

THAT'S WHY
A Play By
Faith Lawrence

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CAST OF CHARACTERS

Brent: A college-age fraternity boy. (Early 20s)

Jade: A college-age girl. Ronny's sister. (Late teens, Early 20s)

Mark: Jade and Ronny's father. Laura's husband. (Middle-age)

Laura: Jade and Ronny's mother. Mark's wife. (Middle-age)

Ronny: A college-age boy. Jade's brother. (Late teens, Early 20s)

Mason: A college-age fraternity boy. (Early 20s)

Eric: A college age fraternity boy. (Early 20s)

Carter: A college age fraternity boy. (Early 20s)

Doctor: From the local hospital. (30s-60s)

Chancellor Marshall (voice-over only)

TIME

The present.

PLACE

Southern United States.

THE SET

Multiple locations. The set can be as realistic or as minimalistic as needed for scene changes.

ACT IScene 1

The light comes up on Mason. He is sitting in what looks like an office waiting room. He is trying to calm himself.

Soon, Brent enters walking slowly, but confidently. He sits stage left a couple of chairs apart from Mason. There is silence.

MASON

Is it tomorrow?

BRENT

(Surprised) Is what tomorrow?...oh, yeah, it is.

MASON

We ordered some flowers or something, I think there's a donation box in the chapter room.

BRENT

Okay.

MASON

I don't think I'm going though.

There is more silence.

MASON

What were you planning on saying?

Silence.

What are you going to say in there? (he points OFF STAGE LEFT)

Silence.

MASON

(Talking rather quietly) I mean, what is there to say, you know? (Silence) You were on exec last year.

BRENT

Yeah I was.

MASON

So don't you agree?

Silence.

We don't wanna get kicked off campus.

(CONTINUED)

BRENT
We?

MASON
Why aren't you following?

Silence.
Just don't fuck up when you go in there, okay? . . .
God, I'm sorry, man.

BRENT shrugs.

MASON
You just know what would happen if the Dean and --

BRENT
Yeah yeah, I know.

MASON
So that's why it's important for you to just act like
it's all good.

BRENT
It's not all good.

MASON
Shit like this happens all the time.

BRENT looks at Mason.

MASON
It happens. (Pause) It's not my fault.

BRENT
(not wanting to argue anymore) Yeah.

MASON
(calming down) Yeah. . .

Silence.
So how are your classes so far?

BRENT
Pretty good.

Silence.

MASON
You know, they're opening up a new spot on 10th. A
couple of us were gonna go tonight if you wanna --

BRENT

I'm good.

JADE walks out of the Chancellor's office crying to herself and headed straight for the door to exit the office. BRENT stares at her as she leaves.

Silence.

MASON

(To himself) Shit.

BRENT

Huh?

MASON

That must've been Ronny's sister.

(BRENT looks back towards her exit).

CHANCELLOR MARSHALL

(Voice only) Mason, come on in please.

BRENT

(Gets up slowly) God, wish me luck. (exits SL)

Scene 2

The light comes up on a family's living room. There is a set of stairs located behind the couch. LAURA, RONNY and JADE's mom is dressed in all black walking around doing meaningless tasks. MARK, their father and Laura's husband, is sitting on the couch reading.

LAURA

(calling upstairs) Sweetie, hurry up please. The driver will be here before we know it.

MARK

Driver? I though we agreed on just taking the truck?

LAURA

I know, but I figured --

MARK

It's fine. (a littler louder) Jade, let's get going.

Are your folks meeting us here or there?

(CONTINUED)

LAURA

There. I didn't want to overwhelm Jade with everyone.

MARK

Well then maybe we should just take our own car if you don't want to "overwhelm" her.

LAURA

She's okay.

When does Daniel and his family get in?

MARK

Tomorrow.

LAURA

(looking for more of a response) Well, what time?

MARK

(still "reading") Not sure.

LAURA

Well, let me know please. . . when you find out. I really don't like that your brother couldn't get a flight for today but I'll be glad to see them tomorrow. It'll be a good distra --

JADE emerges from the stairwell wearing black as well

LAURA

I thought you were gonna wear Ronny's --

JADE

No.

LAURA

Okay, well did you grab the picture that you wanted to --

JADE

Can we go?

MARK

Well, we have to wait for the car.

JADE

What car?

LAURA

Honey, the follow car. The family rides behind . . . The driver should be here any minute.

JADE goes to sit down on the couch next to her dad but not near him. Mark continues to read.

LAURA looks at her non-expressive family sitting on the couch.

LAURA

Some of Ronny's friends from high school are going to stop by after the service today. Isn't that nice of them?

MARK

I didn't know that. Why are they coming?

LAURA

Well, to give their condolences. Mark, a lot of them came all the way from --

MARK

Yeah, I know, I just don't see why. . .

JADE

Dad, it's fine. They used to be over here all the time anyways.

MARK

Right, right..

JADE

And besides, you know that's what he would want. For us to all be around, ya know. So just --

MARK

(shoots a look at his daughter) Jade.

Silence.

LAURA

Uh Mrs. Ellis from the church made us some casserole for the week. Jade, I think you'll like it. I figured I'd pull that out this afternoon when everyone comes.

JADE

Yeah, I think that's fine.

MARK says nothing at all.

LAURA

(looks at her husband for a while. He is oblivious.)
Mark. . .

MARK

(looks up from his paper) What?

LAURA

Nothing. (Starting to get visibly upset)

JADE sees her mother upset and stands to go be closer to her.

LAURA

I'm going to miss him so much.

MARK looks over, but doesn't react.

JADE

I know.

LAURA

(To Mark) We have to go talk with the school.

JADE

Mom. . .

LAURA

(takes deep breath, changes focus) Do we have everything we're taking with us?

JADE

Yeah. (She shows the photo and disc)

MARK

Yeah.

There is a knock at the door.

MARK

Jade, will you get the door?

LAURA

He's here a little early.

JADE opens the door, and BRENT is standing there dressed in a suit.

Silence.

LAURA

Did you go to high school with --

BRENT

No, I just wanted to stop by because, well, I wanted to give my condolences.

(CONTINUED)

LAURA

Well that's sweet, but --

MARK

We're headed to the church. . .

BRENT

I'm sorry to come by like this.

JADE

How did you know him?

BRENT

(not sure how to correctly answer) We had a class together. At Briarwood.

LAURA

Tell me your name?

BRENT

Brent Davenport.

LAURA

Brent, yes.

Silence.

(looking at his clothes) I am assuming you're going to the service?

BRENT

Yes, yeah. I'm - I'm going.

Silence.

MARK

Okay. Well thank you for coming by.

BRENT

Uh yes sir. . . I just wanted to tell you all that I am sorry. I didn't know uh, your son, uh Ronny that well, but I (looking for words) felt the need to come by.

The family doesn't say much. BRENT is still standing near the door staring at them

(In a haste, taking a pen and an old receipt out of his pocket) You know, here is my, um, phone number. I am a junior at Briarwood, so just let me know --

JADE takes the slip of paper.

LAURA

Yes, yes. Thank you, Brent. I think we're gonna finish getting ready to go now probably, so we'll see you there.

(CONTINUED)

BRENT

Yeah, of course. . . I'm sorry.

Brent exits and the family grabs purses and other items preparing to leave.

LAURA

Well that was nice of that boy to stop by, I guess.

JADE

Yeah, it was, just kind of random.

MARK

Is the driver close yet?

LAURA

I don't know, Mark.

Jade, had you seen that boy, Brent, before -- in any pictures or anything.

JADE shakes her head.

The honk of a car horn is heard.

LAURA

Alright, are we ready?

No response from Jade or Mark.

JADE

(looking at her mom as she walks out to the car) No.

MARK follows JADE leaving LAURA to turn off the light and shut the door.

Blackout.

Scene 3

The back porch of Ronny's family's home after his funeral service. JADE is sitting alone for a few moments.

BRENT enters from inside the house.

BRENT

Jade, right?

JADE

(surprised to see him) Yeah. (sarcastically) And you're Brent Davenport.

(CONTINUED)

BRENT

Yeah.

Silence.

JADE

Do you need something?

BRENT

No.

JADE

Okay then.

BRENT

Sorry. I was just going to ask you something.

Silence.

Were you close?

Silence.

Your brother --

JADE

Yeah, we are.

BRENT

Ronny was your little brother?

Silence.

BRENT

Do you go to school somewhere around here?

JADE

No.

BRENT

Oh. . . I'm sorry. Am I bothering you?

Silence.

I can go.

Brent watches as Jade pulls a note out of her pocket. She looks at it.

JADE

He wrote me this about two years ago. (Pause). I, uh, wasn't feeling well, and he wrote me this and put it on my dresser one morning. I don't know, I don't think I'd told him how I'd been feeling, but somehow he knew.

I still don't know what it is, but that letter that he wrote me. . . it saved me.

(CONTINUED)

Silence.

And so that's why I'm gonna miss him.

Brent is unsure of what to do. He steps closer to Jade.

You said you had a class with him.

BRENT

One of those big classes with like 50 people or something.

JADE

Oh. Well, you are just about the only person from Briarwood that's contacted my family -- well, besides the Chancellor.

BRENT

Yeah, I think I saw you coming out of her office the other day.

JADE

(surprised) You did?

BRENT

Yeah, you left pretty quickly, but I think it was you.

Silence.

JADE

It was.

BRENT

Why'd you go?

JADE

I don't know. . . Wait, why were you there?

BRENT

Where?

JADE

The Chancellor's office. You said you saw me. Why were you there.

BRENT

I'm on a student committee. I meet with her sometimes.

JADE

Ah.

BRENT

Yeah.

(CONTINUED)

MARK comes outside to the back porch.

MARK

Jade, Ronny's friends are leaving. Come say bye, please.

JADE

Uh, yeah, Dad, I'm coming.

MARK does not acknowledge BRENT and goes back inside the house.

BRENT

Well, are you feeling better now?

JADE

(hesitates) I was. . . but you know with everything going on and --

BRENT

Totally.

JADE

I'm gonna go inside now.

BRENT

I'll just wait out here.

JADE

For what?

BRENT

(realizing that Jade isn't planning on coming back) Oh, never mind. I'll see you around.

JADE

I guess.

BRENT

Bye, Jade

Jade exits back into the home. The door closes behind her.

Blackout.

Scene 4

The lights come up on MASON, ERIC, and CARTER in the chapter room of a fraternity house.

CARTER

I got the kegs for Friday. Nate's was being a real dick about them, but I got them, so we're good.

MASON

Awesome.

CARTER

Eric, who are you taking?

ERIC

You know that girl, Elise? (Carter nods) Yeah, I'm taking her.

CARTER

You tryin' to (CARTER gestures) --

ERIC

I mean, you know. (They all laugh).

(Pause)

Did y'all see her and Danielle on 10th the other night? They were -- (gestures that they had had too much to drink).

CARTER

Yeah, but the real question is, did y'all see the guys the other night --

MASON

Carter, not right now.

CARTER

What?

(Pause)

I mean if we're gonna act like nothing happened --

MASON

That's right, nothing happened.

CARTER

Whatever dude.

(Pause)

Did any of us even go?

ERIC

Go where?

CARTER

To the funeral?

(CONTINUED)

MASON

Dude. . .

CARTER

Chill the fuck out, Mason. I'm just asking.

MASON

(Pause) I think Brent went.

CARTER

Oh Jesus, of course he did.

ERIC

I swear to God if he said something stupid. . .

MASON

We talked the other day and he was cool about it.

ERIC

Man, I sure hope so because we'd be in some deep shit if he --

MASON

I said I talked to him. Now, can we drop it?

ERIC and CARTER look at one another.

Do you have anyone else that you wanna put on the list for Friday?

CARTER

Nah, I'm good.

ERIC

Yeah, if you could add uh --

*BRENT enters headed to his dorm room "upstairs."
THEY all look at him.*

BRENT

Hi.

CARTER

(Pause) Sup dude?

BRENT heads to the stairs.

ERIC

What'd you do yesterday, Brent?

MASON

Eric, I told you --

(CONTINUED)

BRENT

Oh, I went to the funeral.

ERIC

Oh ok.

CARTER

Did anyone go with you?

BRENT

Uh, no. It was just me.

MASON

Just you. . .

BRENT

Yes, I'm gonna go upstairs now.

ERIC

Yeah yeah, sorry. See ya, man.

MASON runs over to him to talk more privately.

BRENT

Look, Mason, I really don't wanna talk right now --

MASON

I know, just, did you say anything?

BRENT

No.

MASON

Are you sure?

BRENT

What do you mean, "Am I sure?" I didn't say anything.

MASON

Okay cool. (starts to head back to ERIC and MASON)

BRENT

Do you even care?

MASON

Excuse me?

BRENT

You and Eric and Carter and everyone --

MASON

We have flowers we're gonna order.

(CONTINUED)

BRENT

And you think that's enough?

MASON

Brent, you understand why --

BRENT

No, I don't think you understand.

MASON

Dude, stop acting like you're Jesus Christ. So what you went to the funeral? You're still here at the end of the day.

BRENT

What are you so afraid of?

MASON

Don't do this to me.

BRENT heads "upstairs." MASON stands in place thinking.

Blackout.

Scene 5

The lights come up on JADE's room SL and BRENT's room SR as they speak. The lighting is dark everywhere else on the stage.

BRENT

I don't remember. I don't remember. I said, I don't remember.

JADE

God, I'm not sure if I can do this.

BRENT

I wasn't there. That's it. That's what I'll say.

JADE

I wasn't there, like, like, he was.. for me. I wasn't there.

BRENT

That's why I left. Because --

JADE

YOU took him from me. I wasn't there, and YOU took him from me.

(CONTINUED)

BRENT

Me? How did I fucking get into this.

JADE

God.

JADE & BRENT

Help me.

A phone ringing breaks the silence and "brings the characters back."

BRENT

Hello.

Silence.

Hello?

JADE

Hi.

BRENT

Is this -

JADE

It's Jade.

BRENT

Yeah. Oh my God. Uh hi.

JADE

I am really sorry to call you all of a sudden like this
--

BRENT

No, no it's totally fine.

JADE

Do you have a minute? Because I just, I don't know. I don't know many people who went to BU with Ronny, so I was just reaching out to talk about him, I guess. You gave us your number.

BRENT

Sure.

JADE

I'm sorry if this is weird for you. Is it?

BRENT

No. Not at all.

(CONTINUED)

JADE

My parents, they're. . . I'm not really sure how to talk to them anymore.

Silence.

My mom cries a lot, and my dad is just kind of there.

BRENT

I'm sorry.

JADE

It's fine, I guess, to cope like that. I don't really know.

BRENT

I don't either.

JADE

Listen, could you do me a favor? Well for my family.

BRENT

Uh, sure, anything.

JADE

The Chancellor called my parents the other day about getting the stuff out of Ronny's dorm. . . It's been over a week so I guess this is when everything starts. I mean, they said it's no rush, at all, but my dad wants us to go now but he's not doing anything about it, and my mom says she's not ready and I don't know if I really am either or not so I was wondering if you could go and kinda help start the process? The Chancellor told us we could add a student or two to the list of family if we needed to, so I told my mom to add you.

BRENT

Me?

JADE

Yeah. I know that's a lot to ask. I'm sorry, that was a dumb question.

BRENT

It's okay. I can do it.

JADE

Look, I should not have asked you, it's perfectly fine. We'll go sooner than we think, I bet.

Silence.

Talk to you later.

(CONTINUED)

Jade hangs up.

BRENT
Bye.

Blackout.

Scene 6

The lights come up on the family's living room. It is a week later. LAURA is sitting at the table eating. JADE is coming down the stairs to join her.

JADE
Shouldn't we have waited for dad.

LAURA
He called me earlier.

Silence.

JADE
What'd he say?

LAURA
He's gonna grab dinner with Tim and some other guy, I'm not sure.

JADE
Mom, are y'all doing okay?

LAURA
Oh yeah... we are fine sweetheart, you have nothing to worry about.

JADE
Well I mean --

LAURA
I said, you have nothing to worry about. (pause) Are any of your friends around?

JADE
What do you mean around?

LAURA
Don't get defensive.

JADE
I'm not getting defensive.

(CONTINUED)

LAURA

Jade, don't start with me right now.

Pause.

Did you get your prescription filled today?

Silence.

Jade?

JADE

No. I don't need it anymore.

Silence.

JADE

Mom, please don't look at me like that.

LAURA

I'm just worried about you, that's all --

JADE

Well then, talk to me.

LAURA

Honey, I'm trying to --

JADE

No you're not.

Silence.

You and dad aren't trying. He's probably not even out at dinner with his friends.

LAURA

Jade.

JADE

No one wants to be in this house anymore than they have to.

There is a knock at the door. JADE and LAURA look at one another. LAURA goes to answer it. Brent is standing there with a box.

LAURA

. . . this really isn't a good time.

BRENT

I have his stuff . . .

LAURA looks at JADE.

Jade asked me to get it. It's not all of it, but it's a start --

(CONTINUED)

JADE

Mom, I --

LAURA

We said we'd go when-- when--

JADE

I know.

LAURA

Brent, if you could just leave us please.

BRENT

Uh, sure.

JADE

No. He's helping.

LAURA

WE don't need help.

JADE

But I do?

Silence.

LAURA

Brent, please. . .

BRENT

Of course.

BRENT sets the box down and leaves.

LAURA

(To JADE) I told you that we would go to his dorm as a family.

JADE

I didn't think we'd ever go.

LAURA

(Pointing towards the box) What am I supposed to do with that?

JADE

You don't have to do anything.

LAURA

Go put the box in the garage.

(CONTINUED)

JADE

But Mom, we have to --

LAURA

Go.

Silence. JADE picks up the box.
Also, I'm calling the pharmacy for you first thing in the morning.

JADE

I told you, I'm fine.

LAURA

You shouldn't have done this, Jade.

JADE

Mom, you and Dad are delusional --

LAURA

Watch how you talk to me.

JADE

You are! You're at home doing nothing all the time but micromanaging me, and Dad is God knows where. It's been two weeks. Have y'all even gone to the school like you were supposed to?

Silence.

LAURA

I'm just worried about you. . . that's why --

JADE

"That's why" what? You wanna medicate me? You and Dad don't talk? You made Brent leave?

LAURA

Jade, go put the box in the garage.

JADE stares at her mother for a beat then exits to the garage.

LAURA sits at the table.

Blackout.

Scene 7

MASON, LAURA, and MARK are under spotlights as they "talk to the Chancellor." MARK and LAURA are seated together.

LAURA

I got a call at around 2 a.m. that night.

MARK

Thank you for giving our family time, Chancellor Marshall.

MASON

Uh, I don't know what time it was. Around midnight.

LAURA

I remember I had prayed for Ronny just before I went to sleep. Something told me to.

MARK

Yeah, it was bad.

LAURA

I- I get this call and I don't know what I was expecting --

MARK

Laura screamed.

MASON

It was really loud out there with the waves and all the yelling.

LAURA

They asked if we were Ronny's parents.

MARK

Something like, "We regret to inform you that your son --"

MASON

Ronny? Yeah, he was one of our pledges. (Pause) No, I didn't know him well.

LAURA

We drove. . . two hours. . . to the morgue.

MASON

It was an hour drive back, I guess. I thought he was in another car.

(CONTINUED)

LAURA

That was the longest two hours of my life.

MARK

Yes. We have a daughter named Jade. She and Ronny are very close.

LAURA

Jade has -- she struggles with -- we didn't have to tell her right away. She was staying the night at a friend's. (pause) It was just my husband and me.

Silence.

MARK

They took us into this room --

LAURA

With a chaplain and an officer.

MARK

They just kept talking about the process but --

LAURA

I just wanted to see him. I wanted to see my boy.

Pause.

MARK

He looked peaceful.

*It is LAURA'S turn to speak, but she has no words.
Laura screamed again.*

LAURA

I don't really recall what -- I think I -- I know, I held his hand one more time. And brushed his hair away from his face.

MARK

No parent should ever have to --

MASON

Ronny went out too far.

LAURA

What do you do? In that situation?

MARK

We just want to know how. . .

(CONTINUED)

MASON

It was a accident.

LAURA

There's no way that Ronny did that to himself. We just want closure.

MARK

That's why we're here.

MASON

Why am I the only one here?

MARK

Chancellor Marshall, have you talked to any of the other guys?

LAURA

No one is saying anything?

MARK

We know you're trying to get this resolved. . . we know, we know. . .

MASON

I'm telling you, Ronny did that to himself. We play pranks, we are tough on the pledges, but everyone else was okay.

MARK

That fraternity should be removed --

LAURA

Excuse me, I need a second. . .

MASON

Am I okay to leave?

Blackout.

Scene 8

Jade is home alone. She is at home reading on the couch when she hears a knock at the door. She opens the door. It's BRENT.

JADE

Uh hi, Brent. Come on in.

Silence.

What are you doing here?

(CONTINUED)

BRENT

Are your parents home?

JADE

(confused) No. Why?

BRENT

I just thought I'd come by and talk to you.

JADE

Okay.

BRENT looks at her for a moment.

JADE

Well, do you wanna sit down? My mom just made some brownies if you --

BRENT

I didn't know Ronny from class.

Silence.

JADE

Okay, so why. . .how do you --

BRENT shakes his head.

How do you know him?

BRENT doesn't answer.

Brent. . .

BRENT

I'm a Phi Sig.

JADE just stares at Brent.

I was there the night --

JADE

You lied.

JADE goes to sit on the couch. This is hard for BRENT to talk about, but he feels the need to say it all.

Did you try to help him?

Silence.

BRENT

We had all the pledges meet us at the house at midnight. Ronny was one of the first guys there. One of the guys was late, so we made them all put on blindfolds. We -- We put them in cars and drove them down to the coast --

(CONTINUED)

Silence.

The guys took off their blindfolds, and we made them all shotgun some beers. Ronny, uh, he was having trouble getting them down as fast as the other guys, so we made him drink some hard stuff too. After um, after about an hour of that --

BRENT pauses and looks over at JADE who is sitting almost completely still on the couch.

We took them down closer to the shore. It was warm that night. We made all the guys dig holes near where the tide was coming in. Ronny was struggling with digging his . . . the alcohol. . .(pause) so, I helped dig his hole.

JADE

You?

BRENT

They all got in the holes, and we buried them up to their necks. Phi Sig does this every year. It was normal.

JADE feels something and looks behind her. Ronny is standing there. JADE is the only one aware of him.

I'm so sorry, Jade.

JADE

Why Ronny?

Silence.

Did you try and help him, Brent?

Jade begins to cry.

BRENT

. . .It had gotten pretty late, so we uh, we left the pledges there. . . in the sand. (pause) They were supposed to find their way back to the house by morning. And they all did.

RONNY

Not me.

BRENT

Not Ronny. The actives kept asking over and over, "Where's Ronny?" And everyone was yelling at the pledges trying to figure out where he was. One of the actives, Mason made them all do push ups until someone fessed up.

RONNY

The tide.

BRENT

One of the other pledges said that they just looked over and saw him.

RONNY

I thought about my mom, and my dad, and Jade.

BRENT

The pledges --

RONNY

They shouted my name.

BRENT

They shouted his name. But he didn't answer.

RONNY

I couldn't answer. Only our heads were above ground.

BRENT

No one could get unburied in time to help him. They tried.

Silence.

Two of the pledges were crying about it all back at the house, but we just told them to shut up.

Silence.

BRENT

Jade, we do this every year.

JADE

Why have you been pretending --

BRENT

I haven't been pretending, Jade.

JADE

Getting his stuff for us, coming over here to talk all the time, pretending like you were his friend or something.

Silence.

BRENT

Jade, I know you loved your brother. That's why --

(CONTINUED)

JADE

Why did you do all of this? To clear your conscious?

BRENT

No one else was doing anything. You and your family deserve --

JADE

(she looks back at her brother) Ronny.

Silence.

JADE

Get out. Right now. GET OUT.

Jade has had it. She gets up and pushes Brent towards the door.

BRENT

Jade, I -

JADE looks back and sees Ronny.

JADE

Leave.

BRENT pauses and then leaves. JADE looks over at Ronny's ghost.

Ronny's ghost smiles at JADE.

JADE

Ronny?

She takes a step towards him. He shakes his head "no" and exits.

Blackout.

Scene 9

The waiting room of a hospital room. LAURA and MARK are sitting two seats away from one another. MARK is calm, stoic. LAURA is nervous.

MARK

I'm gonna go get some coffee.

LAURA

Can you wait here, please.

MARK

I'm tired.

LAURA

The doctor said --

MARK

Okay.

Silence.

LAURA

I didn't think this would happen again.

MARK

Yeah.

A doctor enters the waiting room.

DOCTOR

Are you Jade's parents?

LAURA

(getting up) Yes.

DOCTOR

Well, I just wanted to let you all know that she is expected to be okay.

LAURA

(sigh) Oh my goodness. Thank you. When can we see her?

DOCTOR

Jade requested privacy for the rest of the night. She said she'd be ready to see guests tomorrow morning.

LAURA

(looks at MARK then back at the DOCTOR) But, we're her parents. I don't --

DOCTOR

She asked for medical emancipation.

MARK

She what? (pause) Well can you at least tell us what's going on with her.

DOCTOR

I'm sorry, I cannot do that. But, you can talk with Jade in the morning.

(CONTINUED)

LAURA

Silence
She needs us.

DOCTOR

I'm seeing that this is a surprise for you, mam.

MARK

We'll just come back tomorrow.

LAURA

Why would she do that to me?

DOCTOR

If you need anything else, the front desk is down the hall and to the right.

MARK

Thank you.

The DOCTOR exits.

LAURA

We're not leaving.

MARK

Laura, stop this --

LAURA

No, we're not leaving.

MARK

I'm not about to stay at this hospital.

LAURA

She's our daughter, Mark.

MARK

And right now, she doesn't want to be.

LAURA

Are you hearing yourself right now?

Silence. LAURA shakes her head at MARK.

MARK

I'll see you in the morning.

Mark exits.

Blackout.

Scene 10

The lights come up on a hospital room. JADE is asleep on the bed. After a moment, Ronny enters.

RONNY

Hey, Jade.

JADE wakes up.

How are you?

Silence.

JADE

I don't get it. . .

RONNY

Can I tell you something?

JADE nods.

I didn't have a lot of plans. (pause) I think that's why I joined -- just to have some plans.

Silence.

And then. . . when I saw the tide, I don't know why, but I screamed. I thought about you, and mom, and dad. I didn't have the time for anything else.

Silence.

What'd you think about?

JADE

You mean --

RONNY

Yes. Last night.

JADE

Nothing.

RONNY

Hmmm. You didn't think about mom and dad?

JADE just stares at him.

They love you, Jade.

JADE

I didn't want to think.

RONNY

Silence.

Who found you?

(CONTINUED)

JADE

Annie. I hadn't talked to her in a month and she still lets herself in.

LAURA and MARK enter. They see JADE but they are unaware of RONNY.

LAURA

Jade, honey?

JADE

Hey.

LAURA hugs JADE. JADE looks over at RONNY.
I'm okay, Mom.

RONNY

She loves you.

JADE

Dad?

MARK

What?

JADE

Nevermind.

LAURA

Mark, did you have something that you were gonna tell Jade?

MARK

I can tell her later.

Silence.

LAURA

Jade, honey, can I open this window to get some light in here.

JADE

I guess.

LAURA

And did you eat this morning?

JADE

Yeah.

LAURA

What'd you have?

JADE

Mom. I'm doing just fine.

RONNY

We're in a hospital, Jade.

LAURA

You're right. Just fine. . .

Silence.

Your dad went by BU yesterday.

MARK

I just told you that I would tell her later, Laura.

LAURA

(ignoring Mark) And, we want you to know that they're trying to bring us some justice.

JADE

Okay.

RONNY

Okay?

LAURA

Does that make you feel better?

Silence.

Jade, honey, Ronny isn't going to come back, but we are doing our best to --

MARK

Laura. . .

JADE

(pause) Dad, if you could tell Ronny anything, right now, what would it be?

Silence.

MARK

Well, Jade I haven't given it much thought.

JADE looks at RONNY and then back to MARK.

JADE

What would you tell him?

RONNY goes and stands near his father.

MARK

I'd tell him that he's my boy and that I love him.

Silence.

- and I'd tell him that he's strong. Ronny might need to know that. . .

RONNY

They told me I wasn't.

MARK

(turning quickly to LAURA) I don't know why you let him join.

LAURA

Mark --

MARK

I - I told you that he didn't need that.

LAURA

Why would you say something like that?

JADE

Dad, Ronny wanted to join.

RONNY

I didn't have many plans.

MARK

I didn't care that he wanted to join, I knew -- I knew it wouldn't be good --

JADE

You didn't know that.

RONNY

Nobody knew that.

MARK

Laura didn't listen.

LAURA

Blame me. Mark, does that make you feel better to blame me?

JADE

Please stop.

MARK

And now my son --

(CONTINUED)

LAURA

OUR son --

MARK breaks down. Silence.

LAURA

Jade --

JADE

It's okay.

MARK

I'm so sorry.

LAURA

I think it's about time we go.

JADE

Sure.

LAURA

Just for a break. Mark?

MARK

Yeah.

LAURA

Jade, we'll be back around dinner.

MARK and LAURA begin to exit. MARK puts his arm around LAURA.

RONNY

I didn't know he felt that way.

JADE

I didn't either. (pause) Did you need to hear that?

RONNY

No, but I think you did.

*RONNY exits. JADE gets out of the hospital bed to address the audience.*Scene 11*The light changes to a downstage spotlight. JADE addresses the audience.*

JADE

I went to counseling. Willingly. Four days a week for six weeks. And life just kind of went on. My parents finally went and cleaned out the rest of Ronny's dorm.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

JADE (cont'd)

All of his stuff is in the garage now. I don't go in there. About two weeks after I got out of the hospital my parents got a call letting us know that Phi Sig was removed from campus. I really don't know what that meant for us, but, my dad was relieved, my mom was indifferent, and I -- I was indifferent I think. (Beginning to take off her hospital gown) I never told my parents about Brent coming over that day. They don't know that that's what was it for me.

JADE exits.

Scene 12

MARK is on the phone speaking with the Chancellor.

MARK

Yes, this is Mark. . . She's doing fine. Thank you for asking . . . Yes, just six weeks, and things do seem to be going well . . . Davenport? Davenport. . . Where do I know that name from? Brent? . . . Yes, he was around a good bit for a while . . . I can ask, Jade, but no, not that I know of. I'm confused. . . No, I didn't know that. He was a --. . . Okay. . . Wow. . . Yes, okay. Yes, we agree. . . Um, I will have to talk with her. . . Thank you for calling, Chancellor Marshall.

As MARK finishes his conversation, JADE enters. They are now in their living room.

Scene 13

MARK stops JADE who is headed to her room.

MARK

Hey Jade, if you're feeling up to it, we could go get ice cream at Frenzy's. Do you think your mom would want to go?

JADE

Yeah!

JADE starts off towards her room.

MARK

Wait, Jade.

JADE stops.

I am so incredibly proud of you.

JADE

Dad.

MARK

I have a feeling that Ronny would be proud of you too.

JADE

Well, thank you.

MARK

I think you, and me, and your mom are getting better.

JADE

We are.

Silence.

MARK

I talked to the chancellor at BU today.

JADE

Oh.

MARK

Well, she called me today to tell me that the university is holding a university hearing against the boys involved.

Silence.

And the school wants us to be there.

*Silence.*Honey, I completely understand if you don't want to.
(pause) We are only getting involved for Ronny.

JADE

Right. I know.

MARK

You don't have to go.

JADE

I'll go.

Silence.

MARK

Brent will be there.

Silence.

Brent Davenport. Do you remember --

JADE
Yeah.

MARK
Jade, he was a Phi Sig. He was there.

JADE
I know.

MARK
You already knew that.

JADE
Yeah.

MARK
How long?

LAURA enters with groceries.

LAURA
Hello!

JADE
Uh, Mom, hi. Do you need help?

MARK
Jade, how long?

LAURA
What's going on?

MARK
Hi, Laura.

JADE
Nothing, Mom.

MARK
I got a call from the school today.

LAURA
BU? What did they say?

MARK
The school is holding a hearing.

LAURA
Honey, that's good right?

MARK
Yeah! Yeah. . .

LAURA

Okay, that's good news then.

MARK

They want us to come to the hearing.

LAURA

Oh.

LAURA looks at JADE.

Is that okay with you?

JADE

Do you want this tomato sauce in the fridge or cabinet?

LAURA

Leave it out. I'm gonna use it.

MARK

Did you know that Brent was a Phi Sig?

LAURA

Brent? The boy who used to come over here all the time?

JADE

He wasn't here all the time.

MARK

Yeah.

LAURA

How did we not know about this?

JADE

He lied, Mom.

LAURA

Oh my God. . . Jade, honey, did you know about this?

JADE

No. Well yes -- But I didn't know then.

MARK

Why didn't you say anything?

JADE

Because I didn't know then.

Silence.

LAURA

Well, um, do you want to help me start dinner?

JADE

Sure. What can I do?

LAURA

Grab a bell pepper and start chopping.

LAURA goes over to MARK who is now seated at the kitchen table. They are talking so that JADE cannot hear their conversation.

Can we just drop this conversation for tonight?

MARK

The school wants an answer by tomorrow, that's all.

LAURA

It might be better for Jade if we just try and move on. Things are going well for her.

MARK

They felt pressure to --

LAURA

This is Jade's first night not having to go to counseling.

MARK

They want her to testify.

LAURA

Why?

MARK

I don't know. They said they had a conversation with Brent.

LAURA

And so they want Jade to testify?

MARK

Yes.

LAURA

But she barely knows the boy. Right?

MARK

That's why we need to talk with her about this.

LAURA looks at MARK.

Look, I know that this may be hard for her, but a lot needs to happen right now.

LAURA
Jade?

JADE
What can I do next?

LAURA
Just come over here for a second, will you?

JADE goes over to the table.

MARK
Go ahead and sit down.

JADE
What is this about?

LAURA
Honey, the school needs you to testify.

JADE
Testify? For what?

MARK
Jade, after the Chancellor talked to Brent, they feel that it would be best to have you testify.

JADE
What did he tell them?

LAURA
Mark?

MARK
We don't know, honey. That's why we need you to tell us what you know.

Silence.

JADE
I told you I don't know.

MARK
Then why do they want to talk to you?

Silence.

LAURA
Jade, listen. We really need you to just tell us anything.

RONNY appears on the stairs behind where the family is seated. JADE does not see him right away, but she can sense him.

JADE

Like two months ago, Brent came over here.

LAURA

When he brought that box of Ronny's stuff?

JADE

No, after that. And, he told me that he was a Phi Sig. He had been lying, and I couldn't figure out why. But then he kept going and he said that he was with Ronny that night. He told me everything.

RONNY

They blind-folded us.

JADE sees RONNY.

JADE

They blind-folded them. And they made them drink, and then they buried them in these holes up to their necks.

RONNY

They do this every year.

JADE

Brent says they do this every year.

LAURA

Jade, if you need to --

JADE

Brent helped him dig his hole. Ronny couldn't do it, so Brent dug it for him.

Silence

He killed him.

RONNY

The tide --

JADE

Brent killed him.

JADE begins to cry. LAURA takes JADE in her arms

LAURA

Jade. . .

MARK

They need to hear this.

LAURA

You don't have to testify if you don't want to. (pause)
C'mon, lets go upstairs.

JADE

I can't.

JADE and LAURA exit upstairs.

MARK pulls out his phone and begins to dial a number. RONNY comes over and places a hand on his father's shoulder. MARK puts his phone down.

Blackout.

Scene 14

A flashback. RONNY is sitting on the living room couch. JADE enters from upstairs.

She goes to join him on the couch.

RONNY

I saw that you were trying to take a nap. I tried to be quiet upstairs.

Silence.

JADE

I got your note.

RONNY

I was worried about you, and I want you to know --

JADE

I'm fine.

Silence.

RONNY

Look, I don't think any less of you. I'm your brother and I just noticed. . .

Silence.

RONNY

I don't -- You just don't seem well. That's all.

JADE

You make it sound like I'm sick or something.

RONNY looks at JADE.

(CONTINUED)

JADE

I need help.

RONNY

I can --

JADE

No. You can't.

Silence.

RONNY

Do you want me to tell Mom and Dad.

JADE

I don't know.

RONNY

What's wrong?

JADE

I don't know. I can't focus. (pause) It's too much, and I can't focus. I can't figure out what to think sometimes.

Nothing is right.

I feel like I'm done.

Silence.

RONNY

Jade. . .

JADE

But I am. (Pause) Why did you write me that note?

RONNY looks at JADE.

You left it on my dresser yesterday morning.

RONNY continues to look at JADE.

How did you know?

RONNY

I'm your brother.

Silence.

JADE

Can you tell them for me?

RONNY nods.

(CONTINUED)

JADE

I am scared. You know that?

RONNY doesn't respond.

It's like I all of a sudden feel this tide rush over me of -- I don't know -- shame? (pause) Because I'm broken. And I need my brother.

RONNY

We're gonna help you. I'm gonna help you. Because I love you. Okay?

JADE

Yeah.

RONNY

I know I'm gonna need you one day.

Scene 15

A light comes up on LAURA, and then on the other characters as they speak to the audience.

LAURA

We tried to get her to do it.

JADE

No. (to audience) I wasn't ready.

MARK

It could be so influential.

JADE

What would Brent think of me? (pause) Why would I think that?

LAURA

This is about Ronny.

JADE

I know. Of course I know that.

MARK

He lied to Jade. (pause) I mean, he killed Ronny.

JADE

Those are my words.

MARK

Powerful words.

(CONTINUED)

LAURA

The hearing happened.

MARK

It was quick.

JADE

I stayed at home.

LAURA

Jade. . . Jade didn't even go. She stayed at home.
(pause) We understand.

MARK

Do we?

JADE

They understood. I couldn't do it.

MARK

Phi Sig is officially removed from the university for
at least four years.

LAURA

Four years. Ronny would have probably been in graduate
school by then.

JADE

He didn't have plans.

MARK

Some of the boys got expelled.

JADE

I wanted Brent to be expelled.

MARK

Brent was one of those boys.

JADE

But for some reason, I was still worried about him.
(pause) Maybe because at one point I thought he was
worried about me.

LAURA

Those boys killed my son.

JADE

They do that every --

LAURA

I don't care that it happens every year.

(CONTINUED)

JADE

I'm confused.

MARK

Jade keeps changing her mind . . . on everything.

LAURA

At one point, she told us that she wanted to be there.

JADE

I'm doing this for Ronny. For him.

MARK

Never mind. She wasn't going anymore.

JADE

Brent didn't care. About me. About Ronny.

LAURA

The hearing was resolved. . . even without Jade.

MARK

One day she'll tell her story.

LAURA

Let down her guard.

JADE

I did that already. . . to Brent.

MARK

I pushed this hearing for Ronny.

LAURA

I kept the peace for Ronny.

JADE

I didn't do enough for Ronny. I couldn't.

Silence.

The lights go out on all other characters. The second flashback. A light comes up on Brent, Mason, Carter, and Eric at a table in the fraternity chapter room.

ERIC

Tonight is the roughest night.

CARTER

Always is.

(CONTINUED)

MASON

They're tougher than our class was though.

CARTER

I guess, except for what's his name. . . yeah, Ronny.

ERIC

Honestly surprised he's made it this far.

MASON

Dude, Im surprised too.

BRENT

He's making it. Eric, remember yourself on "big brother" night?

ERIC

No.

BRENT

Exactly! (All the boys laugh).

CARTER

Tonight will just be where we weed some of them out.

BRENT

Yeah, of course.

*Lights out on BRENT, ERIC, CARTER, and MASON.
Lights up on MARK.*

MARK

Sorry is not enough. It never will be. But, what else do we have.

JADE

I'm sorry.

Lights out on JADE. Lights up on the chapter room.

MASON

I'm gonna get going. I gotta go over to Cal's and get handles for tonight. Do y'all wanna come?

BRENT

Nah, man, I'm good. I have some stuff to work on.

MASON

Eric? Carter?

CARTER

Yeah, we're in.

(CONTINUED)

ERIC

Those guys are not gonna see what's coming.

BRENT

But if they get through this, they've made it, right.

MASON

Yeah, pretty much. Don't you remember?

BRENT

Yeah, yeah. I was just making sure.

CARTER

(To Brent) See ya tonight man.

BRENT

Later.

*ERIC, MASON, and CARTER exit. Lights out on BRENT.
Lights up on LAURA.*

LAURA

Some of the other pledges families have reached out to us. It's kind. But all they know how to say is --

MARK

"I'm sorry. I'm so sorry for your loss."

JADE

People like that didn't reach out until after the hearing. What were they waiting for?

MARK

We just wanted closure.

JADE

I'm fine. I'm going to be okay. I've said it countless times. No one believes me.

MARK

She doesn't make it easy for anyone to believe her.

LAURA

I'm always worried. About her.

MARK

No one got what they wanted. But this is close enough.

LAURA

We love our kids. Both of them. So much. (Pause) They were inseperable at times.

(CONTINUED)

MARK

Always. Jade and Ronny. People didn't know if we could handle twins.

Silence.

LAURA

Forgiveness.

JADE

I forgive him. I'm just not ready to say it.

MARK

Those boys were selfish.

LAURA

It's hard to forgive.

The lights go out on JADE. The lights come up on BRENT again in the chapter room. RONNY enters.

RONNY

Hi, Brent.

BRENT

Hey man, how's it going?

RONNY

Good, good. . . (pause) This is the last night of this shit right?

Silence.

BRENT

Yeah. It's rough, I know. But you're doing well.

RONNY

Thanks. They call it "living hell" for a reason --

BRENT

But you want to be a Phi Sig?

RONNY

Yeah. (pause) I'm sorry. I was just talking.

Silence.

BRENT

(talking more softly) Listen, man, tonight might be kind of tough, alright? So just prepare yourself.

Ronny doesn't respond.

I'm just lookin' out for you, man.

(CONTINUED)

RONNY

Thanks.

BRENT

If you need anything at all, just let me know.

RONNY

Just three more weeks.

BRENT

Don't tell anyone about this.

RONNY

You got it. Thanks man. (Silence) Do you have any siblings?

BRENT

No. It's just me and my parents.

RONNY

Oh.

BRENT

Why?

RONNY

I have a sister. . . a twin. . . a twin sister. And she struggles sometimes.

BRENT

Oh.

RONNY

Yeah. I don't tell many people about her or about that part of her, at least, but I have to be there for her a lot.

Silence.

It sounds like I'm complaining. I'm not. But this is nice.

BRENT

What?

RONNY

You. Looking out for me.

BRENT

Yeah.

RONNY

Sorry.

(CONTINUED)

BRENT

Nah, man. It's cool. (pause) What's your sister's name?

RONNY

Jade.

BRENT

Well, Jade is lucky to have a brother like you. And so am I. Almost.

RONNY smiles.

Just three more weeks.

RONNY

(nods) I'm gonna go catch up on some homework before tonight.

BRENT

See ya, Ronny.

RONNY exits. Lights on just BRENT.

BRENT

Helping. That's what I was doing I was --

LAURA

Forgiveness.

MARK

Ronny. I miss him.

JADE

I miss him.

LAURA

I miss my boy.

MARK

Things are different now.

LAURA

I got to dream about him last night.

MARK

She woke up crying.

JADE

I'm starting to grow numb to it all.

LAURA

Grief. It's good for you. So good it can last a lifetime.

(CONTINUED)

JADE

Why?

BRENT

I thought I was doing the right thing.

JADE

He thought he was doing the right thing, and so did I.
So did Ronny.

Blackout.

The End.