

Sisters & Brothers

A play

by

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*Seeking representation

SCENE ONE.

The inside of a hospital ward. This can truly be crafted as open as needed but should include: a nurses station, three separate patient rooms that couple as other acting areas and a downstage open acting space.

In the darkness the lights slowly rise on NICK, a eighteen year old boy who with apprehension walks out of the darkness into a spotlight center stage. He holds on tight to a journal, decorated with stickers that silently tell the story of his young life. Nick wears a tan shirt and sleep pants and a hospital robe with a loud bow tie to accent. Slightly smiling he opens his journal and begins to write. We hear his journaling as he writes but in this moment Nick never actually speaks.

NICK (VO)

(writing)

June 4th 1983, it's sunny today the weather man said 71 for the high. I wish I could feel it. Just step outside and feel the sun hit my face instead of through the glass from the fifth floor window that is so damn dirty I'm surprised the sun can even peek through. *(laughs)* Lauren always says-

Lights up on LAUREN an eighteen year old girl, smart, full of energy and secrets. She stands facing the audience, merely a voice in his head.

LAUREN

Nick if you would spend half as much time getting better as you do complaining you'd be as-

NICK / LAUREN

Healthy as you were before you got here.

Nick smiles at the memory. Light out on Lauren as Nick continues to write.

NICK (VO)

I wish I could go back. To before I got sick. Before life became what it is. Before is the past, left behind like all of the joy I once had. High school, friends, family, when I was just another kid reading "Magician: Apprentice" and watching television and then...

Nick closes his journal and pantomimes turning the television on.

NEWSCASTER (VO)

Coming to you with breaking news, it is on this day September 24, 1982 that the CDC, the Center of Disease Control has given a name to this illness affecting many gay men in American. They are calling it AIDS. Again they are calling it AIDS which stands for Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome.

Nick stands still for a moment. He wraps himself in his robe, holds his journal tight.

NEWSCASTER (VO)

Symptoms include: rapid weight loss, sores in mouth and other areas, fever, flu like symptoms, extreme tiredness, prolonged diarrhea, swelling of lymph glands, pneumonia, colored blotches on or under the skin among other things.

Nick turns off the television and flips back a few pages in his journal. He faces the audience looking at himself in the mirror. He sticks his tongue out, feels his forehead, fear overcomes him. He swallows, pain. His face is flush as he sighs, he knows his diagnosis. This time he reads aloud as if him reading from the past takes him back to a time when he spoke freely.

NICK

(reading aloud)

August 11, 1982, I haven't felt good in a few weeks. I keep hiding from my mom, she's so annoying and my dad tells me to, "tough it out, stop crying, man up." *(Beat)* I'm getting scared, like what if it's that thing. That new thing going around with gay guys? What would everyone think? How could it be me? They'd disown me. I'm sure it's just the flu. Cold medicine overload it is. ~ Nick

Nick closes the journal and looks helpless to the audience.

NICK

Confirmed. *(beat)* I have AIDS.

He turns around and looks behind him which magically brings up the lights on the cast of characters in the ward frozen.

NICK

That's what this wing is for, the AIDS patients...the ones who aren't going to make it... I mean I guess that's everyone who has it but... I don't know if any of us are going to make it. *(standing by Dr. Bare)* Dr. Bare says we are a family, but what kind of family is constantly changing members? *(half laugh)* Yeah, he didn't think it was funny either. I don't talk a lot, hell, most of these people have never heard me talk, but I listen. Sometimes I think I'm the only person in this place that really listens.

Nick points to DR. BARE is in his mid forties and stands in his doctor coat next to NURSE EMILY in her late twenties, she's young but she definitely has the attitude of being the boss.

NICK

That's Dr. Bare, or as we all say the "Dr. Barer of bad news" *(Smiles)*. He means well but it's his job to shoot us straight. And next to him is Nurse Emily, she's a true doll and truth be told she runs this place. I think she'd take up arms to keep us safe from all the people outside that seem to hate us.

The sounds of protesters can be heard from outside. Nick looks out of the window at the people below.

PROTESTOR 1 (OFF)

Just let em die so we can free up these beds.

PROTESTOR 2 (OFF)

They chose this, so now they have to live with the consequences.

Nick closes the curtain, looks to the audience for a moment then back to Dr. Bare and Nurse Emily.

NICK

They treat us like people. Patients who are sick with this thing that no one knows how to cure or even how to treat. Most days it feels like Russian Roulette and we always end up shot, like always. But Bare and Emily show up everyday for us, that's what we need on this wing, a smile everyday. Some understanding and love, maybe some laughs, those are nice too.

Lights fade out on Bare and Emily and come up on ROBERT in his mid twenties a jokester and ZZ his very supportive and mature mid thirties husband stand frozen.

NICK

These two are a hoot. Robert, the patient has accepted his fate so jokes daily are his cure. Annoys the hell outta everyone else, but I like it. He loves fashion, fun and his opinion.

Robert comes to life with a loud bellowing laugh flipping through a magazine.

ROBERT

Oh, honey! If perms are the new in thing, I am surely out!

He laughs and freezes.

NICK

The man with him is his husband ZZ. The age difference makes them the oldest of the ward but Robert has the energy of someone my age, ZZ on the other hand is kind of an old soul. They understand this life, been through a lot together. They call themselves “husbands” even though the law doesn’t see them that way. Like most gay couples the way they are seen and the way they *are* don’t collate, and that’s fine. I say if they call themselves husbands, respect them as that.

ZZ unfreezes as does Robert and is not amused.

ZZ

Not funny Robert. Not funny at all. Maybe you should calm down, sit down, where do you get this energy?

ROBERT

It’s my youth honey... something that has long sense left you behind.

They laugh.

ZZ

You’re the one who fell for the old guy.

ROBERT

I did in deed.

Robert continues flipping pages.

ZZ

How can you just flip through magazines right now?

ROBERT

Well, it's 6am which means meds are coming soon, breakfast will follow which means that we are in for a treat of something that looks like eggs paired with toast that once upon a time was crunchy, black coffee that could literally fix the oil crisis it's so damn thick and the highlight for me because the hospital didn't make it, grape jello. And the yahoo's outside are going to be in full swing shortly, why protest us? Like being gay is taking away from their lives, we're the ones dying here. So, what else should I be doing my love? Crossword puzzles? Living our best lives?

Robert takes ZZ's hand.

ROBERT (CONT)

This is all we can do right now, the least I can do is be fabulous while I do it.

They both smile as Robert wraps a feather boa around his neck and continues to flip pages. ZZ sits on the side of the bed, and hugs Robert.

Nick holds onto his tie as he looks at the last couple. JAYCE early twenties and an artist. His room has his sketches all around, it is his solace. His sister SHELBY early thirties finds it difficult to accept that her brother is gay but she supports him. The lights shift almost up on them and out on Robert and ZZ.

NICK

Jayce and Shelby, these two really go at it sometimes. Not a couple, brother and sister. He's a brilliant artist and she's... well I'll let you see for yourself.

Lights up on Jayce and Shelby in mid argument as Jayce looks out of the window.

JAYCE

- because they show up everyday to make sure that the "sick gays with the gay Cancer" know that they are hated.

SHELBY

That's just how they see things.

JAYCE

"How they see things" because you see it like that too don't you?

Silence.

JAYCE (CONT)

Unbelievable. You come here because you say you love me, but you can't love me if you in anyway justify them doing what they are doing.

SHELBY

To hell with them Jayce! *(beat)* We are all giving up something.

JAYCE

Like?

SHELBY

Family.

JAYCE

Always your go to.

SHELBY

You asked.

JAYCE

Asked and answered.

SHELBY

The last thing you need is to upset yourself. You need to save your energy.

JAYCE

It doesn't take energy to die Shelby. It takes energy to live.

Jayce exits the room, lights down on Shelby. Nick opens his journal again as lights up on Lauren standing behind a now frozen Nick.

LAUREN

(to audience)

I've known Nick for years. The journal, it's his therapy. Doesn't matter how you get it out as long as you do, I guess. Since we can't get him to talk anymore, he opens his journal and talks there.

Nick now hears Lauren in his head.

LAUREN (VO)

I promise I will never read your journal. Just let your feelings flow, oh, and be honest. If you lie in your journal you're only lying to yourself.

Nick begins to write.

NICK (VO)

(writing)

I only have a few wishes. I don't wanna die alone...no one wants to die no matter how young or old they are. But there's something about going on that journey alone that just scares me. Way more than all of this day to day scares me. I wish for a cure for this thing we all have. If I can't have that, I'd like to not die alone. I don't have a husband or a sister... I had a family but they... it's just me now. Me and Lauren, she's my best friend. She visits, she's honest, let's me be silent with no threats.

Nick closes his journal then opens it up and writes again.

NICK (VO)

I also think that I want someone to give my journal to my mom... just so she'll know how much I love them... waited for them to visit me. I stopped praying for their forgiveness and started praying for their understanding.

Nick looks back over what he's just written, it's heavy. He closes the journal.

NICK

Yeah.

(writing)

~Nick