

(All are sitting in a Semi-Circle in chairs facing away from the audience as the act begins. Chloe, Riley, Dr. T, Kenna, Adrianna. They are all facing away from the audience as the show begins. Nurse is behind the circle.)

Athena: And we all say:

ALL: I hurt myself today
To see if I still feel
I focus on the pain
The only thing that's real

Dr. Thomas: Okay everyone, let's begin.

Chloe: No.

Riley: Here we go again!

Kenna: For the love of God.

Adrianna: Shhhh. You are all you will ever need, or so I have been told

ALL: But that is a lie!

Dr. Thomas: Chloe, you know that this is...

ALL: IMPORTANT

Dr. Thomas: You know that this is ..

ALL: NEEDED

Chloe: This is such bullshit.

Riley: Chloe, come on.

Kenna: How else will we ever get out of this place?

Adrianna: Shhhh

You only need yourself to be strong, or so I have been told

ALL: But that is an untruth!

Dr. Thomas: You know that this is the only way...

ALL: The only way, OUT!

Athena: And we all say:

(Pick up chairs and slowly turn as they all say)

ALL: The needle tears a hole
The old familiar sting
Try to kill it all away
But I remember everything

Dr. Thomas: Ok. Now that that is out of the way, let's get to it.
Time to share.

Chloe: Like you understand anything we have to say.

Dr. Thomas: What do you mean?

Chloe: Never mind.

Dr. Thomas: It's ok, Chloe, you are safe to share here. Say what you are thinking, it is how we...

All: Get better.

Dr. Thomas: It's how we...

All: All cope...

Dr. Thomas: It's how we cope

All: Cope with the pain.

Chloe: That's just it...you don't

Dr. Thomas: I don't know what?

Chloe: You don't understand...

Dr. Thomas: Understand?

Riley: Understand..

Kenna: Understand....

All: Pain.

Dr. Thomas: Oh, I see. You think that since I am here as a guide, I don't have pain. That is, I have not had pain, so I can not relate to you all.

Athena: And we all say:

All: What have I become?

My sweetest friend

Everyone I know goes away

In the end

Chloe: Right, you do not understand what I have lost.

Riley: You do not understand my life at all. How could you?

Kenna: Guys, he's trying.

Dr. Thomas: Yes. Chloe, I understand, to the best of my ability, your loss. Losing your children in that fire can not be easy.

Chloe: You have no idea! I could have reached them, Doc, but the smoke, the heat...I just couldn't.. I just couldn't

Dr. Thomas: I know, it wasn't your fault, you tried

Chloe: (Scoffs and looks into the darkness) Sure

Dr. Thomas: (Moving on). And Riley, I know you grew up "hard," in a world I can not understand.

Riley: How could you understand me, Doc? You grew up in a nice white, suburban home, I bet?

Your mom and dad both loved you, right? You did not have bums living by your front door, did ya? Pissing everywhere outside the door.. You can not imagine the smell! You have no idea about the Plug outside selling his dope. You didn't have a little sister who, because you were...well, because you were...she..because..

Dr. Thomas: Because what, Riley? You never finish that part of the story. You grew up in a very bad situation. I get that, but what happened?

Riley: (Scoffs and looks away) Forget it.

Dr. Thomas: (Moving On) Kenna, what about you?

Kenna: What about me?

Dr. Thomas: You have been pretty quiet today.

Kenna: Because I am fine. (Chloe and Riley both laugh). I am guys! Really, I am. You all had bad issues. I just...

Dr. Thomas: Just what?

Kenna: I just get a little sad sometimes, because of...(tries to laugh it off)

Dr. Thomas: Because of? Kenna, Depression is no joking matter. It is serious.

Kenna: Oh, I know. But it is silly, really. I have nothing really to be depressed about. I just

Riley: Don't know what girl. Spit it out.

Chloe: Yeah, you are no better than the rest of us! Share bitch.

Athena: HEY!

Dr. Thomas: Easy, you two, she is trying...

Kenna: I just get a little sad sometimes, because of what the doctors told me on my last visit...

Chloe: Your head doctor...they're stupid...who cares what They think, no offense, Doc.

Dr. Thomas: None, taken.

Riley: Not head doctor, dumbass, they are called Shrinks. But you are right, what they think has no real bearing on anything, because they don't get shit, no offense, Doc.

Dr. Thomas: None, taken.

Kenna: First of all, they prefer to be called a counselor or therapist, right, Doc?

Dr. Thomas: Sure

Kenna: Anyway, I was not talking about what my therapist said. I never had one until Dr. Thomas here. It was what my regular doctor told me....

Chloe: Well, what did she say? We are all dying to hear from her. (Dr. Thomas shoots her a look.) Sorry, bad choice of words.

Riley: What did your "real" doctor tell you?

(Long Pause)

Kenna: (Diverting attention) Excuse me, Dr.?

Dr. Thomas: Yes.

Kenna: (Pointing to Adrianna): Why doesn't she ever talk?

Adrianna: Shhh
You can survive life all by yourself if you are strong enough, or so I have been told

ALL: But that is a deception!

Chloe: Yeah, that is a good point. Why doesn't little Ms. Princess have to share?

Riley: Right? She just sits there all quiet like she's better than all of us.

Dr. Thomas: Girls...

Kenna: They have a point. (Turning to Adrianna) What gives?

Adrianna: Shhhh
You can make it through this world alone if you carry yourself up high, or so I have been told

ALL: But that is an equivocation!

Dr. Thomas: She will share when she is ready. Remember our mantra

Athena: And we all say:

**ALL: Beneath the stains of time
The feelings disappear
You are someone else
I'm still right here**

Chloe: I still call bullshit
Riley: Me too
Dr. Thomas: Ok, ok, but let's see what we can get accomplished in our remaining time.
Chloe: We are stuck here forever.
Riley: Right. We will never get out of this place.
Kenna: I think we will once Dr. T. thinks we are healed.
Dr. Thomas: Well, that is not exactly how it works. The state did appoint me to evaluate you...
Riley: See, there's the problem, Doc. You are evaluating us on what?
Dr. Thomas: Your pain...and how you are...
Chloe: How are we "coping with it?"
Dr. Thomas: More or less.
Chloe: Bullshit, you won't understand me....none of you can. You were not there...You do not get it..the heat...the smoke...
Riley: And there is no way you will understand my life. No way at all! The smell, the hate, the dying, my little sister lying on the bathroom floor...covered in her..
Kenna: They are right Dr. T. I know you will try, but you will not understand any of our pain.
Dr. Thomas: But, until you each help me understand, then sadly, no one will be leaving.
Chloe: No. I can't
Riley: No. I won't
Kenna: No. Please, no.

(Athena moves behind Adrianna)

Adrianna: And you could have it all

My empire of dirt
I will let you down
I will make you hurt!
Chloe: Oh my Goddd, she speaks!
Athena: Well, at least we know that she can say more than one sentence.
Riley: Bout damn time.
Kenna: Shhh, you guys, Adrianna, keep going, why are you here?
Dr. Thomas: What is your pain?
Adrianna: Shhhh
Chloe: I knew it!
Riley: Of course.
Kenna: It's okay, Adrianna.
Dr. Thomas: Yes, it's ok. Perhaps she will share if someone else does. (All start to protest that they have shared). HEY! Hey, guys...I know you have all "shared," but you are all holding back. None of you have actually "told" us anything. We need to hear it all to really start to heal.

(Very, very, long pause. Everyone looks at each other, then away, then back to each other.)

(Athena moves behind Kenna)

Athena: *(Shoves Kenna lightly)* Hurry up!

Kenna: Fine. I will go.
I wear this crown of thorns
Upon my liar's chair
Full of broken thoughts
I cannot repair *(Everyone looks at her, confused)*
12 months. They gave me 12 months.

Chloe: 12 months to what? Find a man? Get Married?
(laughs)

Riley: 12 months to get out of this hellhole *(laughs)*

Dr. Thomas: 12 months to? *(others laughing until..)*

Kenna: To live.

(Heavy silence)

Kenna: Apparently, I have a very aggressive form of cancer that is inoperable. My parents took me to all the best hospitals. Even Mayo has nothing that will help. So I am gonna die in less than a year. That is my pain.

Chloe: It doesn't even seem like you care

Riley: Yeah

Kenna: I do care. All of my thoughts, beliefs, and everything is focused on the pain of my life, or what little life I have left. That is where my so-called "depression" comes from. Are you happy now? Now you know.

Chloe: Of course, we are not happy. I am sorry. I had no idea. We had no idea, right *(to Riley)*?

Riley: Right. I am so sorry.

Dr. Thomas: Thank you for sharing.

Chloe: But I do not understand something?

Kenna: What?

Chloe: If you only have a little time left, why are you here?

Riley: Right. Surely this kind of place is not going to help you get rid of the cancer, and surely you don't want to spend the time you have before...*(can't say it)*

Kenna: Before I die?

Riley: Right. Surely you do not want to spend your last minutes here.

Kenna: No. I don't.

Dr. Thomas: I can help answer that one. Her parents could not...

Chloe: Couldn't what?

Kenna: They couldn't handle what was happening to me. They couldn't look at me. So, they used my depression as an excuse and...

Dr. Thomas: Sent her here.

Chloe & Riley: Jesus

Kenna: Yeah *(out of nowhere, Adrianna gives Kenna a hug. They both begin to cry.)*

Athena: And we all say:

ALL: I hurt myself today

(Silence, then..)

(Athena moves behind Riley)

Athena: You're next...

Riley: And you could have it all
My empire of dirt
I will let you down
I will make you hurt
I let her down.

Dr. Thomas: Who?

Riley: My little sister. Yeah, we grew up in a hard neighborhood. You had to be tough to survive. Shootings every night. Cries. Screams. But that was not the worst of it.

Chloe: **What could be worse than that?**

Riley: The drugs

Kenna: **You got into drugs really bad?**

Riley: No. Well yeah, but I don't anymore.

Dr. Thomas: **What happened? It is ok. We're safe here. You are safe.**

Riley: Fine. So, yes, things were hard. My life sucked. I lived in a shit-ass place, my mom had to work three jobs just to support two brothers, my sister, and me, because our job was to go to school and get out of that damn place. So she worked all the time. I was the oldest, so it was left to me to take care of the kids, my brothers, and my little sister.

Chloe: **That doesn't sound so bad. I love kids, miss my kids!**

Riley: You gonna let me tell this or not?

Chloe: **Sorry**

Riley: So, bad life, right? Boohoo freakin' me. So, I get down on myself. I remember so many days I was alone with my brothers and sisters. I had to cook for them, make them do their homework. I had to keep that shit hole of an apartment going with the roaches running every damn where, the smell of sewer always in the air. I can still see the mice scatter every time I turn on a light. Jesus! So, yes, it sucked, but it was my job to get us all out of there!

Dr. Thomas: **Of course, none of that was the real problem, was it?**

Riley: No.

Dr. Thomas: **But it was not the drugs that brought you here, was it?**

Riley: No. No, it wasn't. (Silence). I know you have in your chart what happened. Just tell them, Doc. Tell THEM!

Dr. Thomas: **I can't. It is not my place. And me doing it will not help you.**

Riley: Ok. So, here I was finally "living," or so I thought. I had the drugs under control, or so I thought, but...

Kenna: **But you didn't, did you?**

Riley: No.

Chloe: **What happened?**

Riley: One day, I am stoned out of my mind, sleeping on the couch. I hear my mom come home early from work. She wasn't feeling good or something. She goes straight to the bathroom, and starts to scream. I run in and see....see..

K/C: What?

Riley: I see my baby sister lying on the floor. Puke coming out of her mouth. Blood coming out of her nose and her eyes. Dear God. Oh my, God..it was horrible....so HORRIBLE... it was worse than anything I had ever seen before. I mean...sure...I had seen someone OD before...but not my little sister....not her...and you want to know the worst part?

Adrianna: They were your drugs.

Riley: Right.

Chloe: She overdosed on your drugs?

Riley: Right. The problem is, when you get high, sometimes you do not hide your stash. Sometimes, you leave it out and...your little sister dies. That is it.. That is my story. (Kenna crosses to hold Riley. Riley refuses at first, but then lets her.

Athena: And we all say:

ALL: I hurt myself today
To see if I still feel

(Long Silence. They all look at Chloe.)

(Athena moves behind Chloe, shoves her)

Chloe: Oh shit. I guess it is my turn, huh?

Athena: That's right, your turn...

Dr. Thomas: Please

Chloe: Fine.

If I could start again

A million miles away

I would keep myself

I would find a way

I would take it all back if I could. I would take my life in place of theirs if I could. As you all know, I lost my two children: Max and Paige (or whatever names you want). They were so little. So little.

Max was only four, but such a strong young guy.

He could climb on anything. He was strong. He would pick his little sister up all the time. Not too bad for such a little man, right? Paige was small, small even for 2 years old, but still he was only four and would give her piggy-back rides all the time. He would carry her everywhere. She was so sweet. Oh, her laugh would brighten the darkest day. And she laughed all the time. Which we all loved. God, I want to take it all back so badly.

Dr. Thomas: Go on.

Kenna: What happened?

Riley: We know what happened. She had told us many times. There was a fire in the house, and her poor kids died.

Kenna: Oh yeah, sorry.

Dr. Thomas: But there is more. Isn't there, Chloe? Why do you live in a world of Guilt?

Riley: She's distressed because her damn kids are dead, Doc.

Kenna: (Turning to Chloe) Wait. But that is not your pain, is it, Chloe? Or at least not all of it, is it?

Chloe: No.

Riley: Oh, sorry, go ahead. We're listening.
Chloe: Thank you. (Be breath). So, yes, my darlings died in a fire. Died in a fire. Died. You know, they say time heals all wounds. That is a lie. It has already been two years since that day, and I can still see them. Still smell the smoke. Still feel the heat. Oh God, please let me take it back.

Riley: Take what back? You can't stop a fire.
Kenna: Right. And I am sure you tried your damndest to get those kids out. You were a good mom, I can tell.

Chloe: A good mom. (Laughs out loud). Was I a good mom? Shit. Some great mom I was. Yes. Yes. I tried like hell to get to those kids out of the bedroom they both shared. I could not. I just could fucking not get to them. The heat was too much, sure, but my body could have taken it. I did not care if I got burned, but it was the smoke. It is the smoke that gets you. It burns your eyes. You can not see. You can not breathe. You can not go on. Smoke. Ironic.

Dr. Thomas: Why is smoke ironic?
Chloe: (Pause) Because it was my damn smoke that started the damn fire in the first place.

Kenna: Your smoke? That doesn't make sense. A person can not create smoke...
Riley: Her cigarette, right?
Chloe: Right.
Kenna: Oh.
Adrianna: Your cigarette started the fire, right?

Chloe: Right.
Kenna: Oh my
Riley: I am so sorry.
Chloe: My husband had told me time and time again to give those damn things up. They would kill me one day, he said. Well, he was kinda right. He was gone at work. He always had to work, 3rd shift. I had been having issues sleeping. I can not even remember why now, I guess it doesn't matter. But I could not sleep, so I took a sleeping pill, something else my husband told me not to do, but I did, and lay down on the couch to rest. One cigarette, I thought. I can get one more for the day smoked before this pill works...I was wrong. The pill kicked in, and I fell asleep with the cigarette still burning and the newspaper next to me. I fell asleep. The cigarette fell to the floor, caught the newspaper on fire, and by the time I woke up, the fire had spread across the living room into the hallway. I could not get to the kids. I could not..The heat...the smoke... I can not take it back! (Riley goes to Chloe to console her).

Athena: And we all say:
ALL: I hurt myself today
To see if I still feel
I focus on the pain

Dr. Thomas: That is so horrible, Chloe. Thank you all for sharing.
Adrianna, want to go? No. Ok. Perhaps I should share.

Chloe: You, Doc?

Kenna: You have a story?

Riley: You have pain?

Dr. Thomas: Of course. We all have pain. I have always trusted in God. Ever since I was young, I had no doubt there was a higher power, and he watched over me. I think you guessed Riley. I did have a very good life growing up. Two Parents, Middle Class. Good schools, and so on. I had no real problems personally, I mean, my sister had a lot of issues, but me no, I grew up just fine. And Thanks to my mother's teaching, my faith was always strong.

So, one night, my stomach started to hurt. It was the worst pain I had ever felt. I drove myself to the ER. Oh that pain had me rocking back and forth. It was literally like someone had stabbed a white-hot poker into my side. I couldn't take it. I was dizzy with pain. They tried to give me so many different meds, but nothing would touch that pain!

I thought, no, I knew, I was dying. I kept saying to God: "Please, God, don't let me die. Please God, take this pain away. I am not strong enough to take it!" But the pain just persisted. It even grew stronger, actually. I was at the end. I knew it! Where was God now, I wondered. I had followed

him devoutly my entire life, and I did everything I thought he asked of me. But where was he now, when I really needed him? Why had he left me to feel this.....THIS PAIN? Oh, God, the PAIN!

In the long run, they found out that the pain was coming from my Gallbladder that was about to burst. They rushed me to surgery, and ultimately, I would be fine, but the damage was done. I could not help but think that God had forsaken me. I even wondered, still wonder I guess...is there even a God...

Chloe: That is it, Doc?

Kenna: That is your story?

Riley: That is not even the same as all of us!

Dr. Thomas: Well, I was in real pain. Physical pain. And what about...

Athena: Doctor Thomas, we are here for the patients, not you.

Dr. Thomas: *(rushed)* God? You see, I understand I was in real pain too, just like all of you...

Chloe: No

Kenna: No

Riley: No

Dr. Thomas: But..

Athena: Let's move on.

Dr. Thomas: Ok. That's fine. (Long Pause as he gathers himself) Well, if that is it, I want to say that I am so proud of you all. You finally broke through. That is all for tonight...

(Athena moves behind Adrianna)

*Adrianna: What have I become?
My sweetest friend
Everyone I know goes away
In the end
The pain that no one really understands is fear. I was afraid, I am afraid, of everything.

Chloe: **Afraid?**

Kenna: **Afraid of what?**

Riley: **Life is scary, even I was afraid...**

Adrianna: No, you all don't understand. I was not just afraid of dark nights or storms. I was not just afraid of spiders or of snakes. I was afraid of everything. Loud sounds, lighting, the sun, the moon, cars, trains, planes, food, small places, the water we drink, even the air. I was even afraid of the air. Everything can hurt you. Everything can bring you harm. So, I was, am still, always afraid of EVERYTHING.

Chloe: **That has to be hard.**

Kenna: **That is terrible.**

Riley: **Very.**

Dr. Thomas: **That is a hard way to live.**

Adrianna: That is no way to live. So, I decided, I do not want to... you know...

All: **Live.**

Adrianna: So, I did. Somehow, I got past all my fears. Irony is being afraid of everything, but apparently not afraid of death?

Kenna: **How did you...you know..**

Adrianna: Kill myself? Pills. Lots and lots of pills. I was too scared of doing it any other way. I can't do pain at all, no real surprise. But pills, I could do pills. And they worked.

Chloe: **But you didn't kill yourself.**

Adrianna: I didn't?

Kenna: **No, because you are here.**

Riley: **Right. It didn't work.**

Adrianna: Oh, it worked. For 10 minutes, it worked. I was dead.

Dr. Thomas: **However, then..**

Adrianna: Oh, but then, my sister came into my room to tell me dinner was ready. Found me. Called my mom. She called 911. Short ambulance ride, stomach pumping, CPR, and I came back.

Chloe: **Wow.**

Adrianna: Yeah, wow.

Kenna: **And they sent you here? (humme)**

Riley: **Sent you here to help you deal with the pain.**

Adrianna: Not exactly. You see. While I was...

Dr. Thomas: **Dead (matter-of-factly)**

Adrianna: Right, while I was dead, a voice spoke to me. It was not God, Buddha, or Mother Nature. There was not a soft white light, nor any angels singing to come to Heaven, nor any demons whispering my name to come to Hell. No, there was simply a voice of a doctor in the darkness of the Emergency Room telling me it was not my time. I had many things left in life to do and many people to help deal with their own Pain.

Dr. Thomas: And this Doctor, your brother, who simply happened to be doing his weekly rounds in the ER, he suggests you help people by coming to this Mental Ward, right?

Adrianna: Yes, you did, Jackson. You suggested that I could overcome my own pain and my own fears by helping others face their pains and their fears. You suggested that I was given a second chance and, therefore, could help others have a second chance.

Dr.Thomas: Like in doing so, you helped me restore my faith in humans and..

Adrianna: And your faith in God?

Dr.Thomas: Right, (smiles) and my faith in God.

Adrianna: So, here I am, and here I have been listening to you all, trying to figure out how to:

Kenna: Help me face my DEPRESSION.

Riley: Help me face my RAGE.

Chloe: Help me face my GUILT.

Adrianna: And to help me face my FEAR

Athena: And we all say:

ALL: I hurt myself today
To see if I still feel
I focus on the pain
The only thing that's real