

Red Days

A full-length play

By Rachel Bublitz

Contact:

Rachel Bublitz

619-328-7239

Rnbublitz@gmail.com

www.RachelBublitz.com

***Red Days* by Rachel Bublitz**

Characters:

Dianna Abel, female, 17-18 years old, any race. A senior in high school. A runner. Connie's only daughter. In the midst of figuring out who she is and what life is all about.

Connie Abel, female, mid to late thirties, any race. A personal trainer, coach, and single mom. Mother to Dianna. Driven with a capital D. Wants more opportunities for Dianna than she had, like a lot of moms.

Andrew Lee, male, 17-18 years old, any race as long as it different than Dianna, Connie, and Coach's. A musician and hopeless romantic.

Leona Day, female, old enough to have had a different life or two before she ended up where she is today, any race as long as it different than Dianna, Connie, and Andrew's. A KRCL DJ. Pretty dang groovy.

Characters heard but not seen:

Girl, same actor playing Diana plays Girl.

Boy, same actor playing Andrew plays Boy.

Woman, same actor playing Connie plays Woman.

3 F, 1 M, with intentional doubling.

Time:

When there are more red days than not in the Salt Lake Valley. More specifically: Summer, Fall, Winter, and Spring.

Setting:

A running track/field in Salt Lake City, Utah with bleachers, a KRCL studio, and a car.

PROLOGUE

Darkness.

We hear difficult breathing.

*The breathing becomes more challenging. Faster.
It's an awful sound.*

At least thirty seconds and then-

GIRL

(With difficulty)

Help... Help me... I can't... I can't... Catch... Breath-

BOY

Oh my God-

GIRL

Help-

BOY

Get off your mask-

GIRL

I can't-

WOMAN

Where's your inhaler?

BOY

Should I call-

WOMAN

I can't find it-

GIRL

CAN'T BREATHE-

BOY

Should I call 911?

WOMAN

YES!

PLEASE-
GIRL
It's okay, just- We'll get you help, just breathe- In and out- Slow-
GIRL
I can't-
BOY
We need an ambulance-
WOMAN
In and out, it's okay-
BOY
A girl, she can't breathe, I don't know-
GIRL
(Utter fear/pain)
HELP... CAN'T..... BREATHE!

SUMMER

*A field. Grass or fake grass. A running track.
Bleachers. It's night, the sun has just set, a little
after 9pm. It's cooled off a little with the sun
down but it's still in the high 90s. There's a haze
in the air. Music plays, it sounds like the future.*

*DIANNA is in the middle of a set of sit ups.
CONNIE counts and holds her feet. Both are in
athletic gear.*

*LEONA enters with a chair and headphones.
She sets down the chair, sits, puts on the
headphones, and bobs her head to the music. As
the music fades out-*

LEONA

You're tuned to KRCL, I'm Leona, and boy oh boy is it a HOT one today! This brutal July has brought the Wasatch Front into the triple digits for 22 days in a row with no sign of slowing down. I don't know about you all listening out there, but I'm sweating just looking at this weather report. Ouch! And, as predicted, the AQI isn't budging from the red. I'd say it's time to park yourself in the house, get out your favorite fan, and drop a few more ice cubes into your drink of choice. If you must brave the outdoors, masks and goggles are highly recommended. And if that pesky filter light keeps flashing "change me" on your mask, be sure and take care of business. Masks only work if they've got clean filters! Head on down to Filters 4 Less, where you get a discount for every used filter you bring in. I got to watch their sterilization process last month, and folks, they are not playing around. The filters are just like new, and it helps out our Mother Earth, who we all know, needs all the help she can get these days. Okay, enough jibber-jabber, you're not tuned in to listen to be gab, you want to hear that funk! Well, I am happy to oblige. Bob your heads, tap those toes, it's "Rain All Day" by Mo and the Beats.

Music.

LEONA exits with her headphones and chair.

CONNIE

That's 50.

DIANNA jumps up and starts in on a set of alternating lunges.

CONNIE (CONT'D)

So I had an interesting conversation today.

DIANNA

Yeah? More complaints from the district?

CONNIE

I said interesting not idiotic.

DIANNA

Is it really that idiotic to not want your kid sick?

CONNIE

No, but it's sports, people get hurt, that's the nature of the whole thing. If you're not strong enough to handle it, then maybe just stay inside and stick to checkers or whatever.

DIANNA

Wow, checkers? You really think anyone is playing checkers?

CONNIE

How should I know what the kids are doing locked away inside walls all day, I'm the one *outside*, actually doing things.

DIANNA

Your knowledge of teenagers is astounding.

CONNIE

Stop getting me off track-

DIANNA

What am I at?

CONNIE

32.

DIANNA

K.

CONNIE

Anyway, as I was *trying* to tell you, I talked to the coach from Arizona State earlier... Did you hear me? I said Arizona State!

DIANNA

I heard you. I'm guessing they told you what Auburn and Clemson told you? To apply and train for the Spring Expo-

CONNIE

Yeah, but I went over your times and our regiment. He was very impressed.

DIANNA

He probably just wants to sleep with you.

CONNIE

Dianna!

DIANNA

Mom!

CONNIE

Don't talk like that.

DIANNA

It's true though. You've got that kind of phone voice.

CONNIE

I do not!

DIANNA

He probably looked you up too-

CONNIE

Now you're just being silly.

DIANNA

Saw all those "Cut Out The Fat With Connie!" advertisements you have everywhere.

CONNIE

That's 50.

DIANNA returns to doing sit ups, CONNIE holds her feet.

CONNIE (CONT'D)

Last set..... He's all the way in Arizona there's no way he'd know anything about me or my training program or any of that. We were just, I was checking in with him about you and his program-

DIANNA

Did he sound cute?

CONNIE

Don't even go down that road girl, the last thing on your mind should be cute coaches-

DIANNA

I meant for *you*. It's been a long time since-

CONNIE

Think long and hard before you finish that sentence. Unless you want me to double your laps.

DIANNA

Date. I was going to say it's been a long time since you've had a *date*. Jeez mom, like I know when the last time you got laid was.

CONNIE fights to keep from laughing.

CONNIE

Okay! That's- That is enough. No more chattering. I give you an inch and you think we're all buddy-buddy and that you can just talk to me like, I am your coach, you know, you need to show respect-

DIANNA

Coach? Or mom? Mom coach? Coach mom? I'm just a little unclear which comes first-

CONNIE

Both! They- It's both at the same time and so you just double that respect. And don't get sloppy! Straighten up that back- Don't hunch over. Tighten your core. Tight! If you're not feeling it, you can take them double time.

DIANA picks up her speed.

CONNIE (CONT'D)

.... And it hasn't been *that* long. For the record.

DIANNA laughs.

DIANNA

That is just flat out gross.

CONNIE

You're the one that brought it up... And really, my pictures, for the business- They are professional, they are *not* supposed to be attractive or sexy or anything like that-

DIANNA poses, impersonating one of CONNIE's ads. It is suggestive.

DIANNA

You look like this except with three times more cleavage.

CONNIE swats at DIANNA.

CONNIE

I do NOT look like that, and you're not done with your set.

DIANNA gets back to her sits ups.

DIANNA

Right, and you think your clients are 99% dudes for some other reason?

CONNIE

I have plenty of female clients.

DIANNA
Name five.

CONNIE
.. Kathy, and Debbie... Lena...

DIANNA
That's only three.

CONNIE
There are more than three- Well, Lisa and Jordana-

DIANNA
Lisa and Jordana are *students* on cross country, they do not count as clients-

CONNIE
They are female, women, or girls, I guess-

DIANNA
I'm talking paying clients. Like Burt and Bill- TWO Bills- Michael, Ken, Dave-

CONNIE
That's 50. Get some water. Smart aleck.

DIANNA grabs her water and drinks.

DIANNA
I'm just saying you look good. I hope I look half as good when I'm old like you.

CONNIE
I am not old at all, I'm not even middle aged.

DIANNA
If you say so-

CONNIE
It's like you're asking me, no *begging* me to give you extra laps tonight-

DIANNA
Okay, okay, okay, you're not that old-

CONNIE
Don't hurt yourself.

DIANNA

And if you really think about it, I was giving you a compliment.

CONNIE

A strange, beating around the bush, back handed compliment, maybe-

DIANNA

You look good, mother! Men like the way that you look. You are a hot mom. That was my only point.

CONNIE

Wow thanks.

DIANNA

There's no winning with you.

CONNIE

Sure there is. People give me real compliments all the time in a normal, not rude manner, and I take them with pride. Why, just this morning at practice, Micah-

DIANNA

Micah the sixteen year old MALE.

CONNIE

ANYway, how do you get me so off track all the time? What I was trying to tell you, after my chat with Philip-

DIANNA

Who is Philip?

CONNIE

The coach from Arizona!

DIANNA

Okay, so you're on a first name basis with the man, and you don't think-

CONNIE

What I was thinking is we need to get some more bodies on the team. Our numbers have been low for years, and we both know they want to cut all physical education, putting us both out on our butts, and you without a scholarship for college-

DIANNA

Right, because heaven forbid I get into school because I'm, ya know, *smart-*

CONNIE

So I was thinking we can make some flyers, create an online ad or something. Beef up the team, what do you think?

DIANNA

I think having a bunch of new people would be great. More kids to drive you nuts.

CONNIE

I love the students on my team-

DIANNA

You love the students with athletic ability-

CONNIE

It wasn't my idea to cut outside recess and gut PE requirements! And then everyone is so surprised as to why why why all the kids these days are tubby and pasty white.

DIANNA

I'm not tubby.

CONNIE

You better believe you're not. And you're welcome.

DIANNA

Thank you, mother drearest, where or where would I be without your guidance and rigid athletic demands?

CONNIE

So you'll help me get some fresh blood?

DIANNA

I'll try. Running in the muck is a hard sell.

CONNIE

We're up in the canyons most days when it's really bad-

DIANNA

Lady, I said I'd try.

CONNIE

Good. Philip said, and I agree, that to really push you, you need more competition.

DIANNA

Oh, well, if Philip said so-

CONNIE

And I, I don't know what we're gonna do if I lose the gig with the district.

DIANNA

Come on, we'll be fine, you have your clients, you could take on more probably without coaching at the school-

CONNIE

We get our health insurance through the school district.

DIANNA

And we'll just figure it out another way, if we have to-

CONNIE

You had three urgent care visits last winter. Do you have any idea how expensive that is without insurance?

DIANNA

We'll find more kids for the team. It'll, like you said, we'll do flyers and stuff. It'll be, we'll fill it up.

CONNIE

Thank you... Okay, time for your laps.

DIANNA

Hold on, I ran this morning with the team-

CONNIE

And you thought we were just out here for the fresh air? Pop up. Get your mask. I want thirty laps-

DIANNA

THIRTY-

CONNIE

Nice and quick so we can get home.

DIANNA

I am not running thirty laps. Why can't- We were just having a beautiful mother daughter moment and then you come at me with THIRTY laps, totally ruining it-

CONNIE

Give me your counter-offer then.

DIANNA

Not everything- Why can't you just be a normal human being for once in your life and not make your daughter fight and scrape for everything-

CONNIE

I make you fight and scrape because it makes you strong.

DIANNA

You are WEIRD.

CONNIE

Thirty laps.

DIANNA

Two.

CONNIE

Seriously?

DIANNA

TWO LAPS.

CONNIE

Be serious.

DIANNA

I'm as serious as a heart attack. Two.

CONNIE

Fine. Thirty.

DIANNA

That's- That is not- You didn't budge, you're supposed-

CONNIE

Make a real counter-offer then-

DIANNA

UGH! FINE. Five laps.

CONNIE

Twenty five.

DIANNA

Ten.

CONNIE

Twenty.

DIANNA

We go through this every time. You could just give me fifteen laps to begin with.

CONNIE

But then you wouldn't have fought for them.

DIANNA

You don't make any sense. None! Zero!

CONNIE

I wish I had someone who made me stand up for myself when I was your age. I had to figure all that out on my own, you're lucky.

DIANNA

If you say so.

CONNIE

I do.

DIANNA puts her bottle down, grabs her mask.

CONNIE (CONT'D)

It's all big picture stuff. I don't want you to just take what someone is offering you, I want you to ask for what you deserve.

DIANNA

Uh huh, uh huh, I know.

CONNIE

You need perseverance in this world. Moxy. You have to learn to not be such a pushover.

DIANNA

Except when it comes to standing up to you, right?

CONNIE

You gotta be strong to make it out there.

DIANNA

That's what you keep telling me. Fifteen?

CONNIE

Unless you want more.

DIANNA makes a face at CONNIE, puts on her mask, then exits at a run. CONNIE watches her.

CONNIE addresses the audience.

CONNIE (CONT'D)

The blue- That brilliant, blinding, breath-taking, breath-giving S-K-Y.
The smell of earth. Wet earth. The smell of anything except-
Charred. Rubber. Plastic. Ash. That sickly sweet smell- That unearthly, man-made hell of a
sweet smell that turns and burns in my gut and-
Headaches. Coughing. Dry throat. Dry body. Skin.. God, my skin.
Running without-
The feeling of air on my whole face.
Our hills! Honest to goodness mountains.
We live among giants.
But inside?
Without windows. No windows necessary.
Treadmills. Ellipticals. Stair masters. Machines.
Complete with TV and air conditioning and air filters and stale and manufactured and used-
For safety. For security. Shelter. Sanctuary.
Because asthma. Because bronchitis. Because emphysema. Because cancer.
And others. New diseases. New names.
Same attacks.
From the trash.
The trash we breathe.
Breathing. In and out. In. Out. In.
Air.
Air and sky.
I miss.. I miss the sky.

DIANNA enters, she's having trouble breathing.

CONNIE goes to the bag, finds DIANNA's inhaler, and brings it to her.

CONNIE (CONT'D)

Get your mask off.

DIANNA does with help from CONNIE.

CONNIE (CONT'D)

Here.

DIANNA takes the inhaler from CONNIE and uses it.

CONNIE (CONT'D)

You okay?

DIANNA nods. CONNIE rubs DIANNA's back.

CONNIE (CONT'D)

What happened?

DIANNA

... I, I don't.. I just...

CONNIE

Sit down, come on.

They sit. CONNIE gets DIANNA's water.

CONNIE (CONT'D)

Water?

DIANNA

Yeah.. In a minute.

CONNIE

Take your time.

DIANNA

I just.. I lost.. I was fine and then.. It came on fast, a cough in the back of my throat and I couldn't steady I couldn't- It's so claustrophobic, I hate running in that thing.

CONNIE

I know. We could go to the rec center, get on a treadmill.

DIANNA

That's like running with a walker. No.

CONNIE

You're just all over it, with the senior citizens attacks tonight.

DIANNA

How many was I at? Laps?

CONNIE

Four. Only eleven more to go.

DIANNA

Okay.... You think maybe tonight we could just-

CONNIE

After you finish up the rest of your laps, we'll get dinner. Hungry?

*CONNIE hands DIANNA the water bottle.
DIANNA drinks.*

DIANNA

Starving. Pizza?

CONNIE

Ha! Hahahahaha. You're funny. Hilarious.

DIANNA

Salad and chicken breast?

CONNIE

Oh, it's like you read my mind.

DIANNA puts her mask back on.

CONNIE (CONT'D)

Focus. Okay? Don't let your breath get away from you.

DIANNA nods and exits at a run.

FIRST INTERLUDE

DIANNA runs in place.

DIANNA

Tight.
Packed.
Cramped.
Confined.
Narrow.
Closed.
Stifling.

(MORE)

DIANNA (CONT'D)

Stuffy.
Oppressive.
Trapped.
Trapped bits.
In and out.
Trapped and hanging.
Suspended.
A mobile.
A tapestry.
Holding us.
Surrounding us.
In small and stunted and slight spaces.
In putrid and profane and poisonous places.
These bits so small, so infinite.
Around us.
In and out of us.
For all time now.
Trapped.
Oppressive.
Stuffy.
Stifling.
Closed.
Narrow.
Confined.
Cramped.
Packed.
Tight.
So tight.
Too tight.

FALL

Late afternoon. After school. Cross country practice. The same track. The haze is more pronounced in daylight hours.

Music.

LEONA enters with her chair and headphones and sits. She puts on her headphones and rocks to the music.

A whistle.

DIANNA enters, wearing her mask, she's hot and sweaty. She's just been running. She sits on the ground, near the bleachers, takes off her mask, then starts her post-run stretches.

ANDREW enters, also hot and sweaty. Also wearing a mask. He's considerably more tired than DIANNA. He collapses on the ground near DIANNA in a "I'm so funny and adorable" type of way. She laughs. He wrenches off his mask and throws it toward his backpack. He smiles at her. She smiles, then she returns to stretching.

LEONA

In that last set we heard "Tickle Tackle" by the New Machines, "Orange Day, Birthday" by June and the Jones, and closing out the set with one of my all-time favorites "Balloon Mood" by the always great Ms. Freezone who came by last week and was in the studio for our September's Got Soul Series, check out the website for that interview and her live performance. I've got some groovy beats to delight you with coming up, but first I wanted to let you know about the candle light vigil planned this evening for Sarah Gelman, the high school sophomore from West Jordan who collapsed over the summer during field hockey practice and remained in critical condition until last night when her family took her off life support. The vigil is at 7pm at the State Capital. You can find all the details on our site. This next one, this one is dedicated to you Sarah, hope wherever you are you find peace and some good jams. Enjoy.

Music.

LEONA exits with her chair and headphones.

DIANNA

You should stretch.

ANDREW

What?

DIANNA

If you don't stretch you're going to be in a lot of pain tomorrow.

ANDREW

More pain than I'm in right now?

Yeah.

DIANNA

Oh. Okay then.

ANDREW

*ANDREW forces himself into a seated position
and tries to mirror DIANNA.*

Like this?

ANDREW (CONT'D)

No, you can't, you don't want your knees going past your feet. See how I'm doing it?

DIANNA

I'm doing exactly what you're doing.

ANDREW

No you're not.

DIANNA

I totally am.

ANDREW

You're really not. Can I-

DIANNA

DIANNA moves to ANDREW.

Would it be weird if I showed you?

DIANNA (CONT'D)

No, that'd, that'd be fine. Good. Better.

ANDREW

*DIANNA puts ANDREW into the correct
position. They both enjoy the contact.*

That feel okay?

DIANNA

Really- Yeah. Great. I mean, I feel the stretch.

ANDREW

DIANNA

Good.

She gets back to stretching.

ANDREW

I'm Andrew. I'm new. To this. To the team. To cross country.

DIANNA

Yeah, I figured. I'm Dianna.

ANDREW

I saw you putting up flyers and thought, the team could be fun and stuff and running seemed, fun, and I, uh, it's always nice to meet new people and everything too.

DIANNA

Well I'm glad you joined the team.

ANDREW

Yeah?

DIANNA

For sure.

ANDREW

When does the running get to be, not excruciatingly horrible?

DIANNA

Ha. Yeah, that takes some time.

ANDREW

How much time we talking?

DIANNA

Sometimes up to a year-

ANDREW

A year?

DIANNA

Of consistently running.

ANDREW

Dang.

DIANNA

Yeah. It's- It can be hard on the body and lungs and stuff.

ANDREW

So I'm just going to suffer this whole semester, is that what you're telling me?

DIANNA

Pretty much.

ANDREW

Well. Wow. Thanks for not sugar coating it for me.

DIANNA switches stretches. ANDREW does too.

ANDREW (CONT'D)

I'm, I'm in the jazz band too, I play the saxophone, and it's, it is not as gruelling as this.

DIANNA

That's cool, I didn't even know we had a jazz band. I'll have to come and see you play.

ANDREW

We're not great. So don't. But I might be starting my own band and stuff, I play the guitar too, well, I'm teaching myself the guitar.

DIANNA

You must be really good to just teach it to yourself.

ANDREW

Yeah, I mean, I get by. I love music, you know?

DIANNA

Yeah, me too.

ANDREW

Do you play anything?

DIANNA

No, no, I'm a, I love it from an observation stand point.

CONNIE enters with a clipboard. She blows her whistle. DIANNA stands.

CONNIE

(Addressing the whole team)

All right! Good hustle out there! I just have some house cleaning stuff to go over, so why don't you all grab some grass and listen up so I can get you out of here.

ANDREW and DIANNA exit, to sit with the rest of the team.

CONNIE (CONT'D)

Well first off, welcome new runners, it's nice to see some new upperclassmen, and it's always great to get a new crop of freshman in the first week of school. Cross country is an endurance sport, we'll be working on building up that endurance over the next few weeks while also making sure that our bodies are strong and ready to take on the challenge. That means when I send you into the weight room I expect you to actually lift weights! It's not social hour. If you're confused at all about our routine, please reach out to me or our team captain. And speaking of team captain, time to announce the captain, who you unanimously selected, and I hope it's not just because she's my daughter, because she's also one heck of an athlete. Diana, get on up here!

DIANNA enters and stands next to CONNIE. A bit of applause from the team.

CONNIE (CONT'D)

If I'm not around, Dianna will be happy to help, so please don't hesitate to reach out to her. Okay, go back and take your seat, Dianna.

DIANNA exits.

CONNIE (CONT'D)

What else..

Checks her clipboard.

CONNIE (CONT'D)

Right. We'll be moving a lot of our practices up the canyon, in search of better air, so those of you with cars check in with me. In your starting pack you have a permission slip that'll give me the okay for you to head off school grounds for the season. I need this signed and returned pronto, EVEN IF YOU ARE A SENIOR. Got that?....

She checks the clipboard.

CONNIE (CONT'D)

Okay, I've got a list of all breathing impaired athletes here. You MUST have your inhaler on your person at all time.

(MORE)

CONNIE (CONT'D)

It's a new, district-wide policy, after the incident in West Jordan this summer. Most of you are on this list, so do me a favor and follow this new rule. I don't want anyone kicked off the team because of it. When the air is in the red or purple everyone will run with masks and goggles. Even if we're up the canyon, because winds change quick and we can't risk it. On orange days, which I hope we'll be getting a lot of, I recommend everyone keep their masks on, but only those on my list here are required too. And that is..

She checks the clipboard.

CONNIE (CONT'D)

Everything for now. Tomorrow we'll lace up and get to it right after school, and Thursday will be our first trip up the canyon, so I must get your slip back by Thursday afternoon at the latest, or you'll be stuck down here running laps solo. Dismissed!

CONNIE blows the whistle a final time. She gets a pencil and makes notes on her clipboard.

DIANNA enters, she goes to grab her backpack. ANDREW enters after her, he grabs his backpack and mask and goes to her.

ANDREW

(To DIANNA)

Hey, uh, captain?

DIANNA

Hey again.

ANDREW

Right, I, uh, before we go I wanted to see, this is the first time I've had to get an athletic mask, and I think I might have gotten the wrong size.

DIANNA

Oh, well, let's see. Can you get it on?

ANDREW

Yeah, sure. Let me just-

He dumps his backpack.

ANDREW (CONT'D)

There we go, so...

He fiddles with his mask. She helps him.

DIANNA

I think this is the right size...

He enjoys her helping him with his mask.

ANDREW

... It's supposed to be this tight?

DIANNA

They're pretty snug... There.

The mask is on and secured.

ANDREW

So this will work?

DIANNA

Yep.

He takes the mask off.

ANDREW

Okay. Thanks.

DIANNA

No problem.

ANDREW

Also, um, before you go, I was thinking, wondering, uh, you said you liked music and I, there's a local band thing on Saturday night.

DIANNA

Yeah?

ANDREW

Yeah, at the Depot. My cousin's friend is in one of the bands and I'm gonna go and see them play, they're pretty good, and I could, since you like music and stuff too, I thought maybe I could bring you?

DIANNA

Okay, that'd be really good, or fun, yeah.

ANDREW
Okay. See you then!

DIANNA
Cool! Or tomorrow?

ANDREW
Tomorrow?

DIANNA
For cross country.

ANDREW
Oh, yes! Right. Tomorrow then.

He addresses the audience.

ANDREW (CONT'D)
It's rigid
My chest
Each rib condensed
And tensed
Pushing up against
A touch
A tickle
A tingle
Just a tip
Losing my grip
Standing fixed
But I still may slip
It may be the air
Making me dizzy
Making me spin
Putting my heart
In a clenched grip
As I stand and drip drip drip
But maybe
This once
The air isn't the cause
With its waste and flaws
Making my breath pause
Maybe
Maybe

(MORE)

ANDREW (CONT'D)

Maybe for once
It's a more natural cause..

*ANDREW takes DIANNA's hand and kisses it.
She melts.*

ANDREW (CONT'D)

Bye, Dianna.

DIANNA

Yeah. See ya.

ANDREW exits. DIANNA watches him.

CONNIE

(To DIANNA)

You shouldn't lead them on like that.

DIANNA

Um, excuse me?

CONNIE

He doesn't mean it as a friend thing, he thinks it's a date. You're leading him on.

DIANNA

Maybe I think it's a date too.

CONNIE

Come on, he is *not* your type at all.

DIANNA

I'm sorry?

CONNIE

He's just so... Not athletic.

DIANNA

So?

CONNIE

So.

DIANNA

Yeah, so what?

CONNIE

Nothing it's just. You could, you could do better. You could date a much more attractive boy, that's all I'm trying to say-

DIANNA

Stop. Just stop talking.

CONNIE

Okay. Fine. Do on your whole misunderstood teenager thing.. I have a bit of paperwork to get to, then we can head home.

DIANNA

No, I have the, that interview. For the internship.

CONNIE

I thought we decided that was going to be too much-

DIANNA

I have to get an internship and write about the experience for SCHOOL. I told you.

CONNIE

Right, but I told you I could hire you to be my intern-

DIANNA

Mom.

CONNIE

I could! It would give you lots of great experience-

DIANNA

Ugh.

CONNIE

I just don't want you overextending yourself.

DIANNA

Okay, so let me get this straight, I can't date boys I like because they're not up to your standards, I can't go and get an interesting internship, which I'm supposed to be getting for one of my classes, because you're afraid it'll interfere with running, is there anything at all that I'm allowed to just do? Can I sneeze without your permission? Cough? Or do I need a written note for that too?

CONNIE

I just want the best for you. I don't want your senior year to go off the rails because you lost sight of priorities.

DIANNA

I know my priorities.

CONNIE

Good. Then you'll do your internship with me, I'll work it all out with Ms. Savedra-

DIANNA

Please. Please, please, please, please can I just do a regular internship?

CONNIE

I don't think it's a good idea.

DIANNA

I- I can drop it if it's too much. But I really, I want to try. I know I can budget my time.

CONNIE

I just... Well, can you promise me that it will not interfere with running?

DIANNA

Yes, totally. I promise.

CONNIE

Okay then. I'll take your word for it. Do you need a ride to the interview?

DIANNA

No, I'm taking the bus.

CONNIE

What about after, can I pick you up after?

DIANNA

If you don't mind.

CONNIE

Not at all. Maybe we can go out and grab a special dinner or something? Would you like that? We can talk about your bonus workouts for the semester, and I can tell you how much easier it is to not get pregnant if you don't go out with random boys!

DIANNA

Mom! Just stop.

CONNIE

Seriously though. Let's go out. I'm feeling like... Pizza?

DIANNA

Winners don't eat pizza, remember?

CONNIE

We could break the rules.

DIANNA

... Can we go to the Pie?

CONNIE

I was thinking, there's this new thin crust place that uses flour made from cauliflower-

DIANNA

The Pie or no deal.

CONNIE

Okay. The Pie and all it's thick and cheesy glory.

DIANNA

And we're getting pepperoni.

CONNIE

If you want.

DIANNA

AND sausage.

CONNIE

And salad?

DIANNA

We'll see about the salad. I really gotta get going-

CONNIE

Okay. Good, good luck. I hope you knock 'em dead.

*DIANNA exits as LEONA enters with her chair
and headphones. LEONA sets up her space.*

*CONNIE finishes her notes on her clipboard and
then exits.*

Music.

DIANNA enters, now at KRCL.

LEONA has her headphones on and doesn't notice DIANNA at first. DIANNA knocks on the wall of the studio (this does not have to be physically present) and waves at LEONA. LEONA signals for DIANNA to wait. DIANNA gives her a thumbs up.

DIANNA tries to calm her nerves as she waits.

As the music fades...

LEONA

(On radio)

We're keeping the party going down here at KRCL, and boy do I have a special something for you next! So get those ear drums ready, here's the full, completely uncut title track from Brutus B's newest album HAZE. Enjoy!

Music. LEONA takes off her headphones, and invites DIANNA into her studio space. DIANNA joins her.

LEONA (CONT'D)

So you're here for the job?

DIANNA

The internship. Yep.

LEONA

And you understand that it's not an on-air position?

DIANNA

Oh, well I thought, I listen all the time, and I know with some of the other hosts do sometimes let their interns-

LEONA

The other hosts are other hosts. For me, for my internship, it's never gonna be an on-air thing. This is an unpaid slog. You'll be listening to the tracks new artists send my way, weeding out anything good, you'll be organizing my LP's, doing any interview prep work I need, which can vary quiet a bit as I get a variety of folks in here with me, you'll be making me tea, getting me snacks, and you won't ever be talking on that radio. If you don't put in the work, if you show up late, leave early, or get on my nerves in any way, I will let your teacher know and you can kiss that class credit goodbye. Got that?

DIANNA

Uh, yes! Of course-

LEONA

Do you always dress like you're in a gym?

DIANNA

Oh, I just came from cross country practice.

LEONA

And you didn't stop and think it might seem unprofessional to show up like that to an interview?

DIANNA

I didn't have a ton of time. I take the bus, and I'd hate to be late-

LEONA

So it's late or sweaty? Why don't you drive?

DIANNA

I uh, I never learned.

LEONA

Why not?

DIANNA

I guess I didn't see the point. My- It's just me and my mom and money is tight so it's not like I'd be getting my own car anytime soon, so I just didn't learn.

LEONA

I may need you to go out, on errands. Hm... I guess you can just take the bus, it's not like that's a regular thing.. And you're not so sweaty. If we have people in the studio you will need to come clean and presentable, do you understand that?

DIANNA

Yes, totally. I can do that.

LEONA

Okay then. You want the job?

DIANNA

Oh, yeah! Yes, I mean. I will work so hard, and never be let-

LEONA

Great. I'd like a chocolate chip muffin, please.

DIANNA

Right, I- Would I find that in the break room, or-

LEONA

Do I have to hold your hand through all of this?

DIANNA

No, nope, I will figure it out.

LEONA

Good.

LEONA puts her headphones on.

DIANNA takes a deep breath. Tries to figure out which way a chocolate chip muffin would be, makes a snap choice, and exits.

SECOND INTERLUDE

CONNIE

I was eighteen.

Alone.

Alone with a baby.

Alone with a baby in one of the most conservative states in the country.

I was.

I was all alone.

I'd sit in our tiny studio clawing at the walls for change.

For variety.

Knowing every move I made was wrong.

So wrong.

I was alone.

I was wrong.

And then it came

A life raft.

Salvation.

Liberation.

A jogging stroller.

At first it was only walking.

But before a blink we were off.

We were off and running.

Up the hills.

Pacing. Racing. Chasing.

Tracing the mountains

With each step.

(MORE)

CONNIE (CONT'D)

It hurt.
In a way that told me
I was still alive.
It hurt
In a way that told me
That maybe I could do this.
That maybe since I could get out five miles
Ten
Fifteen
That I could do other hard things.
Like you.
That maybe I could do anything.
But then you got sick
R-S-V.
The nurse swelled
She yelled:
Babies can't go outside!
It's not safe.
A danger.
Bits inside.
Strangers.
I...
The asthma.
I gave it to you.
Like your eyes.
Like your laugh.
And with each gasp
Each cough
Each rasp
I know that I did that to you.
I don't know how to tell you.
I guess I never will.
But I was only eighteen.
You're almost eighteen.
Eighteen with a baby.
Eighteen and all alone.

WINTER

*The field/track and bleachers. There's no snow,
but it's cold. Evening. After practice.*

Music.

ANDREW sits on the bleachers, in regular clothes, he wears a mask and goggles. DIANNA enters, mask and goggles on, and in running gear. They both have winter jackets on.

ANDREW pops up once he sees her, they hug. They take off their masks and goggles, then make-out in that really hard-core teenager way.

Throughout the scene they take off and put on their goggles and/or masks as move in and out of wanting to make out and fighting.

LEONA enters with her chair and headphones, she sets up, bobs her head, as the music fades:

LEONA

That was “Move That Thang” by Gorilla Nanny, tryin’ to keep you warm during these bitter days of winter, and the best way I got to do that is to get you to shake it. Haha. It remains a hostile February with temps remaining below ten degrees, with still no snow in sight. And without snow the air quality ain’t looking too good. You know the drill, stay inside and if you must go out, goggles and masks are highly recommended. As for cool things happening in the community, tomorrow at the downtown library Sun Health For Utah will be handing out free Vitamin D droppers so be sure to head on down and get your Vitamin D on, they’ll also have information packets on the best way for you to safely soak up those rays. You know you need it, and you can’t beat for free! You’re tuned to KRCL, and this is Leona. Time to get back to that dance party, up in this next set...

LEONA exits.

DIANNA starts to cough, it’s ugly.

ANDREW gets a water bottle and offers it to her, she shakes her head. There’s something in her throat. She doesn’t know what to do. She’s got to swallow it or spit it out in front of her boyfriend and for a few moments she’s mortified by either option. Eventually she goes with spitting it out. She turns away and tries to spit it out in the most inconspicuous way possible. He comes over and marvels at her handiwork.

ANDREW

That's a beauty.

DIANNA

I'm sorry, I'm disgusting and gross and-

ANDREW

I've done better, of course. You should have seen this one I had yesterday, it sparkled like one of those glittery space marbles. Bigger too. At least two or three times bigger. And last Monday- Dang, you wouldn't have believed-

DIANNA

Okay, okay, I get it. I don't need all the details of everything you've ever spit out your mouth.

ANDREW

Your loss.

DIANNA

Are you going to kiss me or just gross me out. Because I only have like five more minutes-

He kisses her.

ANDREW

I wish you didn't have to rush off, I barely see you.

DIANNA

Except at school and after track practice every day, most weekends-

ANDREW

Like for moments, little blips-

DIANNA

I was at your house eating your mom's funeral potatoes and jello last Saturday. Do you have any idea how crazy *my* mom would be if she knew about all that carb and sugar consumption?

ANDREW

I want to see you, just you. Not you with everyone in my family asking you a million questions, and the farthest we can go is just holding hands.

DIANNA

It would be real weird for us to make-out during your family dinner.

ANDREW

Exactly. I miss you.

They kiss.

DIANNA

Absence makes the heart grow fonder.

ANDREW

If my heart grows any fonder of you, I think it'll explode.

They kiss.

ANDREW (CONT'D)

Before you have to go, I have something for you.

DIANNA

Ooooooh, a present?

ANDREW

Presents.

She claps. He hunts through his backpack.

ANDREW (CONT'D)

Right or left?

DIANNA

Hmmm.... Left.

He pulls out a stuffed lion and hands it to her.

ANDREW

Happy six-month anniversary!

DIANNA

Oh no! I totally forgot, I am the worst girlfriend-

He kisses her.

ANDREW

Correction, you are the most amazing, best, perfect girlfriend.

DIANNA

I didn't get you anything.

ANDREW

I only want you.

They kiss.

ANDREW (CONT'D)

So, you like your new friend?

DIANNA

I love it. Really. I- I've never had one before.

ANDREW

First stuffed lion, glad I could oblige.

DIANNA

No, I mean. I, I was never allowed to have stuffed animals as a kid, and so I've never had one at all.

ANDREW

Are you- Seriously?

DIANNA

They can carry dust and stuff, and so with asthma they can not be great, but also- This is kinda weird, but my mom thinks stuffed animals are dangerous because they teach kids that animals are soft and cuddly, when really they're wild animals that could eat our faces off at any moment-

ANDREW

They're going to eat our faces off?

DIANNA

I mean, lions can 100% eat your face off.

ANDREW

Okay, but like bunnies-

DIANNA

You'd think that, but we went for a field trip up to Donut Falls in third grade and my friend Heather and I somehow found a chipmunk-

ANDREW

You did not.

DIANNA

We did! Seriously! And she was so excited and she tried to feed it some of her goldfish but it bit her finger instead and she bled EVERYWHERE and had to get rabies shots for months.

ANDREW

A finger is not a face.

DIANNA

It could have been. They're not so far apart.

ANDREW

Well, I didn't know it would be considered contraband at your place, I can get you something else if you want-

DIANNA

No! No way! I will sneak her in and put her someplace she'll never look.

ANDREW

Whoa. Check you out, rebel.

DIANNA

Ha ha. I do love it though, and I think I will name her... Rose! She's the best ever. Thanks.

She kisses him.

ANDREW

I don't want to ruin this moment, but it has a mane, so it's a male lion.

DIANNA

Screw your gender conformity. *She's called Rose.*

He laughs, they kiss.

DIANNA (CONT'D)

But I really should go, I need to get the bus-

ANDREW

Wait! There's more, remember, you picked left, there's still the other thing.

DIANNA

Oh right! Well then, let's get to the more presents for me.

*He reaches in his backpack and pulls out a flyer.
He hands it to her.*

DIANNA (CONT'D)

How did you know that I love neon paper more than anything in the whole wide world?

ANDREW

Just read it.

She does.

DIANNA

Oh cool. Really, this is cool! Battle of the bands.. But, uh, since when do you have a band?

ANDREW

Since you decided to sing vocals for me and we formed a two person band.

DIANNA

Hahahahahaha.

ANDREW

Stop laughing, I'm serious.

DIANNA

I don't sing.

ANDREW

Yes you do.

DIANNA

No I do not.

ANDREW

All the time I hear you sing, you have a great voice.

DIANNA

Not in front of people.

ANDREW

I'm not people?

DIANNA

No you're not. You are person, my boyfriend, though I might be reconsidering that-

ANDREW

Remember Rose.

DIANNA

I'm sorry, but I don't want to do this.

ANDREW

Consider it a six month anniversary present to me.

DIANNA

Andrew-

ANDREW

No, seriously, I think you'll be great, we'll be great, and it's not for over a month, and we only have to play one song so we'll have tons and tons of time to practice, and you'll love it, really, performing in front of people, it's amazing, and we'd spend so much more time together, and I thought you could sing that song that I've been working on? You already have sang it for me once-

DIANNA

When we were alone in your car-

ANDREW

And you blew me away-

DIANNA

I can't perform in front of people.

ANDREW

You can.

DIANNA

I don't want to perform in front of people.

ANDREW

But you've never even tried-

DIANNA

Because I do not want to-

ANDREW

Just try it once, for me-

DIANNA

And I don't have time, this would be a lot of work and I have track-

ANDREW
You'll like this more than running-

DIANNA
And my internship-

ANDREW
Which is ending this week.

DIANNA
.. I'm going to ask her if I can keep it up.

ANDREW
Are you serious?

DIANNA
I- I like it.

ANDREW
You like getting bossed around all the time?

DIANNA
She's- She isn't that bossy now, really. She's one of those rough on the outside and slightly less rough on the inside types you have to earn the respect of before they give you the time-

ANDREW
Great. And so you're telling me now I won't ever get to spend time with you.

DIANNA
I really like helping out down at the studio, I've met some really cool people, and whenever she has an interview I get to read or listen to whatever the person coming on does. This week I read this book, "Frogs Set To Boil," by this local scientist, it is SO fascinating-

ANDREW
I think- I think you like Leona because she's controlling just like your mom. It's like you have to be somebody's puppet or something or you don't know what to do with yourself.

DIANNA
Hey!

ANDREW
I'm just saying what I'm seeing-

DIANNA

Well it's not true, at all.

ANDREW

Be in a band with me then! Screw everyone else, and just do this thing with me. We'd get so much more time together, to practice, and to do other stuff..

He tries to kiss her, she stands up.

DIANNA

You don't see it, but you are just like my mom. You think you know what's best and you're sitting here trying to manipulate me into doing whatever you want. Here.

She hands the flier back to him.

ANDREW

Dianna, I didn't-

She exits with her backpack. He gets up and follows her.

ANDREW (CONT'D)

I didn't mean- I'm sorry. Really!

He exits after her.

Music.

LEONA enters, with chair and headphones. She sits, puts on her headphones.

DIANNA enters with a backpack on her shoulder and carrying a cup of tea. She doesn't look great. She hands the tea to LEONA, and drops her backpack on the ground. LEONA removes her headphones.

LEONA

Thank you.

DIANNA

No problem.

LEONA

You okay? You look kinda frazzled-

DIANNA

I'm fine.

LEONA

Okay. You ready to give me the run down on Dr. Schultz's book? This is a long set.

DIANNA

Yeah, totally. Let me just, I'll be right back.

DIANNA gets the book from her backpack. It has dozens and dozens of neon sticky notes sticking out of it.

LEONA

Whoa.

DIANNA

Yeah, there was a lot to dig into.

DIANNA hands the book to LEONA. LEONA flips through it.

LEONA

So what should I know for the interview tomorrow?

DIANNA

Okay, well, so, her hypothesis boils down to two things, the population boom, and extreme weather. Those combined are at the heart of the problem; too many people, too many cars and the exhaust that comes with them, plus with the drier climate in general coupled with the extreme heat in the summer months make for more wild fires. The valley is a bowl, the bad air is here, or blows here and it can't escape. And because we're getting less precipitation, which would flush most of the gunk out, it just sits and accumulates.

LEONA

Right, right.

DIANNA

And, and this was super interesting, since it's all happened so slowly, she says we're like frogs in a pot of boiling water.

DIANNA yawns.

LEONA

Is that where the title comes from?

DIANNA

Exactly. So, if you uh, if you wanted to boil frogs and you just set it to boil right away, they'd all just jump out-

LEONA

Who boils frogs, and why do they do it when they're alive?

DIANNA

I don't know, but I guess it's how they do it. Anyway, since they take off if it gets too hot too fast, they have to slowly increase the temp on the pot, because if it's done in small increments, the frogs won't notice anything and just hang out like nothing is going on while they boil to death.

LEONA

That's disturbing on so many levels.

DIANNA

Yeah, and so we're- We're the frogs. That's what she's saying, Dr. Schultz. Since the air got worse so slowly, only a few more red days at a time, we didn't do anything, and now, now that it's this bad-

LEONA

We're all boiling to death.

DIANNA

That's how she explains in the book why it's so bad and barely any actions have been taken to slow it down or fix it.

LEONA

So how'd she come down in the end, does she think we'll figure it out?

DIANNA

She, she thinks we're past fixing it.

LEONA

Past fixing it?

DIANNA

Yeah, but, she also thinks, she says we need to try. That's the last chapter, it's, her point is that we owe it to ourselves, to the valley, to, to at least try.

LEONA flips through the book again.

LEONA

Gonna be a real uplifting interview.

DIANNA

I'm really glad you're bringing her on. I mean, even if, even if it's kinda terrifying what she's saying, I think, people should know, you know? Like, we deserve to know that we're the frogs, or whatever.. I don't know, am I making any sense?

LEONA

I get you.

LEONA flips through the book again, noticing DIANNA has also highlighted sections and written out some questions for her.

LEONA (CONT'D)

These questions you think I should ask her? Dr. Schultz?

DIANNA

You don't have to use them, I was just, I was just trying to think what I would ask, if I was uh, the one doing the asking.

LEONA reads through the questions.

LEONA

These are good. You did, you really did this one up. I know it's a lot heavier than what we usually get up to, but I agree with you that I think the people should know.

LEONA addresses the audience.

LEONA (CONT'D)

I miss the mountains. Seeing them without the blur. The sheen. The veil. The film that blocks and hides and takes them out of our daily lives.

Mountains fight depression, you know that?

I've always tried to make a point of taking a good hard look daily, just to be on the safe side, but when you're looking at them through a curtain of muck and grime, I think it has the opposite effect.

I miss the birds. Their song. Their seemingly impossible feats of flight. Even their shit on my car.

I miss bird shit.

I miss the outside. The out of doors. The no walls, no windows, the breeze. You can't trust this breeze here.

Trees.

(MORE)

LEONA (CONT'D)

Mountains.
Birds.
The air-
And, and now we can't get it back.

LEONA flips through the book again.

LEONA (CONT'D)

Thanks, Dianna. This is good stuff.

LEONA puts the book down.

DIANNA yawns.

DIANNA

Absolutely, it's, no problem.

LEONA

So, you're yawning a whole lot.

DIANNA

Yeah, I'm, I'm a little tired I guess.

LEONA

Everything okay?

DIANNA

Yeah. Like I said, I'm fine. Don't you need to be on air?

LEONA checks.

LEONA

We got three minutes. Spill the beans.

DIANNA

Really, it's nothing-

LEONA

Come on, you have to do what I tell you, remember?

DIANNA

It's, I don't know, I'm tired, I guess. I had to stay up late last night to finish an essay, and then wake up for morning practice and then school, and then after school practice, and then Andrew was being weird and we got into a fight, and this is the last week of, of, of this, the like, the one thing that I really enjoy doing with my time, being here, listening to music and talking about music and seeing the other side of what you do and everything, and that sucks, that it's over, and I'm tired, and my mom is on me every second of the day with like, what am I eating, why do I spend so much time with Andrew, how I have to pick up my pace on the hurtles, and I'm tired, I'm just, I'm really really tired.

LEONA

Sounds like you're tired.

DIANNA

Yeah.

LEONA

Maybe it's good you're almost done here.

DIANNA

I wish I wasn't. I feel like I'm just getting good at this, at figuring out what you need and what we're doing here, and, I don't know..

LEONA

Well, I don't want to make you crazy or anything, but you can stay on if you want.

DIANNA

Really?

LEONA

You work harder than any intern I ever had, you for sure can stay.

DIANNA

Oh man, thank you, thank you!.... Oh but, well I need to ask my mom if it's okay, and I don't know. I really, let me ask her before I give you a for sure yes, is that okay?

LEONA

I guess, but, I mean.. When I was your age my mom walked in on me kissing a girl, my best friend, and she- She didn't yell or cry or kick me out of the house or anything but, she never looked at me again. And she, she died after I'd finished high school and moved out, and I just wish I'd been able to tell her what I wanted, I wish I'd told her who I was.

DIANNA

.. Wow, I'm, that sucks, I'm so sorry-

LEONA

It's fine, really. I told you because you need to stop asking your mom for everything. You need to tell her what you want. You need to tell her who you are. Consequences be damned because she's not gonna see you until you do that.

CONNIE enters.

CONNIE

Evening Leona!

LEONA

Hey-ya Connie, how's it hanging?

CONNIE

Well, I'm doing very well, thank you.

LEONA

(To DEANNA)

I gotta get back, the set's almost up.

(Holding up the book)

Thanks for this. I'm hoping people really listen in tomorrow, you know?

DIANNA

Yeah. I do.

*LEONA exits with the book, her headphones,
and her chair.*

CONNIE

Ready?

DIANNA

Yeah.

*DIANNA grabs her backpack and goes with
CONNIE. They get in CONNIE's car. This is
probably just two chairs next to one another and
lights, but go crazy if you want.*

CONNIE

You having a good day, honey?

DIANNA

Um, kinda, I'm kinda tired.

CONNIE

Well you've been pushing yourself so hard lately, it's no wonder. Good thing the internship is ending this week.

DIANNA

So, uh, actually, about that, uh, Leona said-

CONNIE

I'm exhausted too. I've just come from an absolutely horrific evening, to tell you the truth.

DIANNA

Oh, the, the district meeting go long?

CONNIE

Yes and they're trying to get rid of me.

DIANNA

What? Why? Who is trying to get rid of you?

CONNIE

This parent coalition from across the district, it's insane! They protested the meeting, busted in, demanded to be heard, and boy were they heard.

DIANNA

Why you though, that doesn't make sense-

CONNIE

It's not just me, it's ALL SPORTS. Yeah, after, did you hear about the boy two weeks ago on the Wasatch Junior High soccer team?

DIANNA

Yeah, I did.

CONNIE

Well, *his* parents are suing the district! *And* organizing this coalition nonsense!

DIANNA

Wow, so, did, what's happening, did they, do you still have a job?

CONNIE

For now, but now I have to- Ugh, there's this new form that everyone has got to fill out and it is going to be total a nightmare to get enough of the team to do it. I need at least twenty kids to stay on, or they shut us down for good. I can count on you, right? To help with the other kids?

DIANNA

Yeah, I guess.

CONNIE squeezes DIANNA's shoulder.

CONNIE

Good. It's an all hands on deck situation.

DIANNA

What's the form?

CONNIE

Oh, just, it's just nonsense. Nothing really. Just a liability for the school and the district and me, I guess. It just, it says that if anything were to happen, to a student, not that anything would, because you know how careful I am in practice, how vigilant I am with inhalers and masks, but if something unfortunate did come to pass, that the student and the parents, that they would take the responsibility and have no legal recourse against the district. It's a new policy, all teams across the board have to sign it... It's like, it's like they're begging for more student fatties. Take away PE, then make it harder to be on a sports team. Does no one care any more about the physical health of children today? Sometimes I think I am the only one in the whole valley who does.

CONNIE drives.

CONNIE (CONT'D)

Leftovers for dinner tonight..... Dianna? Did you hear me? I said we're having leftovers-

DIANNA

I heard you. That's fine.

CONNIE drives.

DIANNA looks out the window.

DIANNA flips on the radio.

LEONA

(Offstage)

Be sure to tune in tomorrow, I have a very special guest in the studio and you're gonna want to hear what she has to say.

DIANNA turns the radio off.

DIANNA

I read this- I was reading this book, for the, for Leona's show, she's interviewing the author, and, it's, the book is about air pollution and maybe.. Maybe the parents are right and maybe we shouldn't be playing sports outside anymore.

LEONA

Very funny.

DIANNA

No, really, I- I think, I don't know, you've been working at the school forever, maybe they could move you to an administrative position or something, so you could keep your insurance and everything-

LEONA

Oh yeah, me a secretary-

DIANNA

Or, or a, I don't know, working full-time at a gym or something. Didn't 24-Hour Fitness want you on, teaching classes and stuff for them?

LEONA

Teaching fifty year old's step aerobics, my dream.

DIANNA

Mom. I won't... I don't want to sign that form.

CONNIE

What?

DIANNA

The- The new district thing, the waver or whatever. I- I don't want to sign it.

CONNIE

I'm not in the mood for one of your not-very-funny jokes, Dianna-

DIANNA

I'm not joking.

CONNIE

Then I'm not in the mood for your attitude. If you don't sign- If you don't sign it, you can't be on the team.

DIANNA

I understand that.

CONNIE

Look kid, I was just yelled at for hours by grieving parents, plus there was traffic heading all the way out to the stupid station to get you. We both know you're not leaving the team.

DIANNA

I won't be- I will not sign anything saying that I'm responsible for- I didn't ruin the air.

CONNIE

That's not- That's not what the form says-

DIANNA

You said that it says it relieves you and school of being responsible-

CONNIE

Yes, but-

DIANNA

And since you're my mom *and* my coach, that just leaves me. I don't want to sign it, I'm-

CONNIE

This is a horrible and *cruel* joke-

DIANNA

I am not joking!

CONNIE

So you're quitting, you're just quitting then?

DIANNA

I- I just said I'm not signing the form-

CONNIE

That is quitting because you can't be on the team if you don't sign the form.

DIANNA

Yes then, I guess.

CONNIE

Never thought I'd live to see the day. My kid, my only kid, the kid I do everything for, who I slave for, so that you have food to eat and a place to live, I never thought that same kid would just stab me in the back.

DIANNA

I'm not stabbing you-

CONNIE

I'm going to lose my job over this. If I can't get enough signatures. And with the *captain* leaving the team?

DIANNA

I'm just not- I won't sign something that says I'm responsible for the air or my health or, I just won't do that. It's not right. It's not.

CONNIE

Well fine. I'll just sit back and watch you give up on your teammates-

DIANNA

I'm not-

CONNIE

Give up on college-

DIANNA

Which I can get in to with my grades, I have good grades-

CONNIE

Give up on your health... Don't blame me when you get big and fat Dianna. Do not blame me, because all of that will be on you.

DIANNA

... There's.. There's more to health than just- You've seen the x-rays on my lungs. You've seen the, the, it looks like I'm a smoker. Like I've been a smoker for *years*, but I guess, yeah, as long as I *look* healthy, that's all that really matters, right? Just like, it doesn't matter if I'm happy or anything, not to you anyways, just as long as I *look* happy.

CONNIE pulls the car over.

CONNIE

If you. If you really do this. If you really put my job in jeopardy for some, for nothing, for, for, for just nonsense, we will not come back from this. Do you hear me?

DIANNA

Yeah.

CONNIE

And?

DIANNA

And I'm quitting the fucking team.

DIANNA gets out of the car, then exits at a run.

CONNIE watches her go. She does not go after her. She just watches and steams.

THIRD AND FINAL INTERLUDE

ANDREW has a guitar. He plays it, maybe this is sung, or maybe spoken. The guitar playing is simple, he's just about adequate on it.

ANDREW

There's a fire
I feel it right here
You burn in me
From my throat on down
It's you I can't ever escape
My forever landscape

I can't run from you
There's no place to hide
You demand devotion
How could I ever deny
Anything from my only sky

I breathe you in
Your taste lingers
Forever in my mouth
You caress, you envelope
My body, you developed

Again and again
From my first to my last
You are the constant
In this daily life craze
You are my eternal haze

You have my heart
My lungs
My chest
You are my breath
You are my death

I can't escape you
Never could

(MORE)

ANDREW (CONT'D)

I couldn't live without you
I can't live without you
I can't live
With you
My breath
You are inescapable
You will be my death

SPRING

Music.

DIANNA and LEONA in the studio. There are two chairs now. DIANNA and LEONA each sit in one. Both of them have headphones. DIANNA is, for the first time of the play, not in athletic clothes. She's in teenage business casual.

As the music fades...

LEONA

Thank you for tuning in, I'm Leona, this is KRCL and woo-ee have I got a treat for you today! My intern who's been busting her behind after school for months and months is next to me and will be making her radio debut at the top of the hour! So sit back, settle in, and get ready Salt Lake: Dianna Abel is comin' at you! Stay tuned.

Music.

LEONA (CONT'D)

You ready?

DIANNA

Um, I think.

LEONA

You'll do good, and if you don't, just keep going. You'll work it out eventually.

DIANNA

Okay.

LEONA

Your boy coming by to watch you?

DIANNA

Yeah, he, I don't know where he is, he was supposed to be here by now.

LEONA

And what about tu madre?

DIANNA

Mom is.. Still not talking to me.

LEONA

Oh.

DIANNA

Yeah. Anyway, though, before we uh, before we're back I wanted to show you- I had an idea, a, um, something for the show...

DIANNA gets out a packed manila folder and hands it to LEONA.

LEONA opens it, and looks through.

DIANNA (CONT'D)

So when we had on Dr. Schultz, it felt, I don't know it felt like that interview really got to people, and for like, for weeks that's all anyone was talking about. But then, then it just kinda, it just fell off the radar like it always does and now, two months later, we're back to no one caring again. So, I was thinking, we should, we shouldn't stop. We should, we should have on every environmentalist, every scientist, every activist, every politician, every poet, everyone out there who's trying to do something about the air. We should interview them all, and we can make it like a reoccurring segment or something. Make it so that people can't just put their heads down and ignore it anymore. What do you think?

LEONA

I love it. This is, this is really good.

DIANNA

Really?

LEONA

Yeah. It's better than ignoring the fact that you're boiling to death, that's for sure.

DIANNA

So these are all, these are just a few people I though we could start with. I've got a bit of background on each of them, and what they're working on-

ANDREW enters, he has on a mask and a bike helmet. DIANNA sees him.

DIANNA (CONT'D)

Oh! That's Andrew! I'll be right back.

DIANNA goes to greet ANDREW.

LEONA looks through the folder.

DIANNA (CONT'D)

Hey! Did you ride your bike all the way down here?

ANDREW takes off his helmet, then mask and drops them on the ground. He's reddish blue and covered in sweat.

DIANNA (CONT'D)

Are you okay?

ANDREW

I, I just need... I just need to sit down I think-

ANDREW lowers himself a bit, and then collapses on the ground. His breath is shallow and labored.

DIANNA

Just breathe. Do, do you have your inhaler on you? Andrew! Do you have your inhaler?

ANDREW shakes his head no.

LEONA comes over to see what's going on.

LEONA

What happened to him?

DIANNA

I don't know, I think- We need to call 9-11.

LEONA

I don't think he has that long.

LEONA pulls out keys.

LEONA (CONT'D)

I'll help you get him up, then take him straight to the hospital, take my car-

DIANNA

I can't drive!

LEONA

Crap I forgot.

DIANNA

(To ANDREW)

Keep breathing, just focus on breathing in and out. In and out. Try, just keep, keep on breathing, you're going to be okay, you're going to be fine-

LEONA

I'll take him then, help me get him up.

They struggle, but get ANDREW on his feet.

DIANNA

But- Who- You're- The radio-

LEONA

You were going on tonight anyway, now you'll just have a longer set-

DIANNA

Leona-

LEONA

I'll call someone when we get to the hospital to come and relieve you. Meet us there.

DIANNA

Okay. Just get him- Get him there quick, okay?

LEONA

I'll go as fast as I can.

LEONA leads ANDREW off stage. DIANNA watches them go. She is breathing fast.

The music stops.

It's quiet.

Silence except for DIANNA's breathing.

DIANNA remembers that she's the only one there and rushes back to the chair. She sits and puts on her headphones.

By the third or fourth sentence of DIANNA's next line CONNIE enters. DIANNA doesn't notice her. CONNIE watches her daughter.

DIANNA

Sorry about that.. Silence is never what you want on the radio I know, so sorry! But, um, hello! I'm, uh, I'm Dianna Abel, and uh, this is KRCL. Uh, here's another track from our album of the day Tiger Mouth's AWAKE & ANIMATE, this song is called "Fresh Gasp." It's my favorite off the album, the beat is infectious, it never fails to make me tap my toes. So shake it and enjoy!

Music.

DIANNA's breath is still fast. She takes off her headphones. She still doesn't notice CONNIE.

DIANNA stands, she looks out a window. She can't get her breath to slow down. She takes out her inhaler and uses it.

CONNIE steps in, about to make her presence known when DIANNA goes back to her chair and puts on her headphones. She does not sit, this may or may not be said directly to the audience. DIANNA still doesn't know CONNIE is there with her.

The music is cut off, abruptly.

DIANNA (CONT'D)

I'm going to die. Not in the right this second way, or even minute or month, or even year. But we are all going to die. This air is noxious. Toxic. Poison. Death. To stay inside each day, every day. To forget the outside. The outside. The open. The air. The air we can't live with. The air we can't live without. Killing trees. And bees. And children. And me. And you.

Yeah. You're going to die. And I get that it's more fun to listen to this nightly dance party than think and sink into knowing the truth- All that stress and that pressure.

(MORE)

DIANNA (CONT'D)

I used to ignore it, my days of getting it out on the hills. My feet pounding. Bounding. Racing. Out pacing. The only reliable escape filling my lungs with lead- I was running on a treadmill. And this woman, she came over and got on the treadmill next to me. She was wearing perfume. Or body spray. Or something. It was vanilla. It was creep inside your skin, smells like the most overly sugared pink cupcake frosting vanilla. It made me gag and I went to the rest room and I lost my lunch and it was- There was still- I've been running inside for months and there were still black bits- Particles- Particulate matter. There. From me. From inside my body! And I still hack and cough and spit and the gray and black. The bits of- The poison. It's still in me. Still. It's taking years off of my life. Off of ALL of our lives!

How did- Was there never a point in time, a moment in which it was just starting, just a, a, a, handful of red days, and why did- Why did no one stop it then? Unlivable and toxic. We're dropping like flies. We're boiling like frogs. And it's too late and too late and so late. This is one giant grave now. The valley. This valley. Just death. And I don't- I don't want to die quite yet. I really just do not want to die.

But what is the alternative? Holding my breath?

That breath.

Our death.

DIANNA sits.

DIANNA (CONT'D)

Let's get back to that album of the day. I'm, I'm just going to put the whole thing on now, without interruptions.

Music.

DIANNA throws the headphones.

CONNIE moves closer, DIANNA sees her.

DIANNA runs to CONNIE, CONNIE holds DIANNA as she cries.

Blackout.

EPILOUGE

In darkness.

LEONA

This is KRCL, Salt Lake City's community supported radio. Time to check in on that air quality... It's not looking good folks. Time to hold that breath! Yes, hold it and keep holding it, because it's another red day. Feels like that's all we get now.

Days and days of red.

Filled with dread.

Our lungs getting shred.

In a sea, an expanse, an abyss, a never ending, never tiring poison. Red.

Red.

Red.

Red.

End of play.