

...IMMORTALITY CRISIS...

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A SUICIDE HOTLINE IS FORCED TO HAVE SUICIDERS TAKE CALLS
IN AN ALTERNATIVE 2018 WHERE PEOPLE CAN'T STAY DEAD.

THEY DISAPPEAR AND RETURN... IN ABOUT 2 TO 4 MINUTES.

JEN	Asian-American, level-headed, a little edgy, sometimes regressive.	Mid 20's	Female
RAJIV	South Asian-American, cocky, obnoxious, never apologizes.	20's/30's	Male
LAUREN	Open Ethnicity, overworked, unphased, confident	Mid 40's	Female
ERIC	African or Latino American, shy, sweet-natured.	18	Male

Additional actors are expected to take on multiple roles as different callers.

CALLS IN ORDER OF APPEARANCE:

ELI	Irate, sad	22	Male
SELENA	Hopeless, drunk	40's	Female
LIZ	Traumatized	14	Female
RICHARD	Angry, manic	40's/50's	Male
ERIC'S CALLER #1 / #2	Obnoxious, emotional	Adult	M / F
JEN'S CALLER	Sad, irate	Adult	M / F
SAMUEL	Manic	30's/40's	Male
AUTOMATED RECORDING	Calm, robotic	Adult	M / F
911 OPERATOR #2 / #3	Patronizing	Adult	M / F
DYLAN	Fey, high, sweet, manic	20's	Male
TONI	Faint	20's	Male

AUTHOR'S NOTE: It is highly preferable that the callers are not entirely seen, creative measures could be taken to have the caller's *presence* on stage (behind a scrim, etc).

PROLOGUE

LIGHTS UP ON:

AN UNRECOGNIZABLE ROOM.

A LARGE SPLATTER OF WET BLOOD AND BRAIN OOZES FROM THE MIDDLE OF A WALL DOWN TO THE FLOOR, TOUCHING SOME PIECES OF HUMAN SCALP. THE FLOOR IS SOAKED IN BLOOD IN A STRANGE PATTERN THAT SUGGESTS A BODY HAD BEEN LYING THERE BEFORE. A FULL SET OF MEN'S CLOTHING WITH BOOTS IS SCATTERED ON THE FLOOR IN AN ODD WAY ALONG THE PATTERN. IT SHOULD LOOK LIKE AN UN-STUFFED SCARECROW WAS TOSSED TO THE FLOOR. A BLOODIED GUN LIES ON THE GROUND. A SMART PHONE SITS NEARBY, IT'S ON.

A CLEAN, HEALTHY, NAKED MAN, RICHARD FACES THE BLOODIED AREA, FOOTSTEPS AWAY, SCREAMING:

RICHARD
STOP DOING THIS TO ME!!! STOP!!!
STOP!! PLEASE!! PLEASE!!! GOD!!!
STOP!!!

ERIC (O.S)
Richard - Richard - you called us - you
want to talk - Richard - I'm here - Richard -
please - listen - Richard - I'm here -

HE MARCHES TO THE AREA, STANDS IN THE STRANGE PATTERN ON THE FLOOR, HE PICKS UP THE GUN AND PUTS THE GUN IN HIS MOUTH. WE SEE THAT THE BACK OF HIS HEAD IS RIGHT IN FRONT OF THE SPLATTER ON THE WALL, AND HE PULLS THE TRIGGER.

AS WE HEAR THE SHOT - THE STAGE IS CONCEALED IN A DRAMATIC AND DELIBERATE FASHION

[It's important that any possible creative staging take place to ensure the actor is not seen walking up and leaving.]

IN THE DARKNESS
WE HEAR A
MONTAGE OF
DIFFERENT
VOICES:

VOICES

Nobody cares that I'm killing myself.
 I wake up and I kill myself.
 I have control of it.
 I wouldn't do it while I'm driving.
 I only kill myself on the weekends.
 I can still function afterward.
 I hate it. I hate it.
 I wish I could stop.
 Nobody knows.

VOICES

Lots of people kill themselves now.
 I just wanted to see.
 I do it cleanly, I don't make a mess.
 I wake up and kill myself everyday.
 I just kill myself when I'm stressed.
 It's fine.
 I killed myself at work.
 I don't want this.
 I don't know how to stop.

CROSS FADE TO:

Dim lighting shows A CHAIR WITH A LAVALIER WIRELESS MIC facing the audience. LAUREN clips on the mic and sits.

LIGHTS GO HOT ON LAUREN.

We are in the middle of her TV INTERVIEW. She is noticeably distraught and defensive, but trying to keep her public relations composure while answering a question.

LAUREN

...I can tell you our job has gotten harder since humanity suddenly became Immortal. For years, you guys covered the wave of Death Experimentation, but I haven't seen nearly as much effort chronicling the endless number of Serial Suicide Addicts we have trying to live their lives in 2018 today.

REPORTER (O.S.)

(deflecting her attack)

And those are the calls you are receiving at your hotline now? Traumatized Suiciders?

LAUREN

Yes. They think they're solving their emotional and physical problems by killing themselves, but they just come back with a new shell of a body, and everything is entirely the same inside. It's just a hard truth to accept. Alcoholics call their sponsors, and the Serial Suiciders call us.

REPORTER (O.S.)
And you run a volunteer staff?

CROSS FADE TO:

SCENE 1

THE HOTLINE CENTER BREAKROOM.

Over ugly carpeting sits an over-used L-shaped sectional sofa, or maybe two separate ones, a coffee-table full of old magazines, and a large circular table with a random assortment of office chairs, folding chairs, etc.

In the corner is Lauren's cluttered Program Director Desk.

On the walls are different congratulatory plaques for the suicide hotline clinic and posters from fund-raisers from years past.

There is a small kitchen with a microwave, faucet, empty watercooler, fridge, cabinets, etc. Probably left-over grocery pastry boxes on the counter.

The ambience attempts to be somewhat "home-y". But the lighting is fluorescent, and the corporate window blinds are all closed.

JEN is on the sofa, flipping through a magazine. ERIC sits anxiously at the table. He has a SURGICAL MASK hanging from a belt loop.

We watch them wait, until:

JEN
(re: a magazine ad)
Ugh! Everything is so expensive!

She rarely looks away from the magazine as she speaks:

JEN (CONT'D)
I'll let you kill me for two thousand dollars.

ERIC
What?!

JEN
Fifteen hundred.

ERIC
No.

JEN

Just be fast. I'm not doing any snuff shit.

ERIC

I'm -

JEN

You can let out all that inner rage you're hiding in that shy little boy act of yours.

ERIC

(trying to be positive)

"Hi, my name is, Eric. What's your's?"

JEN

Come on, Eric. Don't you just wanna strangle me? Aren't I annoying the shit out of you? Just kill me and make it all stop.

ERIC

What do you want the money for?

JEN

I'm *twenty-three*, Eric. I don't *want* the money. I *need* it. Mommy and daddy are probably still foot'n your bill.

As RAJIV storms in, carrying a duffle bag and throwing it down:

JEN (CONT'D)

Ugh! Forget it!

(To Rajiv)

Do you wanna kill me for two grand?

RAJIV

How do you know I'm not gonna feel you up right before your body disappears?

JEN

Fuck you!

RAJIV

Fuck *you*.

A pause.

Then:

ERIC

Hi, my name is Eric. What's yours?

RAJIV

I'll pay you *ten* grand to kill her.

JEN

Watch me reappear and laugh at your broke ass after.

RAJIV

You don't know me.

ERIC

What's in the bag?

RAJIV

Your mom.

ERIC

That. That doesn't even make any sense.

RAJIV

Neither does your mom.

JEN

Don't be a dick.

RAJIV

Kill yourself.

JEN

Eric, our friend's "gym" bag is an extra set of clothes
- not for working out -

(look to Rajiv)

Clearly. But when he ends up with blood all over
himself.

RAJIV

Keep boring the shit out of me I'll be taking this to
the bathroom in minutes. I've got nine hundred
seventy-seven thousand more deaths left and I don't
want to waste my time.

JEN

Good luck.

ERIC

What are you guys talking about?

RAJIV

And Eric?

ERIC

Yeah?

RAJIV

Eric. If you do wanna kill her, you can borrow my friend.

Rajiv throws him a pocket knife.

JEN

(judgey)

Did you name it?

RAJIV

Well, the doctors already named the meds you probably O.D. on. So, yeah - I named it. Sounds better than Klonopine, or Oxycontin.

ERIC

I don't think I should be holding this.

RAJIV

Not a knife man, huh? What's your deal? I doubt you've even been in a loop.

ERIC

(earnestly)

I have.

RAJIV

Huh. Suffocater?

JEN

It's called asphyxiation.

RAJIV
Suffocater. That what the mask is for?

ERIC
Kinda.

RAJIV
You're fuck'n boring me. I'm gonna kill myself.
(picking up bag)
Shit's already a waste a time.

LAUREN walks in.

ERIC
What happens after nine hundred seventy seven
thousand?

LAUREN
Okay. She was longer than I expected.

She goes to her desk.

LAUREN (CONT'D)
(looking through paperwork, etc)
How many? Oh.
(hiding disappointment)
Uhhh... Okay! You're my "Thursday Three"!

ERIC
Hi, my name is Eric. What's yours?

LAUREN
(remembering)
Eric. So, your Rajiv.

RAJIV
Racist.

LAUREN
And Jennifer.

JEN
Jen.

LAUREN
Okay. Rajiv - would you like to kill yourself now -
or can you wait after the intro?

RAJIV

Um -

LAUREN

What's your usual time?

JEN

He probably reappears quick. Give'm sixteen seconds.

RAJIV

I usually disappear the full four minutes, thank you very much.

JEN

Does anybody ever *want* you to come back?

RAJIV

You'll be counting down the seconds.

LAUREN

Good. Yes, actually you will. That's what the L.E.D. screens are for. And I'm sure you're right in the average, Raj. I'm sure you all are. Most callers are around two minutes until reappearance.

(beat)

We have practically no funding, but, Rajiv, the city did give us a self-cleaning bathroom. Which, knock on wood, will keep working.

RAJIV

That's a relief, Jen's gonna puke everywhere. Will it take care of the smell?

LAUREN

(taking Rajiv on)

Do you want to go see how well it works now?

Rajiv is silent. Lauren goes back to her demonstration.

LAUREN (CONT'D)

So, you'll turn the timer on as soon as you think your caller has died. Gunshots are obvious - anything else is really just practice and intuition.

(MORE)

LAUREN (CONT'D)

But try to give yourself a good idea, because when you don't expect a manic looper to return, it can be a scare.

ERIC

Okay. Timer.

LAUREN

(pleasantly surprised)

Good!

RAJIV

(to Eric)

Of course you're the type.

JEN

Miss?

LAUREN

Lauren.

JEN

Lauren, I don't wanna be rude like our little Bollywood butter-knife show, but I'm not qualified to be talking people off the ledge. Considering I'm at death's door on a - not as much as Rajiv - pretty regular basis.

LAUREN

Yes, that's the point of the program. And you have all been cleared as very good candidates.

RAJIV

And we don't have a choice.

LAUREN

And you're mandated by the city to be here, correct.

ERIC

Not enough hospital beds anymore. We're your guinea pigs. To try to help. Help the bigger, systemic, uh, stuff that's -

LAUREN

Crisis.

RAJIV

You really had it at “systemic”.

LAUREN

You all are the first generation to grow up in the Immortality Crisis. And since things are only getting worse - well - you’re lucky to live in a city progressive enough to even have this program. Let alone house one of the last hotlines in the country.

ERIC

It’s one of the last?

RAJIV

Please shut up.

JEN

Rajiv.

RAJIV

Why’s he so fucking enthusiastic?

ERIC

I just want to get better.

RAJIV

Well, I wanna stay dead. The world won’t let me.

Rajiv picks up his bag.

RAJIV (CONT’D)

(to Jen)

Why do you keep defending him?

JEN

I’m not. I’m just letting you know you’re a dick.

RAJIV

Cool, thank you for establishing that. I’m *also* still *alive*. So, I’m gonna go try to do someth’n about it.

As Rajiv exits:

LAUREN

Just to be clear, you were all told you would be put in a Vege Patch if you choose not to complete the program, yes?

RAJIV

I'll be back in at least *4 minutes, Lauren.*

He leaves.

JEN

Lauren, let's just put all the assholes in Vege Patches.

ERIC

(earnestly)

I don't think they've built enough.

LAUREN

Yes, Eric another A-plus for you. Jennifer?

(correcting herself)

Jen? When do you think we call nine-one-one?

JEN

Lauren, I don't know. They don't give a shit.

LAUREN

Good. Yes, also correct. Okay, team!

JEN

I don't - this - none of this matters.

LAUREN

We are just getting started -

JEN

And I'm gonna be useless.

ERIC

But you got a question right.

JEN

Eric, I'm not sure what you think is gonna happen -

JEN (CONT'D)

But I only wanna take whatever funding the city will offer for whatever the fuck I'm gonna do with my life and stay out of the way as much as possible.

LAUREN

We're about to take some calls in about five minutes after I've gone through the basics. And I really need you to pay attention and not sulk.

JEN (CONT'D)

I wanna die, Lauren! Telling me not to sulk isn't helping.

LAUREN

Exactly! Which is why you're not going to do that once I get you on the phones. Look at that, you're not entirely useless.

ERIC

We should be nice right?

JEN

(annoyed with Eric)

Oh God! Where's Rajiv?

JEN (CONT'D)

He needs to hurry up, I've got a bottle of Percaset I need to take.

LAUREN

Not nice. Not anything, really.

LAUREN

Do you understand, Jennifer? All I need from you once I put you on the phone, is for you to do as little as possible.

JEN

Great.

LAUREN

What?

JEN

I said great.

LAUREN

No. What did I *say*, Jen?

JEN

You said "all you need from us on the phone is do little as possible".

LAUREN

Right. You repeated what I said. So, now, I know you were *listening*. You just learned the next step.

ERIC

Wow, you're get'n all the steps, Jen.

LAUREN
Eric! Good validation! Step five!

JEN
(to Eric)
What is your deal?

LAUREN
(to Eric)
You're very, um - *helpful*.

ERIC
Oh. Yeah... I'm thinking about going into nursing.
Or - or, just keep killing myself. I'm debating.

JEN
When did you start killing yourself?

ERIC
Uh, pretty early on. It's just been a normal thing for
everybody at this point, so... Have you killed
yourself Lauren?

LAUREN
No. I havn't.
(beat)
I've taken calls here long enough to remember when
people don't come back. Decades ago, as a
volunteer. Before the Millennium, when no one *was*
Immortal, Eric. And I...just...have not - I just havn't.

Eric and Jen stare at her like a museum relic.

LAUREN (CONT'D)
(jokingly)
I'm just a boring old lady.

She reveals a tattoo around her waist.

JEN
Oh shit!

ERIC
Is that a dolphin?!

LAUREN (CONT'D)
I like dolphins.

JEN
You *really* like dolphins.

LAUREN

Girls trip to Vegas. Long time ago. I - I don't regret it.

JEN

So that's the original, huh?

LAUREN

On my original body.

JEN

Don't they still do touch-ups?

LAUREN

It's fine. I'm not a tattoo person.

ERIC

Are you married?

LAUREN

No - what does that have -

JEN

Where are the actual counselors?

LAUREN

What do you mean?

JEN

Like - trained - actual - counselors.

LAUREN

They're not here for this shift. *I'm* here for this shift. And you are here for this shift.

(trying to keep it together)

And that's all we'll need.

Jen rolls her eyes, knowing something is up.

LAUREN (CONT'D)

Okay, so - who wants to be the -

(obviously)

Eric, would like to take the first call?

ERIC

Um -

JEN

Say, yes.

ERIC

...Okay. Is there - a manual - I can look at? First?
With instructions?

LAUREN

No. We just need to get going.
(trying to make a joke)
The worst that could happen is that your caller will
kill himself.

Jen sulks further into the sofa and finds her magazine again. Lauren tries to ignore her disdain.

LAUREN (CONT'D)

You'll repeat what they say, and let them know that
it sounds difficult.

ERIC

Uhh -

LAUREN

Pick any booth number you'd like and I'll turn the
phone on. Okay?

ERIC

Um -

LAUREN

Let us know how it goes. The timer is in the booth if
anything happens.

Eric hesitates and leaves for a booth.

LAUREN (CONT'D)

(calling after him)

Oh! I'll show the group how to log a call after.

ERIC (O.S.)

What?

Lauren goes to turn the phone-line on at her desk. As she does, Jen takes A LARGE BOTTLE OF LIQUOR from her bag.

ERIC (O.S.) (CONT'D)

(calling back)

I'm at six, Lauren!

Lauren hits a button for phone six as Jen OPENS A PHARMACEUTICAL BOTTLE.

LAUREN

Alright. One down.

And Jen pops a couple pills in her mouth, takes a swig and continues in her magazine:

JEN

Humu-humu-nuku-nuku-apua'a.

Lauren listens while busy at her desk.

JEN (CONT'D)

Hawaiian state fish. Used to have a tattoo of it.

LAUREN

Did you get it there?

JEN

No. No that was after.

(beat)

Got a scar there when I was a kid. Ended up with a couple stitches. On my foot.

LAUREN

I'm sorry.

JEN

Doesn't matter. It's gone now.

LAUREN

You can always get another one.

JEN

You gonna slice me up, Lauren?

LAUREN

I meant another *tattoo*.

JEN

Kill myself. Replace the tattoo. Kill myself.
Replace the tattoo. Done that. Couple of times.
What's the point?

Jen downs more liquor and pills.

LAUREN

I'm sorry you've lost it.

JEN

(re: the magazine)

Ugh! The Bachelor's spray tan is so fake! This
season is lame.

LAUREN

When was your first death, Jen?

JEN

Nope.

LAUREN

This is part of the program.

JEN

College.

Lauren gets out her file to find:

LAUREN

You're twenty three, so that wasn't long ago. Senior
year?

JEN

Freshman.

Lauren has already gotten in counselor mode:

LAUREN

Very common. Is that when you lost the scar?

JEN

Eeeyup.

LAUREN

Hard transition?

JEN

Sure.

LAUREN

Okay.

Lauren waits for more. But nothing.

LAUREN (CONT'D)

What made it a hard transition?

JEN

(taking another couple of pills with a
swig)

Probably the same thing that everybody else goes
through, Lauren. You have our files, I'm not sure
why you're ask'n.

LAUREN

Only basic information, the city doesn't provide us
with your hospital screening. That would be a
violation of privacy.

JEN

Great. I killed myself the first time because it was "a
hard transition" and I'm gonna do it again, soon as
Rajiv gets out of your shiny new bathroom.

Pause. Lauren understands.

LAUREN

Okay.

JEN

Okay.

Then Lauren considers.

LAUREN

In order to keep the program -

JEN

Lauren, I get it.

LAUREN

No, that's not what I was - For the program to exist we need the hotline to exist - *you* need the hotline to exist. There's a quota.

JEN

Lauren, I'm literally busy slowly killing myself right now.

LAUREN

We have to maintain a certain number of calls or we lose state funding.

JEN

Barely touched this bottle and already feeling sick.

LAUREN

And you'll be physically normal when you come back. And we have some numbers that we need to hit.

JEN

Oh my God, who the hell cares about a suicide hotline at this point?!

LAUREN

Yes, correct again, Jen. That is the current issue.

Jen considers. She takes another swig and couple of pills.

JEN

Don't tell, Eric.

LAUREN

About the quota?

JEN

No, that I got someth'n else right. Where the hell is Rajiv?

Jen stumbles off the sofa, as the chemicals take affect. She goes to the doorway to look for Rajiv.

JEN (CONT'D)

(notices something)

Hm.

She stumbles back to pack her bag with the bottles:

JEN (CONT'D)

And I won't be come'n back normal, Laur. I'll be
come'n back still pregnant.

Just before Lauren can respond, Rajiv enters wearing a different outfit. Jen gives Lauren a knowing look, testing how Lauren will handle the conversation now. Lauren is left speechless.

RAJIV

(looking for something in the kitchen)
The bathroom isn't -

We notice that his shoes have tracked in some blood.

RAJIV (CONT'D)

's not entirely self-cleaning.

He takes a small journal from his duffle bag and writes:

RAJIV (CONT'D)

(writing)
Nine hundred seventy six thousand.

JEN

Jesus.

RAJIV

(re: Jen's attitude)
I know what I'm doing.

He continues to cluelessly track blood everywhere. He searches the kitchen for any type of spray, mop, towel roll, etc.

RAJIV (CONT'D)

Bathroom doesn't. Maybe it just doesn't know
itself. Think that whole "All Gender" thing might be
confus'n it? Maybe if we just talk to it - *where is* -
never mind!

He finds whatever cleaning products he was looking for and notices the floor:

RAJIV (CONT'D)

Oh shit! Shit, I'll take care of that when I get back.

He exits, marking up more of the floor.

LAUREN

Jen -

Eric enters.

ERIC

That went okay! He was really young. He said he was nine. Most of his family kills themselves and he - anyway - he won't. He's really young -

JEN

Ugh - gonna go help, Butterknife.

Jen leaves. Eric looks to Lauren.

LAUREN

That's great, Eric. I'll show you how to log the call when they get back.

ERIC

She doesn't - they don't like me.

LAUREN

She - will be in the bathroom - next.

ERIC

Where's -

LAUREN

He's back.

(sighs re: the broken bathroom)

The bathroom...

Eric notices the floor.

ERIC

Oh...

(sullen)

Yeah, we just talked about a TV show he liked.

Good kid. Kids like me.

LAUREN

You have a good way about you.

ERIC

Yeah, I'm nice. Nice vibe nobody wants.

LAUREN

He did.

ERIC

He's too young to know better. Hope noth'n happens to him.

LAUREN

You did a good thing. You ready for another call?

ERIC

Another one?

Lauren considers.

LAUREN

(staying calm)

Okay. That's okay. *I'll* go take one. We have to keep things moving. Please help Rajiv clean up. We'll go over the rest in a few minutes.

ERIC

Oh.

(nods)

Yeah.

Lauren exits. Eric is left alone. Enough time passes that it feels definite.

He takes his mask off his belt and puts it against his face.

He starts to hyperventilate, tries to hold the mask in place, and quickly gives up. He starts to sob.

He tries to compose himself as Rajiv walks back in with his duffle bag.

RAJIV

Jen's a fuck'n mess. Says she knows what she's do'n. I mean, we all do by now.

(realizing)

Where's - uh - the lady?

ERIC

Taking a call.

RAJIV

How many calls we expected - ?

(re: the floor)

Awe, dammit!

He opens his bag with the remainder of cleaning supplies.

ERIC

I can help.

RAJIV

Uh, yeah. Cool.

(beat)

It's *my* blood, ya know.

ERIC

Yeah, I know.

RAJIV

Uh, yeah okay.

They start to clean.

ERIC

Where do you - cut yourself?

RAJIV

Can we just clean without a lot of questions?

(beat)

"I'm not here to make friends."

Eric stays silent in embarrassment for trying.

RAJIV (CONT'D)

That's a classic reality show quote, man. Jesus!

ERIC

Oh!

Rajiv considers.

RAJIV

Arms take too long, so I just do the throat.

ERIC

Oh.

Eric stops and looks to Rajiv for more, but he doesn't say anything else.

RAJIV

You're already clean'n up my blood! What else do you want? A show?

ERIC

I wasn't -

RAJIV

That's what facebook is for!

ERIC

I didn't mean anything, Rajiv.

RAJIV

Scroll down there for whatever snuff shit you want.

RAJIV (CONT'D)

I don't have to tell you about my suicides.

ERIC

Yeah, okay.

RAJIV

What do *you* do?! Kill yourself with that little mask?

ERIC

No, that's not - what I use.

RAJIV

Rope or someth'n?

ERIC

(retaliating)

I don't have to talk about it.

RAJIV

Right. Fine. Do it however you want.

(beat)

You've never looped.

ERIC

Yes I have!

RAJIV

I don't care, man.

ERIC

I *have*. I don't -

As he puts back or throws out his cleaning item of choice:

ERIC (CONT'D)

You're welcome.

The floor is clean. Eric goes to the table.

Rajiv considers.

RAJIV

Thanks.

Rajiv puts the rest away. He sits on the sofa.

We watch them wait awkwardly for something to happen.

ERIC

So, what happens at nine hundred seventy-seven thousand?

RAJIV

You really don't know? What the hell are you killing yourself for?

ERIC

We all have our reasons. So - what - it's permanent?

RAJIV

Yeah. The guy in Montana?

Eric doesn't follow.

RAJIV (CONT'D)

The guy in Montana that killed himself one million times and never came back!

ERIC

Never came *back*?

RAJIV

Cuz they couldn't find him.

ERIC

Maybe he's just not in Montana.

RAJIV

Dumb ass. He's dead!

ERIC
You said there's no body.

RAJIV
Well, he's gone.

ERIC
Maybe just some island.

RAJIV
I'm telling you.

ERIC
How do you know?

RAJIV
Nine hundred seventy-seven thousand more times
and I'll prove it. You just kill yourself for fun?

ERIC
No.

Silence.

Finally, Lauren storms back in to her desk.

LAUREN
Prank call. Said they were going to choke to death
on gummy worms.

RAJIV
Fuckers.

ERIC
That sucks.

RAJIV
What'ja do?

She does busy work at her desk as she speaks:

LAUREN
Forwarded the call to Poison Control.

RAJIV
That's funny...
(can't remember name)

ERIC

Lauren.

RAJIV

Lauren.

LAUREN

(re: Jen in Bathroom)

Is Jen...?

Beat.

RAJIV

Yeah.

Beat.

LAUREN

Right.

Beat.

RAJIV

What're we do'n here, Lauren?

LAUREN

We're taking calls, Rajiv.

ERIC

I took one.

RAJIV

And then what?

LAUREN

And then... you'll take another one.

RAJIV

Lauren, I just cleaned my blood off your floor.

LAUREN

Oh, that's great! Thank you!

Eric gives Rajiv a disappointed look.

RAJIV

(sighs)

Eric helped.

LAUREN

I'm sure he did.

RAJIV

Uhhh - yeah - so - *Lauren...*

LAUREN

Yes?

RAJIV

'm I suppose to tell my caller I just killed myself?

LAUREN

Sure.

RAJIV

In *the office*?

LAUREN

That - part - you could probably leave out. But, yes, if you want to talk about yourself with your caller, that's - *that's fine!*

RAJIV

Can I give tips? I can tell'm the throat's better.

LAUREN

I guess that will be up to you.

Rajiv is confused and stunned.

RAJIV

Eric uses a rope.

LAUREN

(still working)

Is that true, Eric?

ERIC

No, it's not.

LAUREN

(letting it go)

Alright. *Rajiv?*

RAJIV

Yeah?

LAUREN
You're next.

RAJIV
Oh.
(beat)
Fuck.

He gets up and sulks to the booth exit.

LAUREN
Let me know what booth number you choose.

RAJIV
(to no one in particular)
What do I do?

ERIC
I just talked about a TV show.

RAJIV
What show?

ERIC
Pirate something.

Eric is useless.

RAJIV
(mocking)
“*Pirate something.*” I’ll just talk about your mom.

ERIC
(tries)
Your mom.

Finally! He’s been setting Eric up for this:

RAJIV
(earnestly)
My mom is dead.

Rajiv exits.

RAJIV (O.S.) (CONT’D)
I’m at booth Six!

Eric throws a shocked look to Lauren. Same number booth.

ERIC
That's my number.

SCENE 2

Each character appears separately in a SOLITARY HOTLINE COUNSELOR BOOTH. This is a simple desk facing the audience with an office phone, computer keyboard & mouse, posted flyers for referrals and a large L.E.D. Timer visible to the audience and the counselors. A computer screen can be implied.

RAJIV is on a call with 22-year old, Eli, sobbing.

RAJIV
 Uh, hey... Hey. Um...
 (quoting Eric)
 Hi, my name is Rajiv. What's yours?

Rajiv shakes his head with disdain for himself and mouths "Eric".

ELI STILL SOBS.

RAJIV (CONT) (CONT'D)
 Uh, just - just take a breath, okay, man?

STILL SOBBING.

RAJIV (CONT'D)
 Try to take a breath?

Rajiv waits, unsure of what else to do.

RAJIV (CONT'D)
 Can - can you try to do that?

WE HEAR ELI TRY. THE SOBBING SUBSIDES.

RAJIV (CONT'D)
 Okay, cool.
 (thinking)
 So, what's your name?

ELI (O.S.)
 Eli.

RAJIV
 Hey, Eli.
 (thinking)
 You... 'bout to kill yourself?

ELI (O.S.)
 I just killed myself!

RAJIV

Oh. Okay. Sorry, man. What - where are you?

ELI (O.S.)

At home.

RAJIV

Uh - is anybody else around?

ELI (O.S.)

No.

Rajiv nods. Not knowing what to do next, then:

RAJIV

How'd you kill yourself?

ELI (O.S.)

I - I hung myself - look - I just called cause my social worker - this is pointless.

RAJIV

What'd you hang yourself with?

ELI (O.S.)

A belt. The same fucking belt I always use - it's right here - star'n at me.

RAJIV

You get dressed yet?

ELI (O.S.)

No - why?! I'm gonna kill myself again, what does it matter?!

RAJIV

Maybe just put someth'n on while we're talking.

ELI (O.S.)

Jesus! What the fuck is this? What's your name?!
Rajiv? You too sensitive?

RAJIV

No! No, man! I just - I just didn't want you to be

RAJIV (CONT'D) ELI (O.S.)
Cold. Fine. It's fine.

WE HEAR HIM SHUFFLING. THEN SOBBING.

ELI (O.S.)
I hate myself. I'm about to do this again. I struggle like an insect when you squeeze it.
(beat)
You don't have a fucking clue do you?

RAJIV
Uh - I've never *strangled* myself to death.

ELI (O.S.)
Fucking privileged, aren't you, Rajiv?! You got to live your whole life *through*. You people think you just die and come back like, "its no big deal".

Rajiv stays quiet not knowing how to proceed, but it allows Eli to vent:

ELI (O.S.) (CONT'D)
You think my life is just a fucking movie like - like, "Groundhog Day". You don't get it.

RAJIV
You just keep killing yourself and you don't know what else to do?

Silence. That registered. Then carefully:

RAJIV (CONT'D)
The one with Bill Murray?

ELI (O.S.)
(condescending)
Yes, Rajiv, *that* old-ass movie! Kills himself *eight* times like it's nothing!!
(beat)
Is that how *rape* works? Huh?! "No big deal"??
No. You can "*come back*" - but you're not the same - you're whole life you carry that with you.
(beat, sobbing)
I can't fucking stop! I can't!
(MORE)

ELI (O.S.) (CONT'D)

I'm so weak - I keep doing this to myself over and over! I'm a pathetic insect.

This is exactly like Rajiv's life:

RAJIV

Shit, man, yeah. Yeah, man - I don't know - I dunno what - I mean, I - I...

(beat)

I get - feel'n stuck in it. Yeah.

(beat)

You call before? What did, uh - what did the other person say?

ELI (O.S.)

Noth'n. I don't know why I'm call'n again. She just said I don't have a choice. Cuz, none of us do.

RAJIV (O.S.)

A choice for what?

ELI (O.S.)

Can't die. No choice. Just gotta keep go'n...

(realizing)

Just can't keep go'n like this. Gonna put that belt around my neck again. Just can't anymore, but I don't know what else to do. What else do I do?

Rajiv doesn't - oh wait:

RAJIV

When did you start, Eli?

ELI (O.S.)

Awe, I dunno, man. It's been awhile now.

RAJIV

What do you think it was?

Long pause.

ELI (O.S.)

Look, man, I gotta go. I'm gonna just give it a couple minutes - and *then* - probably - but - um - but, yeah.

RAJIV

Oh. Yeah, okay, Eli.

ELI (O.S.)

Okay, Rajiv.

Rajiv spins his knife carefully against his fingers.

CROSS FADE TO:

Lauren is on a call. Her job never stops. She speaks the way you would expect an empathetic, kind counselor would, no matter what. But she has a binder of paperwork in front of her and is getting work done. Re-arranging pages, making notes, checking things off, etc. She is able to balance her attention to the phone when needed.

On the phone with SELENA, a 50-year-old voice, clearly inhibited by alcohol. Lauren is aware throughout that this could be her, but she hides it in her voice.

SELENA (O.S.)

...I have to put my elderly father in a fuck'n water tank, *Lauren*.

LAUREN

I'm sorry.

SELENA (O.S.)

Do you have to plant *your* father in a God Damn Vegetable Garden?!

LAUREN

(deflecting)

I can't imagine what that would be like, Selena. I'm very sorry this is happening.

SELENA (O.S.)

So, no, you don't. You don't have to watch as they shove tubes down his nose and throat and fasten his head to a gurney. At least not yet, anyway.

LAUREN

I'm sorry, Selena. This is something so many people have to go through.

SELENA (O.S.)

I tried for so long to keep this from happening. With zero help. Zero! My brother is a useless little bitch!

(MORE)

SELENA (O.S.) (CONT'D)

He does nothing. Useless. Dad's got Alzheimer's, okay?! I wipe his own shit sometimes - because he'll forget - I have to wipe my father's own shit. And where is Nathan?! Who's shit is *he* wiping?!

LAUREN

How long have you been looking after him?

SELENA (O.S.)

Just forever! I have nothing. No life. Nothing. I hate him. And it's fucking *mutual*. If he remembers *anything* - he remembers to blame me - for everything.

LAUREN

It sounds like you've been doing the best you can. I'm sorry you've had to do so much on your own.

Lauren notices all the work in front of her.

SELENA (O.S.)

There's no point to... any of it. I know *exactly* where I'm gonna end up. Right next to my father. RIGHT next to him! They're gonna shave my head and stick me in.

(beat)

There's no hope that we go to some "otherworldly" place when we die. That went to shit eighteen years ago. Now we know *EXACTLY* where we end up. Just an inevitable fucking *FACT*. We *CAN'T* die, we get *OLD*, and we live our pathetic dwindling-human-body-existence stuffed in a Cyro Stasis Tube underground with the rest of our bullshit humanity - as a comatose *HUMAN VEGETABLE!*

(beat)

What is the FUCKING POINT, LAUREN?! Tell me. *TELL* me. We're both gonna be in one of those tubes! I just have to put my dad inside one first!

Beat.

LAUREN

Selena, here's what I do know. You've done everything you can for your father and there's not many good options. It sounds like you're doing the right thing.

(beat)

Selena, once he's Planted you will have a whole life ahead of you that *will* be different. And it could be *good*.

Silence. Lauren looks at all the work she has, does she believe this for herself?

SELENA (O.S.)

I want to kill myself so badly!

LAUREN

I know you do.

SELENA (O.S.)

Havn't killed myself in months!

LAUREN

When you disappear, what will happen when your father can't find you?

SELENA (O.S.)

I don't know - he'd freak out - but I'll just come back -

LAUREN

You said he's called 911 before -

LAUREN (CONT'D)

Selena, if they find you naked and incapable of looking after him -

SELENA (O.S.)

I'll come back quick - before they show up.

LAUREN (CONT'D)

They'll alert protective services.

SELENA (O.S.)

I will! It'll be fast! It will! *I will!* Right?!

(tearfully)

What the hell am I gonna to do once he's gone??

There's noth'n else for me.

LAUREN

That's really scary, Selena...

Lauren shakes her head as she looks back down at all the paperwork that is still in front of her as Selena continues...

CROSS FADE TO:

JEN is on a call with 14-year old Liz.

LIZ (O.S.)

Some people say that you become a walking angel.

JEN

That's not true. You don't get any superpowers.
You can't fly. People are making stuff up.

LIZ (O.S.)

But maybe you're holier - cleaner - when you come back.

JEN

What'd you mean, cleaner?

LIZ (O.S.)

Birthmarks, tattoos, scars. You lose'm.

JEN

You sound pretty young for tattoos, Liz.

LIZ (O.S.)

Yeah, my parents would kill me.

(shamefully)

But I've got scars. On my legs. My thighs. Where I've cut. A lot. A lot. They're little ones and thick ones. A lot. I hate them. I can't -

(starting to cry)

I have to find a bathing suit - I don't want anyone to see. If I just - if I kill myself - I'll reset. I won't have to worry about them. I can be better.

JEN

Yeah. You wanna be better. I get it. Yeah. But how do you know you won't cut again, though? After? When you come back?

LIZ (O.S.)

I just won't. Maybe I'll come back and won't want to anymore.

JEN

Yeah. That'd be nice, wouldn't it?

LIZ (O.S.)

If I just push the razor deeper. Will you stay on the phone with me?

JEN

Oh. Uh. Look, ya know, when you kill yourself
(hard to say re: baby)
it doesn't change anything on the inside. That isn't how it works.

LIZ (O.S.)

Can you help me find out?

JEN

I - I wanna help you, Liz. If that's what you wanna do - I just - just try'n to tell you that those scars are who you are. And that's okay. That's, um - that's cool - to have them.

LIZ (O.S.)

No, it's not.

JEN

How many people can say they have that many?

LIZ (O.S.)

I dunno. It's cuz of how hurt I am.

JEN

Yeah. That's right. It's cuz of how hurt you are. And all those other people, maybe other friends of yours - they're liars, Liz. They're hiding who they really are by killing themselves and coming back with clean shells. But, yours is cracked and - um... *beautiful*.

LIZ (O.S.)

No, I'm not.

Somehow, Jen starts discovering all this for herself:

JEN

You're not a liar, Liz. You're someone people can trust. Because they can see the real you. Those other people that kill themselves are just scared.

(MORE)

JEN (CONT'D)

They're wearing their new bodies like... a costume.
When they see that you're not hiding, and you're
fearless, they'll want to be your friend.

LIZ (O.S.)

How do you know?

JEN

(genuinely realizing)

Um - I think that's the way it's suppose to work.

CROSS FADE TO:

Eric is immensely panicked. The L.E.D. TIMER IS PAST 1:00 and the seconds are
ticking fast to 2:00 minutes.

We watch the clock tick with Eric in silence. He's practically sweating.

Around 20 seconds after 2 minutes WE HEAR THE CALLER IN THE DISTANCE,
since the phone has fallen to the ground after just killing himself.

The caller slowly realizes he has reappeared, naked -

RICHARD (O.S.)

(in shock)
WHAT????? NO. NO! NOOOO!

ERIC

CAN YOU HEAR ME, RICHARD???
RICHARD?? YOU CALLED A
SUICIDE HOTLINE. CAN YOU TALK
TO ME?!

We hear A GUN PICKED UP OFF THE FLOOR.

RICHARD (O.S.)

I DON'T WANT TO BE HERE!!

ERIC

Richard, can you pick up the phone??

We hear the GUN COCK.

RICHARD (O.S.)

I'M SUPPOSE TO DIE!!
(sincerely)
I'm suppose to die.

ERIC

Richard - Lets talk - Lets talk about -

GUN SHOT. THE SOUND OF THE GUN AND BODY HIT THE FLOOR.

Eric sighs and RESETS THE CLOCK BACK TO 0:00 MINUTES. He tries to breath
slowly. He's flooded with emotion as we watch the clock tick.

ERIC
 (quietly to self)
 Dammit... Dammit... Dammit...
 (beat)
 Talk to me, Richard - come on.
 (breath, slower)
 Just pick up the phone. Pick up the phone.
 (breath)

As the clock ticks toward 2:00 minutes Eric continues to panic:

ERIC (CONT'D)
 LAUREN!

No answer.

ERIC (CONT'D)
LAUREN!

LAUREN (O.S.)
 YEAH!

ERIC
 THIS GUY IS LOOPING!

LAUREN (O.S.)
 YEAH?!

ERIC
 I THINK - I THINK WE SHOULD CALL!

LAUREN (O.S.)
 HOW MANY?!

ERIC
 I DON'T KNOW - NINE OR TEN?!

LAUREN (O.S.)
 HAVE JEN DO IT!

JEN (O.S.)
 I'M ON A BREAK!

RAJIV (O.S.)
 DUDE, QUIET, I'M ON A CALL!

ERIC
BUT HIS PLACE! HE'S SHOOTING HIS
BRAINS OUT EVERYWHERE!

JEN (O.S.)
LET THE CLEANING CREWS DEAL WITH IT!

ERIC LAUREN (O.S.)
HE'S NOT - JEN'S GONNA CALL!

JEN (O.S.) (CONT'D)
NO!

RAJIV (O.S.)
SHUT UP! ERIC YOU SUCK!

LAUREN (O.S.)
FOCUS ON YOUR CALL, RAJIV!

RAJIV (O.S.)
BLAH-BLAH-BLAH-BLAH-BLAH!

ERIC
Come on, man.
(breath)
Just pick up the phone.
(breath)
Just pick up - just pick up.

(Note - Each reappearance timing should change every show to startle the actor, anytime after 2 min)

Richard reappears - WE HEAR HIM SCREAMING IN THE DISTANCE AGAIN.

RICHARD (O.S.)	ERIC
NOOOO! NO! NO! LET ME DIE!	RICHARD - RICHARD - YOU
LET ME DIE! I don't want to be here - I	CALLED US - YOU WANT TO TALK -
don't want to be here - I <i>CAN'T</i> BE	RICHARD - I'M HERE - RICHARD -
HERE! STOP DOING THIS TO ME!!!	PLEASE - LISTEN - RICHARD - I'M
STOP!!! STOP!! PLEASE!! PLEASE!!!	HERE -
GOD!!! STOP!!!	

GUN COCKS AND FIRES. GUN AND BODY ARE HEARD HITTING THE
FLOOR

ERIC (CONT'D)

Shit! Dammit! Shit! Shit!

Eric RESETS THE CLOCK BACK TO 0:00 and the seconds tick up again.

SCENE 3

THE BREAKROOM IS EMPTY. Eric rushes in after his call, visibly distraught.

He takes his mask off his belt. He braces himself and puts it on his face.

The feeling is unbearable. He can't fight this phobia, he starts to hyperventilate, and quickly pulls the mask off.

He tries again. And Again.

Rajiv marches in.

RAJIV

How'd the pirate show go? Not a big fan, huh?
Wouldn't be freak'n out if you'd looped before.

ERIC

I have.

RAJIV

Let it go, man you havn't. You havn't!

ERIC

I'm going to the bathroom.

RAJIV

To do *what*?

ERIC

It doesn't matter!

RAJIV

You're full of shit. Gimmie that mask!

ERIC

No! Why?

Rajiv pulls the mask from Eric to examine it. Eric lunges at Rajiv.

ERIC (CONT'D)

Gimmie your knife!

Rajiv easily pushes Eric back.

RAJIV
(examining the mask)
What's the deal -

ERIC
That what the nurses used when your
mother died?

Rajiv freezes.

ERIC (CONT'D)
You have to wear one too?

RAJIV
You're not gonna re-traumatize me with your baby
toy.

Rajiv throws the mask behind the sofa.

ERIC
You don't want to talk about your mom being dead?

RAJIV
She's dead. She's very dead. You don't get to hear
about it. You're an ignorant Millennium baby that
doesn't know how the world worked. Go enjoy
killing yourself as many times as you want by
choking on your dirty fucking mask. Don't talk to
me.

There stare each other down.

RAJIV (CONT'D)
Go ahead, go get it.

Eric suddenly looks very shameful. Lauren walks in, noticing the tension.

LAUREN
Gentlemen.
(beat)
Hello?

RAJIV
Eric's gonna go to the bathroom.

ERIC
Uh - yeah. I'll - I'm gonna go.

LAUREN

We'll need to talk about your call, Eric.

ERIC

(sighs)

Yeah.

(correcting)

Yes.

LAUREN

It's unfortunate, but there *is* a quota of calls we need to hit and we have to keep going.

RAJIV

(patronizing)

Oh *yes*, we're *both* just *very* excited about that.

After rolling his eyes, Eric looks toward the sofa, but doesn't take his mask and leaves.

LAUREN

What did you say to him?

RAJIV

(insulted)

What did *I* say to him? He's saying he's looped before and he can't handle one simple idiot with a few bullets? And, what did *I* say to him? How is that *my* fault?

LAUREN

Yes. So, what did you say to him?

RAJIV

I said, "Way to go Eric! One for the team!"

Lauren stays calm knowing Rajiv is being obnoxious.

LAUREN

Okay. Well, Rajiv. That isn't your job.

RAJIV

I don't get paid for this.

LAUREN

That's my job.

RAJIV

You were busy. You seem to be *very* busy. If you weren't running around all the time I wouldn't be left here with "poor little Eric".

LAUREN

He can wait. He would have been fine. Maybe you were worried about him and you just didn't know how to help.

RAJIV

Lauren, I don't care about, Eric - or, these dumb-ass callers that're pathetic enough to talk to *me* about killing themselves.

LAUREN

Then I have no problem letting the city know this is not working and have you planted.

RAJIV

Seriously, that's how you're gonna treat us?

LAUREN

No, Rajiv. That's how I'm going to treat *you*.

Rajiv freezes. And pulls out his knife.

RAJIV

Fine. Well, maybe I'll just get this whole place real bloody first.

Lauren doesn't buy his threat and walks right up to him.

LAUREN

If you want to kill yourself, you do it in the bathroom.

Rajiv doesn't move.

LAUREN (CONT'D)

Eric is in there now, and you will have to wait.

Rajiv considers - but puts the knife away and goes to the sofa.

Lauren gets back to work as Rajiv sulks.

Jen enters after her 911 call.

JEN
 Shitty 911 Operators!
 (mocking 911)
 “We’ll be real gentle, wouldn’t want to *hurt* him or anything”. He’s shooting himself in the head over and over again and this asshat thinks its hilarious.

LAUREN
 Are they on their way?

JEN
 “Do you know what type of gun it is?” No! I don’t!
 What do you want my NRA member number?
 Podunk idiot.

LAUREN
 So, they took it?

JEN
 I guess.

Jen scowls at Rajiv for being in her regular sofa spot.

JEN (CONT’D)
 What are you do’n?

Rajiv rolls his eyes and moves over. Jen looks through her magazine.

LAUREN
 Okay. We’ll let Eric know. Thanks for taking care of that, Jen.

JEN
 “Not send’n *my* guys to pick up some *Casual* Suicider.” 9-1-1 Dipshit! He’s got a box of ammo so a bullet will hit a neighbor, eventually. *Pretend* to do your job.

Eric enters.

ERIC
 Lauren, I have to go.

LAUREN
 Jen said police on their way.

Eric doesn’t move from the doorway.

ERIC

Okay.

LAUREN

Eric, the loopers aren't easy. It was your first one.

ERIC

Noth'n I can do here, so I'll see ya.

RAJIV

Freak'n out doesn't help!

LAUREN

Rajiv is right.

RAJIV

Now I'm right?!

Rajiv sighs, doesn't know how to win with Lauren. As he storms off he pulls out knife.

RAJIV (CONT'D)

Nobody fuck'n listens.

He exits.

JEN

He take butter-knife?

LAUREN

(ignoring Jen)

Your caller is still on the line, Eric.

ERIC

If I can't help people, I should just kill myself. This isn't - at least with nursing I could do something.

LAUREN

How many is too much?

ERIC

What?

LAUREN

How many is too much?

ERIC

I don't understand the question.

LAUREN

You've killed yourself. *Rajiv* and *Jen* kill themselves, *other callers* you've taken kill themselves. You do great on inactive calls. This man is looping. What difference does that make?

ERIC

There's nothing I can do. Isn't anyone to talk to.

LAUREN

What's his name?

ERIC

Richard.

Lauren considers.

LAUREN

So, he talked. He has too. There isn't any other way. So, he *will*. Everybody talks. Eventually. His *false hope* is what keeps him going, not the number of bullets he has left. He's hoping that if he keeps shooting, things will get better. His hope keeps him stuck. You just have to wait on the phone long enough for him to feel *hope-less*. Hopeless enough that all that's left is talking to some random kid on the phone so he can try to consider a realistic way to move forward with his life.

Eric considers.

ERIC

(to Jen)

You gonna keep kill'n yourself?

JEN

Think'n about getting my tattoo back again.

Eric considers. He walks back toward the booth and exits.

Lauren goes back to work, Jen reads her magazine.

JEN (CONT'D)

So, I'm hope'n too much, huh?

LAUREN

I was talking about the caller. Hope exists in different ways.

(her go-to speech)

Why do people stay in abusive relationships?
Because they're -

JEN

I'm not in a relationship, Lauren.

LAUREN

I - I didn't say you were.

LAUREN (CONT'D)

I was just -

JEN

And I wouldn't do that.

JEN

My mother did that. I wouldn't put up with shit.

(beat)

I killed myself over a *boy*, Lauren. The first time.

(scoffs)

See? I'm just a cliché.

(beat)

Just a boyfriend I *thought* wanted to be with me because I *thought* he followed me from high school to DePaul because I *thought* he loved me - couldn't be away from me - and I never *thought* he was gonna break-up with me four weeks into the semester and kill the only thing I *thought* I could count on - when my parents started their divorce.

(beat)

Regular college suicide story - I'm just another idiot. College suicides are normal. They have dorm rooms for Suiciders since they can't get rid of 'em. Try to hide the suicide kids from everybody else and keep their funding.

LAUREN

I'm sorry that all happened at once.

JEN

Yeah, it sucked. My dad's not a bad person. He's just obviously not good for my mom. I had to hear all about it from both of them.

(MORE)

JEN (CONT'D)

(beat)

I was totally alone and wanted to go away. So, I took my full three-month dose of Ambien and drank more than half a bottle of disgusting Fireball.

Choked on my own vomit. It's - I don't wanna - can't even describe to you - what I felt.

(shamefully)

I - I know how to do it better now.

(beat)

Traumatized my roommate.

(beat)

She happened to come home right after I did it. She was just unzipping her jeans when I reappeared right in front of her, naked and sobbing to death.

(beat)

I remember feeling so pissed at her for screaming over and over again.

(beat)

When the R.A. knocked on the door, Martha just said we were watching Netflix, or something. That's what she told me. I don't remember. I couldn't stop crying.

(beat)

She kept her distance from me, she was so scared. She knew what I did, but we didn't know what to do about it.

(beat)

We weren't - we never got along, really - we had always just been fake nice to each other up until that point. I didn't even like her.

(beat)

When we finally calmed down she felt okay to sit next to me. Everything was quiet for awhile. Then I crossed my legs. Noticed my foot -

(beat)

And saw my scar was gone. On the bottom of my foot. My long scar from broken glass I stepped on in Maui, when I was little - and mom and dad were good - and they weren't mad at each other. They weren't fighting. They were just happy once I was okay.

(beat)

Saw my foot - realized what I did. I killed a part of my life that I couldn't get back.

(MORE)

JEN (CONT'D)

(beat)

I broke down again and managed to tell Martha about my parent's divorce and Jason leaving me.

(beat)

Out of the nowhere she just said "we should get you a tattoo". And that simple idea gave me some hope.

(beat)

So, I got that Hawaiian fish on my foot. Real fish has lots of colors, but - so much blood in the water - just made mine red.

LAUREN

That was a good idea.

JEN

Yeah, good idea I keep going back to.

LAUREN

Well, maybe you'll keep it.

JEN

Yeah.

(beat)

Keep it.

(touching her stomach)

I'm running out of options. I've already gone to a bunch of clinics. They don't know up from down - it's all opinions about probability. Maybe. Might. Could. Well, still *hasn't*. Maybe this - little parasite whatever it is - isn't going away with Percocet. Too many variables. I'm running out of time... till "it" becomes a "who".

LAUREN

Jennifer, I'm sorry.

JEN

Yeah. Well, good talk.

Jen shakes her head and goes back to her magazine.

LAUREN

I'm sorry you're not given a choice.

JEN

I'll just keep try'n.

LAUREN

I can't imagine what you're going through.

JEN

Okay, Laur - that's - I get it - I'm not a caller.

Lauren let's it go. She focuses on her work. Then:

LAUREN

Rajiv is having a hard time.

JEN

What do you want *me* to do about it?!

LAUREN

(trying to bond)

I'm not sure what to do.

JEN

That's what this whole experiment is for, isn't it?

LAUREN

It seems to be unclear what these calls are doing for him. Or *to* him.

Pause.

JEN

Where is he?

LAUREN

(concerned)

Looping... I think.

Jen flips another page.

SCENE 4

THE BREAKROOM during after hours. The lights are out. Jen and Rajiv sneak in. Jen is very determined, carrying Rajiv's large duffle bag and keys in her hand.

RAJIV

Shit, that worked.

JEN

Yeah, she trusts me.

RAJIV

Trusts you to suck up and do what she asks, *Eric*.

JEN

She'd ask you to help if you were nicer to her.

RAJIV

The hell do I need to do more work for?

JEN

She's busting her ass all day.

RAJIV

Not my problem.

JEN

Doesn't take much.

RAJIV

You keep saying stupid things out loud.

As they've been talking, Jen has pulled out large plastic drop sheets for the floor. Moving furniture out of the way to have only one chair sitting on the sheets. The chair faces away from the audience.

JEN

Your bag smells like actual garbage by the way.

RAJIV

Jen. I don't like this.

JEN

If you hadn't overused our shitty bathroom during your mood swing we wouldn't have to do this here. Save me all this god damn effort.

RAJIV
I don't want to do this.

JEN
(stop)
No.

RAJIV
We don't even know -

JEN
(stop)
No. We don't. I don't. Those are the odds. I'm not explaining this again. Just fucking do it.

RAJIV
I've never -

JEN
Shut up. Where is it?

Rajiv pulls out his knife. Jen pulls out a Snuggie.

JEN (CONT'D)
I swear to God, you better not be here when I come back until I put this on - or I will fucking kill you if you see me naked, Rajiv.

Rajiv sighs.

RAJIV
Fine.

She hands him HANDCUFFS.

RAJIV (CONT'D)
Jesus.

JEN
Stop talking.

RAJIV
Jesus!

She sits in the chair, and readies her arms against the chair legs.

RAJIV (CONT'D)

This is so fuck'n -

JEN

Shut up.

As he attaches her to the chair:

RAJIV

This isn't even a fifty-fifty chance. It's a who-the-fuck-knows -

JEN

Just do the thing you know how to do and maybe I'm early enough that it'll work. Stop. Fucking. Talking. Right. Now.

(starts to sob)

I don't - I can't - just - please - Rajiv, please -

(flips tactic)

You and your knife are fucking useless!

Rajiv slices her throat, but her body fights back and the chair falls. He has to stab harder as she convulses. Blood pours onto the ground.

Rajiv screams.

BLACKOUT:

LIGHTS ON:

LAUREN'S TV INTERVIEW CONTINUED....

LAUREN

...our overhead costs are funded by the state, and some federal dollars, but that doesn't cover the staff. So, yes. We have had - highly trained volunteers - and if any of your viewers understand the disastrous affects of suicide and care about people who live their lives killing themselves over and over again everyday, then please volunteer with us.

REPORTER (O.S.)

A local online paper reported that your staff has succumbed to Serial Suicide in the past. Is that why you have so many vacancies now?

Lauren takes a breath, there's no denying this, so stall.

LAUREN

Like I said, the job is different now. It's harder. I started here as a volunteer twenty-five years ago. We don't deal with life and death anymore. Now we're a suicide hotline that deals with the difference between a caller *LIVING THEIR LIFE* or *SUFFERING FOREVER*. It's clearly a much bigger job, and yes, we have lost volunteers over time in large part because the job has become so difficult.

REPORTER (O.S.)

And volunteers who ended up mimicking their callers?

LAUREN

Look, we were all affected by the explosion of Suicide Experimentation in our culture. This has been happening everywhere. But I can assure you that - this *is* a - supportive space.

REPORTER (O.S.)

Why don't the Serial Suiciders just stop killing themselves if it's so traumatizing?

She answers defiantly with another question, which she's always uses to explain:

LAUREN

Why do people stay in abusive relationships?

And waits for an answer. She get's to finish her speech this time:

LAUREN (CONT'D)

Because they're hoping for that one moment when there isn't abuse, and it only feels *good*. And they hope that, *maybe*, it will last.

She won that round, but now comes the real reason for this interview....

REPORTER (O.S.)

Was that the same "hope" you heard on your call?

Lauren is visibly shaken.

REPORTER (O.S.) (CONT'D)

Let's talk about your last call.

(beat)

What happened???

LIGHTS UP ON:

BREAKROOM, MINUTES LATER.

The chair is empty. Except for Jen's clothes that lay across it like an un-stuffed bloody scarecrow. Rajiv has his back turned away, in deep panic, bloody knife in hand.

ERIC (O.S.)

Hello? Lauren - I think I left -

Eric enters and sees everything.

ERIC (CONT'D)

What are you doing?

RAJIV

Get out!

ERIC

You just kill yourself in here?

RAJIV

Leave!

ERIC (CONT'D)

I left my mask you threw!

ERIC (CONT'D)

I'll go!

RAJIV

Fuck'n mask! Leave! Now!

Eric notices Jen's bloody clothes, looks at Rajiv's knife:

ERIC (CONT'D)

I'm calling the cops.

RAJIV

It's not - just - be -

(AS RAJIV SAYS
"BE") JEN SCREAMS
BLACKOUT/END OF
ACT I

SCENE 1

BREAKROOM - MOMENTS AFTER JEN'S REAPPEARANCE.

RAJIV and ERIC have been looking away as JEN quickly finishes putting on her snuggie.

She sits on the sofa. Through her shock and sobbing she is finally able to say -

JEN

What is he doing here?!

RAJIV

Said he left his fuck'n mask -

ERIC

Are you okay? What did Rajiv -

JEN (CONT'D)

Invite him to this?!

RAJIV

I didn't tell anybody! Didn't even know if -

ERIC

You let him kill you? Jen?

She loses it -

JEN (CONT'D)

WHAT IS GOING ON?!!!!!!

And SCREAMS.

The guys don't know how to respond as she sobs. Rajiv is in shock from what he's done.

RAJIV

What the fuck.

JEN

Okay -

She tries to motivate herself, step by step -

ERIC

Jen, take it easy, just -

JEN

I'm gonna put clothes on.

ERIC

Let me help clean up.

JEN

And take the pregnancy test.

JEN (CONT'D)

That is in my pants-pocket.

And tries to compose herself -

JEN (CONT'D)

Okay.

Just as Eric starts to ask questions:

JEN (CONT'D)

Shut up, Eric.

Everyone stays silent. Then:

ERIC

Okay.

Nobody moves. Rajiv is not himself.

RAJIV

Jen -

Rajiv goes to gather her new clothes from the bag -

JEN

DON'T!

(beat)

Don't.

(beat)

Wait. I'll just sit here another minute... and make everybody feel uncomfortable.

Now she's getting back to normal. The boys don't know what to do.

Finally, she slowly moves to the bag, makes sure everything she needs is there and goes to the door.

JEN (CONT'D)

Just leave. I'll take care of it.

She exits. Obviously, the boys won't go anywhere.

ERIC

You killed her.

Rajiv doesn't respond.

ERIC (CONT'D)

She's pregnant?

Rajiv doesn't respond.

ERIC (CONT'D)

Is it -

Eric shakes his head no. Eric nods, trying to understand.

Eric goes to the kitchen to find cleaning supplies.

Rajiv can't really move, in a state of fog.

Eric finds rubber gloves and starts to clean, rolling up the bloody clothes in the bloody plastic sheets.

Rajiv stares off.

RAJIV

I broke the bathroom.

Eric is not pleased and patronizes Rajiv:

ERIC

You like to do yourself quick before I clean *this*?

As Rajiv doesn't respond, it encourages Eric on.

ERIC (CONT'D)

How many more thousand left to go?

Rajiv stares into space.

ERIC (CONT'D)

Don't waste your time.

Rajiv looks to Eric and considers.

ERIC (CONT'D)

(points to knife on floor)

That's yours.

Rajiv doesn't respond.

ERIC (CONT'D)

I'm suppose to clean your knife?

Rajiv storms over, picks the knife up, scrubs it in the sink, dries it, and puts it in his pocket.
As he does:

RAJIV

There's a chance. Killing her might...
(hard to say)
...abort the...*fetus*.

ERIC

She wanted a tattoo.

RAJIV

Yeah. After.

Silence.

ERIC

Okay, Montana. See if it was worth it. You know
all about these "loopholes," huh?

RAJIV

You think you know what to believe. You're a
simple child. Everything is black and white for you.
Laid out. This or that. Simple.

ERIC

I don't kill people

ERIC (CONT'D)

cuz I think it might help.

RAJIV

Right. Do nothing. Follow the rules.

RAJIV

You love the fuckn rules, don't you? Arbitrary
bullshit. There are no rules anymore, look at the
world around you. Nothing makes sense. You can't
prove anything! You can't *predict* anything!
You've got *nothing*!

ERIC

Killing her did nothing.

RAJIV

You don't know that!

ERIC

Yes, I do.

RAJIV

(re: big man on campus)

Who the fuck are *you* man? We got fuck'n psychics in this world now? You kill yourself and come back with a crystal ball shoved up your ass?!

Eric stares him down.

RAJIV (CONT'D)

What I thought. You don't know. Can't predict shit, Eric. Fuck'n baby in the world. Doesn't know better.

(beat)

What does Y2K even mean to you??

ERIC

The numbers thing for the -

RAJIV

Never had to freak out. Worry about anything changing. All just stays the same for you.

ERIC

Gonna tell me I havn't loop'd again? Because you have it worse than me?

RAJIV

Treatments they have for cancer work better now.

ERIC

I'm sorry.

RAJIV

(like a doctor reading a chart)

"CT-Scan on December eighteenth and on January first everybody on earth will be *Immortal*."

(beat)

Can't predict shit, Eric. So, fuck you, you eighteen year old baby.

(beat)

Is the pregnancy too far along? Is it not? *Does it matter?* Blah, blah, blah. No idea.

(MORE)

RAJIV (CONT'D)

(beat)

She wanted help.

ERIC

(cleaning up the blood)

Yeah. Good thing you were here.

RAJIV

Where's she gonna - you think doctors give a shit? Never *did!* They *practice* medicine cuz they don't know what the fuck they're do'n! Now they just get more time to practice when they fuck up.

(beat)

We kept say'n someth'n was wrong with my mom - she's not get'n the right treatment - something's wrong - she's not improving - something's wrong - still a cough - something's wrong - they didn't listen - tests kept com'n up negative - until dead was dead. No more chances.

(beat)

Jen's just try'n all her options.

ERIC

This shouldn't have been an option.

RAJIV

No. It shouldn't have.

Silence.

ERIC

Might not have turned out the way you think.

RAJIV

Give it a minute. Fuck.

ERIC

Your mom could still be suffering.

RAJIV

Okay, stop.

ERIC

How old were you ?

RAJIV

Couldn't do a damn thing about it. That's how old.

ERIC

You were young.

RAJIV

Baby's put'n two and two together.

ERIC

More numbers.

(patronizing)

Nine hundred thousand what?

Eric continues to clean.

Jen walks back in.

They look toward her for a response.

She shakes her head, "no".

Silence. Eric stares down Rajiv.

JEN

Eric, you can't tell Lauren.

ERIC

(of course)

No!

Jen nods.

JEN

Thank you for cleaning that.

Silence.

ERIC

(concerned)

Are you still getting the tattoo?

Jen shakes her head, "no".

BLACKOUT

SCENE TWO

Rajiv is alone in the BREAKROOM sulking and meandering aimlessly while playing with his knife.

He goes to his duffle bag, opens it to double check he has a new set of clothes ready. He opens his journal and shakes his head. So many kills left.

He hesitantly closes the bag and opens his switch blade. Looking distraught, he keeps the blade open and leaves sulking to go kill himself again.

CROSS FADE TO:

A MONTAGE OF ERIC AND JEN TAKING A CALL AT EACH BOOTH
INTERSPERSED WITH LAUREN'S ONGOING INTERVIEW.

Eric and Jen are having a difficult time.

LAUREN

“What happened?” I mean, we know what happened.

REPORTER (O.S.)

Right. Well, for context, can you walk us through how a usual call would go?

A GUNSHOT in Eric's booth. He resets his timer, getting used to the shock.

JEN'S CALLER 1(O.S.)

Choking on my own vomit. - I couldnt breathe.
Everything was spinning.

Jen doesn't know how to respond.

JEN

Yeah, it sucks.

LAUREN

We're always -

REPORTER (O.S.)

If you can just talk through what *you'd* say.

LAUREN

Oh. I'm always empathizing with the caller. People feel trapped, so, “Sounds like you feel really stuck.”

ERIC'S CALLER 1 (O.S.)
I'M NOTHING!

TWO GUNSHOTS in Eric's booth. He resets his timer.

JEN'S CALLER 1 (O.S.)
Tell me the point. The point of even hav'n a kid in
this shithole?

Jen shakes her head - this is too on the nose.

LAUREN
"You're doing the best you can - that's all you can
do."

ERIC'S CALLER 1 (O.S.)
ERIC! I've got a few more left! Hang on!

WE HEAR A GUN BEING LOADED.

ERIC'S CALLER 1 (O.S.) (CONT'D)
There we go. READY?!

ERIC
(deep breath)
I'm here.

A GUNSHOT in Eric's booth. He resets his timer.

LAUREN
"Good - another deep breath. It's gonna be okay."

JEN
I don't have the answers, Vanessa. I just don't.

WE HEAR A DIAL TONE in Jen's booth. Jen rolls her eyes.

LAUREN
(hopeful)
"Does that sound like a good plan for tomorrow?"

ERIC
Ma'am, NO. This isn't ticketmaster. I have no idea
how you got our number.

JEN

(agreeing)

No, you *don't* need that! Kick him out - or get out of there - you don't need his shit. You're right!

LAUREN

"You've lost so much. I'm so sorry."

ERIC'S CALLER 2 (O.S.)

You ever killed yourself before?

Eric looks around the booth, then quietly says:

ERIC

No. I havn't. I've never killed myself.

ERIC'S CALLER 2 (O.S.)

Don't fuck'n do it, man! Don't fuck'n do it! Once you try it, man! Fuck'n shit. I don't know what to do. Don't do it, man. I wouldn't wish this shit on anybody. Don't - just don't.

ERIC

I - I won't.

LAUREN

And I would take a history. I would ask, "When was the last time you killed yourself?"

ERIC

Yeah - I - I never wanted to die.

Eric covers his face with his mask again, and hyperventilates.

JEN'S CALLER 2 (O.S.)

The world is a waste of time. Nobody cares. Nothing makes a difference.

(beat)

Why am I talk'n to you? You're just get'n paid for this shit.

Jen scoffs to herself about the lack of money and doesn't care to mention:

JEN

They're gonna put me in a Vege Patch if I don't.

JEN'S CALLER 2 (O.S.)

What?!

JEN

This is like indentured servant crap.

JEN'S CALLER 2 (O.S.)

The hell?

JEN

You wanted to know! You're right. I'm doing this cuz I have to. So, kill yourself. Nothing matters.

JEN'S CALLER 2 (O.S.)

Fuck you, don't tell me what to do!

JEN

Don't tell me I get paid for this! I'm probably not get'n shit for this.

JEN'S CALLER 2 (O.S.)

They do that?!

JEN

Yeah. Dunno.

(beat)

Just gotta do what you gotta do, I guess.

JEN'S CALLER 2 (O.S.)

Damn.

(beat)

How many calls they got you do'n?

LAUREN

And to wrap the call up I try to help build a safety plan, "What do you think you'll do when we get off the phone?"

ERIC

You're be'n really honest - most people aren't.

ERIC'S CALLER 2 (O.S.)

Fuck it. Ya know? Fuck it.

WE HEAR ERIC'S CALLER SOB.

ERIC'S CALLER 2 (O.S.) (CONT'D)

God dammit!

Eric looks over his shoulder, covers his face with his mask, and tries to push through the panic as his CALLER SOBS.

REPORTER (O.S.)

You had a trained routine.

LAUREN

(discouraged)

Yes. Very routine. Over and over.

JEN

It's a disgusting thing to do to yourself. I know.
Doesn't - it doesn't make you a bad person. It's -
the world we live in now.

JEN'S CALLER 2 (O.S.)

No choice.

JEN

Yeah. No choice.

CROSS FADE TO:

BREAKROOM. Rajiv returns looking utterly shocked. His clothes are the same. There is no blood on the blade of his knife.

He takes out his journal and stabs the knife into the cover. He throws the journal and knife into the duffle bag and marches to the Hotline Booth Room.

BLACKOUT

SCENE THREE

HOTLINE COUNSELOR BOOTH.

Over the phone we hear A CAR MOTOR RUNNING IN AN ECHO-Y-LIKE CHAMBER.

RAJIV

Kay, Samuel. My name's Rajiv. You -

SAMUEL sounds high, drowsy and panicked.

SAMUEL (O.S.)

Five DUIs, Rajiv. Should've never - tonight woulda been - crashed the car - I -

RAJIV

You still driv'n? I hear the motor.

SAMUEL (O.S.)

I hit a kid - I hit him - I'm - I didn't kill him - there was so much blood - just screaming - he was so scared -

RAJIV

Samuel -

SAMUEL (O.S.)

His arm was bent back.

SAMUEL (O.S.) (CONT'D)

The bone - thought I did right - thought it was the only - wasn't sure -

RAJIV

You parked??

Samuel begins struggling to finish his remaining thoughts as he almost passes-out from the car fumes.

SAMUEL (O.S.)

He was SCREAMING! Didn't think - getting an ambulance - another DUI - I pulled - I dragged... his body a little... his head... in front of my tire... tried to be as fast as I could... I... I didn't hesitate... it was such a loud sound... whole side of the car lifted off the ground... then the back wheel -

RAJIV
What's your address??

RAJIV (CONT'D)
Hey! Can you get out of the car?

SAMUEL (O.S.)
Think... he came back...I'm...I hate...

RAJIV (CONT'D)
You wanted to talk, so - get outta your car -

SAMUEL (O.S.)
Wha... ?

RAJIV
What are your cross streets, man?!

RAJIV
Your address, Samuel -
(lying)
for the paramedics.

SAMUEL
Address...?? ...home.

SAMUEL (O.S.)
I left... didn't... people... nake... cry... kay?

RAJIV
Samuel, turn the engine off so we can keep talk'n -
where do you live?

SAMUEL (O.S.)
...kay.

We hear THE PHONE DROP ONTO SAMUEL'S LAP.

RAJIV
Samuel?? Samuel?? Piece a shit.

Long pause. RAJIV STARTS THE L.E.D. TIMER. He puts Samuel on hold, so the SOUND OF THE ENGINE CUTS OUT. He DIALS 911.

AUTOMATED RECORDING (O.S.)
If this is not an immediate emergency, please hang
up and dial 211. Otherwise, stay on the line and
hope for the best.
(MORE)

AUTOMATED RECORDING (O.S.) (CONT'D)

If you've been killed, please dial one and leave the name and description of your killer, contact information for your killer, and any other fun facts you remember about the incident and we will get back to you eventually. If this is not an immediate emergency, please hang up and dial 211. Otherwise, stay on the line and hope for the best. If you've been killed, please dial one and leave the name and description -

911 OPERATOR 2 (O.S.)

911 - What is your name and emergency?

RAJIV

Hey - uh - I'm a suicide hotline - *person* - on a call with a murderer.

911 OPERATOR 2 (O.S.)

Is this man threatening your life now, sir? Can you get to safety?

RAJIV

No - we're on the phone! He just killed himself with carbon monoxide poisoning from his parked car - probably in a garage.

RAJIV (CONT'D)

I wasn't able to get an exact address.

911 OPERATOR 2 (O.S.)

So, the suspect is currently dead, sir?

RAJIV (CONT'D)

Yeah - he'll reappear in
(reading L.E.D. screen)
About three minutes.

911 OPERATOR 2 (O.S.)

Okayyyy. You said you're calling from a *hotline*???

RAJIV

Yeah, I'm like a phone person at a suicide hotline, yeah. I got his cell number.

911 OPERATOR 2 (O.S.)

Annnnd what's the name of the organization?

RAJIV

City Suicide Prevention Center.

911 OPERATOR 2 (O.S.)

(mocking)

And the man you were speaking with has killed himself and you think he is also a murder suspect.

RAJIV

He's not a *suspect*, he ran a kid over with his car!

911 OPERATOR 2 (O.S.)

(patronizing a toddler)

Well, I'm going to advise you to call back, and push one, or go into your nearest station to file a report.

RAJIV

He just told me he killed a child. You listen'n to me?!

911 OPERATOR 2 (O.S.)

I understand, sir. We keep a long list of murder suspects in our handy dandy giant database. To add your suspect to this ever expanding database of possible killers you can push one, or go to

911 OPERATOR (O.S.)

your nearest station -

RAJIV

What does *my* station have to do with it?!

RAJIV

I have his phone number -

911 OPERATOR 2 (O.S.)

Are you safe, sir?

RAJIV

I already told you that, yes - His first name is, Samuel. Now what are you going to do

RAJIV (CONT'D)

about this??

911 OPERATOR 2 (O.S.)

Sir -

RAJIV (CONT'D)

You're not answer'n my question. He put a kid's head underneath his tire.

911 OPERATOR 2 (O.S.)

Sir -

RAJIV

Don't try to cut *me* off - I work at a hotline.

911 OPERATOR 2 (O.S.)

Sir -

RAJIV

We're allowed to just kill kids now? What the fuck is the matter with you?!

911 OPERATOR 2 (O.S.)
Sir, I'm hanging up the phone! Best of luck to you!

RAJIV
WHAT?!

911 OPERATOR 2 (O.S.)
Bye bye!

DIAL TONE. Rajiv switches back to the call. We hear THE CAR RUNNING again. We wait and watch the clock tic past 2:00 minutes.

SAMUEL COUGHS MANICALLY.

SAMUEL (O.S.)
(crying)
Oh God.

SAMUEL SCREAMS. Rajiv is infuriated.

RAJIV
Where do you live, *Samuel*?!

CROSS FADE TO:

SCENE 4

BREAKROOM. Lauren is practically scolding Jen and Eric.

LAUREN

Where is Rajiv? You guys are taking too long on the calls. We are not meeting our requirements.

ERIC

He's still on.

LAUREN

I don't know what's going on. What matters is, we take calls. We take as many as we can or this shuts down.

JEN

How short are we?

ERIC

I don't know how to get them to end sooner.

LAUREN

You have been practicing enough now - it should just be: in, out, on, off, done. You have to be positive. Stay positive, the call will end.

JEN

How many?

Pause.

LAUREN

A lot.

JEN

Okay. I'm done. I don't have - whatever - *positivity* - you want from me, Lauren. This isn't working.

LAUREN

Stick with it.

JEN

Let's just log whatever calls we want. Make shit up. Or, I'm done. Plant me.

ERIC

(to Lauren)

Loopers take a long time, you know that. It's not Jen's fault.

LAUREN

I never said it was anyone's fault. We just need to take more calls. That's all, Jennifer. If - if we need to - to cut the call short - if you feel - then -

ERIC

Are you cutting your calls, Lauren?

LAUREN

Eric, we have to do the best we can - sometimes -

JEN

You're yelling at us and you're cutting your own callers?

(laughing)

You're a joke! You're not try'n to help.

LAUREN

Jen -

JEN

(mocking Lauren)

"Don't care, bye! Wasn't listening, see ya!"

JEN (CONT'D)

Might as well just make calls up.

LAUREN

That isn't -

Rajiv snakes in after his last call quietly fuming.

JEN

This is all a joke.

RAJIV

The world doesn't want us to be here.

ERIC

The - what?

RAJIV

Plants, animals - sun rises and falls - everything - is still on it's cycle. Just *us* that's Immortal. The world wants us to leave. It's getting rid of us. We're not part of the system anymore. We're just in the way.

Rajiv goes to his duffle bag.

JEN

Lauren is cutting her calls short.

Jennifer!
LAUREN

RAJIV
Good.

RAJIV

Then we're all shitty people tak'n up space.

Rajiv has his knife in hand now, opened and pointing the blade at Lauren.

RAJIV (CONT'D)

You wanna see what it's like, Lauren? Everybody just kills each other all the time now, it's no big deal.

JEN

Rajiv!

RAJIV
What? What difference does it make?

LAUREN
I'm calling the police.

Lauren dials at her desk.

RAJIV

Enjoy the tape recording. Better not listen to it, Eric, it loops.

ERIC

You're not going to kill Lauren.

RAJIV

Our fuck'n psychic. What *am* I gonna to do? Go back to our shitty bathroom and do *myself* in? Cuz I can't.

(re: the knife)

This fucking thing sickens me. I havn't been able to kill myself in days.

JEN

Raj -

RAJIV

(pointing the knife)

Maybe *this* will make me feel better. What do you think, Lauren? You wanna help? Wanna help me stop killing myself? You ever think the solution would be to just kill other people? I've already done it once.

LAUREN

Rajiv -

RAJIV

Did you know *this* would happen, Eric? I'd end up killing people? Maybe I can start a new notebook.

Lauren remains with the phone on hold.

LAUREN

Rajiv, go home. You're unwell.

RAJIV

It's okay, Lauren. I know what I'm doing. I'll make sure to turn the timer on right away. I'll feel better if I just kill you each every four minutes.

JEN

Jesus! What the hell is wrong with you?!

RAJIV

Okay, Jen, I'll give everyone a turn. Eric, you wanna try? Wanna *prove* to me you don't like it? Here, you can try on me first.

Rajiv pushes the knife handle at Eric.

RAJIV (CONT'D)

Come on! Fucking do it little baby! Come on! Put your creepy mask to good use! I know you're pissed at me - *prove* that you won't enjoy it. These are the new rules, Eric! I'm letting you!

Eric takes the knife. Lauren puts the phone down.

LAUREN

Rajiv - take a seat.

RAJIV

I can't. Can't do it anymore. You fucked me up, Jen. I was - I had something. Since I was fifteen. Killed myself twenty-three thousand times for what?! How do I get a million now? How am I suppose to see my mom again? Just - please - I haven't in days - please. Eric. You're pissed at me. I shouldn't have killed her. You're right. You predicted it. Noth'n happened. I'm the one that's useless. Where were you eighteen years ago to tell my mom "hold on" last two days of december? Why didn't *I* know to tell her to wait two more days to become Immortal? What the fuck is wrong with *me* that *I* couldn't fuck'n predict that? Huh, little psychic?!

Rajiv slaps Eric. And continues to rough him up and Eric holds the pointed knife. Jen jumps in and tries to push Rajiv off Eric as she and Lauren ad-lib shouts:

RAJIV (CONT'D)

Where's my psychic power? Lemme predict *this* future! I never see you kill yourself! You've never looped! Never lost control! Lost control of anything - of your life. Never watched people actually die!

JEN / LAUREN

Stop it! Rajiv! What are you doing?!
Stop!

Rajiv finally backs off in tears.

RAJIV (CONT'D)

I'm useless.

JEN

You asshole!

Eric closes the pocket knife:

ERIC

My father killed me over and over and over and over again! *He* suffocated me. To shut me up. If you want to be the next one to kill me, go right ahead!

He throws the closed knife at Rajiv.

ERIC (CONT'D)

I've looped before! But I don't kill people. I've died enough times. My life started with death. I don't need anymore of it, Raj. Not for myself, or anyone. I'm actually here because I wanted to help. Go home and figure out who can kill you so you can keep going on in your pathetic dwindling nothing life. I'm trying to do something with mine. Even though I can't even cover my own face because it traumatizes me. But I don't kill people. And I don't know how you could do that to her and live with yourself.

JEN

It was my choice, Eric. I'm sorry - I didn't know it would - do this to him.

LAUREN

What is going on?

JEN

RAJIV

I -

Nothing.

JEN

I asked Rajiv to kill me to see if I was early enough along.

LAUREN

(to Rajiv)

I'm calling the police back - you're not going around murdering the team.

JEN

Lauren, I asked him to. It's my fault.

ERIC

It's not your fault.

JEN

It's my fault - for -

LAUREN

Jen - there are resources - support groups - we can find -

JEN

I don't - just - the Vege Patch, Lauren.

LAUREN

That's not you're only option.

JEN

Yeah, just -

RAJIV

No.

JEN

I don't have -

ERIC

Jen.

LAUREN

None of you are being Planted. I was never going to let that happen.

(lost and angry)

This is a mess. What am I suppose to do here?

Rajiv, what you just did is disgraceful. And what you did to Jen -

JEN

He was trying to help -

LAUREN

(disappointed in herself)

So have I. Jennifer, there is still time to figure something out.

Jen isn't able to believe that. Everyone reached their limit. Nothing else Lauren can do.

LAUREN (CONT'D)

You've all - been through - a lot - and this - program - was clearly not a good idea. I'm going to - talk to whoever I need to - and ask that they give you whatever stipend you were promised - and we can end this. We'll have to- have to move on.

Silence.

ERIC

Move on to what?

LAUREN

You all - you will - figure it out. Jennifer, I will send you referrals.

JEN

(quietly hopeless)

Whatever.

RAJIV

What am I gonna do? Call the hotline?

LAUREN

Probably not.

JEN

There's not gonna be one left to call.

LAUREN

That's not your problem anymore.

Silence. Eric puts his mask to his face in front of everyone. He struggles, and panics - but he keeps going. And he keeps panicking.

No one knows what to do. Finally, Eric gives up.

ERIC

I was a baby when we were living at a motel and - um - when my mom came back one night my dad - she said he was acting really strange - and he didn't want her to check up on me.

(beat)

It was just a single-room motel set-up, so - it was pretty obvious that my mom could - you know - see if my body was there or not.

(beat)

Um, so he grabbed her and acted like he wanted to -

(beat)

Have sex, or something.

(beat)

(MORE)

ERIC (CONT'D)

My mom said she struggled with him and thought he was gonna seriously hurt her, or probably kill her - but then my little infant body reappeared on the Motel carpet, screaming.

(beat)

He panicked and ran out, basically.

(beat)

My mom says that I saved her - I guess.

(beat)

She dressed me and called 911. And she says that when the police interviewed the other guests in the rooms next to ours - they heard me screaming on and off for hours. I don't know if they coulda called 911 or not, but my mom and the police figure that he probably suffocated me -

(beat)

- at least eight or nine times, based on what the other guests said they heard - the times of silence that they gave. Um, so - yeah.

(beat)

I can't wear masks for Halloween, or just put a bedsheet over my face when it's cold, or wear a motorcycle helmet -

(beat)

Or use a surgical mask. So I can't be a nurse - or anything medical, really - least - not until - or if - I can - I dunno - get over it - or manage it - I don't know.

RAJIV

I'm a dick.

ERIC

Well. My dad's the one that killed me. But yeah, you are a dick. You're a real fuck'n asshole.

Eric puts his mask to his face in front of everyone. He struggles, and panics - but he keeps going. And he keeps panicking.

He looks around and they encourage him to keep going.

He does. Silence.

RAJIV

That was longer.

ERIC

Yeah. I've never - been able to do that.

BLACKOUT

SCENE 5

HOTLINE COUNSELOR BOOTH.

As LAUREN walks in we hear the remaining (previously recorded) news interview. We quickly notice her wearing sweats, looking completely unprofessional, disheveled and checked out. So, it clearly doesn't matter that she's also brought in a bag a fast food with her as part of her new hotline booth set-up routine. She's the only one left, she can do what she wants.

REPORTER (O.S.)

You had a trained routine.

LAUREN (O.S.)

(discouraged)

Yes. Very routine. Over and over.

REPORTER (O.S.)

(news-worthy drama)

And then... *that one time...* it *wasn't*. So, tell us about that... now infamous call with, *Dylan*.

CROSS FADE TO:

MOMENTS LATER

Lauren, in the middle of a panicked call with, DYLAN, a fey young man who is very high: She's flipping through a magazine just like Jen.

DYLAN (O.S.)

He won't come out of the bathroom!

LAUREN

(uninterested)

Anything in there he could use to hurt himself?

DYLAN (O.S.)

Yeah! Of course! He won't come out!

Lauren turns a magazine page.

DYLAN (O.S.) (CONT'D)

He was talking about how he doesn't want to be here and all that!

She flips another page and mouths “oh wow” at what she’s seeing.

DYLAN (O.S.) (CONT’D)

We were smoking. I don’t know what to do! He’s never died before! I’ve never been with anybody who has! ...I don’t make him happy anymore.

She flips a page.

LAUREN

You been smoking more than usual today, Dylan?

DYLAN (O.S.)

No? Drinking. A couple bottles. I just wanted us to have a romantic night. He’s so sad, Lauren!

She flips a page. We hear Dylan slightly off the phone, yelling -

DYLAN (CONT) (CONT’D)

TONI!

(beat)

TONI! TALK TO THIS COUNSELOR! SHE CAN HELP YOU! SHE WANTS TO TALK TO YOU! SHE’S SUPER NICE, TONI!

She looks up from the magazine and mouths, “thank you”.

DYLAN (CONT) (CONT’D)

DON’T BECOME ANOTHER STATISTIC!

OVER THE PHONE, WE HEAR THE SOUND OF THE DOOR OPENING.

DYLAN (O.S.) (CONT’D)

Toni!

We can hear TONI in the background.

TONI (O.S.)

(faintly)

I have to lie down.

LAUREN

Great, Dylan I can hear him. Gonna end the call now.

DYLAN (O.S.)
 (to Toni)
 What did you do!!!!

Lauren ends the call. She hits another button for a new call:

LAUREN
 City Suicide -

DYLAN (CONT)
 Lauren! He's sweating really bad! He's barely
 awake!

Lauren folds the magazine and puts it on the desk.

<p>LAUREN Dylan?? Who redirected you back to me?</p>	<p>DYLAN (CONT) (off the phone) Toni, can you talk to the counselor? She wants to talk to you!</p>
---	---

Lauren is taken off guard and is getting more emotionally involved now.

DYLAN (O.S.) (CONT'D)
 WHAT DID YOU DO?! Take something? Tell
 me! The counselor wants to know! ...Toni?
 (beat)
 Toni!
 (beat)
 TONI-TONI-TONI-WAKE UP! Wake up-wake
 up! Oh fuck! Toni! Fuck-fuck-fuck-fuck. Lauren-
 Lauren - he's not - he's passed out!

LAUREN
 (routine)
 Dylan. Slow, deep breath. Check the bathroom.
 Gonna put you on hold.

DYLAN (O.S.)
 Yeah - yea -

Lauren hits a button on the phone to switch lines and dials 911.

AUTOMATED RECORDING
 If this is not an immediate emergency, please hang
 up and dial 211. Otherwise, stay -

Lauren switches back to Dylan's call.

DYLAN (O.S.)
No-no-no-no-no-no-no!
(beat)
It was Percocet, Lauren.

LAUREN
(unfazed)
Alright.

DYLAN (O.S.)
The bottle's empty!

LAUREN
Dylan, the paramedics might not get there in time.

WE HEAR TONI PUKING AND GASPING FOR AIR WHILE PASSED OUT.

DYLAN (O.S.)
Toni! SHIIIIIT!!

LAUREN
Pull him up, Dylan. Sit him up. Put the phone
down - sit him up.

We hear the PHONE BEING PUT DOWN AS THE GASPING CONTINUES IN THE
BACKGROUND.

DYLAN (O.S.)
Honey! Stop! Baby! Stop! Wake up!

TONI SLOWS HIS GASPING AND STOPS.

DYLAN (O.S.) (CONT'D)
Oh. GOD! *HE'S TURNING BLUE!!*

DLYAN PICKS THE PHONE BACK UP.

DYLAN (O.S.) (CONT'D)
What do I do??!

LAUREN
Dylan, put your hand under his nose. Feel any air?

DYLAN (O.S.)
 What?? No - I don't know! I don't feel anything!
 (shaking Toni)
 TONIIIIIII -

Lauren switches back to the 911 call.

AUTOMATED RECORDING
 - contact information for your killer, and any other
 fun facts you remember -

She switches back to Dylan's call. He is frantic, SCREAMING.

LAUREN
 Dylan, breathe -

As Lauren speaks SHE STARTS THE L.E.D. TIMER.

LAUREN (CONT'D)
 Dylan, I'm here, listen to me. When Toni goes -
 he's going to be naked when he reappears.

<p>DYLAN (O.S.) No!!!!</p>	<p>LAUREN Dylan - Dylan - here's something you can do - go get some clothes for him and a warm blanket, okay?</p>
---	--

<p>DYLAN (O.S.) No - no - no - no - no -</p>	<p>LAUREN He's going to be very cold and scared, Dylan. You want to help him back, right??</p>
---	--

LAUREN (CONT'D)
 (tougher)
 Dylan, you want to help him, *right?!?*

DYLAN (O.S.)
 Y - y - yeah. Yes. Oh, Jesus. Okay. Okay.

LAUREN
 Get pajamas - something comfortable.

DYLAN (O.S.)
 Yeah - maybe his flannels. Okay. Oh, Toni! Ugh.
 Fuck. Okay.

WE HEAR DYLAN SHUFFLE THROUGH HIS APARTMENT. WE HEAR
 DRAWERS OPEN...

Lauren switches back to the 911 call.

AUTOMATED RECORDING
- on the line and hope for the best -

Lauren switches back to Dylan.

AND WE HEAR DRAWERS CLOSE.

DYLAN (O.S.)
Okay. Okay.

Lauren takes a bite of her food.

LAUREN
Do'n great, Dylan.

DYLAN (O.S.)
Oh, Lauren - I'm so dizzy!

LAUREN
Try to sit down.

DYLAN (O.S.)
Yeah, yeah.

LAUREN
I started a timer, Dylan. It'll tell us when we should expect him back. I'm canceling the paramedics, Dylan. Now we just wait. A few more minutes.

She opens up the magazine again, to kill time. She's so over this routine.

DYLAN (O.S.)
How much time is it now?

LAUREN
(attention back inside the magazine.)
Won't know for sure. He might not be completely dead yet. Just wait a couple seconds. Then, I'll reset the timer when he disappears.

She flips a page.

DYLAN (O.S.)
Oh fuck. Baby! Oh my baby. Oh, Toni, why??
Why did you do this?!!
(MORE)

DYLAN (O.S.) (CONT'D)
 I know him, he's gonna get stuck in this shit. He's
 gonna be in loops! Dammit, Toni!

Lauren becomes invested on the magazine page, eats more.

DYLAN (O.S.) (CONT'D)
 (to Toni)
 Disappear already. Hurry, baby. I'm right here.

LAUREN
 I can tell how much you love Toni, that's the most
 important thing.

She takes another bite, flips a page.

DYLAN (O.S.)
 Oh my God - I love him so much! I would do
 anything for him!
 (crying)
 My babyyyyyy!

LAUREN
 (matter of fact)
 He's gonna come back and be very sad, and scared,
 and panicked. You're gonna to have to slow down
 as much as you can, to be there for him.

DYLAN (O.S.)
 (composing self)
 Yeah. Yes. Of course. How much more time? Is it
 going to happen soon? Should I look away??

She flips a page.

LAUREN
 Soon, Dylan. I'm gonna ask you to wait against a
 wall of the room. I don't want his appearance to
 scare you from behind. Okay?

DYLAN (O.S.)
 Jesus.

LAUREN
 There a good place you can stand?

DYLAN (O.S.)

Yeah... Yeah - I'll just be here near the kitchen. It's a studio - it's a small place.

LAUREN

(uninterested)

Okay, if you think that's the best spot.

DYLAN (O.S.)

Is he going to disappear yet???

Lauren looks at the L.E.D. TIMER. It should read somewhere PAST 3:00 MINUTES BY NOW.

LAUREN

(confused)

Um, yeah. He should disappear soon. Then, I'll just reset the timer.

DYLAN (O.S.)

Come on, Toni. I'm here, sweetheart. I'll take care of you. Hurry, baby.

(to Lauren)

Is it time now??

LAUREN

Hang on, Dylan.

DYLAN (O.S.)

He got so blue.

LAUREN

Keep breathing, Dylan.

DYLAN (O.S.)

How much more time? It's been awhile now.

Lauren looks at the L.E.D. and starts to really worry now.

LAUREN

A little longer.

DYLAN (O.S.)

Stop saying that! How many minutes is it now?!

Lauren is getting panicked and trying to hide it in her voice. The L.E.D. TIMER KEEPS RACING.

LAUREN

Um, it's, it's just taking a little longer than usual.

DYLAN (O.S.)

What do you mean?

LAUREN

Well -

DYLAN (O.S.)

I mean he's *dead*, Lauren! He's *DEAD*! I'm looking right at him.

(yelling off the phone)

Disappear, Toni! Disappear! He's not going, Lauren! TONI! DISAPPEAR!

LAUREN

We just have to wait -

DYLAN (O.S.)

He's not disappearing, Lauren! What if I... Oh, lord - Toni - don't make me do something stupid - Toni - *DISAPPEAR!* I love you baby. You have to *GO!!*

WE HEAR DYLAN SHUFFLING THROUGH HIS APARTMENT.

Lauren looks at the L.E.D. TIMER THAT IS NOW *PAST* 4:00 MINUTES.

WE HEAR A DRAWER OPEN AND UTENSILS BEING PUSHED AROUND.

LAUREN

What are you doing, Dylan??!

WE HEAR A METAL OBJECT BEING SLID OUT.

DYLAN (O.S.)

Lauren, he's not going! Trust me - I have to help him -

LAUREN

Dylan - what -

DYLAN PUTS THE PHONE DOWN AND WE HEAR HIM FROM A DISTANCE NOW.

DYLAN (O.S.)

(yelling)

I HAVE TO DO THIS! Oh god, Toni - I love you -
YOU HAVE TO COME BACK TO ME!

DYLAN SCREAMS AS WE HEAR TONI'S BODY BEING STABBED.

Dylan is wrecked with emotion, he pleads and sobs -

DYLAN (O.S.) (CONT'D)

GO AWAY BABY!

STAB

DYLAN (O.S.) (CONT'D)

COME ON, SWEETHEART!

STAB

DYLAN (O.S.) (CONT'D)

PLEASE HONEY! YOU HAVE TO GO NOW!

STAB. STAB. STAB.

DYLAN (O.S.) (CONT'D)

TONI!! MY LOVE! PLEASE! PLEASE! GO
THE FUCK AWAY! BABY! DIE!
PLEEEEEEEASE!

STAB. STAB.

DYLAN (O.S.) (CONT'D)

Oh God, honey. I love you. Please-please-please-
baby-please.

(beat)

Lauren! Lauren! He's not! Nothing is happening!

LAUREN!

DYLAN SOBS IN THE DISTANCE.

LAUREN

Dylan! Can you pick up the phone? Dylan! Dylan,
let's talk - pick up the phone. Alright?!

Lauren checks the L.E.D. TIMER. IT IS FAR BEYOND 4:00 MINUTES.

LAUREN (CONT'D)

Damn. Shit. Um -

DYLAN SOBS AND SCREAMS. Lauren is in shock.

LAUREN (CONT'D)

(calmly in shock)

Dylan - I'm - I'm gonna put you on hold - again -
for a minute.

Lauren switches to another phone line and dials 911.

AUTOMATED RECORDING

If this is not an immediate emergency, please -

911 OPERATOR 3

LAUREN

911 - What is your name and emergency? Oh, you idiots!

911 OPERATOR 3

What did you just say?! What's your name and
emergency?

LAUREN

(in shock)

Hi - I have to report a body.

911 OPERATOR 3

(calmly mocking)

Ma'am, I don't know if you've heard, but...

Lauren becomes enraged in a way we have yet to see.

LAUREN

You need to *LISTEN* to me. Are you listening,
sweetheart?!

911 OPERATOR 3

(putting up with it)

Yeah, I'm listening...

LAUREN

There is a dead - *man*. He's dead!! It's been -

LAUREN READS THE TIME ON THE L.E.D. TIMER.

LAUREN (CONT'D)

He's *NOT* coming back!

911 OPERATOR 3

Ma'am -

She reads the time LOUDLY AGAIN.

911 OPERATOR 3 (CONT'D)

In 2 to 4 -

LAUREN

Did you *NOT* just hear me?!

SHE SHOUTS THE TIME AGAIN.

911 OPERATOR 3

Ma'am -

LAUREN

Are you saying I don't know how to read a god damn timer!? That I suddenly have no clue how to do my job because I'm talking *to you*?! "Mister Operator"?! Is that the shit you're spewing at me right now?! You come over here and I will give you a good look at this number, you patronizing little prick!

911 OPERATOR 3

Ma'am I'm gonna

911 OPERATOR 3

have to -

LAUREN

You're gonna have to - find a fucking coroner!

LAUREN

Know what that is?! You're gonna have to pick up this man's *DEAD BODY*! BECAUSE IT. IS NOT. GOING. *ANYWHERE*.

SHE SHOUTS THE TIME AGAIN.

And she keeps reading the clock out loud until it sinks in -

LAUREN (CONT'D)

Oh my god.

911 OPERATOR 3

Ma'am?

LAUREN

Oh my god.

Lauren bursts into tears.

LAUREN (CONT'D)

...his name was *Toni*... I just heard him die!

(trying to process)

I heard him die. I heard him die. I heard it. I heard
him die. I heard it.

SCENE 6

BREAKROOM. Jen and Eric are alone. Jen is at Lauren's desk trying to figure things out. Eric is at the window looking through the blinds.

Rajiv enters from the front door hesitantly.

Jen and Eric are surprised to see him and stare.

RAJIV

The news vans are everywhere.

ERIC

I guess you got passed them.

RAJIV

Yeah, I said I worked here.

JEN

Fake news.

ERIC

What are you do'n here?

RAJIV

Jen said you were gonna open.

JEN

I didn't know what to expect.

ERIC

Yeah -

(looking out the window)

This is - crazy. Kind of scary. Actually - scary.

RAJIV

What's the call log say?

JEN

That why you're here?

RAJIV

I mean - is it for real?

JEN

I don't know.

Silence.

ERIC
You can't do that shit to me again.

Rajiv considers.

RAJIV
I won't.

Eric considers.

ERIC
Everyone's freak'n out. I'm surprised the FBI isn't here yet. Or, Homeland Security.

JEN
They don't care.

RAJIV
Fuck those guys.

ERIC (CONT'D)
Isn't this a State of Emergency thing?

JEN
Nobody knows what this is.

RAJIV
But he's dead?

JEN
Yeah. He's dead.

RAJIV
And the guy in Berlin?

ERIC
That was ruled out, just a coma. Low heart beat or something.

RAJIV
This shit's some weird fluke that happened to Lauren. Here. *That's it?*

ERIC
It's really scary - random - I dunno.

JEN
People are still dying and returning like normal.

ERIC
But that guy didn't.

JEN

No. He didn't. And the phone lines are going crazy - there's no way we can - even - take a sliver of what's going on.

RAJIV

So, what do we do? Where's Lauren?

JEN

She's probably getting ready for the public funeral this weekend.

ERIC

What's that?

JEN

Like a planting ceremony, but nationally televised.
(to Rajiv)
What do you care?

RAJIV

I wanted to know how you guys were.

Silence.

JEN

(to Rajiv)
I'm going to try the clinic again.
(beat)
Do you want to come with me?

Rajiv considers and nods yes.

ERIC

We should take some calls.

JEN

Keep them short. Just let them know the truth.

RAJIV

What's the truth?

JEN

That we don't know what the fuck is going on and this is really scary for us too.

Rajiv solemnly nods his head again.

RAJIV

Okay.

Eric holds his mask to his face and panics knowing that he's being watched. Jen and Rajiv look on, with a supporting gaze.

JEN

We're here.

Eric continues, longer than before, with less panic.

ERIC

Okay.

As Rajiv walks to the booth:

RAJIV

I told the reporter that Lauren is a good counselor and she did everything she was suppose to do.

ERIC

But you hate her.

RAJIV

Yeah, but I got to be on TV.

SCENE 6

HOTLINE COUNSELOR BOOTH. Jen starts a call:

JEN
Hi, my name is Jen.

LAUREN (O.S.)
Jennifer? It's Lauren.

JEN
Lauren?

LAUREN (O.S.)
What are you doing there?

JEN
It's Thursday. We just - we thought -

Silence.

LAUREN (O.S.)
I called to see - if they added more counselors.

JEN
On the lines?

LAUREN (O.S.)
If the cities - considered that - the demand.

JEN
It's just us.

LAUREN (O.S.)
Who?

JEN
Eric. And Rajiv.

LAUREN (O.S.)
Oh. Huh.

JEN
Yeah.

(beat)
I can tell the news vans about the high call volume.
They're parked outside.

LAUREN (O.S.)

Now?

JEN

Yeah. You havn't been watch'n the news?

LAUREN (O.S.)

(obviously)

No. No - I - I havn't been watching the news.

JEN

(oops)

You're the news now - aren't you?

LAUREN (O.S.)

They're airing my interview tonight. Gotta give a big speech Saturday.

(beat)

Would you start the timer, Jen?

JEN

You're not dead - are you dying? Did you do something??

LAUREN (O.S.)

I don't know what I am, Jen. Just start the timer. Did you start it?

Jen reluctantly does.

JEN

Uh - yeah - it's - going.

LAUREN (O.S.)

Good. That's good.

(beat)

Know how many calls I've taken? They just keep call'n - can't imagine what it is today - it's endless! From across the whole country.

Lauren is sounding more audibly drunk.

LAUREN (O.S.) (CONT'D)

Time does the thing say, Jen?

JEN RELUCTANTLY READS THE L.E.D. SCREEN ALOUD.

LAUREN (CONT'D)

Good. Great. And what'll happen at four minutes?

JEN

I - I don't know, Lauren.

LAUREN (O.S.)

It was a relief, Jennifer. I realized -

(beat)

He just *died*. And it was a relief. Gave me that hope all those addicts and Serial Suiciders are looking for. That it'd be over. It *was* over! He *can't* call me back again. I won't have to walk him through any more steps. Or his *boyfriend* through any steps. Don't have to show concern. Talk about another optimistic future. And other possibilities. And hope. One less call I'll ever have to take.

(spiraling)

Again and again and again. And Again! How many more calls am I supposed to take, Jen? How many more lives are we supposed to try to help? How many?? How many more times do we keep telling them - keep telling myself - that it's gonna be okay - its gonna be okay - its gonna be okay - its gonna be okay!

(beat)

He just died. And I didn't have to say it anymore.

(beat)

What time is it now?

JEN RELUCTANTLY READS THE L.E.D. SCREEN ALOUD AGAIN.

LAUREN (O.S.) (CONT'D)

Gonna keep on ticking. Just keeps going. No more calls. No waiting for anybody to come back. No crisis. Just the clock tick'n.

(beat)

I'm glad he died, Jen. I'm glad.

Silence.

JEN

I'm here, Lauren... I'm here.

Silence.

JEN (CONT'D)

Lauren?

Silence.

JEN (CONT'D)

Lauren?

Silence.

A SIMPLE LIVING ROOM SET IS REVEALED IN A DRAMATIC AND DELIBERATE WAY.

In a lazy boy is, RICHARD - wearing a clean version of his clothes and boots from earlier, his feet are up on an ottoman. He's viewing an iPad screen, using large headphones.

LAUREN sits nearby, next to a lit lamp while on the phone.

She looks devastated:

LAUREN

I don't know what I'm doing.

Jen considers.

Then repeats:

JEN

You don't know what you're doing.

Lauren notices. She taught her well. Surprised to find herself on the other end of the hotline, she can barely say:

LAUREN

Yeah.

Jen, now taking the reins:

JEN

Okay, Lauren... Yeah... I'm glad you called...

FADE TO BLACK,
AS THE TIMER
KEEPS GOING.

END OF PLAY