

DISRUPTION: A PANDEMIC DECALOGUE

An episodic one-act drama for virtual performance by
Randy Wyatt

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CAST OF CHARACTERS

The play may be produced with a cast of 4-21 performers. Genders may be any mix at all, especially for CHECK-IN. BREATHE was written to be all women but could be modified. Feel free to change pronouns appropriately. Be sure to eliminate the actors' names from the Zoom display before they perform.

PRODUCTION NOTES

These vignettes have been written to allow as much contextual freedom for the producing company as possible. Since each actor could be performing in different houses, cities or even countries, the variables are endless and the way you interpret these scenes should complement the spaces you are working with. Think about what room of the house each character inhabits, or whether they are inside or outside. That said, here are a few guidelines for specific scenes.

BORED: These three friends are in comfortable places where they can speak freely.

FLORIDA: Sondra is connecting on her phone, Deb on her desktop or laptop. They are in the same house but not for long.

BREATHE: Three generations within a family, none in the same house presently.

MEDITATION: This could just be two people, or it could be a class/group of people all meditating together. C is the most prepared for meditation, E is the least prepared.

The devised nature of these scenes determined their distinct rhythms and language. At times, punctuation is deliberately omitted to allow the actor to interpret the moment as best fits the production. An asterisk (*) donates a pause, the length of which to be determined by the actors/director.

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

Disruption: A Pandemic Decalogue was released on June 10th, 2020. It was devised from material supplied by students at Union College in Schenectady, NY. It was directed by Randy Wyatt and Eric Hand, costumed by Brittney Belz and the video edited by Rashad Miller. It had the following cast:

BORED.....Emily Andrews, Sophie Hurwitz, Aly Silbey
RED DRESS.....David Brown*, Linnae Caurdy*
FLORIDA.....Mia Villeneuve, Lauryn West
UNREAL.....Haoyu (John) Jiang, Aly Silbey
CHECK-IN.....Evan Warren, Lauryn West
ADMISSIONS.....Lindsey Hansen*, Mariam Musah
DELIVERY.....Haoyu (John) Jiang, Mia Villeneuve
BREATHE.....Kitty Carrico Carpenter*, Kate Meehan*,
Sophie Hurwitz
MEDITATION.....Emily Andrews, Evan Warren
LIKE HOCKEY.....Etienne-Marcel Giannelli
*The(atre) Agency actor

Special thanks to all the Union College students and friends who filled out the surveys so honestly, including Carly Ristaino, Amber Birt and Vasili Kolia. Thanks also to guest actors from The(atre) Agency.

BORED

1: Oh my God I'm so bored.

2: SO bored.

3: Sames.

1: I am the most boringly bored that has ever bored.

2: (*Pointing at self:*) Even more bored.

3: Everything just *stopped*.

1: Right? I'm so useless when I'm not busy.

2: If I have to look at my brother again, I'm gonna scream.

(The other two crack up.)

I'm serious. I leave the house for a *reason*.

1: I can't look at another teacher trying to figure out Zoom for two hours.

(The other two groan/adlib in agreement.)

3: Can you buy stock in Zoom?

1: We totally should buy stock in Zoom.

2: It's probably too late.

1 & 3: (*Deflated:*) Yeah.

2: If I were a hacker, I'd hack into Zoom meetings everywhere.

3: But like, invisible. Nobody knows we're there, but we get to listen in on secret conversations.

1: In theory. But in practice, people are boring. They're not talking about juicy secrets. They're having lectures and meetings and talking about what a time we're living in four hundred times a day.

2: God, that's depressing.

3: At least I can talk to you two.

1: Yeah.

2: Yeah.

1: About how bored we are.

2: Yeah.

3: Yeah.

2: I wish we were back at school. I can't believe I'm saying that.

1: I miss everyone. In one place.

2: Can you imagine when we're back in the fall and everything is trying to be all normal, except we all lived through this intensely weird world event, and everything we try to do to be normal is just fake? Normal is the new fake.

3: I won't be there in the fall. So.

2: Oh. Oh right. Senior. Graduation and all that.

(First awkward silence.)

1: Well hey! Your life starts this summer!

2: Yeah!

3: Yeah.

1: No classes, no papers, no more "when will my life begin?!"

2: It's BEGINNING.

3: Yeah.

1: My brother is being all stupid about graduating. Whine whine whine. All the stuff he's missing that everyone else gets to do, like there aren't a million other high school seniors in the same boat.

2: You're not a whiner.

3: Yeah.

1: He's all "It's like we're being targeted, man."

2: What a loser.

1: Why can't I socially distance from him?

3: Will we still do this once I graduate?

1: What? Of course we will.

2: Definitely.

3: Will we though?

I was ready for a slow goodbye.

You know. A couple events

Graduation

To send me off into the great unknown right? but that might not be how the world works anymore.

(Second awkward silence.)

2: We don't know how the world works anymore.

3: Yeah I

I noticed.

1: We can always be bored together. I promise.

3: You promise?

2: I promise.

Bored forever.

3: OK.

I'd rather be eating pizza down at DJ's with you.

But.

OK.

(Third silence, less awkward.)

2: My parents say

They wish they could be bored.

Weird huh.

1: Naw.

I think I get it.

RED DRESS

HIM: Isolation makes you listen to every little crack and bump and clang in your apartment.

Yanno?

They say it's the house settling.

What does that mean exactly?

Are you still there?

How can a house still be settling?

Years after.

Settling into what?

Is it still in shock from being constructed

And now it's just

Resigning itself to —

You there?

HER: Yup.

HIM: I'm teaching myself harmonica.

My cats hate it though.

Cats hate harmonicas.

I Googled it.

HER: She's over there again.

HIM: Don't. Stay here. Here.

HER: They're not isolating. I'm isolating but they're not.

HIM: Don't.

HER: It's not fair.

HIM: Don't.

HER: I should call the police on them.

HIM: I'm running out of things to talk about.

HER: I'm sorry.

HIM: Maybe you can move your furniture around so you don't

HER: I'm not gonna do that.

HIM: OK.

HER: Ya think he remembers I live here, or is he too lost in the moment?

I'm gonna lose it, I swear.

HIM: I'm right here.

HER: You're a good friend.

HIM: No one is in their right mind.
You don't know what he's thinking.

HER: I do though. I went over there.

HIM: You what?

HER: Did the Spotify "Ten Minutes of Meditation" to calm down first. Then banged on his door. He shows up all sheepish, says she's just a friend.

Miss Red Dress up in the window, her back to us.
To me.

HIM: You went over there?

HER: I had my mask on.

HIM: Don't go over there.

Just...seriously.

Don't go over there anymore.

Are you – you hear me?

HER: You're just calling because you're lonely.

HIM: Why do you make that sound like an accusation?

HER: I don't I—

HIM: I don't wanna watch you...
I'm worried.

HER: I'll be fine.

HIM: Don't think about it.

HER: How do you not think about something, exactly?

HIM: Right.
I don't know.

FLORIDA

(SONDRA is on her phone, on her way out the door. DEB is on a desktop or laptop.)

DEB: Where are you going?

SONDRA: Seriously? I knew it.

DEB: What are you doing?

SONDRA: I knew I shouldn't have picked up.

DEB: Come back inside.

SONDRA: I have to go.

DEB: Go where?

SONDRA: Tell Mom I'll be back on Sunday.

DEB: I'm not telling her anything.

SONDRA: Then don't. I'll see you on Sunday.

DEB: Stop right now, look me in the face.

(She does.)

And tell me where you're going. Say it out loud.

SONDRA: You know where I'm going.
I don't have time for this.

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DEB: You are so damn selfish.

SONDRA: Thanks for your feedback.

DEB: You're driving to Florida? This is *irresponsible*.

SONDRA: I need to see him! I have to see him.

DEB: Two months doesn't make him your boyfriend.

SONDRA: In a pandemic it does. Get off my phone.

DEB: You are such a child. This isn't about you.

SONDRA: I knew you wouldn't get it.

DEB: Come back inside, Sondra. I'm serious.

SONDRA: Just because you suck at having boyfriends doesn't mean I have to suffer.

(A silence.)

DEB: When you come back, don't. Get a hotel for two weeks.

SONDRA: I can't afford that.

DEB: We can't afford your germs in the house.

Think about somebody else.

I'm serious. Don't come back here.

(Sondra flips Deb off. End of call.)

CHECK IN

TWO: You again.

ONE: You again.

TWO: You *again*.

ONE: Okay don't.

(They crack up. A silence.)

Did you eat all the blueberries?

TWO: Entirely.

(They share a silence. TWO hums softly.)

ONE: Thank you. For checking in.

TWO: *(Makes a heart gesture:)* Of course.

ONE: I don't want to waste your time.

TWO: How does one waste time right now?

(Another silence.)

ONE: I should have cuddled you.

Last week. When I saw you.

TWO: I—what? We don't—

ONE: This isn't me asking for—

TWO: *(Phew:)* OK I mean because—

ONE: Distance between friends is so last week.

I love you. I don't want to—*(Makes a "jump your bones" gesture:)* you know. But I. I need to be *sure* of you. Forget it. Sorry about the honesty.

TWO: I mean I love you too but—

ONE: Don't—qualify that, OK? Friends should be able to cuddle.

TWO: Friend cuddling?

ONE: We're *here*. On the *planet*.

(A silence.)

TWO: How does one Zoom-cuddle?

ONE: I dunno.

(They warm into a Zoom-cuddle. It's probably awkward. But it's not just that. Something makes sense. It might take time.)

TWO: Wait.

How did you know I ate all the blueberries?
How did you know I bought blueberries?

ONE: I know you.

UNREAL

J: Nothing feels real.

K: Right?

J: I want to feel like everything is real again. Everything feels like a farce.

K: Right? Like I'm in a cartoon or one of those young adult apocalypse novels.

J: Like no one can actually prove that the things we're hearing about are actually happening.

K: You sound like my Uncle Tony. Conspiracy boy.

J: How is your Uncle Tony? Still wearing the MAGA hat to Sunday dinners?

K: Right now he's at the Michigan capitol protesting.

J: Are you serious? Of course you're serious. He's a schmuck.

K: He owns his own lawn care business. So.

J: Schmucks can have their own businesses.

K: Yeah. OK, I guess I'll say it. I don't like the government telling us not to leave the house. It feels like an Orwell thing.

(A silence.)

J: I know people on ventilators.

K: Yeah, I mean, I—

J: I know people who have to put people on ventilators.

K: I get it but—

J: That Michigan protest is *blocking access to a hospital*.

K: I get it! I get it, alright? Do I have to like it?

(A short silence.)

J: No.

K: Thank you. Geez. [Sheesh.]

J: You just have to deal with reality.

BREATHE

M: Well, obviously, no.

D: Just

M: It's not –

D: Just hear me out

M: *(A beat, crossing her arms:)* Fine. Go.

D: I haven't seen Grandma in a long time –

M: And you thought now would be the perfect time to –

D: You're not hearing me out

M: No. Now continue.

G: Fran.

M: This is crazy.

D: You always

G: Let's hear her out.

M: Mom.

G: I've got room

M: That's *not* the *point*.

D: I'll make sure her internet stays working.

M: You need good internet for school.

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D: That's what I just said. I'll—

M: A college is second only to a prison when it comes to spreading viruses.

G: Fran, come on.

M: You're going to breathe all over her.

D: I'm not an idiot, Mom

M: You don't have to be.

G: I think she should

M: Have you seen the numbers, Carolyn?

D: I've seen the numbers.

M: They're not getting better.

G: Breathe. You're getting all huffed up.

M: I expect you home on Monday.

D: So we don't get to talk about this

M: It's the responsible thing to do.

G: That sounds convenient.

M: You have...conditions.

G: Lucky me.

M: I haven't seen her in months.

G: I haven't seen anyone in months.

(A silence.)

And it's going to be more months.

M: Why do you want to stay away from home?

D: Why do you have to make it all about you?

G: Now now, let's—

M: That's not an answer.

D: How about you just listen to you right now?

M: I'm not putting Grandma in danger. And then have you come back here and breathe all over the rest of us.

D: You can stop making me sound like a living virus now, thanks.

G: Whoa, whoa. Breathe. Both of you.

No, slower.

No one is abandoning anyone.

Shhh.

(A silence. Then suddenly G coughs. D and M react.)

I'm fine.

DELIVERY

H: Pizza's here.

P: You can't eat pizza in front of me.

H: Actually, I totally can.

P: Rude.

H: If we're gonna Zoom this long, you have to get used to regular life happening.

P: Whatever. So what's going on?

H: Nothing. Nothing's going on. Nothing is ever happening again.

P: What are you doing?

H: What?

P: Are those disinfectant wipes?

H: Yeah.

P: You're disinfecting the pizza box.

H: I don't know where this box has been.

P: You're DISINFECTING A PIZZA BOX.

H: I have to!

P: If I sent this conversation back in time a year ago, you'd be screaming the same thing.

H: So you just bring pizza delivery into your house?

P: Yeeeeaaaah. It's easier to eat it that way.

H: It's your life. Enjoy your germs. Mmmm germs.

P: Do you spray the pizza guy down when he shows up?

H: Not anymore. He just leaves it on the stairs.

P: "Not anymore"?!

(H opens the box and wipes down the upper inside of it. They look at each other.)

H: Just being —

P: Uh-huh.

MEDITATION

(Meditation music plays. The MEDITATORS focus on breathing. They sync breathing. There is a lot of silence between these lines.)

E: I miss the future.

C: Stay in the moment.

E: What if I don't like the moment?

ADMISSIONS

T: *(Laughing:)* No. I want a job.

R: I see. So if you're not gonna be a journalism major —

T: Theatre.

R: Much better.

T: Just kidding. Engineering.

R: I was a theatre major.

T: And now you're an admissions counselor.

R: (*Smirking:*) I can't tell if that's a slam or not.

T: It's all about how you take it.

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