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# Adeline: Therapy, Expressive Writing and Gaining a Voice

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UNIVERSITY OF CALGARY

Adeline: Therapy, Expressive Writing and Gaining a Voice

by

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A THESIS

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## ABSTRACT

The following manuscript and the accompanying artist's statement examine the process of creating and developing the play *Adeline*. This play explores destigmatizing therapy and exploring abuse in relationships and dysfunctional family dynamics. In exploring Adeline's journey through Expressive Writing, in this case, playwriting, I tackled challenging stigmas around abuse, trauma, and confidence. In the following chapters, I will discuss why I wrote this play, how I intended to help others, and what I learned.

## PREFACE

This thesis is an original, unpublished, independent work by the author, Julie-Anne Bolduc.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

“There is no greater agony than bearing an untold story inside of you.”

– Maya Angelou

I want to thank the School of Creative and Performing Arts of the University of Calgary for their continual support and fantastic opportunity. I want to express immense gratitude to my extended family members, classmates, drama students of class 500, Lunchbox Theatre, directors, Collaborators, staff, professors, and significant others who supported and helped.

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while I was struggling with my daemons. I want to thank my niece, always a gift and reason for why I still fight.

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I am grateful for my family, who always send me with love, no matter where I am.

I want to thank everyone who believed that I could succeed.

Avec Amour,

Julie-Anne

## DEDICATION

To my mother.

To my loving family, friends and significant other.

To everyone else who went through a similar story.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABSTRACT	ii
PREFACE	iii
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	iv
DEDICATION	vi
TABLE OF CONTENTS	1
EPIGRAPH	3
INTRODUCTION	4
CHAPTER ONE – METHODOLOGY AND DEFINITION	5
METHODOLOGY	5
DEFINITIONS	6
CHAPTER TWO – DEFINITIONS, THERAPY AND WRITING	9
DEFINITIONS - NARRATIVE AND EXPRESSIVE WRITING	9
LANGUAGE	11
HEALING AND BENEFITS	13
CHAPTER THREE – MY JOURNEY TO PLAYWRITING	17
HOW IT BEGAN	17



	2
THERAPY	19
TO HELP	20
CHAPTER FOUR – WRITING AS THERAPY	24
SURVIVOR	24
NOT BEING STUCK	26
MY WRITING CHALLENGES	28
LEARNING	31
OVERCOMING CHALLENGES	32
CHAPTER FIVE – REVISION AND REHEARSAL	34
COMPARISON OF EXPERIENCE AND RESEARCH	34
REHEARSALS	36
FEEDBACK	38
CONCLUSION	40
BIBLIOGRAPHY	42
ADELINE	53
ACT 1	58
ACT 2	95

## EPIGRAPH

Normal is an illusion. What is normal to the spider is chaos to the fly.

– Morticia Adams

## INTRODUCTION

My thesis play is about Adeline's journey of discovery. Adeline's experiences cause her to re-evaluate her entire existence and help her find her true path, self, and purpose. Her journey involves enduring abusive relationships, working through a dysfunctional living environment, and eventually coming to terms with the loss of her identity. This loss leads Adeline to establish a new revised identity by revisiting and reconstructing her narrative, as she gains a wholeness of self. This journey involves realizing who she is, and reclaiming her voice and agency over her life.

In the following chapters, I will discuss why I wrote and developed this play, and how I intended for my play to help others and myself. Additionally, I will explore what I learned during the development of my play. I will write about creative writing as therapy and personal explorations, using myself as the subject.

In Chapter One, I will outline my methodology and establish a definition of abuse. In Chapter Two, I will define Narrative Therapy, Talk Therapy, and Expressive Writing. I will discuss the need to heal the soul through writing, the psychology behind Talk Therapy, Narrative Therapy, and Expressive Writing Therapy. I will dive into the role of language and the healing process and briefly discuss the healing and benefits of therapeutic writing. In Chapter Three, I will provide my journey that led me to playwriting, therapy and writing this particular play. In Chapter Four, I will discuss my writing process, writing challenges, and lessons learnt. In Chapter Five, I will describe what I learned from revisions and rehearsals. In my conclusion, I will share my progress as a writer and the benefits and difficulties derived from writing this play.

## CHAPTER ONE – METHODOLOGY AND DEFINITIONS

“In many cases in psychiatry, the patient who comes to us has a story that is not told, and which as a rule no one knows of. To my mind, therapy only really begins after the investigation of the wholly personal story. It is the patient’s secret, the rock against which he is shattered. If I know his secret story, I have a key to the treatment.”

(Jung, 1961/1989: 117; Beglau 10).

### METHODOLOGY

I approached research for *Adeline* in several different ways. I used ‘Artistic Research (AR), specifically ‘Practice as research’ (PaR) as my principal methodology. Practice as Research, PaR, is a methodology that allows us to understand “the confluence of different, but interlocking, spheres, the ‘arts world,’ ‘the mediasphere’ and ‘the academy’” (Nelson 23). The goal of PaR is to create new knowledge, to “afford substantial new insights” (Nelson 26).

I applied autobiography and auto-ethnography to document the experiences, knowledge and reflection process. Cycles of therapy sessions informed the writing of my play. My reasons for coming to the University of Calgary were primarily to ingest everything I could concerning playwriting and theatre while applying Expressive Writing techniques as I wrote my play.

Upon embarking on my graduate studies, I wanted to make sure I was mentally healthy for the entire process and immediately sought counselling from the University of Calgary. I

gained the knowledge required to write my play through classwork, reading plays, and research. I noted what I felt, made continuous reflections on what I had done, and kept a clear and concise track of all these experiences, such as feedback from professors and other playwrights. These helped to nourish my writing and assured me that I was continuously advancing healthily.

I expected to generate discussion around abuse and trauma and help those dealing with these subjects while presenting various healthy coping mechanisms. I intended to demonstrate various healthy coping strategies, such as Talk Therapy and other therapeutic uses of the arts. In my studies, I understood how essential it was to empower and give voice to 'victims' for "as long as you keep secrets and suppress information, you are fundamentally at war with yourself. Hiding your core feelings takes an enormous amount of energy" (Van Der Kolk 235). Arthur Egendorf, experiential humanist psychologist and expert in trauma (1995), noted, "when a person is heard, they also feel heard and accepted through the conduit of empathy" (Egendorf. 22; Beglau 38). My goals were to gain agency, reclaim my voice, identity, and self through therapeutic Expressive Writing, mainly playwriting. In doing so, I hoped to inspire others to do the same.

## DEFINITIONS

“Narrative is a scheme by means of which human beings give meaning to their experience of temporality and personal actions. Narrative meaning functions to give form to the understanding of a purpose to life and to join everyday actions and events into episodic units. It provides a

framework for understanding the past events of one's life and for planning future actions. It is the primary scheme by means of which human existence is rendered meaningful.”

(Polkinghorne 1988: 11; Payne 29).

In Van Der Kolk’s *The Body Keeps The Score*, it is indicated that in society, trauma and abuse are often thought of as shameful and have led to further complications since the "truth can be brutally painful" (235). As I wrote *Adeline*, I hoped that the material in the play about arts and therapy would allow the audience to understand that healing is possible, making therapy more approachable and demonstrating the benefits of arts in life. The proposal my play implicitly involves "the belief that healing from relationship violence is a social, spiritual, cultural, and psychological process” (Allen and Wozniak 39).

As Van De Kolk states, there is a misunderstanding with traumatic stress, with the “expectation that re-exposure to their traumas will reduce emotional outbursts and flashbacks” (73). In reality, patients need to “live fully and securely in the present” which means that “desensitization may make you less reactive,” but ultimately will not lead patients to appreciate life more if they cannot feel “satisfaction in ordinary” events (73). The discouraging and poor efficacy of repetitive therapeutic exposure addressing trauma displays the need for an alternative approach to a treatment that leans on the usage of “holistic, integrative, and alternative healing approaches such as prayer, meditation, yoga, creative visualization, and art therapy" (39). These alternative approaches give those affected a voice and agency, resulting in more positive outcomes.

As an example, during a period when I was engaged in session of Talk Therapy, before I had started writing my play, I attempted to heal through re-exposure. However, no matter how much I tried, I was unable to continue with the homework. To begin, the therapist decided we should try on an upheaval that I found less triggering than others I had experienced. Then, she assigned homework to record myself talking about one upheaval in my life and listen to it once daily, building to three times a day. We started with an experience that I mentioned in passing in my play, sexual assault. No matter how much I wanted to overcome this event, I could not bring myself to listen to the recording. I could not see any benefits in this task. Every time I would try, I got severe hives and became very sick. The therapist ended our sessions because she said they were doing more harm than good. I was reading Van de Kolk and found that I agreed with him about the holistic approaches. No matter how much I wanted to move on from the experience, my body, nervous system, and many sensations triggered betrayed me, and I could not continue.

Clear definitions must guide my research. First, it is imperative to define abuse. The definition for abuse that I will employ stems from the U.K. government's definition of domestic violence, stating that:

"Any incident or pattern of incidents of controlling, coercive or threatening behaviour, violence or abuse between those aged 16 or over who are or have been intimate partners or family members regardless of gender or sexuality. This can encompass, but is not limited to, the following types of abuse: psychological, physical, sexual, financial, and emotional" (Home Office 2013).

As Jennifer Campbell Kirk notes, “this revised definition came into effect in 2013 criminalising ‘controlling’ and ‘coercive behaviour’ as well as recognising that domestic abuse is more likely to be a ‘pattern’ of ongoing suffering” (29). My play intends to destigmatize the discussion around abuse and trauma. This way, others may be willing to discuss and learn about this topic more openly. As Gábor Máté said, *In the Realm of Hungry Ghosts*, “no society can understand itself without looking at its shadow side” (Maté 11).

Art therapy is defined by the American Art Therapy Association as "the therapeutic use of art media, images, and the creative process, within a professional relationship, to improve and enhance the physical, mental and emotional well-being of individuals of all ages" (Amy Green 14). These methods effectively help traumatized individuals as they journey through their recovery (14).



## CHAPTER TWO – DEFINITIONS, THERAPY AND EXPRESSIVE WRITING

### DEFINITIONS - NARRATIVE AND EXPRESSIVE WRITING

“We have to be very sensitive to the issue of language. Words are so important. In so many ways, words are the world. So, I hope that a sensitivity to language shows up in my work with persons and, as well, in my writing”

(White 1995: 30; Payne 8).

Narrative Therapy is the practice of telling stories by a therapist during Talk Therapy, or it could refer to the dominant story of a traumatic incident that the client shares during therapy. As I sought help through counselling, I realized that Narrative Therapy was employed during our sessions, which I will refer to as Talk Therapy. Talk Therapy, the practice of discussing and analysing troubling events with a psychologist or counsellor, was essential to my overall success because it allowed me time to reflect in a private setting and offered extra guidance from a trauma-trained individual.

Expressive Writing has yet to be categorized or defined definitively and is a newer expanding category of therapy. For my artist statement, I will use the term Expressive Writing to mean storytelling and reconstruction of a traumatic story or upheaval through the act of therapeutic writing. This definition stems from *The Writing Routes, a Resource Handbook of Therapeutic* (Bolton, Field and Thompson 11). Expressive Writing can be a personal journey into whatever event, trauma, or emotional upheaval one intends to investigate. I used Expressive Writing Therapy through playwriting. I use the terms counsellors and therapists interchangeably

when referencing trained individuals who offer guidance or insight regarding matters of emotional health.

Martin Payne emphasizes that everyone interprets experiences upheavals or traumatic events differently, as these interpretations or perceptions by the individual are primarily seen through “cultural and social lenses, rather than via inherited biological or psychological factors” (21). However, these factors are not solid, and we can “identify them, consider how they work on us, and choose whether we will continue to accept them” (21).

I was continually questioning why Expressive Writing felt crucial to my life. I stumbled upon Payne’s explanation of the few crucial elements for language. It is through language that we “define and organize our thoughts and feelings” (21). Payne observes that language can clarify or distort or oversimplify. Language plays a “mediating and influencing role in these interpretative processes, as it is through language, including our unspoken inner monologues, that we define and organize our thoughts and feelings” (21).

After the failure with exposure therapy, I decided that I would continue with Art Therapy, which gave me the strength to do everything the voice recording did not, which was process my emotions and move past the event. In doing so, I found it beneficial to write about traumatic events in my own life. Writing about *Adeline* became crucial when I saw that while it was difficult and could be slightly triggering to myself physically, the distancing provided by applying a fictional approach to actual suffering gave me the strength, time for introspection and space to work through the traumatic experience. When I first started writing about the first abusive boyfriend in *Adeline* Act One, I felt embarrassed and ashamed. In writing about this

experience, however, I could eventually hear parts of this story without feeling any emotional turmoil, and it did not affect my physical health. In a way, I could find peace within myself about this event and move on to the next chapter I wanted to use in this play. It became evident that Expressive Writing was a beneficial process for me.

Expressive Writing Therapy becomes crucial as a coping mechanism because “language is the product of our culture and embodies its assumptions, influences, in turn, our interpretations of what happens to us by providing both ready-made meanings and 'canonical stories'— ready-made stereotypical narratives into which we try to fit and story our lives” (21). As we review these canonical narratives that we create for ourselves, such as “achieving success in work, finding a permanent partner, being a parent, living in gender-appropriate ways,” these can become a source of distress and formulate a loss of identity as our lives cannot correspond to them (21). In Expressive Writing, we can rewrite our stories, and playwriting was my main means to do this.

The role of defining terminologies in therapy is essential in linguistic communication taking place within a counsellor and patient relationship. Storytelling has been applied throughout the ages, from Christian, Jewish and Muslim history, metaphors have been “deliberately used as effective prompts for problem-solving,” and storytelling has thus established its worth throughout “the millennia and across cultural” backgrounds (Hammel 5). In the past, wisdom was sought through “rabbis, prophets, priests, hermits, mullahs, gurus, Zen Masters, healers, seers, teachers, philosophers, medicine men, shamans and druids,” all at different times and throughout vast cultures across the globe. This task is perhaps now also accomplished with therapists, social workers, doctors, therapists, counsellors, and alternative

practitioners (5). In *The Handbook for Narrative Therapy* by Stefan Hammel, he contends that “stories are therapeutic remedies that complement psychotherapeutic and medical approaches and sometimes provide the missing piece of the treatment puzzle” (5).

In adding Talk Therapy scenes, I had to be careful what language I used and how the therapist was to help Adeline in her personal development. I found it useful to think of her as a therapist, guru, healer and teacher. She represented the one person that Adeline could communicate with openly about the tragedies she was experiencing. She helps Adeline gain insight into herself and becomes one of the biggest guiding forces for Adeline, helping her piece together parts of the puzzle.

## LANGUAGE

We employ narratives and stories all day long, sharing stories and experiences with our communities. These narratives provide meaning to our lives, providing a “framework for understanding,” and a “primary scheme by means of which human existence is rendered meaningful” (Polkinghorne 1988: 11; Payne 30). Numerous researchers have claimed that the “brain is a narrative organ and that story-making is hard-wired into our very nature,” thus, it further helps the storyteller generate coherent documentation of the story, with a beginning, middle and an end (Pennebaker and Evans 24). Studies conducted by Pennebaker and Evans demonstrate there are significant improvements to a person’s life if stories are expressed when dealing with repressed emotions or memories, as suppressed trauma impedes the immune system from properly functioning (Pennebaker & Evans 24).

For myself, playwriting proved to be the most valuable methods to help in my healing journey. Until my investigation and healing excursion, I did not comprehend the power of words and metaphors and their healing capabilities. Dealing with repressed memories or traumatic events can lead to complicated emotions that are often very difficult to express. The beauty of playwriting and poetry is that they provide a “unique voice of the individual that reaches for one’s deepest feelings and truths. Poetry gives the writer the freedom to divulge and obscure. The poet is fully protected by words which serve to veil and to disguise” (Reiter, 2000: 117; Masson 3). In applying metaphors, I conveyed layers and hidden information regarding how I felt without directly declaring, which empowered me as a writer. There are subconsciously buried emotions, and through writing, I noticed these feelings. Unlocking thoughts and sensations is a tricky practice that, if carefully managed, triggers a wealth of new favourable emotional landscapes (Masson 3).

Furthermore, writing is a perfect tool for therapy because it permits the storyteller to build a safe environment and identify and recognize repressed or complicated emotions to manage. Storytelling is crucial to the healing journey because it helps the author express these complicated emotions, negative or positive, about upheavals or traumatic life-altering events. Afterwards, it facilitates the writer in their ability to reflect, rework, and gain agency, over time, with their narrative account. In this way, the storyteller discreetly toils and assembles strength in a confidential non-judgemental manner.

## HEALING AND BENEFITS

Feeling out of control, survivors of trauma often begin to fear that they are damaged to the core and beyond redemption.

(Bessel Van Der Kolk).

Writing as therapy is prevalent and understood in several contexts, through community settings like writing groups and clients receiving care. It is encouraged by psychotherapists and counsellors, preferably in supervision, to learn about and practice solitary writing (Bolton. Field; Thompson 2011: 11-12).

It is important that we not forget that healing is crucial, and not offering treatment fails those suffering. People suffer, and treatment options are dire. For example, people often turn to drugs to cope with horrible pain, such “stories of pain upon pain: rape, beatings, humiliation, rejection, abandonment, relentless character assassination” (Maté 43). As Maté explains, “The question is never “Why the addiction?” but “Why the pain? The research literature is unequivocal: most hard-core substance abusers come from abusive homes” (43). The research demonstrates the necessity for action, as “the effects of early stress or adverse experiences directly shape both the psychology and the neurobiology ... in the brain” (45). Stressful experiences, major upheavals or traumas lead to awful mental or physical side-effects. According to an “Adverse Childhood Experiences Study of over 12 000 people established that trauma in childhood was a strong predictor of serious illness in adulthood” (Stockdale 2011; Brown et al. 2010; Dube et al. 2009; Felitti 2009; Pennebaker and Evans 13).

I intended to offer one perspective and take the audience on a journey showing how isolating it can be to experience trauma and abuse. A key ingredient needed to achieve successful healing is the support of loved ones. Survivors often have to navigate through life alone, encountering the stigma applied to those who have experienced trauma and are persecuted as if they have committed a crime. Expressive Writing provides a beneficial, and discreet, way for individuals to cope and manage their emotions without pushing loved ones away as they deal with sensations or new concepts that friends and family may not be able to understand.

This journey took me on a voyage through shame, embarrassment, discovery, acceptance, and ultimately loving myself - but a loved one might not understand this voyage. I learned that not everyone could see the world the same way, because they have not experienced the same life. Vulnerability is a tough place to dwell and not everyone is willing to join someone there. The beauty in storytelling, especially theatrical, is the power that words provide the storyteller. They offer them strength to present this emotional journey and then invite others to join them. I hope to help, not only myself, but those in similar situations. This journey affects Adeline and those who cannot cope with this difficult topic. Problems of this nature do not simply disappear nor will they go away, simply because we ignore them.

Expressive Writing allows the victim to question, reflect, and challenge through the "emergence of innovative ways of thinking and behaving that the client narrates in the therapeutic conversation" (*Self-Narrative* 199). Challenging the narrative and framework allows for a new perspective and narrative, giving the victim back a stronger sense of self and a voice. Further, a completed piece of writing or project is a marvellous "part of building self-esteem and, therefore, contributes to well-being" (Jess-Cooke 254).

As Pennebaker states, the “purpose is to be completely honest and open with yourself” because, as studies have shown, holding trauma has adverse effects on someone’s life (26). According to Pennebaker, there are manifold benefits garnered from Expressive Writing; psychological, behavioural, and biological. Expressive Writing, according to several studies, has shown “general enhancement in immune function” and plays a role in emotion regulation, which affects our physiological regulation (Koschwanetz et al., 2013; Pennebaker, Kiecolt-Glasser and Glasser 1988; Lumley et al. 2011; Pennebaker and Evans 18). Research has shown that Expressive Writing has been beneficial in patients with chronic illnesses, for example, with AIDS patients, increasing white blood cell counts (Petrie et al. 2004) and with asthma and rheumatoid arthritis patients who “showed improvements in lung function and join mobility” (Smyth and Arigo 2009; Smyth, Stone and Hurewitz, et al. 1999; Pennebaker and Evans 18).

Several research studies established that Expressive Writing introduced benefits such as “lower blood pressure and heart rates” and immediate signs of “reduced stress: lower muscle tension in their face, and drops in hand skin conductance” (Pennebaker, Hughes, and O’Heeron 1987; Pennebaker and Evans 19-20). The psychological and emotional benefits are usually long-term. After writing, there is a small window where sadness and depression might result. However, seeking a counsellor or therapist is extremely critical.

Talk Therapy and Expressive Writing through playwriting have been an essential part of my healing route. Exploring harrowing depths inside the self, meant I required select days of emotional self-care. It was vital to feel, acknowledge, reflect, but not obsess over these thoughts. The dominant focus was to let myself move on from the experiences.



## CHAPTER THREE – MY JOURNEY TO PLAYWRITING

### HOW IT BEGAN

“Do you know what a playwright is? A playwright is someone who lets his guts hang out on the stage.”

(Edward Albee)

In the beginning, I internalized the labels that were associated with experiencing trauma, choosing to hide my issues from others. I sought to suppress the hard events and keep them buried deep, but the dichotomy between my private and public feelings often collided. I quickly understood that to move on and heal, I needed to face the truth and work through it. Recovering from my past and regaining agency over my life would require courage and resilience.

My trauma occurred when I was young. However, as memories of it were repressed, it only impacted my health when there were subconscious triggers. I began my Bachelors of Education at the University of Ottawa when I was 25, after teaching English as a Second Language in Asia. During this time, I learned about abuse from a counsellor and in an unfortunate turn of events, I suffered from a concussion. I finished school, but the severe concussion meant it would take me an extra year to finish, and I would have to return to my mother's home to heal.

During my Bachelors of Education, I studied ways to teach students with different mental health problems. We were taught about the importance of differential learning and

accommodating our lessons to each students' needs. I realized how much my life would have significantly altered if I had previously had access to the necessary accommodations to help me heal physically and mentally. I struggled and often felt rejected by society, which initiated a desire to aid others in their healing process. I was labelled. I felt as though I had fallen through the cracks of society, left to die. I wanted to take charge of my life and refused to be characterized as anything but a warrior. I knew my trauma impacted my daily life, and if I wanted to get back to living rather than surviving, I was going to have to do something drastic. My desire to heal progressed out of my passion for helping others who were coping with similar difficulties. I would never have wished my difficulties on anyone, yet people were living this way and worse. I discovered a resilience that felt imposed.

I thought my stay at home would be of short duration, but I was wrong. In my late 20s, living at home, I was forced to encounter some challenging views and ideas about my past, which confronted everything I knew about myself and my family. As I processed what I discovered through Talk Therapy, I realized I had experienced significant abuse and violence in the past. I learned how unhealthy my family dynamics were and how my stepfather's toxicity had invaded my family. At first, this insight was shattering and destroyed my concept of self, my family, and the world around me.

I dedicated myself to healing. My mother had raised four children alone and worked two jobs to help my sister and me. I felt I was a burden and source to my mother's suffering. I was desperate to escape, but I refused to abuse substances or let these factors change or taint my perception of the world and instead clung to life. I saw a sliver of hope in trying to help others and devoted my time to this.

## THERAPY

“He who learns must suffer. And even in our sleep pain that cannot forget falls drop by drop upon the heart, and in our own despair, against our will, comes wisdom to us by the awful grace of god.”

(Aeschylus)

Before working on this play, *Adeline*, I took part in several forms of therapy. My goals were to heal myself by whatever means necessary. Desperation and survival, often combined, means victims are forced between a rock and a hard place. I was desperate and running purely on survival mode. I diagnosed myself with post-traumatic stress disorder after I completed my post-degree in education. I refused to allow any of the traumatic events that I had been through hold me back from living the type of life I wanted. Through various therapeutic workshops, I learned about trauma, abuse and myself. I took Talk Therapy, cognitive behavioural therapy, self-love workshops and any other therapy or counselling that I could.

The waitlist to have access through the city's government or programs was six months to a year. I could not afford a therapist, but fortunately, I could access a counsellor through the sector's French side. In the French department, the funding and programs provided are smaller, and there are not as many workshops for those struggling with mental health difficulties, but I could gain access to a counsellor. I researched books, used bibliotherapy about loving myself. I sought researchers like Brené Brown, whose work shed light on the importance of self-love and dealt with my emotions through poetry and painting. I grasped at every straw available, including

the opportunity to learn about playwriting through the Sudbury Theatre Centre. For me, the traumatic events had triggered a rare and new autoimmune disorder that took several years and doctors to diagnose. I wanted to heal myself completely, help others whom I knew were also stuck in a similar situation. I had fallen through the cracks of the 'system'. The doctor who diagnosed my disorder said they could not help me, because the medication to ease my immune disorder symptoms was not covered by the government's health care system. Holistic interventions could have been possible, but I hadn't the finances to pay for these.

I got a job with the CRA, the Sudbury French School Board, but following an accidental peanut situation at work, I had to take over 8 Benadryl a day. The maximum safe amount of Benadryl to take is six to eight a day, and Benadryl caused severe drowsiness without removing all the symptoms. I could not, in good conscience, work with children when I was taking this many medications. Benadryl, taken to that extent, can cause early onset Alzheimer's and the steroids that I was dependent on, could cause more damage to my body in the long-term. The manager at the CRA said she could not guarantee a peanut-free environment. They did their best to stop people from eating nuts at work, but one employee did not get the memo, and I had an anaphylactic reaction. I realized I could not continue working until I figured out my health. I was not receiving extra insurance. I had to pave my way to healing myself.

## TO HELP

“The tears of the world are a constant quantity. For each one who begins to weep somewhere else another stops. The same is true of the laugh.”

(Samuel Beckett)

In therapy, I discovered that in order to help others, I first needed to cultivate growth and well-being in myself. I was obsessed with the topics concerning abuse and trauma, discussing, researching, and hearing other people's stories and the theoretical approaches applied to these topics. I wanted to know why this issue of abuse and trauma remains unresolved. I yearned to make a difference and hoped to stop this from recurring for other people.

I always wanted to be a writer, but playwriting was not initially what I thought I could pursue. My choice originated from a sudden burst of confidence that ultimately led to a new-found passion. I found an advertisement online from Sudbury Theatre Centre asking for a scene from a play, which changed the entire course of my life. A friend once told me that nobody would purposely fall into theatre, but I certainly did. I never thought of myself as a playwright, but now, I cannot un-see it and would not if I could.

I heard of an initiative at the Theatre Centre in Sudbury, Ontario, led by Pat the Dog Theatre Creation, through a talented playwright, Matthew Heiti, concerning a free opportunity to write a play in a workshop as a group. I wrote my play in a decisively bold move and applied. The year I applied, they started a subsection for those interested in playwriting despite having no theatre background. I started working on a play that would permanently alter my life.

Drawn to a fortune-telling incident I had experienced, I believed this segment was an excellent place to start my play. I had 10 minutes to read in front of an audience. It was nerve-racking and exhilarating. Before this, I had never had my work read and was proud to see my words come alive on-stage. I loved the collaborative approach of writing for theatre - Matthew Heiti was an excellent mentor, talented writer and teacher. I received a grant from the Theatre

Creators that allowed me to work on my play for a year. I threw myself into this process and wrote approximately 50 pages. The process was arduous, and I was unsure how to surmount the challenges I met. The story was based on experiences which were difficult to share. I felt extremely vulnerable and unsure how to proceed. I was never certain how much to reveal and it was hard to determine what to do. This experience eventually led me towards pursuing a master's degree in playwriting, where I met another mentor that further altered my life for the better, Professor Clem Martini.

The importance of time, patience, forgiving myself, and letting go of shame and embarrassment were all part of the process. Dealing with my embarrassment over the subject and its stigma were among the most complex issues to work through. Professor Martini suggested I read a dissertation of someone else who had dealt with this topic. Professor Martini's actions allowed me to trust my supervisor and share these elements without feeling judged, which gave me the confidence to write.

I could not push myself to expand what I had written, and having a supervisor that understood that was critical. Having someone you can trust, who will probe and challenge you with questions, directing you towards exploring complex topics and ideas, was essential to my writing process. As Rich Furman says, engaging in writing about the self "demands that we ask and answer tough questions" and bravely face these hard demands at our core (Furman 2004; Leedy 1969; Peterkin and Grewal 2018; Furman 195). There are "various functions of questions used in therapeutic processes," such as questions to interrogate their experiences (Furman 195). Professor Martini prodded and asked specific questions that were helpful to my personal growth

as a writer and playwright. This process helped me advance past the painful self-imposed barriers.

As I continued my writing journey, I read *Behind Closed Doors*, a short play by Janet Shaw that portrays two students' wedding engagement that will bring two families together. Both students' families are abusive, with controlling husbands and suffering mothers. This short play was enlightening but failed to capture the actual dilemma, as I perceived it. I did not want to conceal the topic in excessive horror, traumatizing my audience, nor did I want to sugar-coat it with comedy. My goal was to write a play that articulated the complex situation while leaving space for the audience to discuss ways to change contemporary perspectives.

## CHAPTER FOUR – WRITING AS THERAPY

### SURVIVOR

“To thine own self be true.”

(William Shakespeare)

In playwriting, I learned that the self I thought I was, was not determined by one title or term, but rather it was fluid and based on various perspectives. I realized that, like a character, I could alter myself and my identity. As Jung described, the self was but an archetype (Jung 1953/1983: 267; Beglau 15). According to Beglau, a new way "of framing the meaning of psychotherapy and its purpose" is recalling that 'psyche' and 'therapy' are meant to serve the soul, "not to treat it" (17). In writing my play, I seized the words 'victim' or 'survivor' and rejected them. I did not want to be associated with either definition. Playwriting gave me space to write about the trauma to "process the event and [my] emotions" (Masson 6). I noticed guidelines that were useful in channelling Expressive Writing. In Act two, Scene four with the voices in the woods came from an idea tied to the concept known as the collective unconscious, which is a term initially coined by Jung. The collective unconscious is defined as a theory that all human beings share a "primal aspect of the unconscious" (Beglau 19). The collective unconscious is said to store "the ancestral heritage of possibilities of representation ... and is the true basis of the individual psyche" (19). It is those ideas that I wanted Adeline to work through and confront, expunging the concept of being branded and having to hold the negative connotations of sexual assault or rape.



In creating Adeline, I could express emotions that were difficult and unwanted. I used this character to reframe my narrative, “re-storying or re-authoring” (Payne 19). This perspective permitted me to deconstruct the narrative I was stuck with, scrutinizing each detail and taking a fresh look at “socio-constructed or cultural values and beliefs” (24). In recreating this narrative, I questioned the person I once was. As Martin Payne explains, social constructionists propose that identity is “socially constructed– ‘negotiated’–from moment to moment, and varies according to circumstance, its apparent continuity an illusion based on the generally consistent and repeated social circumstances within which most people live” (Gergen and Davis 1985; Anderson 1997; Gergen 1992; Payne 33). I realized I was not the person constructed by social norms or stigmas, branded, victimized, and distorted. In seeing this, I understood how resilient I was and that society's external descriptions did not have to define me.

Stefan Hammel, the author of *Handbook of Narrative Therapy*, asserts: “stories circumvent conscious thinking, which has a tendency to be paralysed by the familiar and the feared, and instead address, the problem-solving capacities of the unconscious mind” (4). In utilizing playwriting to compose my story, I used language and metaphors and offered pieces to puzzles that the audience could take home and apply independently. Often, the unconscious mind will pick up on ideas that our conscious mind may not have noticed. This seed grows and influences their way of thinking about a particular subject. As Hammel says, suggesting the idea to the listener offers an “avenue for future exploration or a searching attitude which may lead to various solutions” (4).

My play initially had what people considered a grandiose and arrogant title, “A Silent Masterpiece”, but this phrasing represented the idea that I could, in fact, rewrite my life. This title was my goal, and in seeing it, I could grasp what I was trying to do. I felt socially

constructed, held back and a failure, but my goals were to make my life a masterpiece, to become the person I wanted to be and live my life to the fullest. While this might appear self-involved, I viewed myself as the problem of every issue. However, through my writing and reading, I realized I was not the problem. As Martin Payne says, “the person isn’t the problem; the problem is the problem” (Epston 1989: 26; Payne 44).

## NOT BEING STUCK

“You have to ask hard questions.”

(Tony Kushner)

When I set out, I struggled balancing the stress of school and writing. Anxiety had taken an enormous toll on my life. I was withdrawn, becoming uneasy, which left me paralyzed in my writing. I rapidly learnt that writing helped me "move away from a sense of fixity or "stuckness" (Hunt 232). I realized this was essential to the healing process and probably the biggest challenge I had to face. The more I researched and wrote, the more I understood the necessity to confront these emotions and permit myself to feel them.

I was determined to write the story the way I remembered it, but "psychological manipulation tactics like gaslighting" by abusers left me confused and questioning my memory (Masson 1). I focused on the worst parts, constantly overwriting scenes, adding too much dialogue. Sometimes, in the necessity to get the memories out, I would forget to include some keywords. Other times, I felt too embarrassed to reread my writing, and shame stopped me from editing my work. I realized some scenes were unnecessary to the structure of my play. They

added nothing of value to the overall story. It was not easy deciding what scene was important, but Professor Martini was extremely adept at guiding me.

I had problems sorting through the fragmentary aspects of my play and refused to acknowledge the holes in the narrative. It was easier to focus on each scene, one at a time. I needed to work on my transitions, but I had to give myself time, figuring out puzzle pieces to fit into the story. I avoided the play's actual escalating moments and climax. I refused to admit to myself what had occurred and avoided it. This stage of writing was emotionally challenging, accessing hidden or repressed emotions that revealed things about myself that I had difficulty in acknowledging.

There are certain elements to be aware of when undertaking a project of this nature. Since this process of self-discovery can result in life-changing alterations, I highly recommend what Pennebaker describes as the “Flip-Out Rule,” which states “if you feel you will get too upset when you write about a particular topic, don’t write about it” (Pennebaker 29). I would not have used this terminology myself, but as I developed my play, if I felt I was in turmoil and struggling to write about a particular segment, I approached it cautiously and set aside time to recover.

In self-reflection, I have realized that it is also crucial not to over-analyze and navel-gaze, as this concentrated attention can become destructive and lead to obsessive behaviours. The goal should be to avoid obsessing on the events, and instead analyze, learn, and move on. Expressive Writing is by no means a cure-all type of therapy, but it is one of many techniques that helped me.

I had established a connection with a therapist on campus at the University of Calgary if I needed the emotional discussion and connection. My family may not have fully understood what I did, but I had their full support. My mother remained my strongest ally throughout. I missed close friends and family, but I found I was too emotionally exhausted to extend any energy to friends. The traumatic stress could cause an anaphylactic reaction, and I had to be careful to avoid that from occurring. I have since become more adept at managing these health issues.

## MY WRITING CHALLENGES

“The fool doth think he is wise, but the wise man knows himself to be a fool.”

(William Shakespeare)

Studying creative writing, I learnt of my shortcomings as a writer. Writing is a great way to make sense of the world - language is, after all, one of the first tools we teach our children to use, manipulate and measure what is before them. In language and stories, I have found comfort, but in writing this play, I struggled to edit. I sought additional training that could support me in becoming a better writer and paid for extra editing software. I tried to study vocabulary to strengthen my scholarly writing.

Some complications could be difficult to overcome, such as days that left my thoughts muddled and foggy. I saw a direct link between excessive anxiety and my inability to cope with only simple sentences. Despite these challenges, I pushed through and would start assignments as soon as possible, which helped in overcoming these setbacks. This strategy helped me gain

resilience and strength. Some days I could read a play in an hour, and other days, it took far longer. Determined, I persevered and refused to become discouraged.

As a writer, I learnt the Aristotelian perspective of playwriting and put a name to ideas that I had somehow stumbled upon myself. Crafting a beautiful story is what every writer hopes to do. Everyone longs for a code or rule to guide and set us up in the original quest for the perfect story. I learnt any story with a grain of truth was the best story, at least for me. In readings, I noticed how the ‘actors’ or readers in class would try to read phrases fluidly or naturally, as though they were speaking to someone and not reading. This would influence how I wrote my dialogues, as I would cut out unnecessary words, words they stumbled across, or add in some that I thought necessary. I would craft my dialogue according to the natural speech patterns that we use everyday. This seems simple, but it was important to my process. I have a wonderful memory for what people have said, and this key strength has been advantageous when crafting my plays.

Another challenge I met was connecting or transitioning between theatrical scenes. I found it difficult to craft a world of illusion that had to have coherent confines and structures. I thought transitions were obvious, but things that seemed obvious to me were not for others. I realized that writing too many words or stage directions was distracting and unnecessary. A playwright aims to create a strong skeleton for a play upon which a complete performance can be built. I read that the best playwright only includes the essential words, such as in Shakespeare’s play, where removing a line could ruin the overall message. I tried to write my plays in the same way. I wanted each line to be crucial - repetitive, only where essential. If I was not clear in my dialogue, my message could not be inferred by actors or directors.

I found editing was my worst enemy, and I kept trying to avoid having to do it. I tried to establish routines where I forced myself to read and reread a scene. I had workshops on the side with trusted friends, which forced my hand in editing. I was not fond of editing because I had to revisit my work, and I always found too many flaws. I was harsh on my writing and demanded perfection.

It took a while before I realized that my writing did not necessarily reflect who I was as a person. This concept of disconnecting someone from their writing may appear odd, but it was important for me. My writing did not reflect who I was – at least not completely. The failures in a scene did not reflect my failing self. Each minor mistake that I made helped me learn a lesson and forced me to refocus my attention. Eventually, I realized I demanded perfection out of a draft, but a draft was meant to be imperfect. Workshopping a piece meant working on a piece until I was satisfied, not to perfection, because nothing is ever perfect. I recognized that nobody but myself stood in my way.

A professor at the University of Calgary offered some of the best advice. She explained that my tuition was paying for feedback from each Professor. I took this advice to heart and kept the feedback, using these suggestions to advance my writing. I wrote them out as notes that I referred to throughout my entire program. I was criticized in my scholarly work for several small but significant errors, which was troubling at first. I was distraught at the feedback criticizing my English vocabulary and grammar. However, I realized that this was an opportunity to learn, and in this manner, I took the feedback and made use of it, improving my scholarly work.

## LEARNING

Playwriting at an academic level was a new experience. The story I wanted to tell changed on several levels. I wanted to write a musical. I wanted to incorporate dancing, singing and lyricist as mediums to use in my therapeutic means. I was hoping to build a large-scale play. I dreamt big, but I quickly understood my folly and that I was reaching for the moon. I knew I lacked experience in the theatre world and devoted myself to the craft.

Some say that good writing cannot be taught. If someone wants to be a writer, they must first love reading. I took this to heart and asked Professor Martini for suggestions to help my training. We began with an analysis of Aristotle's *Poetics* and I read any play I could get my hands on, from *Sila* by Chantal Bilodeau, *Goats* by Liwaa and translated by Katherine Halls, *Harlem Duet* and *The Adventures by a Black Girl in Search of God* by Djanet Sears, *The Unnatural and Accidental* by Marie Clements, *Indecent* and *How I learned to Drive* by Paula Vogel, *Playhouse Creatures* by April De Angelis and *Father Comes Home From The Wars Parts 1, 2 & 3* by Suzan-Lori Parks, *The Drover's Wife* by Leah Purcell, *Top Girls*, *Cloud 9*, *A number*, *Escaped Alone*, *Far Away*, *Love and Information*, and *Escaped Alone* by Caryl Churchill. I was not entirely new to the format, but Professor Martini filled the gaps, and like a sponge, I soaked it all up.

I found myself too busy describing what I hoped the overall play would do rather than focusing on the play itself. I could not accurately capture the play because it felt too intimate. I have a friend who, when asked, would tell everyone his play was about cows. It was his way of avoiding the questions and intimacy that might come with it.

When Professor Martini said I was avoiding escalation in my scenes, I was surprised. I had not expected this. While trying to heal, I was also trying to paint a picture that was not the

reality. I wanted to avoid the painful truth and not touch the crux of it. I found that to tell this story, I had to lean in and get messy. I had to embrace that while this past did not define me, it did help to shape who I was.

I did not want to embrace the shock value of trauma or vulgarize sexual experiences, assault, or rape, as some have, but I recognized that if I wanted to help destigmatize this story, I would have to lay claim to some difficult truths.

I needed to lean into the tension and the escalation of my scenes, pushing myself to confront conflict. I have avoided it in my life, afraid to be outed as a drama queen who thirsted for the constant emotional high. Professor Martini reminded me that having emotions was completely normal, and while I knew this to be true, I needed to hear this. It was important for me to know it was ok to have emotions and breakdown at times. I took a deep breath, drew from past experiences and wrote.

## OVERCOMING CHALLENGES

I started workshopping my play with other students, learning from their ‘voices’ as a writer while searching for my own. I drafted scenes I initially labelled a failure and then rewrote them. Eventually, I found I could write scenes that stood on their own, but tying them together was challenging.

I thought my play was about a young girl who was lost and without control over her life. I discovered it was not that she had no say but merely that she thought she had no say. This idea was central to building my story because I realized Adeline was holding herself back, which ultimately proved to be her biggest challenge. Adeline faced struggles in her life, which were



loosely based on mine, but the most important struggle was the one raging within her. This insight amounted to a breakthrough and helped me write the final scenes of my play. Once I made this realization, every other scene fell into place.

A key ingredient to my storytelling development was self-reflection. Jess-Cooke says in their article, *Should Creative Writing Courses Teach Ways of Building Resilience*, that "the essence of the writing technique is that it forces people to stop what they are doing and briefly reflect on their lives" and for me, reflection was completed through writing (Pennebaker 2002; Jess-Cooke 252).

Once the story is released, the body can finally be relieved of the "exhausting task of repression" as "the fog of shame and confusion lifts, and the experience is objectified as real" (Masson 3). I did my work with a few slips along the way and transformed myself into a healthier version of who I wanted to be.

## CHAPTER FIVE – REVISION AND REHEARSAL

“Art is not a mirror to hold up to society, but a hammer with which to shape it.”

(Bertolt Brecht)

### COMPARISON OF EXPERIENCE AND RESEARCH

Leaving home to work on my master’s thesis was a tremendous leap of faith. I knew that medication was only a Band-Aid, covering my problems. What I discovered through this journey was far richer than I could have hoped.

Medications were never meant to be the answer, and somewhere along the way, people forgot this and started using them as a cure-all. As Van Der Kolk states, “studies on non drug treatments” are rarely explored as “mainstream medicine is firmly committed to a better life through chemistry,” and that we can change our “physiology and inner equilibrium by means other than drugs is rarely considered” (38). I am further in agreement with Van Der Kolk as he states that the “brain-diseases model overlooks” fundamental truths (38). These truths are that:

“(1) our capacity to destroy one another is matched by our capacity to heal one another.

Restoring relationships and community is central to restoring well-being;

(2) language gives us the power to change ourselves and others by communicating our experiences, helping us to define what we know, and finding a common-sense meaning;

(3) we ... can regulate our physiology, including some of the so-called involuntary functions of the body and brain, through such basic activities as breathing, moving and

touching; ...

(4) we can change social conditions to create environments in which children and adults can feel safe and where they can thrive”

(Van Der Kolk 38).

If only we had access to this knowledge, then perhaps we would not be as reliant on medication, but that is not the focus of this play. I wanted to express some of my new-found perspectives learned from dealing with my health difficulties in a powerful way, playwriting.

Upon reviewing the notes for therapy and trauma that I have researched, I discovered I had accomplished many of the tasks they requested the storyteller to do. The healing power of words, as per Pennebaker, listed a few crucial steps to follow in his book, *Opening Up by Writing It Down: How Expressive Writing Improves Health and Eases Emotional Pain*. He describes that writing three to five days a week is ideal. Successful studies showed that time devoted to post-writing contemplation was necessary since the subject could linger in people's minds days after writing (Pennebaker & Smyth 167).

In most articles, handbooks, or research publications, they described how a storyteller needed to experience, question and reflect upon the original story they had created for themselves. In doing so, they would come to view a new narrative, gain insight and perspective, guiding them to a happier life. The studies mentioned through Pennebaker are pretty straightforward and succinct, stating the overall psychological, physical and emotional benefits as positive for each storyteller, no matter what cultural background, age, race or ethnicity. I did not follow all the rules described as per Hammel, Payne or Pennebaker, but I followed similar

guidelines and had similar results. Writing has influenced my life and allowed me to gain insight and grow in magnificent ways.

## REHEARSALS

We were to have a staged reading as a part of the Alchemy Festival but could not because of the COVID-19 pandemic. The Alchemy Festival was cancelled, because of government restrictions prohibiting gatherings of this nature. Luckily, we were still able to have an alternative to a staged performance. The solution arrived at was to use the electronic platform called zoom which connects users across the internet. Zoom was a useful tool because it allowed people to connect across a large distance and my family and friends from Ontario were able to view the staged reading.

We rehearsed once at school, but most of our rehearsals were done through Zoom. We took time to rehearse using this new medium, trying to be creative as possible with this technology. There were challenges to overcome in staging and performing, *Adeline*, but I continuously reminded myself that what I lost from having it presented on Zoom was gained in other ways. Instead of focusing on what I lacked in my performance, I did my best to push for what I thought was valuable for my experience and the play. I sought to make sure that music was included in the staging and I assisted with the music cues. I wanted a slide that mentions places where people may get support if in a dire emotional situation. I did not want to trigger or cause any emotional distress for anyone viewing my play.

I knew my edits needed to be more exact and precise and worked steadily for the week, correcting and rewording my play, removing excess stage directions, and rewriting the synopsis.

My biggest personal challenge proved to be the minor edits. No matter how frequently I read, edited, revised, and reread my play, mistakes somehow crept up, and I would find another mess waiting for me. I began rereading my play obsessively, staying up late and acknowledging the necessity for a professional draft of my play.

The personal face-to-face interactions were not achievable with Covid-19 restrictions. Staging and performance became trickier as Covid-19 cases rose, but the actors from Professor Jane McFarlane's 500 Drama class did an incredible performance despite this challenge. The students, the director Bronwyn Steinberg from Lunchbox Theatre and I met via zoom conferences to read over the play. This experience allowed me to make edits as we progressed with the play.

I read the lines and listened to the students intently, looking for holes in their dialogue and the plot. After each scene, we discussed extensively, looking for meaning and motivation behind each character. I gained insight regarding what people may contemplate as they read or viewed my play. I was pleased to see that the play generated excellent discussion around abuse and trauma.

The differences between a rehearsal for zoom versus the stage required creativity and an extra ounce of work. The director ignored some details she could not fix and focused on improving others that she could, such as the use of lighting per actor. The actors were taught new performance techniques for computer screens, playing with angles and sounds from their home environment. I recognized that I enjoyed having more say in the staging. The therapy scenes shown through zoom allowed for an intimate connection between the viewers and the actors. I would have liked more time to workshop with the actors, but I was thankful for the time allotted, given the restrictions.

## FEEDBACK

Those who attended the reading mentioned appreciating the intimacy of the zoom features and found the therapy scenes compelling rather than didactic. When I inquired, the students said that they found the therapy scenes to be soothing because they saw the trauma Adeline was experiencing and learnt about abuse along with her. They could process what she was dealing with, which was reassuring and did not leave them feeling traumatized by the experience. As Adeline was learning about her story, they were also learning alongside her.

I was concerned that some could have trouble experiencing such a complex and painful subject live but was glad to learn that most responded positively. I was comforted to learn from friends that the subject, while demanding, was addressed in such a way that it was not overwhelming. A friend mentioned that the representation of violent males reminded him to keep developing his vulnerability. I appreciated these thoughts and feedback.

I was delighted to have had these discussions with the students. Students questioned what was ‘normal’ or ok in these situations. They asked questions to clarify their roles and clarify that they fully understood these terms and what happened. The actress playing Adeline described her part, feeling as though “being in character was like being stabbed by people I have worked with for years.” Self-care was needed to help her cope with the role. It was exciting to see all these students performing each role differently and bringing their tastes and mannerisms to the play.

The students were all surprised by the lack of support Adeline received from family and friends. I clarified that the play described Adeline’s journey specifically, but people in similar situations are usually isolated due to shame and stigma. The students' perspectives were engaging; during the readings, several students burst out in frustration for Adeline and wanted

Frank to get hit by a car. However, they acknowledged that this was an unfortunately realistic portrayal of her life and the ‘real world’ especially when it comes to Frank. In reality, there would be no destruction, killing or imprisonment of Frank as he fades into the world, never entirely forgotten by Adeline and her family.

Lastly, the students enjoyed the French language I employed in the script, and added that it gave another cultural dimension to the play that they were not use to. Audience members enjoyed the ‘ticking scene’ when Adeline confesses to her dark thoughts and desire to escape through suicide. A friend described how eloquently it portrayed the inner sensations of that lived experience, the idea of contemplating suicide and its heartbreaking aspects. They became attached to its dynamic and sensorial display. A friend mentioned how it resonated with every fibre of her being, inspiring her to seek help. Several friends felt proud and inspired to continue writing their lived experiences.

I purposely left out many of the details or puzzle pieces to allow the audience to think about what was done and how they could improve. The ending was not intended to be perceived as wholly cheerful but at the same time ended on a sufficiently positive note to hint at a better life. The intention was to give others who find themselves in that same situation a glimmer of hope.

## CONCLUSION

“It is good to have an end to journey toward; but it is the journey that matters, in the end.”

(Ursula Le Guin)

I learnt that all writing forms are helpful in the healing process and hold the potential to be "cathartic and intrinsically beneficial" (Beglau 3). The forms can range from journaling, stream-of-consciousness autobiography, poetry, fiction and my favourite, drama. Playwriting gave me a tool of power and a voice to speak the unspeakable, to confront oppressive and destructive issues.

As I employed Expressive Writing I felt as though I was continuously bleeding onto the page. This visceral image describes how extremely challenging, vulnerable and raw the entire practice was, from beginning to end. I had to accept my lack of control over how people would view this story. I learned that I held no grudge against those who could not understand because this journey had shattered my own sense of self and changed my perception of life permanently.

Each step was emotionally taxing, but the rewards far outweighed any challenges. I felt this prominently during my first semester in playwriting. Walking home after class, I was overwhelmed with a foreign sensation. I sat down, put a hand to my heart, realizing that I loved myself, despite it all. Writing this play gave me the tools I needed to learn to love myself, my past and accept who I was.



Wearing my story is still a challenge that I face every day, and some obstacles may remain for the unforeseen future, but this experience has rendered life meaningful once more and given me a chance to embrace the oxymoron of life, bittersweet.

Hearing my play read for the first time felt excruciating because I was concerned with this lack of control over what people would think. As the supportive responses from others came pouring through, I felt relieved and overjoyed. Seeing my work on-stage once more was terrifying but beautiful. I was thrilled to see my work brought to life. This gift was one of the greatest moments of my life, understanding that my words could be worth hearing.

As a writer, I continuously gain insight into my strengths and weaknesses. I have always been hard on myself, demanding perfection. Learning that I do have strengths has been as important as learning what my weaknesses were. I continue to strive to learn about conflict resolution and escalation. Realizing that cause-and-effect was present in every story and applying it to my own experience felt disjointed and uncomfortable. I have tried applying this understanding to every book or event in my life. Choosing to use arts in a therapeutic aim was a decision made when I discovered the benefits of painting. I made the bravest decision in my life during a difficult spiral and, without realizing it, changed the outcome of my life. Looking back, I know that I wanted to stop drowning in my upheavals and stop the destructive spiral I was on. I tentatively started painting and writing, which led me towards greater happiness. Realizing that not only to heal but to live, I required art in my life was an action that generated positive changes in my life. In knowing my strengths, I have gained confidence in myself as a writer. I humbly realize that I still have much to work on, but I also know the direction I want my life to go. Playwriting is an obsession that I will not give up.

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**Adeline**

By Julie-Anne Bolduc

## SYNOPSIS

This play is about Adeline's journey of discovery. A discovery about who she is, reclaiming her voice and agency over her life. Her experiences cause her to re-evaluate her entire life and help her find her true path, self and purpose.

Her journey involves abusive relationships and in working through a dysfunctional living environment, she comes to terms with the loss of her identity. In conjunction with different forms of therapy, Adeline explores the very complex theme of abuse and trauma.

Utilizing magical themes, mystical elements, such as fortune-telling, art and the wise words of a deceased loved one, we join Adeline on this journey.

This is a desire to destigmatize therapy while raising awareness about abuse and trauma. This play will generate discussions on the benefits and crucial roles of art and narrative therapy that are instrumental to healing.

## CHARACTERS

ADELINE: The story is about her journey through the self, abusive relationships and the problematic dichotomy of family dynamics with memories that were not addressed and repressed. Furthermore, she confronts the loss of self, self-erasure, loss of confidence, lack of self-esteem, and PTSD symptoms.

Conflict with her true self, accepting herself, finding her voice and gaining agency.

Conflict with the very complex idea of abuse and what it holds.

Conflict with trauma and managing the physical symptoms that have manifested.

THERAPIST: Female character helps Adeline and the audience to understand what abuse is, better ways to cope with stressful situations, and more.

OLD WOMAN: An Older lady, a fortune teller, approximately 80-90 years old.

MOTHER: Adeline's Mother

DOCTOR

MéMèRE: Adeline's dead Grandmother.

NICHOLAS: Nephew to Adeline and son to Suzanne. 10 years old.

SUZANNE: Older sister to Adeline, she is approximately in her late 30's.

MAGGY: Niece to Adeline and daughter to Suzanne. She is 7 years old.

MARC: Adeline's brother.

FRANK: Stepfather to Adeline and the main antagonist. Frank takes a monstrous appearance.

CHRIS: Chris is Adeline's boyfriend as the play starts. He is pompous, arrogant and albeit slightly charming. Through his character, we see the first abusive relationship.

ADAM: Adeline's second boy friend.

FRIENDS: John, Kate, Sandy, Claude, Mindy and Micky.

ERICA AND TINA: Adam's roommates.

SCENE WITH VOICES: Voices by different actors, but only one distinct voice to be used at a time. It should start softly and gain momentum as the scene unfolds.

## MUSIC

Some music is specified in the script. Additional music may be inserted during scene changes at the discretion of the Director.

Songs by Marc Stoeckle: <https://soundcloud.com/marcstoecklemusic>

## NOTES ON LAST SCENE

The paintings should be there to promote therapeutic art, especially local, showcasing the importance of another form of therapy and demonstrates why it is important to have art.

Actors in this scene all help set up the exhibit for Adeline and are eventually a part of it.

It would be an idea to have stories of other people added in the exhibit, showcasing other stories of “survivors.” These could be art, poetry, written notes and many other art forms.

Eventually, the audience could be invited to join the stage and walk around the paintings and could buy them.

Possible idea: The actors could walk amongst them, commenting and having a script of things to say. Adeline could also have some things to say if people approach her.

## SYMBOLS

/ Denotes when a character cuts another character while they are speaking.

// Denotes when a character speaks at the same time another character is speaking.

... Denotes when a character’s speech trails off.

Two conversations side by side, denotes when two characters speak at the same time.

The *beat* is a short skip in time, enough to notice.

*Pause* is approximately three beats.

Underlined texts are to be spoken with emphasis.

CAPITALIZED words are meant to be shouted, unless they are lyrics to a song, then it should be sung.

Stage directions are written in *Italics* and bracketed if they are in the dialogue. Also, there is often a note or scene direction included through in *Italics*.

SR: Stage RIGHT

SL: Stage LEFT

CS: Center Stage



**Adeline - Act 1**

## Scene 1

*Chris and Adeline wander into a crazy bazaar observing the chaos around them in an overpopulated city.*

*Enter Chris and Adeline.*

Chris: This is RIDICULOUS. There's got to be a thousand of these crazy scammers. It's impressive that they have a whole section of the city dedicated to this sort of thing. I mean, come on, how many buildings can you have dedicated to inventing your future for you? How can so many people believe in this hocus pocus? I mean, look at that couple there?

Adeline: I always wonder who grew up thinking - oh my god, I want to be a fortune teller.

Chris: Liars and fucking cheats. I could make a fortune doing this. (*Glances at Adeline*).

You don't believe me? Look at that couple there.

*Chris gestures to a young couple intently listening to a fortune teller.*

I bet you she was told that she could only have one child/

Adeline: /that's statistics/

Chris: /Exactly! They read you as per your age, ethnicity and body language. I would make a sick fortune teller. Only takes confidence/

Adeline: /I agree with you there/

Chris: /So only one child and it won't be a boy. That's why she's crying. Clearly, boys are better. So, she's probably saying - for a boy, you must buy my garlic broach/

Adeline: Garlic - girls are vampires now? /

Chris: Yes. Clearly. Shut up. Listen. I'm fortune-telling. Then because she's approximately 25, she told her she would be married within a year. Then if she didn't buy one of those money-cats, she would be poor for the rest of her life/

Adeline: /the money-cats are cute/

Chris: No, they're a gimmick and stupid. Buy me, and you'll be rich; that's just dumb. She looks like a teacher.

*Adeline rolls her eyes.*

Oh, you know she does - just like you/

Adeline: What's that supposed to/

Chris: /You have that look. Look at how she's dressed. Practically screams, I love working with snot-nosed kids. So now she's telling her a bullshit story about her job. Then she's said her father will die within the next 2-5 years of either cardiac arrest, liver cancer, or he will be hit by a car.

Adeline: So negative, can't he live?

Chris: No, life isn't roses and butterflies, Adeline. You're so naive. Then her mother will move in and drive her nuts. She'll need that stupid money-cat then.

Adeline: OK, I like those money-cats. Plus, don't mock, you'd buy one-/

Chris: /Ha! Yeah right. We both know you would and send it in an outrageously expensive package to your family. You fund the whole post office. Look at those two. They're paying an exorbitant amount to be told a lie. Oh, and that one, I would tell them the obvious, orange is evil. Do not wear orange.

Adeline: Clearly orange is the devil's colour/

Chris: /Of course, and they just clearly can't pull that colour off.

*Adeline sighs heavily.*

Chris: How do we get out of this place? I've had enough.

Adeline: Check it out; that one's a lot cheaper than all the other ones.

Chris: So? Let's go. I'm hungry.

Adeline: I just thought it could be fun/

Chris: /I'll tell you your future for free. It involves hot dogs. You've spent enough this week.

Adeline: I'm not that hungry. I've never had mine read, and I'm curious. It'd be interesting to see what they say.

Chris: Adeline. I'm tired, and I want to go. Let's go.

Adeline: Please? I'll skip lunch or ... I could meet you/

Chris: /Let's go.

Adeline: Honestly, I won't have lunch. I want to check it out. Then you'll have more ammo to make fun of them.

Chris: They're fake Sherlock Holmes in a dress. Don't be stupid.

Adeline: It'd be exciting to see what Misses Holmes would say. You could make fun of them all you want afterwards. We'll grab street meat and go to the game after. Then you can explain to me how it was all hocus pocus.

*Chris groans and gives Adeline money.*

Hi, I'd like the basic palm reading, please.

Old woman: Alright. Please have a seat. The cost is on the sign. Pay upfront.

*Adeline pays.*

You cannot write it down, so pay attention. I'll read both palms, place both here. How old are you?

Chris: Statistics.

Adeline: I'm 25.

*The old woman looks at both palms, scrutinizing both her face and her palms.*

Old woman: Hmmmmmm. *Pause.* Yes. Yes.

Adeline: What/

Old woman: /I see...

You are going to overcome a lot of challenges. Big obstacles in your life. You have a big heart and are incredibly stubborn. You'll have to learn your life lessons the hard way. You have a unique future, but before it, you'll need to be strong.

People love you.

*She continues to look at Adeline's palms.*

The relationship you're in now - terrible. There's too much fighting, and he isn't right for you. This is a bad relationship. He's arrogant. Argues. Vindictive and angry words like whore. Frustrating.

*She waves in the air but not looking at either person, only at the hands.*

After this relationship, you'll meet a "sweet talker" for approximately one year. Be careful; no one knows a sweet talker till it's too late.

*Beat.*

*Old woman nods.*

Yes, but it's ok. Later, you'll meet a good man. He will love you more than you love him. He will be good for you/

Chris: /See Hun, it'll be/

Old woman: Shh!

You love being creative, and you love to travel. You'll be a mother, but not a mother, so like a mother, but they won't be your children.

*Speaks softly, as if to herself.*

This is. This is strange.

You'll be too sick to work, but I don't see why. I mean, maybe it's work that makes you sick? Either way, you'll be too sick to work. Hmmmmmm /

Chris: /(Grunts loudly) I could tell you why/

Old woman: /Be quiet!

*Chris shrinks back into the shadows.*

I see darkness. Much sadness and change. Lose all your friends and, tsk. Tsk. So dark... *(Ends in a whisper.)*

Adeline: What do you mean? What do you see?

Old woman: Let me see your other hand.

*Old woman compares the two hands.*

*Old woman slowly lifts her eyes and meets  
Adeline in the eyes to emphasize her words.*

Remember, change may be hard, but it will be better in the end. Do you understand?

*Adeline nods.*

I see the letter M is important. You will be truly happy in your 30`s. When you are 28, you will have a 20% chance at your job. Then when you are 32, you will have an 80% chance at your job.

Yes. Right. Questions?

Adeline: No. Thank you.

*Old woman turns to Chris, with a big smile.*

Old woman: Do you want a reading as well? Same price and pay upfront.

*End scene.*

## Scene 2

*Note: Chris is not on set until he opens the door.  
His voice is heard offstage.  
He cannot hear Adeline until he is onstage.*

*Knocks = noise done with hands.  
Bang = louder, more powerful hit with hands.  
Boom = noise that's done by feet.)*

*Scene: Adeline is sitting on her bed.*

Adeline: My little cocoon. My little Shell. My little haven. Safe.

*Door rattles.*

*KNOCK KNOCK KNOCK KNOCK*

Adeline: All my fault. All my fault. Stupid. Stupid.

Chris: *(Offstage)* Adeline? Why is the door...?

*KNOCK KNOCK KNOCK KNOCK*

Adeline: Merde.  
If you can ... I mean others need you more ... After you help them... Please?  
*Beat*  
Help?

*BANG BANG BANG BANG BANG*

Chris: *(Offstage)* Why did you lock the door, Hun? Come on. Stop being a drama queen, and please open the door. It's not like I'll hurt you or something. Don't be silly. Could you please open the door?

Adeline: Please. I don't know what to do...

*BANG BANG BANG BANG BANG*

Chris: *(Offstage)* Adeline. Fuck. Open the door. I need stuff in there. Stop being such a drama queen. What is wrong with you? Just unlock this fucking thing.

Adeline: Shit de merde. Move. Stop being such a wuss.

*BOOM BOOM BOOM*

Chris: Unlock the door, or I'll break the fucking door down.

*Adeline gets up. She quietly and quickly unlocks the door and runs to the washroom. She huddles in the corner of the washroom.*

*BOOM BOOM BOOM*

*BOOM BOOM BOOM*

*The door rattles, and Chris walks on set.*

Chris: I just needed pants. It's my room too, Adeline. Why would you lock the door? Crazy. Seriously, you're crazy.

Adeline: *(Not heard by Chris as he walks in the bedroom).* Oh god, Oh god, Oh god, oh god...

*Pause as Chris searches for Adeline. Chris walks into the washroom and finds Adeline.*

Chris: Wow. You really are pathetic.

*During this line, Adeline plugs her ears and further curls in a ball.*

Look at you. Do you realize this is crazy, right?

*Chris laughs at Adeline.*

I was giving you constructive criticism. What you made tasted like shit. We know you're an awful cook. You can't cook worth shit. You know you're seriously crazy, right? You burn everything; you're needy and waste all our stuff. You're insane.

Adeline: *(Pleading softly).* Please.

Chris: Then you lock the door? That's the epitome of your craziness. You have no right. Acting as if I'd hurt you... I mean, look at you... No one would love you. You're lucky I put up with this shit.

Adeline: *(Pleading).* Please, can you stop?



Chris: You have no sense of humour. Tree trunk thighs and a fat ass. Mustache girl with more hair on your lip than a man. Those are funny. What is wrong with you? You can't even take a fucking joke. You're acting crazy again.

Adeline: (*Pleading- louder*). For the love of God. Stop it. Stop it. Stop it.

*Pause.*

Chris: (*Derisive laugh*). Worthless.

*Chris exits.*

*Slowly Adeline reaches for her razor and stands before the audience as if looking into a mirror.*

Adeline: Stupid

*Strikes her arm once.*

Crazy. Useless.

*Strikes her arm twice.*

Crazy. Fat. Ugly.

*Strikes her arm three times.*

Worthless

*Five strikes on her skin.*

*Blackout on SR.*

*Lights up on SL.*

*Lights shine on a group drinking.*

*Scene: They're all sitting around a table playing a drinking game before going out to a bar.*

*Note: This game is called Kings/Sociables. Each card represents a different rule that is already agreed upon before the scene starts.*

Micky: Ace. Social!

Chris: Social!

*Everyone cheers and drinks from their cups.*

Mindy: Four of clubs - oh les boys, drink one each.

*The guys cheer and drink.*

John: I've got a ten. What did we decide the ten was?

Marc: Rules!

Mindy: Rules!

Adeline: JINX! Haha

Marc: Oh, god, you're such a loser.

*Chris rolls his eyes and hides his face,  
embarrassed of Adeline.  
Not seen by Adeline.*

Adeline: Shut up, you owe me a coke. Make that a beer; I'm running low. And shots, we should do shots. Tequila eh eh eh? Come on... You know you want to...

*Adeline sticks out her tongue at Marc.*

Marc: Only cause I'm also running low and have to pee. Anyone else want one?

Kate: Me!

Claude: Me!

Mindy: Please? It's in the fridge door.

Sandy: Me too, beer bitch. I want one with an umbrella.

Micky: Drink!

Chris: Yo, I've got beers in the fridge. You can grab one if you want, Marc.

Marc: Thanks.

*Marc walks off stage.  
Sandy drinks.*

Adeline: That shouldn't count. It's a title.

Sandy: Yes, thank you. I was thinking that too. He acquired the title of beer bitch.

Mindy: Come on, it's a game. Just drink.

*In the meantime, Adeline takes the tequila and  
pours a shot for the three of them - Adeline,  
Sandy and Mindy.*

Adeline: Only if you drink with us, Mindy.

Mindy: Sometimes I really hate you, Adeline.

Adeline: I know you mean love. Here's a shot of love.

*Sandy, Mindy and Adeline cheers saying "chin chin" and drink.*

*Claude gestures to John to play; John picks up a card.*

John: Fuck, I hate this card.

Micky: Drink! You swore.

Claude: Drink.

*Whispering between Chris and Adeline.*

*Said as John says he hates the card.*

*It's not clear if the friends hear, but it is spoken low.*

Chris: Fucking rule.

Adeline: Chris...

Chris: Come on...

Adeline: Arrête. Don't ruin the game. Can't you just play, s'il vous plait?

Chris: You know it sucks, right?

Adeline : Chris, s'il vous plait ?

*In answer and anger, Chris pours himself a shot and takes it.*

Claude: *(To Micky).* You're getting everyone drunk. If anyone pukes, you have to clean it up.

Micky: We're all adults here. They can control their alcohol. Jealousy is a shit colour on you.

Claude: Drink!

Adeline: *(To John)* How's your chick drink?

John: Good, better than your piss-beer.

Chris: I'll cheers to that!

*Chris and John Cheers.*

Sandy: Takes a confident guy to drink that. It's hot.

Adeline: She's right; drink what you want. It's very... chaud.

Chris: You're a dork.

Adeline: Whale Penis?!

Sandy: Setting expectations high, aren't we?

Chris: Yo, that whale ain't got nothing on me.

John: Dude, I'll drink to that

*The two cheers and drink.*

Sandy: I'll still stick to my piss drink, though. But it's like a guy getting a pedicure or wearing purple. Confidence is very... chaud.

Adeline: Damn right. I'll drink to that.

*Adeline and Sandy cheers. They drink.*

Confidence is attractive.

Claude: Damn, now I almost wish I had a chick drink.

Kate: I've got plenty; grab one.

Micky: DRINK, both of you!

John: I should make my rule that Micky has to drink whenever anyone says the word drink.

Kate: I'll drink to that.

John: What can I say? I'm a natural when it comes to wooing the ladies.

Kate: Ladies or only Claude?

John: Can't I aim for both? I'm single.

*John winks at Claude.*

Kate: Leave the ladies to me, John. Go for Claude

John:           *(Gesturing for everyone to be quiet.)* Serious moment. RULES!

Mindy: Can't say the letter T.                      Kate: No last name.                      Micky: Drink if you speak French.

Claude: Did Marc get lost?                      Sandy: Oh, fuck, no. The letter T? That one seriously kills the conversation.

Micky: Drink!

Sandy: Fuck you.

Micky: Now, you're just asking for it. It's a game Sandy, why do you/

Adeline: /Hold on! Too much thinking involved in that one. Veto the no letter T rule. Plus, Sandy won't make it to the bar with all that swearing. Who made up that rule, again? *(Sarcasm, implied that she is the one who did.)*

Sandy: You're so funny, Adeline. *(Sarcasm.)* If I throw up, I'm aiming for you.

*Adeline sends her a kiss.*

Sandy: I'll get you back, Micky.                      Claude: MARC!

Sandy: No first names.                      Micky: Drink with your opposite arm.

Sandy: I hate that one.                      Chris: Fuck no!                      Kate: Yes!

Micky: Drink.

Chris: Yes. Yes.

*Marc walks on stage and hands everyone their drink, and they thank him.*

Marc: I heard Claude wanted a chick drink. I made it just for you, lucky little lady.

Claude: I know you're kidding, but this is delicious. Thank you, man.

*The two-fist pump.*

Marc: I never joke when it comes to mixing drinks. Or food.

Sandy: You're the best beer bitch ever. I love my umbrella.

Adeline: Awe, we all got little umbrellas. It's so cute and tiny!

Sandy: Yeah, I like it because it makes me feel huge.

Adeline: Too true. Giants with mini umbrellas.

Marc: Little man!!

John: YES! Little man!                      Mindy: (Groans)NO!                      Kate: Little man?

Micky: (To Kate) How do you not know? What rock have you been living under?

*Note: The rule 'little man' is when you remove a pretend man from their cup before drinking it, then put him back on the cup.*

*Sandy, Micky, Adeline, Marc and John show how they remove their little man from their cups, all in their eccentric way.*

*They could gently remove him, pluck him off, slap him off, etc.*

*Marc gently removes his little man and puts him on the table. He takes a drink and gently puts back his little man on the drink.*

*Adeline flicks her little man off her cup and drinks.*

Marc: (To Adeline) Geez, you're so violent with your little man!

*Marc pats Adeline's little man on the head.*

Adeline: My little man is annoying me. OK, little buddy, get back on my cup.

*Fakes grabbing and putting something on her cup.*

He's like super superman. Plus, he keeps drinking too much. Reminds him to slow down.

Marc: You're a dork.

Adeline: It's your rule, Dorkface.

Micky: *(To Mindy)* Probably should get going, eh? Taxi?

Mindy: Yes – let me do the whole responsible thing here.

Kate: We're lucky to have you Mindy. Always taking care of us.

Mindy: Recognition! Thanks Kate.

*Mindy shows a heart sign with her hands to send her love.*

Claude: 8 of hearts! Kate two, John two, Sandy two, Mindy and Micky one, drink up!

*They all cheers, take their little men off, then drink and put them back on.*

Mindy: Cabs have been called ladies and gents.

Micky: Washroom!

Marc: But my cup was just poured!

Sandy: My umbrella drink!

Claude: Shit, my ID!

John: We just grabbed a beer.

*Marc and Sandy start chugging their drink, contest...*

Micky: *(Going offstage)* Drink!!!

Mindy: I don't care what you do, but cabs will be here in 10 minutes. Get your sexy selves ready. Now!

John: I hate waiting in lines. I'm not missing the cabs.

Marc: That was too much too fast.

Sandy: Fuck that.

Kate: Micky! You're taking too long!

Micky: *(From offstage)* Drink!!!!

John: Micky, what the F are you doing? Except annoying us with your stupid rule.

Micky: *(Shouts from offstage)* Everybody needs to poop.

John: Stop shouting that - DUDE.

Chris: Seriously – too much!

Micky: *(From offstage)* Whoa, you should see. /

Adeline: /Oh, dear, can someone please say cheers so we can drink and not listen to the shape...

John: Cheers!

*All cheers and drink the remainder of their cups.*

Mindy: Ok - coats, IDs, cash, and hold your pee. Hurry, peeps.

*Everyone scrambles to get their coats and ID.*

Marc: Shotgun!

Sandy: Crap!

Claude: *(Belts out a line)* Can anybody find me SOMEBODY TOOOOO

EVERYONE: LOVEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEE

*Everyone exits, dancing and laughing.*

*End scene*



### Scene 3

*Scene: Adeline is with a therapist, learning about what an abusive relationship is.*

Therapist: Hello, Adeline, please take a seat.

I want to make sure it's clear that what we talk about is confidential. We have talked about this during the intake, but I want to let you know that this may change if a child under the age of 16 is in danger or with a mandated court order.

Adeline: Ok.

Therapist: Ok, good. How are you today?

Adeline: Ok, you?

Therapist: Alright. Why don't we get started?

Adeline: Sure.

*Beat.*

Therapist: Where would you like to start?

Adeline: I don't know.

Therapist: Why don't we start with what you wrote in your form? About abuse?

Adeline: OK. I might be in an abusive relationship? I could be wrong.

*Beat.*

Therapist: Let's see if we can figure that out together. You mean you think you are in an abusive relationship?

Adeline: Yes? I was talking to a friend who told me about her abusive relationship with her husband. Sounds so rough and decisive that word - Abuse. I guess I think it's like mine?

- Therapist: Could you explain what you think might be abuse?
- Adeline: We fight a lot. He can be really mean. Not just mean – cruel. With words. Called me a whore. He hit me once. I mean, it wasn't on purpose.
- No, it was in anger, I guess? I don't want to excuse it. I'm being silly. I mean – people say mean things, don't they? I don't, but... to him... I'm always imperfect...
- Therapist: Physical abuse always includes verbal abuse. Usually, things start with verbal abuse, then it escalates into physical abuse. Verbal, in a way, is much worse. It's harder to see.
- Adeline: (*Rushed and faster pace*). Once he's calmed down, or in public, he's different. I sound ridiculous –don't I? ha. My sister says it's black and white. You don't hurt someone you love. But I'm not perfect either – I'm anxious... She's angry because she knows I don't hurt him in the same way.
- And she's angry I haven't left him yet. (*Puts her head in her hands.*) Sorry. Verbal Diarrhea! Sorry – wrong terminology.
- Therapist: It's OK. Please, please, don't apologize. This is a safe space. Is he often angry?
- Does he break things? Or maybe he's quick to anger?
- Adeline: Yes... he is. He broke his keyboard. Ummm.... Twice? It's as if he wants to fight all the time, no matter what I do.
- Therapist: How was your relationship at the beginning?
- Adeline: He was great and really kind - He's not a bad guy.
- Therapist: Of course not. Did you two start fighting quickly in the relationship?
- Adeline: It took time...
- Therapist: Do you remember why you fight?
- Adeline: I always do something wrong, and it's my fault somehow. Is it normal? What is normal?
- Therapist: Ok. Let's take a look at that and break it down. Often, when a relationship becomes more work than happiness, then that is a time you need to rethink the relationship. Are you beneficial to each? Do you fight all the time? These are

some of the questions to ask. Let's start with - Do you ever feel like you have to walk on eggshells around him?

Adeline: What do you mean?

Therapist: Will he get furious at you out of nowhere? Like there's nothing you could do to stop the anger from coming?

Adeline: (*Sighs*) Yes. I'm never allowed to be angry without him being angrier than me.

*Beat.*

We fight. All the time. What if there is something wrong inside of me, and I'm the reason this happens at all!

Who would want to love someone who can't do anything right?

*Puts her head in hands out of shame.*

Therapist: People in abusive relationships experience the same thing. You are not at fault or flawed. Do you have thoughts of hurting him?

Adeline: No, not him. I love him, but I hate him at the same time.

Therapist: It's perfectly normal to feel conflicted. Emotions are complicated, and we can often feel more than one at a time. That is Ok.

Adeline: Ok.

Therapist: I'm going to show you on the whiteboard because I find having a visual representation of what I'm saying is helpful.

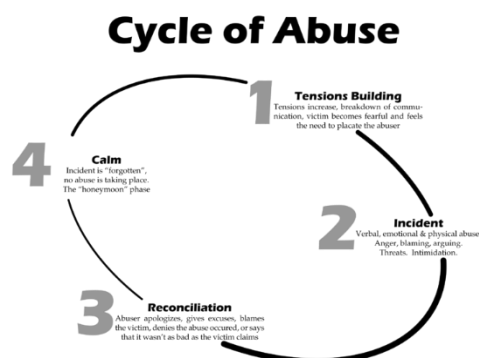
*Therapist starts explaining as she draws or points to the board.*

In an abusive relationship. The relationship evolves through steps. The first step is the honeymoon period. Psychological abuse is not as obvious as physical abuse - an irrational or verbally abusive relationship will become physical. We have the moment of great happiness, a tense moment, followed by abuse. Does this make sense?

Adeline: Ok...

Therapist: Fights. They start small at first and get worse. As the cycle becomes more frequent, tension and the fighting gets worse. After a fight, there's usually the honeymoon period. Eventually, violence appears in the fight and escalates.

*The board will eventually look like this:*



As time goes on, we have the cycle of abuse. Does any of this look familiar to you?

Adeline: If it's my relationship, then what do I do? Leave? I love him. I've been trying hard to make it work. But, I've been getting scared of him. It's not like he punched me, like in the movies. This isn't what I want...

*(Quieter.)* What if this is all I am worth getting?

Therapist: Adeline. You don't have to decide anything. If you do decide to leave him, then we can make a safety plan. And you are worthy of a healthy relationship, whether you want to try it with him or someone else or even by yourself.

Adeline: I love him, but I'm terrified of what he'll do... I'm ashamed to say that. Absurd!!

Therapist: Do you think he will hurt you?

Adeline: I don't know anymore.

Therapist: You deserve security. You deserve to be loved. Your safety is my priority. I want you to know how brave you were for admitting all of this.

*Beat.*

Therapist: How about we talk about a safety plan. I want to make sure you feel safe and that you know you are not alone.

*Blackout on SR.*

*Lights up on SL.*

*Lights shine on Chris is sitting on a chair, reading.*

*Adeline walks in.*

Chris: I can't keep doing this/

Adeline: /YOU can't. Unbelievable...

Chris: You're a real bitch, you know that?

Adeline: Why do you keep being so mean?

Chris: Me? Look in the mirror.

Adeline: What?!

*Adeline throws her hands up in frustration.*

Adeline: This has been going on for hours now. Are you done?

Chris: Not even close. You're spending it all on stupid stuff. Fucking postcards! Cups. We have enough dumb cups.

Adeline: Me? You're going out drinking every night! What time were you even home last night?

Chris:	One	Adeline:	Three, and you were still drunk this morning
--------	-----	----------	--

Chris:	Shut up. We both know you're the one who can't handle your alcohol.	(Mumbling.) I know where I was...
--------	---	-----------------------------------

Adeline:	I went out a month ago, the same night as you. You
----------	--

called me at 4 am, drunk with  
no clue where you were.  
Your fist was bloody from

some fight you had gotten  
into...

Chris: Does it matter? You were flirting with all the guys that night. Like you did the last time we went out.

Adeline: Flirting? With WHO? I was sitting beside you.

Chris: You spent half the night trying to make me jealous of Don. You talked to him for an hour.

Adeline: Don? He has a girlfriend and wanted some advice on what he should do. No, wait, this isn't even important. Why are we/

Chris: /Exactly! Right - "help".

Adeline: What?

Chris: If it weren't for you, we'd be doing much better financially. How can you not get this? Are you stupid?

Adeline: I'm not the one going out drinking all the time.

Chris: No, but because of you, we can't have street meat. We have to eat at these nice restaurants. You're expensive.

Adeline: I'm expensive? I don't want to have fried chicken every meal, so?

Chris: No, you want steak and pork. You're expensive!

*Chris kicks the couch across the room.*

Adeline: Why are you fighting about this again and again? It won't stop!

Chris: Because you spend all our money.

Adeline: No, I don't. We don't even share our money anymore.

Chris: Because you kept spending all of it.

Adeline: I can't keep doing this. I'm so tired.

Chris: You? I wanted to watch my series and spend the night relaxing. But you wanted to snuggle or talk.

Adeline: It's bad to snuggle now too?

Chris: You're needy. Face it.

Adeline: Why do you have to keep doing this? We don't share. Do whatever you want.

Chris: No! You started this!

Adeline: I didn't!

Chris: You started by insulting me. Fuck!

*Chris advances towards Adeline.*

Adeline: Insulting you? How? By wanting to snuggle?

Chris: Making fun of my show and what I like. You have no respect for me.

Adeline: Making. (*Deep breath.*) Can you please stop? Really. I'm tired of this fighting.

Chris: ME? You did this!

Adeline: Seriously. No! No. No. No. You are not getting closer. Don't you dare. I'm already shaking- see

*Holds out her hands.*

Please. You're scaring me. Stop.

Chris: Oh, we have to listen to the queen now, do we?      Adeline: I can't do this anymore.

Chris: You can't be with me? I've been trying to leave you for a week. I broke up with you, and you're still here.

Adeline: You end it every week!

Chris: Then, why are you still here?

Adeline: I don't know.

Chris: Fucking leave! I will beat you. I will tear you apart. I'm going to hit you. You hear me? I want you out. Now.

Adeline: How do you not see that what you're saying is wrong?

Chris: Leave now, or I'm calling the police.

*Chris grabs his phone and starts dialing.*

Adeline: And tell them what? That you're threatening to hit me?

*Chris throws his phone across the room, and it breaks.*

I'm leaving. My mom will be here soon.

Chris: I wanted to relax and play my game. Why couldn't you just let me do that?

Adeline: Series.

Chris: What?

Adeline: You said series last time.

*Chris breaks a lamp.*

Chris: What does it even matter? GET OUT!

Adeline: Got it.

Chris: (*Looks at the broken lamp.*) You're not going to help me with this?

Adeline: I'm going, Chris.

Chris: What?

Adeline: You're right. I should leave. You really don't remember threatening me?

Chris: Oh, is it that therapist who told you to do this?

Adeline: What? No. You kicked me out. You don't want this either, and you know it.

Chris: What do you mean?

Adeline: We've been fighting for days over the same thing. I'm sorry. (*Shrugs*) I'm going/

Chris: /No. You can't go.

Adeline: Maybe this is what we need. Space or something.

Chris: It's just a fight Adeline/

Adeline: /Sure. A fight.

Chris: This isn't over. I won't let you go.

Adeline: Chris. This isn't a fucking game. Do you not see me shaking? You're threatening me, kicking me out.

My mom will be here soon. I'm going...

Adeline: Chris, let me go.

Chris: No. I told you, this isn't fucking over.

Adeline: Let. Me. Go.

*Chris pushes her up against the wall.*



Chris: I'm not letting you leave.

*Chris kisses Adeline. She lets him and doesn't kiss him back.*

*Chris pushes her rougher against the wall.*

Come on. You know you love me.

*There's a knock on the door. Adeline gently tries to push Chris back.*

*Chris doesn't budge.*

Adeline: Chris, move. It's my mom.

*Adeline's phone rings.*

Chris: No. You're not leaving. This isn't over.

Adeline: She's here to pick me up. Come on. She's calling! I need to let her in. We can talk more, ok?

*Adeline slowly pushes Chris away and walks towards the door*

*Chris grabs her arm as she reaches for the door.*

Chris: Did you tell your mom?

Adeline: Of course not. Don't worry.

Chris: Ok.

*Beat.*

Adeline: Chris, I need to answer the door.

Chris: You know I love you, right?

*Chris lets her go and answers the door.*

*Lights out on Stage Left.*

*Lights up on Stage Right.*

*Adeline walks to another therapy session and sits down in the chair.*

Therapist: So, you left him?

Adeline: I guess I did. It's been... a couple of months now.

Therapist: How do you feel?

Adeline: Now? Numb.

*Beat.*

I wanted to go back so much. I hardly slept. Ate. Couldn't cry. Of course, he called. I had to block him.

Therapist: No more contact with him?

Adeline: No.

Therapist: Ok. Do you want to go back?

Adeline: No.

Therapist: I hope you realize how much courage that took.

Adeline: I guess.

Therapist: You are incredibly brave. It took a lot of strength doing what you did.

*Adeline shrugs.*

Therapist: Do you feel safe?

Adeline: I'm living with my brother and he's been supportive. I'm worried about Chris... I know he's not ok. He's probably drinking too much, hardly eating, smoking pot...

Therapist: It isn't up to you to worry or care for him. It's not your job.

Adeline: I guess. His friends are more aware of his mental health. He's not alone.

Therapist: How do you feel now?

Adeline: I get so angry for no reason. Walking helps.

I've met someone else. I'm not sure about him, though. He seems interested in wanting me when it's only convenient for him...

Therapist: What makes you say that?

*End Scene*

#### Scene 4

*Scene: Adam sets up an elaborate romantic dinner.*

*As the scene progresses, Adam is trying to get Adeline very drunk.*

Adeline: Wow, Adam, I'm truly impressed. Linguine with escargot and home-made lemon meringue pie for dessert.

Adam: I'm glad you like it. Only the best pour la plus belle.  
*Adam winks at her and refills both of their glasses of wine. The bottle is almost empty.*

Don't be shy, plenty of wine. I did good, though. I love myself. This WAS delicious.

*Adeline smiles in answer.*

*Adam grabs her hands and drags her over to him. He drags her into his embrace and starts dancing.*

*Music plays in the background – The song is: La vie en rose by Edith Piaf. Adeline and Adam sing a line or two.*

*Sings and takes her in his arms dancing*

*DES YEUX QUI FONT BAISSER LES MIENS.*

You're beautiful.

Adam: QUAND IL ME PREND  
DANS SES BRAS.

Adeline: QUAND IL ME PREND  
DANS SES BRAS.

Adeline: JE VOIS LA VIE EN ROSE.

Adam: Anything for my blue-eyed girl.

*(Beat.)*

Adeline: Brown.

Adam: Quoi ma belle?

Adeline: I have brown eyes.

*(Beat.)*

Adam: That's awkward. Hah

Adeline: No, shit.

*Adeline Sings.*

IL ME DIT DES MOTS D'AMOUR.

*Adeline pulls away.*

Adam: Oh, it's 'cause you're so damn beautiful that I forgot. You are the hottest and smartest girl I know.

Adeline: Good try, not quite enough. *(Beat.)* You're lucky I like you.

Adam: Oh, I know.

*Adam winks at her.*

Adeline: Adam, it's been ten months that we've been dating...

Adam: *(Clears his throat.)* Let me clean those dishes. All you've to do is sit there and be beautiful. It's my job to make you joyeuse ma belle and feed you delicious meals. I want to make sure you'll come back.

*Winks again at her.*

Adeline: Sure... because the fact we're in a relationship shouldn't be enough?

You told me I have the wrong colour of eyes; the least I can do is imply some sort of commitment. I've met your parents, and you've met my brother...

Adam: Yes. *(Tastes the wine.)* Super BON! Je m'aime!

Adeline: Your last girlfriend was years ago, about five years long, right?

Adam: Yes, and the same for you. What's your point?

Adeline: I know it was a difficult break-up.

Adam: I don't want to do this right now, Adeline.

*Adam walks over to Adeline and snuggles up to her.*

Adam: Adeline, can't we enjoy the moment? Have I told you how gorgeous you are?

We had a romantic dinner, music and there's a beautiful lady for me to enjoy all of it with. You are exquisite, you know?

Adeline: Adam... The dishes... I was...

*Adam kisses Adeline, lifts her off the chair and slowly puts her down. They start to slow dance.*

Adeline: Adam.

Adam: Shhhh ma belle.

Adeline: Adam, come.

Adam: Can you blame me? I can't stop wanting you. It's your fault...

*Adeline stumbles and tries to pull away.*

Adam: I can't resist you.

*Adam slow dances with Adeline and twirls her around a couple of times. By the second or third twirl, Adeline giggles and throws her arms around Adam's neck and kisses him.*

*Adam starts undressing Adeline as he twirls her into his bedroom.*

*Blackout on SR.*

*Lights up on SL.*

*Lights shine on Adeline and Adam as they are having coffee. It is now morning.*

*Tina and Erica walk onstage, whispering to each other, unheard by Adam and Adeline.*

Erica: I don't think you should do this.

Tina: He fucks around with all these girls. (*Beat.*) C'est d'la merde, OK?

Erica: He slept with you, and you didn't care that he had a girlfriend at the time.

Tina: Maybe I do care. He tried to sleep with you early on this year. Don't you think she should know?

*Tina walks towards Adam and Adeline without an answer.*

*Erica follows, staring intently at Adeline's face.*

Adam! Hi Adeline? Adam, the man I was looking for.

Erica: Hey - smells so good.

Adam: Hey, Tina. Erica. What brought you, two beautiful ladies, out to the kitchen?

Tina: Oh, you know, thought we'd say Bonjour!

Adam: I have some of that maple caramel you love.

Tina: Diable! You're going to make me fat, but oh man, this stuff is heaven!

*Tina opens the jar and licks a chunk off her finger.*

*Adam winks at Tina.*

*Tina hands the jar to Erica. Erica grabs the jar, licks and moans.*

Erica: You're evil. This is delicious.

Adam: Me, Evil? Hah (*Adam winks at Erica and Tina.*)

I love that stuff too, plus it keeps the pretty girls coming.

Tina: Thank you, Adam. Best roommate. Oh, Adam, who was that cute girl you had over the other night? She was adorable. I liked her.

*Adeline coughs.*

Adam: (To Adeline) Are you almost ready to get...

Erica: Yeah, you know the pretty blond. She was super cute and tiny. She drank with us on the deck. How many were we, Tina?

Tina: Oh, we were a good 20 of us that night. Turned into a pretty good night.

Erica: You and her, though...

Alright, we're off. Girls gotta work. Later...

Adam: (Angry) Adeline, are you ready?

Adeline: I'm not feeling good, Adam. I need a minute.

*Adam glares at the two - Tina and Erica as they walk off stage.*

Adam: I really must get going, or I'll miss my bus. You can lie in my bed till you're better. Take a second. You don't have to rush out, ok?!

Adeline: Are you sure?

Adam: Of course! It doesn't bother me at all! Watch something quick on my laptop if you want. I'll leave it there for you, ok? I have to hurry. Off to work. See you later...

Adeline: Ok.... bye

*Adam gives her a quick kiss and walks offstage to get dressed and leaves.*

*She takes a deep breath and grabs Adam's computer.*

If you feel you must check, it's never a good sign. You'll always find something you wish you hadn't.

*Beat.*

But there's something....

*Beat.*

I could be wrong...

A quick peek at Facebook... a quick one... to know...

*Beat.*

This isn't the first time people have hinted at... something... I'm so tired of asking him. He says no, of course.

*Beat.*

I feel like I'm going mad! If I have to check, it's already over.

*Beat.*

Screw it.

*Beat.*

hah. Of course. He's cheating... and wow...

*Adeline grabs her cell phone and starts dialing a number.*

*End scene*



**Scene 5**

*Adeline is sitting.*

*The Doctor walks in.*

Doctor: Hello, Adeline. And How are you today?

Adeline: Ok. Yourself?

Doctor: What seems to be the matter?

Adeline: Hah. I found out my boyfriend was cheating on me. I thought I should get checked. I've been having a lot of other issues - nausea, can't breathe, can't sleep, nightmares, and a hard time concentrating/

Doctor: /Ok, let's do one at a time here and start with the tests. Do you know if it was one person or more?

Adeline: More than one.

Doctor: When was the last time you had sex?

Adeline: I guess a few weeks ago.

Doctor: I ask because for some tests, we need more than a few weeks.

Adeline: Ok.

Doctor: Do you know if prostitutes were involved?

Adeline: Oh, god. I hadn't even thought of that. I would guess. Honestly, what I found was... pretty excessive. I mean - so many of them! I had no idea!

Doctor: Ok. And your chances of getting anything are pretty low. But let's be on the safe side and check for everything.

*Pause, as the Doctor writes up a note for testing.*

I realize these questions can be intrusive, but it's best to know what we're working with here.

Adeline: Thank you. I appreciate knowing and understanding. It reassures me. It's just embarrassing, and I feel stupid.

Doctor: You were in a relationship with this man, right?

Adeline: Yes, I guess almost a year or so.

Doctor: I think it's completely understandable and happens more than you'd think. It's good to have these tests done once in a while anyway. A few blood samples, and you'll be good to go. No calls mean you have nothing to worry about. We'll contact you if something is irregular.

*Adeline is wringing her hands and unable to sit still.*

The chances of any of these tests being positive are very slim. I should warn you to use a condom next time to be safer.

Adeline: Of course.

Doctor: Have you seen anyone about this?

Adeline: No. I didn't even want to come here. It's so embarrassing.

Doctor: I would suggest you see someone, counselling- psychiatrist. I'll send a referral for you.

Adeline: *(Sighs)* If I go I have to admit it happened.

Doctor: Yes, that is pretty obvious. It did. Listen, throughout my whole career, I can tell you that this is sadly not unusual. You should speak to someone about this.

Adeline: I did have those other issues to talk/

Doctor: Yes, that's right. You mentioned nausea, and what else?

Adeline: I have acid reflux and anxiety. I'm taking medication for stomach problems, but they seem to be getting worse. I'm having more headaches, difficulty sleeping, eating/

Doctor: /How's your motivation?

Adeline: Low.

Doctor: Difficulty sleeping— do you mean falling asleep, staying asleep, or waking up?

Adeline: All of the above. It depends on the night—a lot of nightmares.

*Beat.*

I have issues breathing. I don't think I have asthma, but at some moments, I can't breathe or speak. I have to lie down because I get these awful headaches/

Doctor: /Ok, one thing at a time.

Adeline: Ok.

Doctor: Let's run these tests and get you checked. I want you to speak to someone.

Adeline: Right.

Doctor: I'm going to increase your medication for your stomach. Up your anxiety medication, and we'll see how that works with the extra symptoms. *(Beat)* Oh, and let's check your vitamin B12, iron and all of this... Make sure everything looks good there...

*Beat.*

I'll have you come back in for a check-up in two months.

*Beat.*

Do you have suicidal ideations? Or are you wanting to hurt yourself?

Adeline: No, no. Just the tests.

Doctor: You're going to speak with a therapist?

Adeline: Yes. I think I should. I'm moving back to my mom and her boyfriend. Closer to the family for a bit.

*Hands over prescriptions.*

*Lights out on SL*

*Adeline walks over to SR, and the lights follow her to another appointment.*

*Adeline sits in the chair and the session starts.*

Counsellors. I wouldn't be here if I hadn't had free counsellors available to help.

Therapist: Yes, it is an issue that we have right now. The waitlist is over 6 months.

Adeline: Someone comes, takes away a part of you. Or it feels like that. The more you wait, the more you think you don't matter, and you feel ashamed. The more you feel like people don't care. The longer you wait, the darker the thoughts get, the more ashamed and the more you hate yourself. They give you medication, and then what?

*Beat.*

We just sit there hating and ashamed of being who we are. Then you get angry that it happened. What do you do with all those emotions? Pretend?

*Beat.*

Then you're supposed to try to make it on your own? Hope that your family is supportive. Believes you. What if they don't? What if it destroys them too?

Therapist: It's true. Some people do recover better with more love and support around them.

Adeline: Yes, exactly, they need to be heard! And people to remind them they are loveable. We get traumatized, and we're supposed to shut up because it's a hard topic. How is that supposed to help?

Therapist: Yes, I agree. It's not fair that there is a lack of support. It can be very hard to speak with someone or ask for help.

Adeline: Then, you get labelled. Branded. Victimized. You're damaged goods.

Therapist: Listen, Adeline, you are NOT or EVER will be damaged goods. This is NOT your fault.

Adeline: It's that stigma that you are now damaged. They don't know if what you said was true, so everything is a possible lie. This is my body and my SELF. ME. I live with this body, and I get told or shamed.

Therapist: It is completely understandable. You're dealing with so much right now. It's why it's wonderful that you're channeling them in a positive direction. You're taking those walks, and you are painting.

Adeline: Thanks. I'm living at home now. I feel like I'm at war. Every day is a chess game, and I don't make the rules.

*Adeline sighs.*

It's been a lot.

*End Scene.*

**Adeline - Act 2**

### Scene 1

*Scene: Maggie, Frank, Suzanne, Nicholas, Adeline and her Mother are all sitting around the kitchen table, playing a board game.*

Maggie: It's your turn Ma Tante.

Adeline: Oh, Merci ma belle. *Coughs.*

Frank: It'll take her eternity to play. I have time to drive to the store in town and back before she plays.

Nicholas: Ma Tante, you want to hear a funny joke.

*Adeline nods.*

Knock knock.

Adeline: Who's there?

Nicholas: Boo.

Adeline: Boo who? *(Adeline rolls her eyes. Nicholas giggles.)*

I've heard that one before. Do you have any more?

Suzanne: Oh, don't get him started. He's been going on all day about his knock-knock jokes.

Frank: I'll tell you a funny joke.                      Adeline: Please don't.

Frank: Look in the mirror. That's a funny joke.

Nicholas: Knock knock

Suzanne: Who's there?

Nicholas: Dumbass!

*Frank laughs.*

Frank: Now that's a funny joke.

Maggy: No, it's not. It's mean!

Adeline: Yes, Nicholas, you can make better jokes. *(To Frank.)* Why are you teaching him that?

Nicholas: *(Mumbles)* Grampa liked it.

*Frank does a gesture of pointing with one hand and a circle with his other.*

*It's meant to show the person that he's pointing at his crazy. His finger is pointed at Adeline.*

*Nicholas laughs.*

*Frank smiles.*

*Adeline sighs and rolls her eyes.*

Mother: You know she's right. Suzanne got called to school last week because he was calling other kids dumbass. You're teaching him the wrong things.

Frank: *(Laughs.)* What - they probably were. The school teaches them to be soft little girls. Exaggerating. He's doing fine/

Adeline: And what is wrong with being a "soft little girl"?  
  
This soft girl can out-fish you any day. Has out-fished you.

Frank: Right, well, next time you see a fucking spider, don't come crying to me. Or if your car needs an oil change.

Adeline: Oil change? Screw up half of them.

Frank: Don't you fucking talk to me that way.

Mother: Stop it. That's enough. Who's turn is it?

Maggy: Toi, Grandmamman.

Mother: Oh! Well, let me see. I love it when we play games. It's good to spend time with my grandbabies.

*(To Nicholas)* Do you have a 2? I'll trade you the 4 that you need.

*Nicholas goes to give her a card.*

Suzanne: Mom!

Mother: Oh, come on, it's just a game. Alright. Fine. I'll play this.

*Lowers her voice to Nicholas.*

Here, just sneak it under the table, and I'll give you mine.

Suzanne: Mom! Stop that.

Nicholas: We're not doing anything.



*Adeline and Maggy giggle.*

Adeline: Mom, you're teaching him how to cheat. Come on...

Mother: I don't know what you're talking about. It's just a game. I taught you, and you turned out fine.

*Everyone laughs, except Frank.*

Frank: Dumbass, it's your turn.

*Adeline sighs and plays.*

Frank: If you play this Maggy, I'll help you out next turn.

*Maggy plays.*

Adeline: Right, because that's not cheating.

Frank: No, it's not. Don't listen to your crazy aunt.

Adeline: How is that helpful?

Frank: Shut up. Let the kid play.

*He does the crazy gesture again, pointing to Adeline.*

*Everyone smiles or laughs, except Adeline.*

Adeline: Right, mature. Suzanne, it's your turn.

Frank: You're jealous because I thought of it first.

Adeline: Jealous? It's a game!

Mother: Ok. Ok. That's enough.

Frank: Yes, from the drama queen over there.

Adeline: What drama? I'm just saying you can't do that. It's not how you play.

Mother: I said that's enough!

Maggy: Mom?

Suzanne: Yes, I'm playing Maggy.

Nicholas: I have another one!

Nicholas: Knock, Knock.

Mother: Who's there?

Nicholas: Atch

Mother: Achh-who?

*Nicholas, Suzanne, Adeline, Mother and Maggy  
giggle/smile/laugh.*

*Except for Frank.*

Mother: Whose turn is it?

Adeline: It's mine/

Frank: /Fucking slow poke

Adeline: Slow? It's just a game! Can you stop, really?

Frank: Everyone here can play, but we have to take forever when it comes to you. I could take a nap. Wait at the ER. Take a shit. And still, you wouldn't have played.

Adeline: Could you just stop and let me play...

Frank: You play like you do everything. Slow. Takes you forever to wash the dishes. What - do you lick the soap? Jig. Dance around?

Adeline: Whatever. Do you do the dishes? No.

Frank: Yes. The food I put on this table. Are you bringing food to the table? Money?

Mother: Yes, she does. Enough. Adeline is living with us and helping out. Adeline, he helped you move. Now, I get to have family time with my daughters.

Maggy: *(To Suzanne.)* Mommy, my tummy hurts.

Suzanne: You need to eat, Hunny. We can grab a heat warmer and try that? Do you think you can eat?

Maggy: *(Sniffles)* No, it just hurts, mommy. Can I go lie with the puppies?

*Suzanne gets a warming pack for Maggy.*

Suzanne: We're playing a game, Maggy. You can go play with the dogs after.

Adeline: You want me to leave. Yes, I got that. I can pack.

Mother: That's enough, you two! Stop it now. We're playing a game.

Frank: If she cleaned up once in a while - it wouldn't hurt.

Mother: Frank, that's enough. I said- stop it.

Frank: She comes into our house, acting as if she owns it. Changes everything. We give her everything. Ungrateful. No respect. Now you sit here and ruin the game that we're playing. You're a disrespectful little/

Mother: /Frank!

Frank: I'm going to get some cheese. Talk to your ungrateful daughter.

Adeline: What? Mom!

Mother: Adeline. I said it's enough. Stop it.

*Maggy goes to her mom and hugs her. Suzanne takes Maggy and Nicolas with her out of the room.*

*Frank starts pacing.*

Adeline: NO! I come here and clean. I cook, pay rent and do more chores than he does. What does he do? Sits in the room all the time - yells at me.

Frank: (*Mumbling.*) Nothing wrong. (*Louder.*) We do everything for you.

Mother: Frank, I said that's enough.

Frank: We invite you to our home, and what do you do? Ruin everything. You can't do a goddamn thing. We've got a leaky toilet that I have to fix. Look, it's leaking through the ceiling. You want to tell me you didn't do that? You're the only one who uses it!

Adeline: If you had fixed it properly in the first place, it wouldn't be broken.

Mother: Adeline, that is not the issue. It's a whole other problem...

Frank: See! You think you know everything. No respect. We had no issues with it before you came/

Adeline: /Because nobody USED IT!

Frank: And here you are. Ruining everything. Eating all our food. And you can't even show one ounce of respect.

Adeline: You and your respect. All we ever do is thank you, and it's never enough ...

Frank: I'm not the one who/

Mother: /Frank! Adeline. That's enough. I don't want to hear anymore from both of you.

Adeline: Mom, I didn't /

Mother: /No. That's enough, Adeline.

*Lights out.*

*Lights on . It's now morning.*

*Adeline is enjoying a cup of coffee.*

*Suzanne walks towards Adeline, grabbing a cup of coffee, joining her at the kitchen table.*

Adeline: Suzanne, do you want to go to town?

Suzanne: Sure, it would give me an excuse to swing by and grab a Cappuccino from Tim's.

Adeline: My treat.

Adeline: Thanks. I want to go buy some more paint. I'm running out of white.

Suzanne: From what I saw, it looks beautiful.

Adeline: Thanks.

Adeline: SUEEee! SUzannneeeee. Suzeeeee. You know you are very talented, right?

Suzanne: Adeline, please drop it.

*Frank walks in and goes to the fridge.*

*He starts shuffling around and to make himself some coffee.*

*Frank leaves the room.*

Adeline: I thought he left... (*Speaking lower*).

Suzanne: He came back a couple of minutes ago...

Adeline: Do you want to go?

Suzanne: Sure, let me go get my purse.

*Suzanne leaves the room as Frank enters, looking monstrous.*

*Only Adeline sees him this way.*

*See description in character notes.*

Frank: Where's the Jam Adeline?

*He walks towards Adeline as she backs away.*

*She shrugs.*

Where did you put it? It was in the fridge this morning, and I went to grab it, but it's gone.

Adeline, where the fuck is the jam?

Adeline: Fridge?

Frank: Are you stupid? Obviously, I checked there. It's not there.

Adeline: Frank, I have no idea. I'm not the holder of the jam jar.

*Beat.*

Frank: What is the matter with you? Disrespectful...

*Beat.*

*(Looks up at the sky.)* Oh, Jesus, my saving Grace, please give me the strength.

*Frank walks towards Adeline, and she backs away. Adeline starts to leave the room, but Frank blocks her path. Adeline looks frantic.*

Ungrateful little bitch. All I'm asking is for the goddamn jam, and you stand there looking stupid. Where the hell did you put it?

Mother: *(Offstage.)* Hey! I'm home!

*Frank hurries off-stage.*

Adeline. Where's Frank?

Adeline: I don't know – but mom, he's at it again.

Mother: I came home to grab something quick to eat. I'm starving.

*Mother opens the fridge and starts shuffling through.*

Adeline: He's mad at me again. He's angry I'm here - period.

Mother: Adeline, I don't want to do this. Can't you two not fight for one day? He hasn't done anything to you. I told you, avoid him and don't speak to him.

Adeline: This is exactly what I did! He got angrier this time!

Mother: You know how much he's done for us. He worked long hours, through holidays, birthdays and has moved you every time you needed to. I wouldn't have made it financially without him. Raising four kids by myself... I couldn't even afford to feed you. You know all of this, Adeline, why do you make it harder on him? Your father left us. Frank is here. If he's cranky sometimes, it's because he works too much. Now he's home because he's sick. Give him his space. He is overworked and needs it. How many times do I have to tell you this?

Adeline: Mom...

Mother: You know he helps us a lot, Adeline. I'm done with this conversation.

*Frank walks back in, dressed as his normal self.*

Frank: Where is the JAM?! I can't find the damn thing.

*Beat.*

Have you gone dumb? Where did you put the jam?

*Frank and starts pacing.*

Mother: What is going on?

Frank: Where did you put the Jam Adeline? How many times do I have to ask you?

Oh Jesus Christ, give me the strength to deal with such an ungrateful child.

Mother: What are you doing? You're yelling at her and asking God for strength? How does that make any sense?

Frank: God help me deal/

Mother: /Enough. Where is the jam, Adeline?

Adeline: Mom, you told me to avoid him. I answer - he gets mad. I don't answer- he gets mad. What am I supposed to do?

Frank: Make me the villain as usual. Criminalize me.

Mother: ENOUGH.

Frank: I have to avoid you in my own goddamn house. I can't do what I want or go anywhere.

Adeline: I stay in my room to avoid you; you call me lazy.

I do chores; you tell me I'm in your space.

You don't make any sense!

Frank: Jam, where is it? I don't care. These are stupid lies.

Mother: I have to go to work, don't you get that? It's been a long day. *(sigh)* Don't you understand that?

*(Beat)* Where is this jam?

Adeline: The fridge - where it should be.

*Mother walks over to the fridge and starts rummaging to find the jam.*

Mother: Adeline, I can't find it. Where is it?

Adeline: I don't know. I thought it was there. I don't/

Frank: /You are a selfish little/

Mother: /Frank!

Frank: You're lying. Where did you put it?

*Frank advances on Adeline as she retreats.*

Adeline: I don't understand what you're talking about.

*Frank advances slowly.*

Mother: Frank, stop this. Did you take it? It's just jam. Does it matter?

Frank: *(To Mother)* What?! We have to put up with her crap all the time, and we're supposed to let her walk all over us?

Adeline: I didn't do any of this! Are you kidding? I buy food, and I help out/

Frank: No, you don't. You sit in your room complaining to me and dreaming of boyfriends. We give everything to you guys.

*Makes a prayer with his hands and looks up.*

God - give me the strength to understand why she's so disrespectful and ungrateful to me. Help me understand why she can't respect her own Mother/

Mother: /Ok, Frank, that's enough.

Adeline: Suddenly he's a believer? He doesn't believe in God any more than he did before. He's just using it to get mad at me.

Mother: Adeline...

Adeline: But.../

Mother: /Go.

*Adeline rushes out.*

*Frank is pacing back and forth like a caged animal.*

*(To Frank)* Why are you yelling at her like that?

Frank: I just wanted the jam.

*End Scene*



**Scene 2**

*Scene: Adeline is sitting on the chair waiting for the Doctor.*

*Doctor walks onstage.*

Doctor: Why don't we get started? Now you must be - let me give my computer a chance to load my information here. Adeline.

Adeline: Yes.

Doctor: Ok. I see you've seen a psychiatrist. We want to make sure your medication is all in order. I see that's a long list here.

Adeline: Yes.

Doctor: How are you feeling?

Adeline: The same. I'm depressed, apparently.

*Doctor types a few notes down.*

Doctor: How are you sleeping?

Adeline: Badly. Like I told the other nurse, I have a lot of nightmares.

Doctor: Do you have trouble falling asleep? Staying asleep?

Adeline: Both.

Doctor: Waking up?

Adeline: Yes.

Doctor: How is your energy throughout the day?

Adeline: Low.

Doctor: How bad are the nightmares? Are they waking you up? Making it hard to fall asleep? Stay asleep?

Adeline: Yes, to all of those.

Doctor: I see you've got something for anxiety, depression and what is this one?

Adeline: I also have acid reflux, so a couple meds for my stomach. They thought I might have an ulcer, but the doctor who went in there with a tube proudly told me that I didn't.

Doctor: Hah, Ok.

Adeline: I also have something for nightmares.

*The doctor types more notes.*

I hate taking all of these medications...

Doctor: Most people do. Should.  
How is your appetite?

Adeline: Low.

Doctor: Do you mean you don't have one? Or you don't want to eat?

Adeline: I don't want to eat, and I'm not hungry. I'm always nauseous. But I read that's normal for people who've been assaulted. They have a lot of nausea...

Doctor: Do you have any suicidal thoughts or ideations?

Adeline: I guess.

Doctor: Do you have a plan? Have you thought of a way to do it?

Adeline: No. I just stopped trying anything. I won't do anything.

Doctor: You know there's a hotline where you can call and speak with someone about what you're going through?

Adeline: Yes, I called. When I told her what I was dealing with, she said, "So what?" and I hung up on her.

Doctor: Do you feel comfortable calling them again?

Adeline: Sure.

*Doctor types up some notes.*

Doctor: Do you have thoughts of self-harm? Are you harming yourself?

Adeline: I have. I don't. I thought of it, but I don't. My mom told me that If I want to stay with her that I can't put a knife to my skin. I've made a promise.

Doctor: Good.

*Doctor types up some notes.*

Are you speaking with a counsellor?

Adeline: Yes. With the Women's center. She's nice.

Doctor: Good.

I'm going to get you to get some blood work. I'd like to see how your iron and all of that is doing. If you're ok with that?

Adeline: Ok.

Doctor: Ok, good. I also want to see you again in a month. Can you do that for me?

Adeline: Sure.

*Blackout on SR.*

*Lights up on SL.*

*Lights shine on as Adeline walks from the Doctor's office to the living room at home.*

*Scene: Frank is sitting watching television.*

*Adeline walks in.*

Frank: I see you did the dishes. But lost the jam. It's all wrong. They're all over the place and dripping in the cupboards.

Adeline: What?

Frank: If you can't do it properly, then don't.

*The phone Rings. Adeline answers the phone and walks away from Frank so he won't hear her talking.*

*Note: Frank could easily be eavesdropping with another phone line as she called on a home phone.*

Mother: Frank went through my text messages and read what you wrote. Why would you call him a dog?

Adeline: I never called him a dog?

Mother: Yes/

Adeline: Mom, I said he was LIKE a dog protecting you. When I wasn't home, all I heard was how he wouldn't spend time with you and DO things.

Now that I'm home, he won't leave your side. He is constantly criticizing me - you know that, right? Yesterday he was mad I didn't do laundry, now he's mad about the dishes.

Mother: Yes, I know. I see it. But, you can't call him that; it's insulting.

Adeline: But I was/

Mother: / No, you can't. You owe him an apology.

Adeline: Hah. No.

Mother: Adeline, don't make me come over. I have enough work to do. I don't have time for this.

Adeline: I'm not doing anything. He should not read your texts first of all - it's none of his business. Privacy, mom. He wouldn't spend time with you, and all he does now is spend time with you and won't leave you alone. /

Mother: Adeline/  
 Adeline: /I ask you to join me for a walk, and he's there. I ask you/  
 Mother: Adeline. I'm at work. Now is not the time/  
 Adeline: /Are you not listening to me?  
 Mother: (*Sighs.*) Yes, I noticed. I know he's doing that.  
 Adeline: Oh, you like it, and I'm being thrown aside now? He just got mad at me for putting what he calls wet dishes away. They were not wet/  
 Mother: / Yes. Yes, I know. (*Wearily*).  
 Adeline: So?  
 Mother: So, I'm at work, Adeline. You're not being pushed aside.  
 Adeline. What are you saying then? None of you believe me. None of you seem to even hear me. He calls me crazy /  
 Mother: /Adeline! I'm at work. I told you this. I'm going now.  
 Adeline: But... ok hang-up then....

*Frank walks back in and has morphed into a  
 "monster."*

Why are you reading my texts?  
 Frank: I don't know what you mean.  
 Adeline: Why are you reading my texts? You have no right.  
 Frank: You little... ungrateful.... We take you into our home and feed you, give you everything we have.  
 You have a roof over your head. But you complain. You use my television in MY house. You sit there like some princess. No wonder you've only had failed relationships. You drive them crazy/  
 Adeline: /Stop It!  
 Frank: A guy would have to be nuts to be with you. On top of that, you can't take care of yourself. We had to come to rescue you. Hah, you basically failed at life! /  
 Adeline: /YOU'RE WRONG!

Frank: Failed at life. /

Adeline: /That's not true!

You talk about me failing?

Mom is the only reason why you even HAD a job. She's the one who took care of us. You cheated! Prostitutes! Drugs! How old are you? You're the one who couldn't even finish high school. You sit here, not working. I finished school and worked. I got a degree. I made something of my life. What did you DO?

Frank: Little cocksucker. You can't do anything. You're always calling your mom for help. (*laughs mocking at her*). You couldn't even keep a boyfriend! You can't even afford to live. You failed at life. You know life is shitty all because of you.

Adeline: You make excuses for CHEATING ON MY MOM! You've always treated us like shit. You're always making up some excuse why we're fucked up. But the only fucked up person is YOU!

*At this point, Frank is fuming and looming directly in front of Adeline.*

*Frank raises his arm above his head and stops as he's about to hit Adeline.*

Frank: Little cunt. Get the fuck out of my sight.

*Frank backs away.*

Adeline: (*Whispers*) Can't hit me, eh? You know she'll leave you if you touch me.

*Lights out on Stage Left.*

*Lights on Stage Right.*

*Adeline sits in her usual chair, with the therapist.*

Therapist: How are things at home?

Adeline: (*Deep breath.*) I hate it. He's worse.

Therapist: I'm sorry to hear that.

Adeline: I've been working on some things in my head, though.

Therapist: Oh. Ok.

Adeline: I was asking myself some odd questions. I mean, it's not normal that I have only felt comfortable with my bedroom door locked when I'm at home, is it?

Therapist: What do you mean by normal?

Adeline: No, I mean. I should feel safe at home. I don't feel safe unless I lock my door. Now my lock is broken.

I don't know what happened, but I put things in front of my door. I've had this fear of the dark, but it's not the dark that I'm afraid of. I wake up and think someone is in my room, and I've had these fears for so long that it's normal for me. I thought it was me who was crazy.

*Adeline's speech increases, and talks quickly.*

I get terrified when I'm alone at night. I would wake up to someone touching me? I didn't share these fears with anyone. I thought they were nightmares.

They wouldn't believe me even if I had. I don't believe me. Now? I have those same fears. I have the same fear again. What is wrong with me? Am I crazy?

Therapist: Adeline, there is nothing wrong with you. You are not crazy. It is very brave of you to share this with me.

Adeline: I start asking myself these questions. I started wondering why things aren't ok. I start remembering things that I didn't think mattered. But... when I put them all together, They. They. They fit together. This horrible puzzle. (*Panicking*).

Therapist: So you're saying that you remember things that you had forgotten?

Adeline: It's just. It's just. It's... (*Panicking*).

Therapist: It's alright, Adeline. This is a safe space, and you can share whatever you're comfortable with.

Adeline: Being home. Being back and seeing how horrible he is to everyone. It brings back memories. I see how horrible he is. He is abusive to my mom, my family. On top of that, I swear there are things going on that aren't ok at night.

Therapist: He? Who do you/

Adeline: Frank.

Therapist: Ok. I know you mentioned that your mom tries to mediate between you both.

Adeline: Not just that. I think she saw that there isn't anything we can do. I feel like I'm continually at war with him. Every day is a chess game. Every day I don't know if he is going to be nice or get mad.

*Adeline starts to silently cry.*

Sorry, it's... (*Panicking*).

*Adeline reaches for the box of Kleenex and noisily blows her nose.*

Therapist: Not at all. That's why the Kleenex box is here.

Adeline: Yes. He is a horrible person. I don't know what I can do.

*Adeline is panicking – near hyperventilating.*

Therapist: Ok, Adeline, before you continue, take a deep breath.

Adeline: All coming out. I didn't want to talk about ... I'm scared for my niece. I remembered when they were visiting me once, and I saw him staring at me while I changed. When I remembered that, I threw up. Disgusting. My niece is the same age I was.

*Adeline is shaking and crying.*

I don't want any of this. Please - I don't want to. I don't want to be associated with any of this. It's disgusting. It's gross. I can't breathe when I think of it. When I think that he would come into my room ...

Therapist: Ok, Adeline. Take a deep breath. Come back to me. Look at me, Adeline. Where are you now? You're safe. It's ok. It's ok.

*Adeline and Therapist do a breathing technique.*

Deep breaths. In and Out. (*Breathes*).

Deep breaths. In and Out. (*Breathes*).

In and Out. (*Breathes*).

In and Out. (*Breathes*).

Deep breaths. In and Out. (*Breathes*).

How do you feel?

Adeline: I don't know.

Therapist: Thank you for trusting me with that. I know how hard that must have been. You're saying, to make sure I fully understand, that he would come into your room at night.

What did he do? I know this is hard, Adeline.

Adeline: I don't want to say.

*Speaks with a hesitant voice, as if afraid of the words she's saying.*

He... watched and touched himself... touched.... Touched... (*Sighs*) me.

*She covers her mouth like she's going to puke.*

or... I don't know if I'm ready... I... (*Panicking again.*) I... I... really wish I wasn't remembering...

Therapist: Deep breath, Adeline. (*They breathe together again - deep breath.*)

Focus on me. Deep breath (*Another breath together.*)

That's it. (*Beat.*)

Ok, Adeline, I want to clarify. I hear you're saying that he was physically abusive with you. Watched and touched himself while you slept? You think he has attempted to repeat this kind of behaviour?

Adeline: (*Shudders.*) Yes. (*Deep breath.*)

All of those. To all of your questions – yes.

Therapist: It was very brave of you to admit that. Know you did nothing wrong. You were very young when all of this happened. This is really hard work you're doing. I need you to know you should be very proud of yourself.

Adeline: Thank you.

Therapist: It isn't easy to work on these memories. There is a reason why you chose to repress them. Together we can work through this.

Adeline: I wasn't going to. I don't know if I can. And my niece... (*Whispers*). What am I supposed to do?

Therapist: Alright, now that you brought her up, Adeline, I need you to understand this point. I told you on our first visit that I would have to speak with officials if I believed there was a child in danger. He is living at home, and so is your niece, is that correct?

Adeline: Yes.

Therapist: Alright, this is where it will get a little harder. I need to contact officials to tell them about this.

Adeline: My sister will hate me and won't believe me. Nobody will. It took me half a year of living with him and a ton of therapy to even get to this point. They won't accept it. How could I have said anything.

But my niece... (*Holds herself*)

She matters more. They'll blame me because that's always how it goes, isn't it? He'll twist this/

Therapist: /Adeline, I need you to understand. Yes, your niece is very important. She is a priority, and it is incredibly brave of you to have talked to me about this today.



Your safety, your feelings, and you - are also important. I need to know you'll be safe, though. We need to talk about a plan.

Adeline: Ok. I thought I could protect her by being there. It's all my fault, isn't it?

Therapist: No, it is not. You did not do this. He did. You are trying to do what's best and often, what is best is the hardest thing to do. This is why it's incredibly brave of you. Also, it's often a misconception that we think we can protect them while it's being done or has happened. It's a difficult situation, and it's not your fault.

Adeline: I don't want any of this. It's awful. They're the ones I need the most, but I'm going to hurt my whole family. What am I supposed to do?

Therapist: Adeline. You didn't do anything wrong. Look at me. You. Did. Not. Do. This. He is the one at fault here.

Adeline: Why does it feel like I did?

Therapist: You have to understand that you did nothing wrong. It wasn't your fault that HE did this. You also aren't the only one. You weren't the only one that this has happened to.

Adeline: Why does anyone have to feel like this? This shame. They didn't do anything to deserve that. Why is it the victim gets stuck with this? None of this is fair. You get traumatized and bam – stuck with the crappy stigma and shame of it all.

Therapist: You are completely right. You don't have to feel shame, though it is completely normal to feel that way/

Adeline: /Why do I get to deal with the embarrassment? The guilt?

Therapist: They don't deserve that and neither do you. I can't even/

Adeline: /I hate that people say life isn't fair. It's not life; it's this way of thinking. This way of thinking hurts more people than helping. It's not ok. I refuse to feel it. I'm so angry.

Therapist: Deep breathes, Adeline. I understand. It's a platitude to say – life isn't fair. It's meaningless.

Before you go, I need to ensure you are safe. Do you have somewhere else you can go to? I also will give you some pamphlets for the Women's Shelters that you can go to in case of emergency.

Adeline: A plan is good, I guess. Yes, I can go to other family members, I guess. Maybe? I can't leave those kids alone, and I don't want to.

Therapist: You should consider it. Let's talk about this more. I'll get you those pamphlets. I want to know, though, you mentioned your lock...

Adeline: I sleep with a light on, and I put heavy furniture in front of my door.

Therapist: It doesn't sound very safe for you. We have door stoppers that we give to our clients in these situations. I have some left... Financing can be hard, but we're lucky we get these donated every year. Do you feel safer with that?

Adeline: Much. Thank you!

*Lights out on Adeline*

*The therapist turns, picks up the phone and dials out.*

Therapist: Hello, I'd like to report a child in danger.

*End scene.*

### Scene 3

*Note: When the sound TICK TOCK starts, it's the sound of a clock, and it increases with momentum and urgency as the scene progresses.*

*Adeline speaks, and time moves faster as if she's losing time.*

*Tick and Tock start off as a beat and slowly reach up to a second.*

*Clock and buzzing sound beats like a heartbeat.*

*Scene: Hospital emergency room, Adeline and her mother are waiting.*

*Adeline's mother is on her cellphone and occasionally blowing her nose.*

*Adeline has her phone in her hands and is journaling on her phone.*

Adeline: Things aren't going all that well. Alright, that might have been an understatement. Things fucking suck.

*(Journaling.)* I don't care anymore. I'm done. Why do I bother noting this down in this stupid dumb journal app? I don't know, but I'm stuck at the emerge.

Here is where we get to see the dirty drugged up right next to the clean, wealthy people. They don't want to ever see each other, but here they have no choice to sit, side by side, waiting.

*(Journaling.)* Numb. No, I am a volcano of emotions. I feel like I will explode from all my limbs to all the corners of the earth with my anger. Love. Sadness. Guilt. It's terrifying.

We haven't said a word to each other about it. She drove all the way here to bring me. I want to hug her and tell her it's ok. I want her to let me go.

Most of all, I want the pain she feels to stop.

*Adeline sits down and slowly reaches for her mother's hand.*

*Their eyes meet, and her mom smiles with unshed tears in her eyes.*

Mother: *(To herself)* This is ridiculous. You could have died twenty times before they see us.

Adeline: Mom, you didn't have to drive here.

Mother: What? Of course, I did. You're my baby. *(Sniffles)*  
You're my baby girl. Of course, I would.

Adeline: Mom, stop. I don't...

Mother: I want you to get better. Écoute! It's all I want right now.

Adeline: Oh, mom, everything is a mess.

Mother: Mon bébé. You're going to get better. I'm staying till you have all the help you need. If we didn't have a goddamn shitty healthcare system. A fucking waitlist of 6 months. 6 mois. Mon Dieu!

Adeline: Mom.  
*(Journaling)* You hear those horror stories of people dying in waiting rooms. It happens. You have one minute with a nurse who holds all this power over how much time you're going to suffer in the waiting room. You have to walk in that room hoping that you sold your issues well enough that they'll take you seriously. Are you deathly ill? Can you hold out while we see other people? Are you faking it and not as sick as you look? *(Beat)*.  
The worst kind of interview.

*We hear the sound of a clock ticking, slowly and loudly in the background.*

*Tic*

*Tock*

*(Journaling)* Ladies and gents, don't be afraid to put on that sick look. If you don't know how, then practice. It can make the difference between 10 minutes or 2 hours.

*Tick*

*Tock*

*Tick*

*Tock*

Mother drove in a record time to come and bring me here

*Tick*

Because they caught me red-handed. Not literally. I wanted to.

*Tock*

It was impulsive and selfish. I guess.

*Tick*

But no one wants me here. I'm blamed.

*Tock*

I'm the problem.

*Tick Tock*

I fix things.

*Tick Tock*

I'm the problem.

*Tick Tock*

It's logical.

*Tick Tock Tick*

Take the problem away.

*Tock Tick Tock*

I'm the problem.

*Tick Tock Tick*

I don't want to live with this.

*Tick Tock Tick Tock Tick*

I don't want to live anymore.

*Tock Tick Tock Tick Tock*

Life is shit, and I want to go.

*Tick Tock Tick Tock Tick*

I fell down a rabbit hole. I'm Alice, and she hit rock-bottom.

*Tock Tick Tock Tick Tock*

She found her way home. I haven't. It keeps going on and on and on.

*Tick Tock Tick Tock Tick*

She hit rock-bottom. I'm not in a funky-the-writer-must-have-been-stoned type of story.

*Tock Tick Tock Tick Tock*

It's never-ending. I keep falling and losing.

*Tick Tock Tick Tock Tick*

I'm not trying to play the please-pay-attention-to-me game. I want to play the please-let-me-go-away game.

*Tock Tick Tock Tick Tock*

I'm the Debbie Downer. I have pain nailed to my heart.

*Tick Tock Tick Tock Tick*

*The Tick-Tocking stops.*

Before the little washroom episode, I'd gone for a nice walk. Debating on whether I should drown eloquently like Shakespeare's Ophelia. I saw myself moving across the water, but I'm not Ophelia.

*Beat.*

I could. I could. I wanted to make it better.

*Tock Tick Tock Tick Tock Tick Tock Tick Tock  
Tick*

I also didn't want any of this.

*Tock Tick Tock Tick Tock Tick Tock*

*And the clock stops Tick-Tocking.*

I begged. I prayed. I asked anyone listening to send a sign.

*Adeline walks to a tree with a small rope  
hanging off the branch - a noose.*

*The noise of mosquitoes buzzing fills the air.*

It was an awful walk. Full of mosquitoes. But when I saw that noose. I swear that's what I saw! I never thought I'd actually get an answer. I thought I was seeing things. Walked up and down a few times. I touched it. My cousin found me then. I guess I had been missing for a few hours. I knew what I had to do now.

*The buzzing stops, and we hear the ticking begin  
again quickly.*

*Tick Tock Tick Tock Tick Tock*

*Doctor walks in.*

Doctor: Didn't you think of what this would have done to your family? How traumatized your family would have been if they had found you like that?

*Blackout on SR.*

*Lights up on SL.*

*Lights shine on Adeline, as she walks away from the Doctor, to the bed and lies down.*

*Scene: Adeline is in bed. Memere is sitting in a chair.*

Mémère: Réveille-toi ma belle.

Oh, ma belle Adeline. Comme tu ma manqué.

*Mémère walks over and gently kisses her cheek.*

Wake up, Adeline. (*Adeline stirs*).

Now that's it – wake up.

Adeline: Mémère!!

*They embrace.*

Wait... Comment est-ce possible ? Mémère! How is it that you're here?

Mémère: Shhhh! There isn't time for that now.

Adeline: What do you mean there's no time? What are you doing here? You're dead. I don't understand.

Mémère: Oh, ma chérie! We don't have much time.

Adeline: Non, mémère, this isn't real.

Mémère: This is where you felt most comfortable. Now stop it.

Adeline: Non non Mémère. I went to your funeral.

Mémère: Oui ma chérie. Oui.

Adeline: How is this possible? I'm...

Mémère: Arrête. Voyons ma belle. Stop this. Come with me. Viens-me voir.

*Adeline gets out of bed.*

Adeline: Oh, Mémère.

Mémère: Oui, c'est moi. Viens.

*Mémère opens her arms to welcome her. They embrace again.*

Adeline: Comment? How?

Mémère: I'm here for you. Hurry. You ask the wrong questions. Come and sit.

Adeline: But you couldn't even speak English!

Mémère: Who says we're speaking English or French? I'm not alive, am I?

Adeline: Oh, Je t'aime. I'm so sorry I didn't visit you as much. I wanted to. I wanted to be there. I've thought of you every day.

Mémère: I know you did ma belle. C'est le passé.

Oh, ma belle Toune, you need to smile more! Don't you remember? Life is beautiful.

*Mémère gets up to dance, Adeline smiles and joins her.*

J'EN AI UN SUR LE MENTON  
 QUI EST AUSSI GROS QU'UN CITRON  
 J'EN AI UN AUTRE SUR LE BORD DE L'OREILLE  
 QUI ME SERT DE PENDANT D'OREILLE  
 JE VOUS ASSURE QU'IL TERNISSENT PAS  
 SONT GARANTI QUATORZE CARATS

*Mémère singing and dancing.*

*The song plays and they dance.*

OH PIS J'EN AI UN SUR LE BOUT DE LA LANGUE,  
 PIS QUI M'EMPÊCHE DE TURLUTER,  
 PIS ÇA ME FAIT BéGAY-GAY-GAY YéBéGay GAY GAY éBéGAYER

*The music slowly disappears.*

*Mémère sits down with Adeline.*

Adeline: I wish I'd been there to see you all dancing like that. I miss that. I forgot what it was to have fun and be happy.

I miss you. *(They hug).*

You would put on, J'ai un bouton and dance. *(Smiling).*



- Mémère: Oh, oui! Ta mère. She was a dancer. You're just like your mother in that way. Once we put that song on, she couldn't stop. You're just like her, ma belle.
- Adeline: I forgot that life.... Was fun... should be fun.
- Oh, Mémère. I wish you were really here.
- Mémère: I'm always here for you. For all of you. But I need you to listen now. What I'm telling you is important, and you need to listen. I'm here to tell you that you need to wake up.
- Adeline: What? Non, Mémère. I want you to stay.
- Mémère: Adeline, non! I mean, WAKE up. REVEIL. C'est l'temps.
- Adeline: No, I want to stay. Why did you have to leave us?
- Mémère: I love you and I will always love you. Your family and friends also love you. They don't understand. You need to wake up. Adeline, you need to ask for help.
- Adeline: I don't want to. I want to stay here with you.
- Mémère: Non, ma belle Toune. You need to wake up now. You can't stay isolated. You're not dead yet, and you have so much to live for.
- Adeline: I don't want to. It'll hurt people. I can't Mémère. Please. Please.
- Mémère: Ma belle, grown but still the sweet girl I knew. I always loved having you and your siblings over.
- Adeline: You're loved by ALL of us...
- Mémère: I'm here because you need to wake up Adeline.

*Adeline hugs Mémère.*

No, please don't make me!

*The cuckoo clock on the wall tweets and chimes.*

- Adeline: Oh, your clock!
- Mémère: It's time, Adeline. You need to wake up and stop pulling yourself away from people you love.
- Adeline: Please don't make me. I don't want to. I want to stay with you.
- Mémère: I know it will be hard. You need to wake up. You're strong. I know you can do this. You're not alone.
- Je t'aime ma chérie. Gros comme le ciel Mémère.

Adeline: Moissi. Je t'aime.

Mémère: I can see you in your dreams, whenever you want. I won't leave you. You won't ever be alone. Ma belle Toutoune, you'll have a mountain to climb. You will. But you're already almost over it. It'll get harder, and it'll be tough. You're made of tougher, and you're stronger than that. If you can't go over the mountain, move it. You can move mountains.

Adeline: (*Softly*). Oh Mémère.

*Mémère put her hand to Adeline's face.*

Mémère: J'ai confiance en toi, ma belle Toune. I know you can do this. You have everything you need inside of you to beat this.

I don't have the perfect words to say, but I know you have the strength to fight this. Now be the girl I know you are. Go beat that monster.

Adeline: I didn't want to wake up or know the truth Mémère.

*Mémère pushes her and gives her the strength to walk through as a forest materializes before her.*

*Mémère, who is gone.*

*Adeline walks towards the forest.*

*End Scene*

#### Scene 4

*As Adeline walks through the forest, she hears voices whisper softly around her. Coming from onstage, offstage, everywhere and nowhere. Shapes and odd forms appear to move in the shadows; unclear.*

*Adeline enters a forest.*

Voice: Liar.

Voices: Crazy. Little Bitch

Voice: Not. Enough.

Adeline: Hello? Excuse-me?

Voices: Never.

Voice: Twisted little soul.

Voices: Enough.

Voices: Burden.

Adeline: uh, what? Is there anyone there?

Voices: *(Hissing)* Shame.

Voice: You made it all up, didn't you?

Voices: Ashamed of you.

Voice: Nothing but a black sheep of your family.

Voices: Disgusting human being.

Adeline: What is going on here?

*The trees try to hit Adeline with branches. Throwing acorns or apples at her throughout this section.*

*The items are thrown while VOICES is speaking.*

*Adeline tries to swap them away, sometimes getting hit.*

Adeline: *(Softly to herself)*. She said I had the strength...  
What is this?

Voices: Burden.

Voice: Do you know how many people you've hurt with your so-called Truth?

Voices: Liar.

Adeline: Hold on. Hurt? I didn't DO anything. Ouch! Stop it. Who are you? WHERE are you?

Voices: *(Hissing.)* liar.

Voices: Crazy.

Voice: You're the one who wouldn't let skeletons lie. You had to dredge up the past, didn't you? /

Adeline: /No! Please stop this. – owe!

Voice: You had to let it ALLLLL out. Couldn't you just keep quiet?

Adeline: No, you're wrong.

Voice: Why say it, knowing it would tear everyone apart?

Adeline: NO! I didn't DO this. I didn't. I swear... *(Falters)*

Voice: *(Cackling)*. Deep down. You know you did. You did this.

Adeline: *(Softly)* No. How? No.

Voices: Overly emotional.

Voices: Always Drama.

Voice: You brought the pain to your family. Your news... it almost killed them all.

Voices: Cruel little girl.

Adeline: No. I didn't want any of them to be hurt. *(Softly, then louder)*.  
I am not the one...

Voices: Arrogant.

Voices: Crazy.

Voice: Of couurrrsseeeee not.

You wanted to save them. The saviour. Trying to take care of them. Your niece. (*Patronizing*). Even if you wanted to, you only made it worse.

Adeline: No. You know, if I hadn't ... Mémère – she was right. You're all wrong.

Voices: Sadist.

Voice: You wanted those guys to hurt you.

Voices: Victim.

Voice: (*Cackles*). Playing the victim card as if you didn't want it.

Adeline: Ok, this is absurd. You, talking to me as if I wanted to be hurt?

Voice: You know you did. Why else?

Adeline: Ow - Come on. Stop it. I've had it. Love, I wanted love. It was my comfort zone. They were amazing... at first...

Voices: You drove him mad.

Adeline: I did not! I had my difficulties, but so did he. He didn't know how to love. He was afraid. Love is much more complicated than we/

Voices: Lies

Voice: (*Cackles.*) You didn't drive him mad, then what about the manipulative cheater? /

Adeline: /What about him? He had even bigger issues...

Voices: Meaningless.

Voices: It's all your fault.

Adeline: I didn't choose this!

Voice: Ha! Sure, you didn't.

Adeline: Why would I want these things? They warped my view of the world. My mental map/

Voice: /Mental map? /

Adeline: /of what is love ACTUALLY is and how I should be treated.

Voice: Stop playing this stupid victim card. You're doing this to yourself.

Adeline: I'm not, dammit. To myself? Show yourself. Stop this!

Voices: Witch.

Voices: Demanding.

Adeline: Stop hiding. Ouch! Stop this!

Voice: I know you. I am you. I am your shadow. I am your deepest darkest you.

*The shadows bring an object, distorted in shape, closer.*

*The voice comes from this covered object and does not resemble what it truly is.*

Adeline: So, you hide? How can you be me? I don't...

Voice: I know what you think. I know everything about you.

Adeline: Show yourself! Hiding in the shadows, accusing me. Screw you.

Voices: Selfish.

Voice: I am you.

Voices: Shame.

Adeline: It's repressed for a reason. Telling anyone. It would hurt them all.

Voice: Why did you?

Voices: Whore.

Adeline: I had to tell the truth. I am not the one who caused this...

Voice: Oh, it's all his fault then?

Voices: Shame.

Adeline: No. He's not the one either. Generations of trauma. Pain. Hurting each other. We all bleed onto each other. It had to stop.

Voice: Are you empathizing with the person who traumatized and scarred you?

*Slowly the veil lifts and reveals the front of the object, a mirror.*

*Inside the mirror, a reflection of Adeline, broken, bruised, scarred and demented, appears.*

Voice: Look. Look at yourself. This is what he did to you.

Voices: Pathetic.

Voices: Dirty.

Adeline: You're wrong. I can stop it.

Voice: (*Endearingly*). He hurt you physically and verbally.

Voices: Broken.

Adeline: I am still me.

Voice: Still you? Who are you without what happened to you?

Adeline: STOP. Shut up. Enough!

*The mirror disappears. The line shines through the forest, clearing the shadows.*

*Lights go out and follow Adeline.*

*Lights go off on SL and light up on SR.*

*Scene: There is an electronic clock showing the speed.*

*Adeline gets in the car.*

*Frank starts driving and singing along to a rock song from the '80s.*

*Note: Frank sheds his monstrous shell as the scene progresses.*

Frank: Before I met your mom, I used to listen to this song all the time and speed. I would drive like a bat out of hell and loved the rush I would get from it.

It was such a rush! I loved the adrenaline boost I would get. I drove over 140 all the time. Exciting to experience.

Adeline: Ok, but you know you don't have to experience this right now - right?

*Frank steps on the gas pedal and increases the speed of the car to 120.*

Frank: Don't you feel that rush? You know how it is—a little speedy.

Adeline: Yes. Yes. Sure. I guess.

Frank: YEAH!!

Adeline: Frank!? I'm cold. Stop...

Frank: Jesus Christ.

Adeline: FRANK! COME ON. PLEASE

Frank, can we...  
I'm freezing.

Frank: Are you kidding me?

I used to go for long drives in my pickup truck. You remember my truck? I miss having a truck. I miss that, the feeling of living life.

Adeline: Frank, stop it. You're scaring me. I'm going to call my mom. Come on.

*Frank turns the volume on*

*Frank increases the speed to 150.*

Frank: Run to mom – predictable. Don't be so uptight, Adeline.

Adeline: I want to get there. Do you have to go this fast?

Frank: I am the driver. Shut up.

Adeline: Frank. What the?

Frank: No, you know what? I already have to drive you to this goddamn appointment. I have to take time out of my day. You sit there.

Adeline: I want to GET there.

Frank: What does that mean?

Adeline: I want to survive this drive. You're scaring me. Don't make me call my mom.

Frank: (*laughs*) And what? She's going to tell me what to do? Really? I've always wondered what would happen to us if we crashed this fast.

*Frank increases his speed to 160.*

Adeline: FRANK! I will call her.

Frank: Oh, right. Just run to your Mother. I always drive this fast

Adeline: Frank!

Frank: What do you think would happen? If we hit the wall – eh?

Adeline: Is that necessary? SLOW DOWN!



*Frank laughs.*

SERIOUSLY! You're not in your 20's now...

Frank: You know what? I should slow down and kick you out right here and now. Would you like that?

Adeline: Yes!

Frank: Maybe we'll just enjoy this ride. What if we drove in the other lane for a bit?

Adeline: FRANK – STOP!!!! (*Screaming.*)

Frank: Put that phone away, or I swear to god, Adeline. Have some fucking respect.

Adeline: WE ALWAYS respect you. You want us to do whatever you want and just accept it. Guess what – you have no RIGHT.

Frank: CRAZY FUCKING BITCH. Disrespectful.

Adeline: Me? You're the disrespectful...

Frank: Jesus Fucking Christ. You failed at life, you know that? You are lucky to have us. You can't get by without a man. You NEED us.

Adeline: NO! YOU are lucky to have us. We have been your family, no – Mom forced us. You're an ass...

You're abusive, you know that?

Frank: Are you fucking kidding me? You are crazy. I'm glad I'm not your dad.

Adeline: Me too!

Frank: Only thing we can agree on.

Adeline: You realize it's your fault. I have to go to therapy? You CHEATED on my mother. You lied to her about who you are. Plus, you sexually and physically abused me. /

Frank: /Your own dad couldn't stand you. Left and hasn't come back.

Adeline: Fuck you. That's none of your damn business. You're the one that we have to deal with, the problem. You're lucky my mom endures you. You're lucky/

Frank: /Shut your disrespectful cunt mouth. You should be a prostitute with those dumb lies. I could kill you right now. It would be really easy.

You're lucky to have me in your life. You wouldn't be here without me. I did everything for you kids. I didn't want any. I gave up my life for all of you. All of our money. Everything to you.

*Adeline sends out a text message from her phone, and Frank's phone starts to ring again.*

*He laughs and increases the speed to 170.*

Adeline: *(Angrily turns the music off)*  
STOP THE CAR. STOP THE CAR STOP THE CAR STOP THE CAR  
*(Screaming as she dials for her mother).*  
STOP THE CAR!/

Frank: *(While Adeline screams).* / Jesus fucking Christ.  
YOU ARE CRAZY! STOP FUCKING YELLING.

*Frank answers the phone.*  
*It's Adeline's Mother.*

*(Sighs.)* Hello? Hey.  
*(Beat.)*

She's exaggerating. You know how she is/  
*(Beat.)* No. Listen.  
Why can't you... *(Beat.)*  
Stop it, Woman. Just let me speak for one damn minute.

Adeline: *(Frantic.)* You're going to kill us.

Frank: *(Still on the phone.)* We're just having a little fun.

*Frank looks at Adeline around him and pounds the wheel.*

*(Still on the phone.)* No.  
*(Beat.)* I just need cigarettes.  
*(Beat.)* Yes, I get it. We're almost there.  
*(Beat.)* Ok – I'll call you back. Bye

*Frank hangs up, pulls over and stops the car.*

Adeline: I hate you. No one wants you in the family. You screwed us all up. I will call the police – I will.

Frank: No, you won't. It'll kill your mom.

Adeline: It'll kill my mom having you in her life.

Frank: Get the fuck out of my car.

Adeline: Gladly.

*Adeline gets out of the car.*

Frank: HEY, CRAZY.

*Adeline turns to face him.*

Not that it's any of your fucking business. But I'm moving and leaving this weekend. You go to the cops; I swear I'll kill you.

*End Scene.*

## Scene 5

*Scene: Setting of an Art Gallery. Art for sale.*

*Adeline is at an art Gallery, family and friends come by, and congratulate her.*

*Note: Soft music by a local musician is playing – Marc Stoeckle.*

*The paintings should represent people who've been in abusive situations and have healed through the arts. There are extra notes at the start of the play.*

Adeline: Mom! How have you been?

Mother: Ma belle! *(They hug.)*

I brought you some coffee. It looks really nice – I like where they put your art!

Adeline: Thank you – I do too. I'm so glad you're here. Thank you.

I have to help Sandy out – I'll be right back.

*(Hugs her again.)* I'm so glad you're here, mom.

*Her mother and other friends are helping set up the exhibit.*

Adeline: Suzanne! Nicolas! *(They hug.)*

I love that you are here.

Nicolas: Wow – It's impressive. The art... It's really cool to see it all.

Suzanne: He's right – we're so proud of you. This is amazing.

Adeline: Well – If you take a look over there, you might see a painting by my amazing sister Suzanne...

Suzanne: What?! You didn't!

Adeline: Sandy, that's so sweet of you. I don't know what I would've done without you!

Sandy: Are you kidding? You'd have been fine. You know I wouldn't have missed this for the world...

*Adeline's therapist walks in.*

Therapist: Hello, Adeline. This is wonderful!

Adeline: Thank you. I've been working on my paintings *(Gestures around)*, as you can see.

Therapist: I'm so happy to hear that.

Adeline: Thank you so much for coming – it means a lot that you're here.

Therapist: I am really proud of you. It really is an honour – it's beautiful work.

Adeline: Thank you.

*Adeline approaches the audience.*

Adeline: Thank you for coming.

I really could not have done any of this without you.

As they say, fall down nine times and get up ten.

Can't let it keep you down.

*End Play.*