

DECISION

A play in one act

By: Shenendoah Thompson

shenendoahmt@gmail.com

How do we know when it's time to let go?

A family faces the decision to End Life Support.

PETER	mid 20s, honest, reserved, resents the burden of responsibility
JOANNE	late 20s, emotional, hyper, trying to hide her addictions
SARAH	early 30s, businesswoman, tough, trying not to break down
ERIC	30s, headstrong, sensitive, trying to see his love one last time
MARIA	30s, Nurse, tender, caring, trying to hide her feelings
DR ROBERTS	50s, professional, pragmatic, monotonous a la <i>Ben Stein</i>

SETTING
Hospital Room

TIME
Present Day

Songs:

Killswitch Engage - And Embers Rise (Sean Townsend Cover)

The 1975 - Haunt // Bed

The 1975 - Antichrist

The 1975 - Is There Somebody Who Can Watch You

Killswitch Engage - The End of Heartache (Sean Townsend Cover)

Notes:

- *Should be performed proscenium style.*
 - *The Ghost Light should be an authentic element, both to the theatre and the lighting design. If possible consider use of dimmer for additional control.*
 - *One Empty Seat must be reserved in the center of front row of audience for actors to address.*
-

Special Thanks:

To Steph for your ceaseless love and support, To David for a playwright's guidance and to Squirrelly for all the midnight board games.

'For everyones anyone....'

DECISION

One Empty Seat must be reserved in the center of front row of audience for actors to address

SCENE 1

BLACKOUT.

MUSIC FADES in

MUSIC: *Killswitch Engage - And Embers Rise
(Sean Townsend Cover)*

SFX: *The sounds of a heart monitor. Slow, steady.*

LIGHTS FADE UP.

A Ghost Light sits downstage center.

A pole with a bag of fluid, heart monitor and blood pressure cuff stands feet from the light.

MARIA enters, in VALENTINE'S DAY THEMED scrubs. She walks to the Ghost Light and proceeds to check the heart monitor, blood pressure, tubes. She finishes and exits.

A BEAT.

A figure enters, ambling slowly. They come to a stop just outside the pool of light, standing with a folder of notes. This is DR ROBERTS.

DR ROBERTS looks at the Empty Seat for a minute, hidden in shadow, before exiting.

A BEAT.

MARIA enters again, this time in SPRING / EASTER THEMED scrubs.

She walks to the Ghost Light and proceeds to check the heart monitor, blood pressure, tubes.

A BELL CHIMES.

MARIA looks around, slips a hand in her pocket and pulls out her PHONE. She rapidly texts, slipping it back into her pocket before exiting hurriedly.

DR ROBERTS enters, this time coming to the pool of light, ignoring the Ghost Light and staring into his notes.

DR ROBERTS looks up from his notes.

DR ROBERTS stands for a moment looking at the Empty Seat, before exiting.

A BEAT.

MARIA enters again, wearing SUMMER THEMED scrubs. She again walks to the Ghost Light and proceeds to check the heart monitor, blood pressure, tubes on the pole.

She finishes her tasks and exits, with one last saddened look to the Empty Seat.

A BEAT.

DR ROBERTS enters, ambling slowly, carrying and reading a folder of notes; comes to a stop near the Ghost Light and does not look up from the folder of notes.

DR ROBERTS looks at the Empty Seat briefly, before returning to their notes.

DR ROBERTS

Here we have... yes. Patient arrived to the ER mid February... multiple upper body fractures, severe trauma to the lower half of the body. Upon admission patient experienced severe intracranial bleeding; we were able to address the elevated pressure through use of 3% and a catheter.

(beat)

Injuries indicate high chance of *TBI* with probability for lasting neurological complications.

(beat)

Shown minimal to no improvement since last exam. Awaiting consent from family and final decision.

MUSIC FADES out

SOUNDS of HEART MONITOR remain.

LIGHTS FADE OUT.

SCENE 2

LIGHTS FADE UP.

The Ghost Light still downstage center.

Pole with a bag of fluid, heart monitor and blood pressure cuff stands unmoved.

Two chairs sit stage right, a small table between them. Another chair sits near the pole.

A mid-sized window stage left lets muted shades of pink and orange light fall into the room.

Sitting in one of the chairs stage right is PETER, 20s. He wears a disheveled, modest suit, no tie. He works on his laptop half-heartedly.

DR ROBERTS enters, coming to a stop between the Ghost Light and the pole. He continues reading as he talks, rarely looking up from his notes.

PETER
Morning Doctor -

DR ROBERTS
Mmm.

*MARIA enters, wearing HALLOWEEN
THEMED SCRUBS.*

MARIA
Morning Doctor Roberts.

DR ROBERTS
Mmmm.

(to MARIA)
Maria, have you administered more 3% yet?

MARIA
Not yet...

DR ROBERTS
Let me know when you do. I'd like to get another reading on these levels.

*PETER has trouble feigning interest in his
computer.*

PETER
Is everything alright?

DR ROBERTS
No need to worry.

(beat)
We have everything under control.

PETER watches DR ROBERTS with hesitation.

PETER
Dr. Roberts... I'm sure you've seen a lot of patients...

DR ROBERTS
Practicing some 30 years.. I've seen a few.

PETER
Right. Well -

DR ROBERTS

You want to know how it ends?

PETER

That's not -

DR ROBERTS

No, no. It's ok.

(crosses to PETER)

Sorry to disappoint you. There is no easy answer.

(beat, to MARIA)

Let me know before you give the next dose, I'll have you draw levels at the same time.

MARIA

Will do.

DR ROBERTS looks at Peter again.

DR ROBERTS

You want my advice?

(beat)

Breathe.

DR ROBERTS exits. PETER looks at the Empty Seat. He crosses to stand just outside the brighter pool of light, facing the MARIA.

MARIA checks the monitors, the tubes, all with an air of detachment.

MARIA

How are you doing today?

PETER

Breathing... You?

MARIA

Still here...

(beat)

I hear the rest of the family is coming today, that's good!

PETER

I don't know...

*MARIA attends herself to the tasks, almost
overly attentive to routine procedures.*

PETER

You never answered me.

MARIA

I don't know what to say.

PETER

Just say what you feel...

MARIA

But... you wouldn't even know me unless -

PETER

Is that a problem?

MARIA

Well no, but -

PETER

So, why can't we be together?

MARIA

(with hesitation)

You know we can't... *here*.

PETER looks at MARIA, wounded.

PETER

But we -

MARIA

(quickly)

Especially now.

PETER

I thought -

MARIA

It - this was all just so impulsive.

(beat)

You need to stop texting so much.

PETER

Sorry -

MARIA

(gently)

You have nothing to apologize for. I'll be back in a minute with something for comfort and to get some levels.

MARIA finishes her task and starts to leave. She stops and turns to look at Peter.

PETER

You don't know what it meant to me... I'm just...

MARIA

Please don't feel guilty. You've got enough on your plate without me clouding your mind.

PETER

I don't usually do things so impulsive...

MARIA

(laughing)

Could have fooled me. Just... try to let me keep a low profile around here, ok?

MARIA exits. PETER stands alone by the Ghost Light.

PETER

(to Empty Seat)

God... I still don't have any game huh?

(chuckles)

How are you feeling? I'm sorry I didn't get here sooner... I just... you know. And...

(beat)

I still haven't heard back from Jess... are you two.... It's just weird her not being here.

(crosses to the window)

Remember Mom had that embroidered pillow: 'Let God's Glorious Day Shine Light Down Upon You - Then No Fear Need ye Feel'. I love the sunrise.. It just doesn't seem very glorious right now.

(beat)

Sarah's supposedly coming today... I'll believe that when I see it...

(beat)

You want me to open this?

PETER leaves the curtains as they are, he crosses back to the chair and his laptop.

PETER

I guess this'll be the first time we've all been together since the funeral.

PETER opens and stares at his laptop a second.

JOANNE (O.S.)

(yelling)

Jesus fuck, I think I can find my own family thank you!

JOANNE, late 20s, wearing a colorful summer dress and toting a giant purse enters, stumbling.

PETER

Jo?

JOANNE

Petey!!!

JOANNE drops her purse and pulls PETER up to hug her.

PETER

Jo, where the hell did you come from?

JOANNE

(offended)

Nice to see you too little bro!

PETER

I'm sorry. I just - I thought we agreed to meet at Uncle Ray's -

JOANNE

I couldn't handle hanging out there all day.. I figured I'd come meet you guys here and we could all head over together.

PETER

That's not... I mean -

JOANNE

What - You don't think *I* want to be here too? You think you're the only one this hurts?

JOANNE stumbles towards the Ghost Light.

JOANNE
(to Empty Seat)

How you doing baby?

PETER

Don't infantilize.

JOANNE
Wanna give me a shining smile honey?

PETER

Jo -

JOANNE
What?

PETER
Don't infantilize.

JOANNE
Jesus Christ. I can't even talk without upsetting you.

PETER
I'm just asking you to be a little sensitive.

JOANNE
Oh, so I'm insensitive all of a sudden?

JOANNE crosses back towards the chair.

PETER
(sighing)

I'm gonna go get a cup of coffee. You look like you could use one.

JOANNE
Extra Cream and Sugar.

PETER exits. JOANNE picks up a magazine from the table and flips through it.