_LILY produces and holds a pocket mirror to FABIAN's face._

_FABIAN applies lipstick to his lips and dabs cheeks to make rouge._

KAY

Stop!

RORY

Freeze, Fabian!

KAY

That's it! Oh Isaac!

_KAY jumps into FABIAN's lap._

_KAY kisses FABIAN._

_FABIAN remains frozen._
LILY

(to RORY)

Do somethin'!

RORY

We should begin.

*RORY gently pulls KAY off FABIAN.*

*KAY sits.*

*RORY pushes FABIAN, who is still frozen, down.*

*RORY assumes corpse pose.*

RORY

Here lies Isaac—

KAY

Isaac Abraham Deauxtrive—

RORY

Here lies Isaac Abraham Deauxtrive. He loved—

KAY

Sandwiches.

RORY

Sandwiches. Hearty sandwiches you could grab with both hands.

KAY

(crying)

We used to have picnics together.

RORY

Isaac was a man taken too soon—
LILY

From his daughter—

KAY

From his wife—

RORY

From this world.

*RORY takes a shot of whiskey and leans over FABIAN, staring at him.*

RORY

He was beautiful, handsome. Pinkish. Kind-hearted. Sweet, like a little bit of chocolate—

*RORY kisses FABIAN.*

*KAY pulls RORY off and kisses FABIAN.*

*LILY pulls KAY off and kisses FABIAN.*

*All have lipstick smeared all over their faces.*

FABIAN

Are we going to finish?

KAY

Stop talking! You're dead!

*LILY and KAY sit.*

*RORY finishes directing the funeral.*

RORY

Here lies a man who was sweet—

KAY

Like a jellybean—
LILY

Or a marshmallow—

RORY

He was loved by many.

LILY

He loved his daughter—

KAY

(to RORY)

Say the thing about the sun again.

RORY

Every long night leads to dawn.

KAY

(to LILY)

Isn't this the best funeral you've ever been to?

FABIAN sneezes.

KAY (cont.)

(to FABIAN)

Stop that! You're dead!

LILY

(to RORY)

Say something about his daughter—

KAY

My heart. I miss Isaac so much—

LILY stands face-to-face with RORY away from FABIAN and KAY.

KAY sits, mourning.
LILY
Fix this funeral—

RORY
Isaac will be missed—

KAY
Oh Isaac!

*KAY jumps up and lies on top of FABIAN.*

LILY
Say something about me—

RORY
Everyone who knew Isaac agrees that he was a good man—

*KAY begins to make-out with FABIAN.*

LILY
Say something about his daughter.

RORY
Isaac will forever remain in our hearts—

LILY
Say something about me!

RORY
Not a day will go by, that we won't think about Isaac—

LILY
LILY! SAY SOMETHING ABOUT LILY!

*LILY flees the room.*

RORY
We should have a moment of silence.
Finally noticing, RORY pulls KAY off FABIAN.

RORY

Let's have a moment of silence.

RORY and KAY bow their heads in silence. Hold for ten seconds.

RORY embraces KAY and kisses her neck.

FABIAN sits up.

Lights fade to black.
13. Lily and Fabian, then Isaac

*Lily and Fabian’s bedroom.*

*LILY and FABIAN sit on the floor, eating hotdogs.*

LILY

I can't believe you did it, is all.

FABIAN

Nothin' to it.

LILY

Do you think a lot?

FABIAN

Whenever I teach.

LILY

Do your students listen to you?

FABIAN

You know I love you?

LILY

How's the hotdog?

FABIAN

I'll never get used to this.

LILY

Oh?

FABIAN

All this food and sex exhausts me.

LILY

But you're happy, right?
FABIAN

Your mother—

LILY

She's just a strong personality is all.

FABIAN

And your father?

LILY

Deep down, Momma’s a really nice person.

FABIAN

Most people usually are.

LILY

D'ya know why she named me Lily?

FABIAN

Her favorite flower?

LILY

She was afraid I would be a slow child. Lily is easy to spell. L-I-L-Y.

FABIAN

Were you a slow child?

LILY

You're madly in love with me, right?

FABIAN

Right.

LILY

Tell me then.
FABIAN

Lily, I am madly in love with you.

LILY

I should probably cook for you more.

FABIAN

No thanks.

LILY

Is it because I salt the potatoes too much?

FABIAN

You're sentimental. And it's nice.

LILY

I want to remember everything.

FABIAN

Then do it.

LILY

Still hungry?

FABIAN

Are you happy? (long pause)

LILY

I think you should go.

FABIAN

Kiss me.

LILY

Just once.

FABIAN and LILY kiss, a kiss of abrupt finality.
FABIAN takes of the yellow coat.

LILY hands FABIAN another hotdog.

FABIAN exits.

ISAAC enters.

ISAAC

I’m dizzy.

I think I’ve lost something. Not like keys or eyeglasses or a coat—something important.

I’m dead and I don’t remember a whole lot.

So, I might have misplaced my keys.

LILY approaches ISAAC.

LILY hands ISAAC a hotdog.

ISAAC

Thanks.

LILY

You’re welcome.

ISAAC

Your name is?

LILY

Lily. Why can’t you remember?

ISAAC

In my life, I had two girlfriends and one wife.

LILY

Yes. I know.

ISAAC

You do?
LILY

I know everything.

ISAAC

Yeah?

LILY

Don’t be mad.

ISAAC

My head hurts a lot.

LILY

I’m sad a lot. (pause) I have to go soon.

ISAAC

Will you remember me?

LILY

Why?

ISAAC

Won’t I go away if you stop thinking about me?

LILY

Maybe.

ISAAC

What’s your name again?

LILY

J.J. My name is J.J. and I’m exceedingly happy.

ISAAC

That’s nice.
LILY

Goodbye then.

ISAAC

Goodbye, J.J.

Lights fade to black.
14. Kay and Rory, then Isaac

*Train station.*

*RORY and KAY sit on a bus bench holding hands, each with a suitcase.*

RORY

Are you sad to be leaving?

KAY

No. It's time to move on.

RORY

If you were sad, it would be okay.

KAY

It's—Isaac was my only husband—it's hard to explain. You won't understand until you have a husband that dies.

RORY

We'll be happy together.

KAY

You're right. I do like you the best.

RORY

I want to be selfish with you.

KAY

Are you hungry?

RORY

A little thirsty.

KAY

Shall I get you a drink?
RORY

Not right now. Now, I want to kiss you.

*RORY and KAY kiss.*

*ISAAC enters and watches them kiss.*

*RORY and KAY cuddle.*

ISAAC

(looking at KAY)

I probably should kiss her.

*ISAAC walks over to his picture and holds it.*

I hate being dead.

I remember when I died.

When I was alive, I met a girl named Kay and I wanted to see her naked. Is that love? I never understood the concept.

I died quickly. I wanted to think about my wife, and the baby in her belly. But I'm not sure if I did.

*Puts his picture down.*

One day I woke up and I wanted coffee. And I was on my way to see my girlfriend. But I died.

*Fin.*