

**SEEKING GOODBYE**  
*A QuarantEN play*

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## **CHARACTERS**

HILDA            30s, any ethnicity, womxn identifying, Abigail's Mother

DESTINY        30s-50s, any ethnicity, womxn identifying . Perhaps an Angel, perhaps an imaginary friend. Exact identity should remain ambiguous.

ABIGAIL        7, any ethnicity, female identifying. Hilda's daughter.

## **SETTING**

A Kitchen anywhere in the United States.

## **TIME**

The Present, give or take a month.

Note: In line stage directions are indicated with italics and brackets. Narrative stage directions are offset.

*Lights up. HILDA stands at an island in the kitchen. She is preparing a meal. This is a familiar action, she does not look up. We watch her for a few moments. Her actions begin to slow. DESTINY enters from somewhere you would not normally expect to see a person arrive. It could be a cabinet, the fridge, or the audience itself.*

DESTINY

What do you need?

HILDA

Why are you here? *[A pause. It is unexpectedly heavy]* Why are you here?

DESTINY

I'm here to help.

HILDA

Help? With what, exactly?

DESTINY

What do you need?

*HILDA sets down the utensils she has been working with abruptly. She is frenzied, but still composed. She moves throughout the kitchen to busy herself but completes no tasks. DESTINY does not move throughout the scene, but is following every move HILDA makes. Childish laughter is heard offstage. Lights shift. Enter ABIGAIL.*

ABIGAIL

Mommy, I want to go outside!

HILDA

I know, baby, but you already went outside once today, remember? We can't go out again, it's not safe.

*HILDA remains standing where she was before ABIGAIL enters. She hesitates to enter the memory. Slowly as the dialogue continues she moves to join Abigail in the past.*

ABIGAIL

But I want to *play*. Charlie said his daddy lets him go outside and ride his bike three whole times each day. Yesterday Charlie says they even went for a walk. Please, Mom, can I go play?

HILDA

I'm sorry, Abby, it's just...why don't you think of a game for us to play inside? We can even use the pink ball!

ABIGAIL

But you said the pink ball was only for outdoors so I don't break stuff, 'member?

HILDA

Well, today is special.

ABIGAIL

It is?

HILDA

Yes it is! *[she nods, and gives chase to ABIGAIL, catching her and wrapping her up with hugs]*  
Today will be Indoor-Outdoor day! I'll clear out all of the stuff from the living room, and we'll bring outside in here tonight. How does that sound?

ABIGAIL

Do I get a special dessert, too?

HILDA

Of course!

ABIGAIL

Okay. We can do outside in here today.

HILDA

That's my girl. [*HILDA pauses suddenly, panicked.*] Abby, when did Charlie tell you his dad lets him go outside and ride? Abby? Abigail, listen to me, this is important. When did you talk to Charlie?

*Frustrated HILDA returns to the kitchen Island. Abigail disappears as quickly as she came. Lights shift.*

DESTINY

I'm here to help you. What do you need?

HILDA

I don't know.

DESTINY

Can I help you with dinner? You've been on your feet all day, I can help.

HILDA

No...no, I like cooking, it gives me something to focus on. Something to do. I need something to do.

DESTINY

Do you want to talk about it? I can sit here and listen. It's good to talk, it's healthy.

HILDA

Don't use that word in this house.

DESTINY

Alright, then it's...beneficial.

HILDA

I want to see her. Can you help me with that?

DESTINY

You know that's not possible.

HILDA

Then why are you here?

DESTINY

To make sure you know that it isn't your fault.

*A pink ball rolls into the kitchen from offstage. HILDA tracks it as it rolls, and moves to retrieve the ball. As she grabs it, ABIGAIL runs into the kitchen. Lights shift.*

ABIGAIL

Mommy, I want to go outside outside. We've had outside in here too many days. I won't leave the yard, I promise.

HILDA

Abby, I don't know how many times I have to say this, but you can't go out there. Don't give me that look, I know it's unfair, but I promise you it's for the best.

ABIGAIL

Even just for a little while?

HILDA

I'm sorry, baby, I am. But you can go outside when all of this is over, I promise. We'll spend endless hours out there.

ABIGAIL

But Charlie...

HILDA

I know you miss Charlie, Abby, but I can't risk it. I can't risk you.

ABIGAIL

But...it's not a risk. It's the backyard. I've been in the backyard tons of times, Mommy, 'member?

HILDA

I know, baby. It's just...it's different right now. Remember how I explained about the virus? How it's making a lot of people really sick? [*Abigail nods*] Well, we have to stay in right now so that we can squash the sickness. It's like...it's like a really big game of hide and seek, but the whole world is playing. We stay in here and the virus can't find our hiding spot. Does that make sense?

ABIGAIL

Is that why the virus found Charlie? Because he was outside and didn't find a good hiding spot?

HILDA

What do you mean the virus found Charlie? Abigail is Charlie sick?

ABIGAIL

He has a cough.

HILDA

Abby, baby, listen to me, this is very important. How do you know Charlie is sick? Have you seen him?

*Hilda begins to repeat the last question over and over with growing fear. ABIGAIL begins to cry and runs out of the room. HILDA walks back to the table and sits, head in hands. Lights shift.*

DESTINY

Hilda? Hilda? Did you hear what I said? It's not your fault.

HILDA

Of course it's my fault. I'm her mother. It's my job to protect her. I thought I was protecting her.

DESTINY

You were. You did everything you could.

HILDA

Did I? I kept her inside, I kept her home, but I didn't watch her. Not every second. I still had to work, there were meetings, I was tired, it was too much. At some point I didn't watch her and then...

DESTINY

And then? Say it, Hilda, it's okay.

HILDA

And then she got sick.

*Hilda stands up and walks back to the Kitchen Island. Abigail walks in slowly, tired. Lights shift.*

ABIGAIL

Mommy?

HILDA

Yes, baby?

ABIGAIL

I don't feel good.

HILDA

What's wrong? What doesn't feel good?

ABIGAIL

My tummy, and there's a tickle in my throat.

HILDA

I... [*She takes a breath, trying to push back panic.*] Okay, sweetie. Why don't you go upstairs to bed and I'll get you some broth and ginger ale. Does that sound good?

ABIGAIL

Yeah.

HILDA

Okay, baby, go upstairs. I'll be up in a minute, okay?

ABIGAIL

Mommy? I'm sorry.

HILDA

Oh, honey, what are you sorry for?

ABIGAIL

Going to see Charlie outside...I just wanted to go play in the yard. But I forgot we were playing hide and seek. I didn't hide good. I'm sorry, Mommy.

HILDA

Oh, no, Abigail, it's not your fault. Shhh, it's not your fault.

*Hilda rushes to Abigail and comforts her. Abigail begins coughing. Both mother and daughter stand in an embrace as Hilda begins to cry. As the coughing subsides, Hilda kisses Abigail on the head, and Abigail moves to go to her room. Lights shift.*

DESTINY

It's not your fault.

HILDA

So you've said. That's what everyone says, but if it isn't my fault whose is it? Charlie's? Am I supposed to blame an eight year old little boy?

DESTINY

It's no-one's fault, Hilda, it's a virus. You did everything you could.

HILDA

I should have watched her better. I should have cancelled my last meeting, it wasn't necessary, I could have moved it to next week, or I could have...

DESTINY

You could have what, Hilda? You're not a superhero. You're a mom.

HILDA

And mothers are supposed to *protect* their children! And I didn't do that. I didn't even notice when she wasn't feeling well. She had to tell me. How did I not notice she was getting so sick? It happened *so* fast, but I should have seen it...I should have...and now she is all alone. She is alone in a hospital fighting for her life, and I can't be there. I can't protect her, and all I can think about is how she is laying there wondering where I am. I couldn't even get her to understand why she couldn't go outside, how is she going to understand why I'm not there? How...how...

*HILDA collapses on the floor. She picks up the pink ball and hugs it to her chest, crying. DESTINY looks on but does not move. HILDA's voice breaks as she tries multiple times to get out the next question.*

HILDA (cont)

How..how...will she know that I love her?

*A long pause.*

HILDA (cont)

She's on a ventilator now. I keep trying to picture it...but I can't do it. She's so small, you know? She's just so tiny, and they have her hooked up to all of these machines, and there's nothing I can do. They call once a day, the Hospital, to update me, but the calls are getting shorter. They're so busy. This morning the Nurse told me to not expect a call unless something changed for the worse...how fucked up is that?

*DESTINY stands up and crosses the room. She is unexpectedly overcome with emotion, and takes a moment to compose herself.*

HILDA (cont)

I just keep thinking about getting that call. About all the people who already got that call, all the people who won't get a chance to say goodbye. What if...what if I don't get to say goodbye? Oh, God, what if I don't get to say goodbye!

*HILDA begins to grow hysterical. DESTINY places a hand on her shoulder. HILDA looks up, and her breath catches. Light shift, but not to the past, and the room takes on an ethereal glow. Somehow the light seems to come from DESTINY herself.*

HILDA (cont)

Why are you here?

DESTINY

To give you what you need.

HILDA

I told you I don't know —

DESTINY

Yes, you do Hilda. Tell me what you need.

HILDA

I need...

DESTINY

Go on. It's okay.

HILDA

I need...I need to be able to say goodbye. Oh God. Oh...that's why you're here isn't it?

DESTINY

Yes.

HILDA

So I can say goodbye?

DESTINY

Yes.

HILDA

But that means...No, god please....no...she's just a little girl I can't...I can't....I'm her mother. I can't say goodbye...I can't.

DESTINY

It's okay, Hilda. It's going to be okay. Are you ready?

HILDA

What?

DESTINY

To say goodbye.

HILDA

No. No, I'm not...I'm not ready.

*A high pitched straight line tone begins to sound, it is slowly getting louder as they stand.*

DESTINY

Hilda? I'm so sorry, but you're running out of time. *Abigail* is running out of time.

*The straight tone is all encompassing now. HILDA takes a deep breath. She squeezes the pink ball as tight as she can. She looks down at the ball and smile, however brief, crosses her face. DESTINY is no longer present on stage. Similar to her arrival, she should not leave traditionally, though her departure should be less noticeable. The tone stops — the silence should be almost tangible.*

*HILDA walks to the Kitchen Island. Everything becomes as it was in the first flashback. ABIGAIL enters. Lights shift.*

ABIGAIL

Mommy, I want to go outside!

*Beat.*

HILDA

Goodbye.

*A telephone rings.  
Blackout.*

**End of Play**

