

EMERGENCY CONTACT

A One Act Play

by

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CHARACTER NAME	BRIEF DESCRIPTION	AGE	GENDER
Henry Steinfeld	Henry is handsome but defeated.	30's	Male
Travis Reffen	Power dresser all the way.	30's	Male
Selena Victors	Waitress, lots of moxy	30's	Female
Jackson Kingsbury	Crisis counselor, low-key.	20's	Male
Mrs. Steinfeld	Super Controlling. Polished.	60's	Female

## SCENE

HENRY STEINFELD sits on a cot in a small curtained area in the Triage area of an Emergency Room. Paper Banners and Decor announce that this is the New Year. Henry dangles his feet over the edge of the cot, TRAVIS REFFEN, a man in an expensive suit barges through. JACKSON KINGSBURY, fills out paperwork and looks as shocked to see Travis barging through as Henry does. Henry, however, knows this man. SELENA VICTORS watches quietly from the doorway. So far, she hasn't been noticed.

JACKSON

Sir? Are you family? Who let you in here?

TRAVIS

I let myself in, and God no, do I look like family?

JACKSON

You the emergency contact?

(Selena, moves out of the doorway.)

SELENA

Sorry it took me so long. Had to get someone to cover my shift.

(Selena walks to Henry, starts to hug him, stops awkwardly. Henry's posture changes a little: there might be hope left in this world yet. There's an awkward silence that even Travis can't penetrate.)

SELENA

I know it was some mistake, but when I they called me, I decided to come, just had to wait for someone to cover my shift and with all the traffic...

HENRY

You look the same, Selena.

TRAVIS

I'm sorry? Who are you? Who is this person? I thought Jillian might...

HENRY

You thought Jillian might be here? That's what you came all this way for? To see if my wife would show up?

TRAVIS

You're fucking crazy, you know that? You send an email to every single person at the company, threaten an act of terrorism and you think I'm not going to worry that Jillian is putting herself at risk by coming down here?

HENRY

At ease, Travis, Jillian isn't coming.

(Jackson looks carefully at the subdued Henry  
as he flips through the paperwork.)

JACKSON

Terrorism? I just have him down as risk of suicide?

HENRY

I was only going to kill myself. That's true. You've marked the correct box, Jackson.

(Henry smiles at Jackson, encouragingly.  
Then he turns to Selena.)

HENRY

This is Jackson, he's been assigned as my crisis counselor. He's actually a graduate student at N.Y.U, but he's almost finished his clinical...

TRAVIS

Goddamn good luck with this one, Mr. Jackson.

JACKSON

Jackson. Just Jackson. Mr. Jackson sounds like I'm training a team of young African-American singers...

SELENA

...Henry, what's going on? I haven't seen you in ten years and then I get this call...

TRAVIS

He's lost his mind completely, is what's going on. Sent an email to the entire company at six a.m. this morning that he's in my office with a rifle and he's going to use it.

HENRY

*On me.* I was only going to use it on me.

SELENA

Why would you do that, Henry?

HENRY

He has the better office.

(Selena and Jackson both stare at Henry,  
shocked.)

HENRY

Oh, no. I don't mean the better office because of the view or anything like that. Well, it does actually have a better view. But I was referring to the fact that his office is on the top floor. So there's less people up there. It's super minimal too. So less mess, and less people to see the mess.

JACKSON

Thoughtful.

(Travis grabs Henry by the collar.)

TRAVIS

You sent a "Happy New Year" email to the entire company that your own wife has been cheating on you, and that you're sitting in my office with a gun, ready to celebrate the New Year "with a bang".

(Jackson, who's actually a bit of a big bear-type, pulls Travis away from Henry.)

JACKSON

Sir, I you're stressing out the patient. The point of his being here is to bring him to low stress levels.

TRAVIS

Stressing out the patient! The one who sits in my office with a rifle!?

HENRY

I just didn't want anyone thinking the affair between you and Jillian was the reason I was going to shoot myself, so I needed to be transparent and that my reasons were...

(Travis drops his voice to a quasi sympathetic  
whisper.)

TRAVIS

You know this is not normal behavior, Henry. You shouldn't be emailing everyone at the company about your personal problems. You shouldn't be bringing a gun to work.

HENRY

I'm sorry, Travis, next time I try and take my life, I'll do it at home. Win-win for everyone.

JACKSON

Sir, I'm afraid I'm going to have to ask you to leave.

TRAVIS

I'll leave when I'm Goddamn ready!

(Travis paces, furiously. Henry looks at Jackson with sympathy)

HENRY

Don't let it get to you. You asked him to leave with a lot of authority. I would have left, if you'd asked me in that tone.

(Jackson watches Travis pensively and then grabs him and shoves him toward the door.)

TRAVIS

Let go of me! Don't fucking touch me!

JACKSON

Security!!

(Jackson exits with Travis resisting. Henry watches the whole thing with a calm smile. Selena is increasingly uncomfortable and concerned.)

SELENA

What is this, Henry?

HENRY

I'm pretty sure that was Jackson handling his first real manic. Did pretty well, yeah?

SELENA

You know what I mean. I haven't seen or heard from you in ten years. I get this call that you're under psych hold for trying to take you're own life. Obviously, I know I shouldn't be getting this call.

HENRY

No one should have to get that call. For that, I'm sorry, Selena.

(Selena glares at him.)

SELENA

Maybe if you could actually ever talk about what's going on *underneath* the surface, I wouldn't have.

HENRY

Why did you come? I mean, I'm glad. I'm glad you came. But I was surprised.

SELENA

I wasn't going to. I knew it was some H.R. mistake. That they were contacting me because of some old or missing paperwork or something. I told one of my coworkers about the call and started back on my shift...but I kept thinking about...what if you didn't have anyone? I mean, your mother...is she still...with us?

HENRY

And how.

SELENA

Have you called her? Does she know...

(Jackson returns, his cheeks red, but looking self-satisfied. Henry softly applauds as Jackson returns to business as usual. He turns to Selena.)

JACKSON

We still need to state your relationship to the patient for the paperwork.

SELENA

Like I told the lady on the phone, I hadn't seen or heard from Henry in years...

JACKSON

But you once had a relationship?

(Jackson scans the form, searching for something to write.

Selena throws her hands in the air. She's a New Yorker, born and bred.)

SELENA

In college. We lived together. I'm not even sure where he lives now.

HENRY

Is there a box you can tick for ex-girlfriend who won't add patient to any form of social media?

JACKSON

Uhh.

SELENA

Just put friend.

(Jackson marks the form. Henry looks relieved and winks at Jackson.)

HENRY

Progress.

JACKSON

Listen, I don't want to step out, but I have to for a bit. We're crazy busy on New Year's. Everyone's resolution has something to do with getting injured. Someone needs to be with him at all times right now. The first twenty-four hours after an attempt are most critical.

SELENA

Most critical?

JACKSON

Detachment is also a very common coping mechanism when severely stressed.

HENRY

Graduating Magna Cum Laude, this one.

(Jackson actually blushes. Selena looks on with some skepticism.)

SELENA

What about his Uncle? He owns a company here.

HENRY

Ehhh. Nooo. He wasn't too pleased about the whole thing taking place in his building.



SELENA

Wait, you've been working for your Uncle Albert? Uncle Albert who cares "more about the spacial relationships of building interiors than human relationships?"

HENRY

Yeah.

JACKSON

Given that part of this was triggered by work, we want someone not associated with his job here. Also, Uncle Albert doesn't sound particularly well-suited.

(Henry winks at Jackson in agreement.)

JACKSON

His mother has been contacted, and she's on her way here.

(Selena visibly relaxes at this news.)

JACKSON

From London.

SELENA

London?

JACKSON

She took the first flight out, should be here soon.

SELENA

It's fine. I mean, of course it's okay. I will stay here...until she arrives.

JACKSON

You two have history, right? Some of it was good, yeah? Why not try and focus on that.

(He hands her a remote control.)

JACKSON

Or just watch T.V. or something.

(Jackson exits, Selena and Henry look at each other for an awkward moment alone. She looks at the remote control as though it were a foreign object.)

HENRY

I'm not sure he's been trained beyond patient intake.

SELENA

I need to make a quick phone call, let them know at work.

HENRY

Of course. I'm, umm, sorry that this was our reunion, Selena. I also...I appreciate it.

(Selena nods, walks to a small corner of the room where she can still see Henry. Henry puts his hands behind his head and lies back on the cot.)

SELENA

I may need you to do the first two hours of my shift. It's time and a half. I would absolutely not ask on this day in particular, but I'm in the E.R. No. I'm fine. An old friend is in trouble. Yeah. I think it is serious. Why? Because they called me.

(Selena hangs up. Walks back to Henry's cot. Walks around him as he watches a "Happy New Year!" Banner wave from a heating duct overhead.)

SELENA

You look good, Henry. Looks like corporate policy hasn't aged you much. Gave you a bad wardrobe, but that's to be expected.

(Henry doesn't move. Selena sighs and sits next to him on the gurney. She props up her feet and waits.)

SELENA

Definitely a different New Year's Eve than I was planning. Always interesting with you, though.

(Henry looks at her next to him and Selena awkwardly slides off of the gurney and walks to get a closer look of the "Happy New Year's!" Notes from staff.)

HENRY

Remember the New Year's at my Aunt Edna's in Long island?

SELENA

You couldn't find the key. Kept saying it should be under the blue planter. Took some convincing but you got me to climb in through the window.

HENRY

I genuinely thought it was her house.

SELENA

Should've known. We were so drunk. God were they surprised...

(Henry looks at her next to him and Selena awkwardly slides off of the gurney and walks to get a closer look of the "Happy New Year's!" Notes from staff.)

HENRY

The Geoffrey's. You'd broken into the Geoffrey's.

SELENA

Because you told me it was your Aunt's house!

HENRY

We got off pretty easy.

SELENA

In under twenty minutes you'd convinced them that we were not only an anti-theft company with some seriously dangerous sales techniques but we also walked out of there an invite to their daughter's Bat Mitzvah.

(Selena smiles for the first time, and it changes her entire demeanor, posture and attitude. It's like spotting a unicorn.)

SELENA

We thought we were so invincible. Who knows? Maybe we were.

HENRY

Nah. The world fills you in after college.

(She turns to Henry suddenly.)

SELENA

What happened, Henry?

HENRY

Remember that old, basement apartment in Brooklyn?

SELENA

The one your mother refused to set foot in?

HENRY

One of it's many perks.

SELENA

Perks? That place didn't even have proper ventilation. We first opened the front door and rats ran *out*.

HENRY

We were so desperate to get out of there. You working three shifts. Me not finding proper work.

(Long pause.)

HENRY

That was my favorite place I've ever lived.

(She turns and looks at Henry and that tough,  
New York attitude has fallen for a moment.)

SELENA

We had plans, you and I. Big plans. Maybe they were childish. I don't know. Maybe that's how plans get made. Ignoring the fact that they're childish. But with your sales skills and my, well I thought I was talented at the time, my art skills...

HENRY

You had art skills. I mean, you do have art skills. One of your paintings, it still hangs in my office.

SELENA

And one day, you just quit coming home. No note. No explanation. Just ghosted. I only knew you were okay because your mother reassured me that you were fine, and then told me to stop calling or coming by.

HENRY

Remember your Nephew's birthday party?

SELENA

Changing the subject when it gets too heavy, guess some things never change.

HENRY

You were getting sick and we thought it was the taco truck your sister hired. But then you kept getting sick...and I found something when I was home, feeling useless and you were working...working while sick.

SELENA

What did you find? What did you find Henry that was so bad that you just left, not even the courtesy of a final email sent out to an entire company as explanation?

HENRY

A pregnancy test.

(She stares at him shocked.)

SELENA

You left me because I was pregnant?

HENRY

But you weren't...I waited, I waited for you to tell me. I went to my Uncle and I begged him for that job. I knew you couldn't keep working like you were, and we couldn't raise a kid in a place like that. My mother's house wasn't an option.

SELENA

That's when you started working for Uncle Albert?

(Henry nods.)

HENRY

I was good too. Really good. Forget the nepotism that put me there. I was a natural at selling real estate. Only I didn't want to tell you....until you were ready to tell me....and two months went by, and you never said a word, so that's when I realized...

SELENA

I didn't tell you, because there was *no* baby.

HENRY

I know. I mean, I understand that now. How could you have wanted to have a baby with me then. I was a mess. I had no real work experience. Everything I'd ever gotten was because someone had given it to me...I drank *all* of the time.

SELENA

No. Henry. There was no baby because I wasn't ready. I wanted babies with you. I would have had dozens of babies with you, but *I* wasn't ready at *that* time.

HENRY

You never thought about asking me?

SELENA

It wasn't about *you*. Not everything is about you!

(Jackson returns and watches both of them.  
He takes the neglected remote and turns on  
the television.)

JACKSON

So, you've caught up then?

(Jackson pulls the curtains around Henry and  
sets to work on him behind it.)

SELENA

What are you doing to him, anyway?

JACKSON

Uniforming him.

SELENA

Isn't that what they'd already done?

(Jackson can't help but smile as he works  
behind the curtain.)

JACKSON

No laces or belts. They need to recognize him as a patient once he's moved.

SELENA

Moved where?

JACKSON

Psych ward.

(Selena hides surprise about as well as she  
hides irritation. Not at all.)

JACKSON

Very standard in these cases. Also, very temporary.

SELENA

When I asked what happened, I meant...now. I didn't mean to bring up...but...thank you for the explanation.

HENRY

Now. Oh. Right.

SELENA

You're wife...she really won't come see you?

HENRY

I don't have a wife.

SELENA

That man in here...he said...

HENRY

I know what he said but I haven't been married in maybe three years.

(We can't see Henry, but Jackson looks at Selena to maybe...quit talking, which she blatantly ignores.)

HENRY

Actually, that's not true at all. Five and a half years. I'm pretty sure we separated for good on our third anniversary. We were in Hawaii. Celebrating our separation.

SELENA

Did she know that's what the celebration was about?

HENRY

Yeah. We both knew. Just one of those things you know without saying.

SELENA

Same way I did?

HENRY

Jillian was having an affair before we'd even made it down the aisle.

(Jackson pulls back the curtain to reveal the newly uniformed Henry, he's slumped over, hopeless looking, somewhat agitated. Jackson eyeballs Selena and pointedly turns to the television.)

JACKSON

Seems the most interesting man in the world has been replaced with a younger more interesting version.

(A SHRIEK is heard from the corridor.  
Jackson hesitates. Finally he runs out to  
determine the source.)

SELENA

I'd hardly think that could be true.

HENRY

I never cared about Jillian's affairs. I wish the most recent had been someone other than Travis. Sort of speaks volumes about my abilities, if he's satisfying emotions I wasn't. I did care that I didn't care. That doesn't make any sense, right?

SELENA

It makes sense.

(Jackson returns with Henry's duffel bag.)

JACKSON

A lot of crazies on New Year's.

(Jackson quickly looks at Henry.)

JACKSON

I mean the screaming in the hallway.

HENRY

Of course.

(Jackson tears through the contents of  
Henry's duffel bag. He produces a wallet  
and searches it.)

SELENA

Hey!

(Selena snatches it out of his hands. Jackson  
holds his hands up, but sifts through his bag  
again.)



JACKSON

You can take the girl out of Brooklyn...

SELENA

I'm *still* in Brooklyn.

JACKSON

Hold on to it if you want. Just make sure you leave it with his mother before you go. My job is to make sure there's no string, floss, pens, cuff links, you name it.

(He shoves Henry's suit inside the bag and exits. Shortly after Mrs. Steinfeld walks in. She's wearing a fur. Still has her suitcase. She pauses on this pair. Watches them like a cat. Then pounces on Henry.)

MRS. STEINFELD

Henry, what in God's name? Always such a flair for the dramatic!

(She walks over to Henry and puts her hands on his face, like a mother might do to a child. He can barely tolerate it.)

MRS. STEINFELD

Always trying to send me to an early grave, Henry. Your Uncle forwarded the email you'd sent to the *entire* company. I didn't have to hear another word before I booked a ticket this morning. So embarrassing, Henry. To make it all so public like that.

SELENA

Yes, Henry, people should commit suicide quietly and without embarrassing others.

(Mrs. Steinfeld looks at Selena as if she's surprised to see her.)

MRS. STEINFELD

Selena, we appreciate your coming in. Obviously though, this was a mix up. You can go now that Henry has family here.

(Selena sighs. Gathers her things. Henry watches her intently.)

HENRY

I'd really like if you stayed.

MRS. STEINFELD

Of course I'm going to stay Henry, we have to get through this together. Also, there's a lot of damage control to be done with your career and this...what's this about Jillian? Another one with a flair for drama.

(Selena is half-way through the door when Henry jumps off the gurney to try and stop her. He takes her hand as Mrs. Steinfeld laughs.)

HENRY

I know you have no reason to stay...

MRS. STEINFELD

He's still reeling from the shock of everything. Darling, let go of Selena's arm. She doesn't want to stay and she doesn't need to now that I'm here.

(Mrs. Steinfeld turns to address Selena.)

MRS. STEINFELD

Forgive Henry. He's clearly not himself with all that has occurred.

(Mrs. Steinfeld reaches into her purse and pulls out some cash. She tries to hand it to Selena.)

MRS. STEINFELD

Let's at least get your cab, dear.

SELENA

I don't think Henry's ever been himself, Mrs. Steinfeld.

HENRY

I am right now. I was once before. I can be again.

(Selena stops, listens. She's standing in the doorway.)

MRS. STEINFELD

Henry, stop making a fool.

HENRY

Shut up!

(Selena turns to get a load of this. His mother is beet red and aghast.)

HENRY

If not tonight, please will you come back?

(Selena shakes her head, starts to exit. Reaches into her purse and spills the contents. Rattled.)

SELENA

I almost forgot. His wallet.

(She starts to pick up the contents and finds a photo. She stares at it in silence.)

JACKSON

It's the night we went to Long Island.

SELENA

I recognize it. You really want me to stay?

HENRY

I do.

(Selena nods as she looks at the picture.)

MRS. STEINFELD

She can't stay, I'm here now. Henry, I've come all of the way from London.

(Mrs. Steinfeld appeals to Jackson, but he only shrugs.)

JACKSON

She's the one he put on the form. The form's pretty official.

HENRY

I'll call you tomorrow, mother.

CURTAIN