

All Packed  
A One Act Lockdown Comedy  
By C.M. Miller

C.M. Miller  
2618 F Street, #3  
Sacramento CA, 95816  
(310) 713-5960  
[Cmillcontent@gmail.com](mailto:Cmillcontent@gmail.com)

CHARACTERS

HODGE - Male. Early 20's.

SIERRA - Female. Early 20's.

TIME

Sometime around March of 2020.

SCENE ONE

Afternoon. A hiking trail overlooking a small college town.

SCENE TWO

Evening, months later. A small apartment.

SCENE ONE

A lookout point, leafy and sunlit, high up on a hiking trail.

There's a BENCH upstage center.

(SIERRA strolls onstage, full of energy.)

SIERRA

Made it!

(She wanders downstage, takes a deep breath.)

SIERRA (Calling O.S.)

I said *made it!*

(We hear a GROAN offstage.)

SIERRA (Calling O.S.)

Hodge? You okay?

(We hear a RUSTLING noise as HODGE trudges onstage, exhausted. His backpacker's rucksack is stuffed to the brim. Odds and ends dangle from it, clanging like janitor's keys: flashlight, utility tool, hand sanitizer, Nalgene, you name it, *it's there...*)

(HODGE stumbles collapses on the bench.)

HODGE (weakly)

Made it.

(Slowly, carefully, HODGE takes his rucksack off. Top heavy, it falls over with a pathetic crash.)

(SIERRA laughs.)

SIERRA

You're like Burt in *Mary Poppins*.

HODGE

What now?

SIERRA

You know, when they first meet Burt. When he's wearing his whole, noisy...one man band thing.

HODGE

One man band?

SIERRA

You know. If you had a clown horn. HONK. CRASH!

HODGE

Well, fail to prepare...

(HODGE unpacks a Nalgene, drinks.)

SIERRA

*Agua?*

(HODGE takes out a bottled water and tosses it to SIERRA. She sits downstage, drinks.)

HODGE unpacks a litany of items: snacks, a laminated trail map and marker...)

(SIERRA watches.)

SIERRA

You brought the generator, right?

HODGE

*Hah.*

(HODGE tears into an energy bar.)

SIERRA

I'll take one of those.

(SIERRA holds her hand out, arm extended. HODGE ignores it.)

HODGE

Let's see...

SIERRA

Anytime.

(HODGE studies the map, scribbles.)

HODGE (Sotto)

Three point two miles... temperature's... sixty-five with the breeze...slightly up from when we started.

SIERRA

*Hodgekins...*

HODGE

Think we done good.

SIERRA

Hey. *Hodgie-poo?*

HODGE (overlapping)

Trail grade was seven point five. Pretty moderate. Overall time was...one hundred and twelve minutes. All things considered...

SIERRA (overlapping)

*Hodge Ransom Jennings...*the THIRD. Hey, I'm talking to you.

HODGE

Hold on.

(SIERRA sulks.)

HODGE (Sotto)

*Yeah.* We're in good shape.

(He looks around)

This'll do just fine.

SIERRA

Hey Fitbit man, c'mon and bar me.

HODGE

Bar you from what?

(SIERRA gets up and walks to the bench beside him. She punches HODGE on the shoulder and picks up an energy bar.)

(She turns, but HODGE catches her hand and tugs her back to him.)

SIERRA

I'm starving.

(SIERRA turns, but HODGE tugs her back again.)

SIERRA

What?

(With a grin, HODGE lets go. He takes the energy bar, unwraps it, and with a touch of flourish, presents it to SIERRA.)

(She scoffs, then courtesies. She takes a huge bite and chews... mouth open.)

HODGE

*Really?*

SIERRA

*Thaaaaaank you.*

(Still chewing, SIERRA leans over and kisses HODGE on the cheek.)

HODGE

That's...okay...

(HODGE leans away, but she advances, going for a quick kiss on the mouth. HODGE gives in.)

SIERRA:

You taste like Clif bar.

(SIERRA sits downstage).

(With an air of secrecy, HODGE unpacks. He takes out a dry-cleaning bag. He unzips it to reveal slacks, a tie, a white dress shirt).

SIERRA

So hungry. Can I have another?

(HODGE tosses another energy bar over and SIERRA catches it.)

HODGE

Good thing I packed, right?

SIERRA

Good thing you're carrying what you packed down to the parking lot.

HODGE

You know, I've been thinking about that whole equality thing...

SIERRA

Nope.

HODGE

Way I hear it, the future is female.

SIERRA

Nuh-uh. You *pack it in*, you *pack it out*.

HODGE (casually)

Keep eating then.

SIERRA

*What?*

(SIERRA pivots and HODGE covers the white shirt in his jacket.)

HODGE

If we *both* keep eating, it'll lighten the load.

SIERRA

Better watch yourself.

HODGE

Noted.

SIERRA

You think I'm kidding?

HODGE

I said *noted*... hey while you're over there, how's the view?

(SIERRA turns.)

(HODGE takes the drycleaning bag back out and goes to work. In a few moments he's got the sleeves of the dress shirt on.)

SIERRA

Decent.

HODGE

*Decent?* What'd we climb three miles for?

(HODGE stands: the slacks are going to be difficult. He starts by taking off his hiking shoes, and pulling them up over his shorts.)

SIERRA

The view, I guess. Hey where's the map?

(The slacks get caught. HODGE panics).

HODGE

The *what?*

SIERRA

Trail map. The one you brought two copies of?

HODGE

I don't recall...

SIERRA

You just had it out.

(SIERRA starts to turn.)

HODGE

No, no. Don't get up. Describe it.

SIERRA

Describe the trail map?

HODGE

Yes.

SIERRA

It's, yay big. It's gray on one side.

HODGE

Keep going.

SIERRA

It's *laminated*. You laminated it yourself, remember?

(SIERRA turns her head and HODGE jumps aside,  
out of view.)

SIERRA

What are you...

HODGE

Hold on, I'm...doing my business.

SIERRA

What?

HODGE

I haven't gone in two hours.

SIERRA

You're going right there on the trail?

HODGE

Don't look, just...let me get a few things situated.

(While they talk, HODGE finishes the slacks,  
buttons the shirt, and takes out polished dress  
shoes.)

SIERRA

Sounds more like you're setting up a base camp. On Everest.

HODGE

You know, that's not a bad description...

SIERRA

Are we going to summit tomorrow if the weather's good?



HODGE

One day.

(Pause)

But not tomorrow. That'd be getting ahead of ourselves--

(SIERRA turns and HODGE lunges to the floor.)

SIERRA

Are you done already?

HODGE

I'm good. I just...tripped on a shoelace.

SIERRA

Do you need help?

HODGE

No, just...enjoy the view. Can you see the bell tower from here?

(SIERRA looks ahead. HODGE stands, dusts himself off and takes out a stylish matching coat.)

SIERRA

Yeah. Campus is pretty clear.

HODGE

What else can you see.

(HODGE takes on a small, travel-sized straightening iron. Should he *go for it*?)

SIERRA

Looking down, I see parking lots, Fox Theater, Pioneer boulevard...

(HODGE agonizes. He puts the iron away.)

SIERRA

Looking up, there's foothills, tree line, Three Sisters...that pond that's right by airport. No planes though.

(Pause)

That's weird. Have you seen any planes today?

(HODGE puts on a necktie, adjusts his hair.)

HODGE

Have I *what now*?

SIERRA

We should have heard them going over us by now. They're like the soundtrack to this trail.

HODGE

Airport's closed.

(While they talk, HODGE sets up small sound speakers.)

SIERRA

No. I flew in last night. How could it...

HODGE

Since this morning.

SIERRA

Really? Oh, wait. That stupid virus in the news?

HODGE

Think so. Someone tested positive at SeaTac. So all the flights, all the surrounding airports...

SIERRA

You're *kidding me*. Every airport down here?

HODGE

Better to be safe, right? Plus, less noise, less ozone.

SIERRA

We're over two hundred miles away. You don't think that's overkill?

HODGE

If the thing's contagious...

(HODGE takes a moment; *this is it*. He adjusts the speakers and a song starts playing. Something smooth and soulful: perhaps Al Green's 'Still in Love With You.')

(SIERRA turns.)

SIERRA

Hodge: you don't think two hundred miles...

(Pause)

What are you doing.

(HODGE approaches SIERRA gallantly; he's been practicing this.)

HODGE

Care to dance?

SIERRA

You sure? I'm all sweaty.

HODGE

I'd go from rags to riches.

(SIERRA thinks about it, then stands. HODGE bows, takes her hand, and paces her other hand on his back. Awkward at first, they dance a little. HODGE twirls SIERRA.)

SIERRA

Look at you.

(Pause)

You're like a handsome, dancing... penguin.

HODGE

You can learn a lot with TikTok.

(Their dancing slows. He pulls her close.)

HODGE

Sierra...

SIERRA

*Mmh...*

HODGE

I brought you something.

(HODGE steps to the speakers and dims the music. He returns and kneels.)

(SIERRA freezes, astonished but delighted.)

SIERRA

Hodge, No... are you serious right now? Are you...

(Pause)

*Nooooooooo...*Are you...

(HODGE nods.)

SIERRA

*Oh my God.* I'm...should I? I'm...

HODGE

You're perfect Sierra. Trust me, you're perfect.

(Pause)

Just...stand right where you are.

SIERRA

Okay.

(HODGE takes out a small box.)

HODGE

*Ahem.* 'Arise my love and come away. For the winter is past,  
the rain is over and gone... and the time of singing--

SIERRA

You're gonna sing?

HODGE

Um...

SIERRA

If you're going to sing, I'm recording this...

HODGE

No, I'm...just let me finish.

SIERRA

Oh. Sorry.

HODGE

'Your eyes are like doves behind your veil. You've captured my  
heart with your humor, your smile. Your hair is like a flock  
of llamas...'

SIERRA

*What?*

HODGE

Llamas.

(Pause)

Personal touch...your family's llama pen.

SIERRA

*Oh.*

HODGE

Never met someone who raised llamas before. Didn't know  
raising llamas was even a *thing*.

SIERRA

Just...*keep going.*

HODGE

All right. Sierra: You're altogether beautiful. There is no  
flaw in you.

(HODGE opens up the box, revealing an engagement ring.)

HODGE

Sierra Justine Kile. Would you--

(The moment is CUT OFF by a buzzing, Amber Alert-style sound that startles both of them.)

(HODGE walks to the bench, retrieves his phone, and stops the alarm.)

HODGE

Got it.

(HODGE turns, but stops, reading his phone.)

SIERRA

Hodge?

(Pause)

Don't you think we should...

HODGE

Hold on a sec.

(SIERRA walks over to him.)

SIERRA

What is it?

HODGE

It's an emergency mandate. There's a stay-at-home order from our governor. There's this list of CDC rules...*sorry*, I'm just trying to--

SIERRA

Hodge, what's going on?

HODGE

What flight where you on last night?

SIERRA

What flight? You mean *what number*?

(Pause)

Can this *wait*?

HODGE (reading)

Flight 4160. Nonstop from SeaTac, landed 9:20. Was that you?

SIERRA

Yeah. Yeah, that was it.

(Pause)

Are we going to finish this up, or...

HODGE (reading)

Six feet.

SIERRA

What?

HODGE

We're supposed to stay six feet away from each other.

(A pause.)

SIERRA

What are you talking about?

HODGE

Three people tested positive on your flight. You could be contagious. *Shoot...hold on.*

(HODGE digs through his backpack.)

SIERRA

I'm asking nicely. Don't you think we should...

HODGE

I had a feeling this might happen. I packed ahead, but even still...didn't think I'd have to try and pull it off.

SIERRA

Pull what off?

(HODGE turns and tosses SIERRA a bottle of hand sanitizer.)

HODGE

Don't use it all okay? They're running out of it.

SIERRA

What the...

HODGE

C'mon. Hands.

SIERRA (Reading)

'Kills ninety-eight percent of germs and bacteria.' Germs. We're talking about a *virus*.

HODGE

Just go *with it*.

(SIERRA puts some on.)

(HODGE returns. He's wearing plastic gloves, a bandanna over his mouth and nose, and he's holding a plastic grabber tool. SIERRA bursts out laughing.)

SIERRA

You can't be serious.

HODGE (through the mask)

Three people on *your plane*...

SIERRA

I can't hear you.

(HODGE rips the bandana off).

Three people on *your plane*...touching surfaces, touching faces.

SIERRA

I sat the whole time. No one *touched* me...

(SIERRA tosses HODGE the hand sanitizer and he jumps to avoid it.)

SIERRA

What is your problem?

HODGE

You were just *touching it*.

SIERRA

You were just *touching it*, you gave it to me.

HODGE

I'm sorry, *okay*?

(Pause)

What am I doing? There's no use panicking.

SIERRA

I know, Right?

HODGE

Completely forgot that I brought one of my own.

(HODGE takes out his own bottle of hand sanitizer.)

SIERRA

Will you calm down? So I what, touched a surface, breathed some circulated air. So what? There's got to be dozens, hundred cold viruses at every airport. If you go in a crowded...

HODGE

It's not a cold.

SIERRA

I don't think it's the Bubonic Plague.

(HODGE kneels, leaving a clear gap between him and SIERRA. He takes out the box with the ring and wipes it down with a moist toilette.)

SIERRA

Hodge, what are you...

HODGE

Are you ready?

SIERRA

This isn't funny.

HODGE

You're right. It isn't. But I'm doing my best.

(Pause)

'Arise my love and come away.'

(HODGE places the box in the claws of the grabber, inches closer, and holds it out to her, wobbling but as firm as he can.)

(SIERRA freezes)

HODGE

Winter is past, the rain is over and gone...

SIERRA

Hodge, *stop it*.

HODGE

Sierra: You're altogether beautiful. There is no flaw--

(SIERRA reaches over and slaps the grabber out of his hands. The grabber and the box across the floor. HODGE stands, stunned.)

SIERRA

I'm sorry. I don't...



(HODGE picks up the box and dusts it off.)

(They pause.)

SIERRA

I don't believe this is happening. Are you pranking me?

HODGE

No.

SIERRA

Then what is this?

HODGE (slowly)

There's a mandate due to a virus that someone on your plane...

SIERRA

Yeah, I know that, but what the hell are you doing?

HODGE

If you'll let me—

SIERRA

What is THIS? RIGHT HERE? Is this FOR REAL?

(A Pause)

HODGE

I'm trying to marry you.

SIERRA

And you won't touch me. You're proposing but we can't touch?  
What is wrong with you?

HODGE

Calm down.

SIERRA

I DON'T understand.

HODGE

Then listen. There's a virus we've never seen before. It's contagious. It's *asymptomatic*, meaning it spreads without symptoms. If it spreads it will kill people. Not you and not me, but older people. People with health problems. It was on *your* plane so we're being careful. Our governor said--

SIERRA

What are you, his intern?

HODGE

He wouldn't ask us to do all this if it wasn't...

SIERRA

If I've got it then you're screwed already.

(Pause)

We were dancing a minute ago. Your hand was right there on my sweaty, clammy, back. You kissed me on the lips.

HODGE

Sierra.

SIERRA

I've got NO symptoms. No coughing. No fever. No shortness of breath, nothing. But if I had them so what? You'd seriously *ruin* our...

HODGE

You don't need symptoms.

SIERRA

Says who?

HODGE

The CDC.

SIERRA

And they know this how? They've done trial experiments in the last month and a half? Thing's new on the scene and they know for a *fact* you don't need symptoms?

HODGE

You don't trust the CDC?

SIERRA

I'm not saying that.

HODGE

Yeah, you're implying it.

SIERRA

I'm asking what do they know about you and me? Do they know our medical histories, what we ate for breakfast?

HODGE

That not's the point. We're not talking about--

SIERRA (cutting him off)

...do they know the temperature outside, the...air humidity? Do they know how far you're standing from me?

HODGE (overlapping)

Good grief. You're not even...

SIERRA (overlapping)

Do they know what symptoms I have when I get a cold? Could the CDC tell you my nose runs like a faucet and that you...bite your tongue a lot? They're not *all-seeing*.

HODGE

They issued rules. We follow them, people won't die.

SIERRA

They're not *all-seeing*. And the rules won't work.

(Pause)

Maybe you've got it.

HODGE

Sierra...

SIERRA

Anything's possible.

HODGE

Not *likely*.

SIERRA

You sure?

HODGE

*Sierra.*

SIERRA

You picked me up and DROVE me here with the air on *circulate*. We gulped each other's carbon dioxide for ten whole minutes. You handed me a Clif bar, we shared a water bottle...

HODGE

No we didn't.

SIERRA

Ten minutes in, you handed me your Nalgene.

(Pause)

If you can't touch me, how exactly are you taking me home?

HODGE

I'm working on it. I'm *thinking*. But in the meantime...

SIERRA

Not thinking. You're reacting.

HODGE

Sierra.

SIERRA

What? You're literally panicking. There's not one rational thought in that whole list of rules--

HODGE (Overlapping)

Okay...*got it*. I've had enough. Got it. Hey, I said I GOT it. I'm not panicking, and you're hysterical. Will you stop?

SIERRA (Overlapping)

Not ONE. Know how I know that? I know you're not thinking because nobody in their *right mind* would stop a marriage proposal to lose their shit over some made-up--

HODGE

I said THAT'S ENOUGH.

(Pause)

I didn't plan it this way. I didn't plan it, I don't like it, but I'm *not* making this up. You understand?

(Pause)

That virus, the one that was on your plane; it's not sentient. It doesn't think. It can't be reasoned with. If you're infected, it won't make an exception because I'm proposing to you, *okay*?

SIERRA

Hodge...

HODGE

I'm not saying you have it. You probably don't. But *if* you have and it, and you're contagious, then the virus *will not care* that it's a romantic occasion.

SIERRA (quietly)

Was.

(Pause)

It was romantic.

(They pause.)

HODGE

Well, I'm not the one ruining it.

SIERRA

Are you serious?

HODGE

I'm responding like I should, like a conscientious person who's aware of what's going on. I'm not thumbing my nose at the...science because I don't like the timing.

SIERRA

I dare you to touch me.

(SIERRA takes a step toward him, but HODGE steps back.)

HODGE

What are you doing?

(She steps closer).

SIERRA

Nothing. We were dancing a minute ago. C'mon big boy. Come here and give mama a touch.

HODGE

C'mon. You know the guideline, six feet away!

(SIERRA steps backward and HODGE moves forward. She takes two quick steps forward and HODGE retreats.)

(SIERRA darts over to HODGE's backpack and starts touching everything. She rubs items against her arms, her legs, presses them against her face, making a general show of it.)

HODGE

*What are you...are you out of your mind?*

SIERRA

I'm infecting my boyfriend so it's over with. What does it look like?

HODGE

Why would you--

SIERRA

*Herd immunity, baby.*

(SIERRA licks his Nalgene.)

(HODGE takes the grabber and tries to stop her with it. She grabs onto it and a tugging match ensues.)

HODGE (overlapping)

What are you five? Let go of it. If you don't let go *right now*...

SIERRA (overlapping)

The rules, the precious *ruuuuules!* I'm so afraid of breaking the rules!

(HODGE lets her have it.)

HODGE

Okay, fine TAKE IT!

(They catch their breath.)

HODGE

You're acting like a five-year-old.

SIERRA

Fair enough, coward.

HODGE

Excuse me?

SIERRA

I just said you're a coward.

HODGE

Take it back.

SIERRA

No.

HODGE

It's not cowardly to act responsible. Between the two of us, I'm being the adult in the room. When something's dangerous, an adult takes precaution. You know what a *child* does?

SIERRA

I'm done, Hodge. I tap out.

HODGE

You *can't*. It's not a game.

SIERRA

Whatever it is, I'm NOT DOING IT.

HODGE

Okay, look. I get it.

(Pause)

The mandate. Six feet. Something about wearing hospital masks that I *don't even*...it sounds ridiculous. All right. It *does*.

HODGE CONT'D

I'll even grant that's overkill. You know what won't accept? Your insistence--and whatever you think you're doing, you are insisting--that what we do right here, right now doesn't affect everyone around us. It's not about you, it's not about us, got it?

(Pause)

We're not careful we spread this to other people. People with asthma, diabetes, cancer. People like my Grandmother who are stuck in hospitals, stuck in retirement homes. People whose lives and safety might depend on you and I going along with this. Do you understand?

SIERRA

Diseases spread. Even if we're careful, we can't always stop them. That's *life*. That's history, the...fall of man.

HODGE

You're not following.

SIERRA

I'm all for caution but you're acting like these recommendations are a silver bullet. You know they'll change tomorrow, right?

HODGE

Doubt it. When the CDC...

SIERRA

A virus with *no symptoms*? How on earth do we...

HODGE

I don't know. But you know why I don't care? Because the health and safety of the people I care about overrides everything else.

(Pause)

If one of us...if I, or someone else gets sick with this and spreads it around, my Grandmother's gone. She's at a facility where people die every flu season. You seeing the big picture or is this still a game to you? You may not care about her, but *I do*, okay?

SIERRA (incredulous)

You think I don't care?

HODGE (nearly ignoring her)

When my parents split, she was there for us, okay...she and no one else. No one. If I did *anything* that would allow harm to come her, make her sick...if encourage other people to do anything that would make her sick...

SIERRA

I get that, okay?

HODGE

Do you? Cause it looks like you'd rather just roll the dice.

SIERRA

I get that you love her. I get that you're scared. But you can't just...

(HODGE takes off his jacket and throws it on the ground).

HODGE

Call me a *coward*. If I'm a coward, then you're a selfish idiot. You're dangerous.

SIERRA

I'm not...

HODGE

If you think your actions don't matter, you're dead wrong. And you're irresponsible. You like risks so much why don't you marry them? Go...free solo Half Dome or something.

SIERRA

You're not...

HODGE

But don't spread your risk to everyone else. Get down of your soapbox and *wake up* to what's on. Is that asking too much?

SIERRA

If you'll *let me*...

HODGE

If we follow the rules like everyone else fewer people like my Grandmother will catch it and die, period, full stop, that's all she wrote. Is that enough for you? Do you UNDERSTAND what I'm telling you?

SIERRA (softly)

*Yeah*. Yeah I do.

HODGE

Okay.

(Pause)

Sierra, this won't be permanent. In few weeks, maybe a *month* I'm sure we'll be back to normal. I don't *want* this just like you don't, but I have to...



SIERRA

Do your thing Hodge. It's okay.

(SIERRA picks up her water bottle.)

SIERRA

Getting late.

(SIERRA starts to leave.)

HODGE

Wait, hold on...

(Pause)

I wasn't finished.

(Pause)

In truth, I've still got something to ask you.

SIERRA

*Oh no.* Not now.

HODGE

I've planned this and I'm ready.

SIERRA

Hodge, please don't...

HODGE

Listen, hear me out... I've had this moment in mind since the day I met you. Remember it? Remember that first hike just the two of us? It was this trail. This month. You left me in the dust, remember?

SIERRA

I'm asking you, *don't* do this.

HODGE

You challenge me, Sierra. You're fearless and you nudge me out in the open. Like no one else. Whatever happens, whatever our *governor* says, whatever off-road safari we find ourselves on...

SIERRA (Shaking her head)

*Please.* Just...

(HODGE goes down on one knee, the box open, the ring gleaming.)

HODGE

I want to share my life with you. I want to protect you, cherish you.

(Pause)

HODGE CONT'D

Sierra Justine--

SIERRA

No.

(A Pause)

SIERRA

I should get going.

HODGE

Sierra...*I didn't even...*

(SIERRA shakes her head.)

(HODGE stands.)

HODGE

*Why not?*

SIERRA

Come closer... come close to me and I'll tell you.

HODGE

We shouldn't and you know it.

(Pause)

We can't touch, you know that. You were on that plane.

SIERRA

Okay.

(SIERRA turns.)

HODGE

Wait.

(HODGE stands, walks a few steps, then goes down on one knee again.)

(SIERRA shakes her head.)

(HODGE gets up, moves closer, kneels again.)

HODGE

Sierra Justine Kile...

SIERRA

You got one more try.

HODGE

What do you even...

SIERRA

Come. Closer.

HODGE

Okay. Hold on.

(HODGE goes to the backpack. He takes an extra shirt and wraps it over his mouth and nose like a mask. He wraps a bandana over his hand and then then puts on sunglasses.)

(All protected, HODGE kneels.)

HODGE (muffled):

Sierra, will you...

(SIERRA pulls off the sunglasses and slides the shirt off his face. She offers him her hand.)

SIERRA

Last chance.

(HODGE stands.)

(He takes the ring out of the box.)

(SIERRA reaches for his hand, but he flinches.)

(SIERRA backs up.)

SIERRA

Yeah, that's what I thought.

HODGE

I'm here. I'm *literally* here, and I don't know what your problem is.

SIERRA (weakly)

I'm sorry, Hodge. I'm sorry.

(SIERRA turns and gathers her things; perhaps she cries a little.)

HODGE

Where you are you going?

SIERRA

Home.

HODGE

Wait. At least, let me...

SIERRA

I'll walk.

HODGE

It's not just me, you know. It's everywhere, the... whole town's closed. Restaurants. Bet you anything they'll cancel classes this week.

(SIERRA stops. She takes her phone out, reads.)

HODGE

See?

SIERRA

You're right. Looks like you're right.

(Pause)

You win, I guess.

HODGE

It's not a contest. And trust me; it's just *temporary*. Emergencies are temporary. When the governor of *our state*...

SIERRA

You're a lemming.

(A pause.)

HODGE

Why? Because I...

SIERRA (erupting)

Because you *don't* think; that's why. You just...*obey*. Doesn't matter if it makes sense. Doesn't matter if it's pure panic. They tell you, and you obey *carte blanche*.

HODGE

What do you want from me?

(SIERRA advances.)

SIERRA

You're going to hurt people. You realize that don't you? *YOU*. All of this, the whole mandate. Everyone following this for a week, a month. For as long as they're told. *THAT* will kill people. You're afraid of a damn virus? What about forcing people to live in fear, *cower* in their own homes until some--

HODGE (overlapping)

I'm so done with this.

SIERRA (overlapping)

--government bureaucrat tells them it's OK to come out?

(HODGE goes to his backpack.)

SIERRA CONT'D

People can't live like this. They'll go crazy. They'll go out of business. They'll commit suicide. My brother owns a restaurant. Mortgaged his house with two kids. Been living month to *month*.

HODGE

*Good for him.*

(SIERRA gets in his face.)

SIERRA

What's he supposed to do, huh? Give it up? Just, roll over and wait because someone might be contagious? Go bankrupt while he's waiting around for the all-knowing CDC to--

HODGE

I don't know.

SIERRA

*Two kids...my niece and my nephew. What does he do, HUH?*

HODGE

I DON'T KNOW. It's a PANDEMIC. Nobody knows.

(A pause.)

SIERRA

Think I do.

(SIERRA turns, crosses.)

HODGE

Sierra.

(SIERRA stops.)

HODGE

We're not...

(Pause)

It's all right that we don't see eye to eye on this. We *don't* and I get that. I get that, all right? But that doesn't mean we can't come together and somehow, just...

SIERRA

How?

(Pause)

You won't even touch me.

(HODGE moves closer, takes a deep breath, and kneels down again.)

HODGE

I *will*. Don't you know that I will?

(Pause)

When this emergency clears up, I'll dance with you. Dip you. Next time we're at the llama farm and we're filthy and slobbery from feeding them, I'll hold your hand while we walk to the beach.

(Pause)

Sierra...

SIERA

No, Hodge.

(A pause.)

HODGE

Because of this? Because of how I'm...

SIERRA

Yes.

HODGE

You're saying no.

(SIERRA nods.)

(HODGE rises.)

(A pained silence.)

HODGE

Why? Because of *this*? Because of how I'm...

SIERRA

Yeah

(Pause)

Yeah, I think so. You want me to trust you? You want to protect me?

HODGE

Yes.

SIERRA

If this is how you act when you're afraid of something.

HODGE (

I'm not afraid, I told you that. We've been over this--

SIERRA (Overlapping)

--YES, afraid. You're afraid of a virus. A harmless one. What happens when it's for real, huh?

HODGE (Overlapping)

--this thing IS real. What about a growing pandemic do you *not* understand?

SIERRA (Overlapping)

--when something real and dangerous happens, what will you do then? How do I know you'll step up? If you're acting like a friggin' coward right now--

(HODGE reaches over and slaps her.)

HODGE (fuming)

Don't *call* me a coward! I told you that.

(Whimpering, SIERRA turns.)

HODGE

I...

(Pause)

I can't believe I did that.

(Pause)

I apologize.

SIERRA

*Goodbye.*

HODGE

Wait. We talked about this. You can't just--

SIERRA

Tough break.

HODGE (nearly in tears.)

*Please...don't leave before you hear me out. You're not even listening.*

(SIERRA turns.)

SIERRA

I sure am. I'm listening and watching you cower in fear and *I won't do that*. I won't live in a way that shames my parents,

SIERRA CONT'D

my family... my Savior, Hodge. A God and Savior you *believe* in.

HODGE

Sierra, *don't--*

SIERRA

Since when do we fear death? *Don't be afraid for I have overcome the world.*

HODGE

What are you talking about?

SIERRA

Everything. I'm talking about everything. Fear or courage, comfort or the Cross, *every single moment.*

HODGE

How about pride and arrogance? Thinking there's a speck in someone's eye when you've got a damn *log* in yours? What about obeying the government? Giving to Caesar what is Caesar's...

SIERRA

You want to spend your life with me?

HODGE

Yes.

SIERRA

Then tell me: what life are you inviting me into?

HODGE

A decent one. One where I give you everything I have.

SIERRA

Drenched in fear?

(HODGE scoffs, turns. He starts packing up the items spread over the bench into his backpack.)

HODGE (sotto)

*Useless.* It's all useless.

SIERRA

You can't hide from this, you know. You can't stick your head in the sand and pretend it's the right thing...

HODGE (grumbling to himself.)

I'm not the only one afraid, that's for sure. You're afraid of change, obedience. a little hardship. Well, I'm not. I'm not



HODGE CONT'D

afraid of sacrifice that means other people and what they need come before me. I'm fine with that, I'm reasonable. But you? No way. Nothing doing, Miss Daredevil. Miss 'everyone be damned because my life and my rights and my wonder woman faith journey, and hey, this is 'MURICA.'

SIERRA

Listen to yourself.

(HODGE turns to her.)

HODGE

It's science, OKAY? It's my grandmother, people without healthcare. And it's your brother too, okay? Restaurant owners. What can he do if he's hooked up to a ventilator?

SIERRA

You're disgusting.

HODGE

At least I'm not selfish. It's not obsessed with MY life, MY whims and liberties; my spidey sense that *this is all wrong* while EVERYONE ELSE suffers.

SIERRA (weakly)

Who are you?

(Pause)

I wanted to marry you. I was excited. But I can't live like this.

HODGE

Weren't you leaving?

(SIERRA turns, crying softly. She takes a moment to catch her breath.)

(Pained, HODGE moves closer to her.)

HODGE

Sierra...

(SIERRA darts over to the edge of the stage.)

HODGE

Wait. I'm sorry.

SIERRA

Me too.

HODGE

Can I do anything? Not now, maybe not today...but I'm coming for you. How do I?

SIERRA

Laugh at it. Laugh at the bomb and live.

HODGE

The bomb? What do you mean?

SIERRA

C.S. Lewis. The atom bomb...age. The atomic age...*I don't know*, something from class. We read it, remember?

HODGE

I don't...

SIERRA

I can't remember.

(Pause)

You want something, take the risk.

(SIERRA exits.)

(HODGE crosses the stage after her.)

HODGE (calling O.S.)

Sierra? ... *Sierra?*

(Nothing.)

(Alone, HODGE sits next to his backpack. The plastic grabber is still onstage. He walks over and kicks it.)

END OF SCENE

SCENE TWO - A FEW MONTHS LATER

Indoors. Darkness.

A COMPUTER SCREEN opens, lighting up HODGE's face. He's alone in his room, and he's recording a VIDEO.

HODGE (sotto)

Presets on... resolution set...

(His face appears on a projection screen above.)

(He coughs, takes a drink of water).

HODGE

Here we go...

COMPUTER VOICE

Recording.

HODGE

Hey everyone. Here I am for today's update. Day twelve of my two-week quarantine. Still some coughing, but feeling better... So bizarre. A lot of people have this strange *on* again, *off* again... If I'm on the mend I hope that means off for good.

(Pause)

Been taking walks. It's gorgeous outside.

(Pause)

I'm itching to see you. Can't wait to get out and see people again. Snow's melting. Classes are online, so...that's neat.

(Pause)

If you're watching this, then thanks for the love. I've enjoyed the comments, the pictures. Even got a letter or two.

(He holds up an opened envelope)

HODGE

Auntie Shay, thank you. You win the prize for how much glitter you can fit in an envelope. Glitter all over my fingers...

(Pause)

I see it all and it's great. But still, I miss you guys.

(Pause)

So once again I'm going to talk to someone in particular. If you've been following this you know who that is; you know it's your cue to turn this off and check back later. Honor system out there, so... please oblige me.

HODGE

This is for Sierra... and for anyone else still watching, I guess.

(Pause)

How are you doing? I'm still here, still broadcasting and hope you see this. I remember everything we said that day. Everything I said. I think about it, you know. If I'd known that was the last day I'd be out with you...last time I'd see your hair catching the light or hold your back right on the shoulder blade you always think is so sweaty.

(Pause)

It's not, if you want to know. You don't sweat AT ALL and you're so self-conscious it's ridiculous...

(HODGE reads something on the screen).

HODGE

Yeah, *thanks* guys. Okay, turning comments off...if you're hearing this, time to go. That means you, Auntie Shay, I love you but, scoot along.

(Pause)

Sierra, I packed hard that day. I was all packed and I didn't want to fail. I mean, you have no idea how much gear I *didn't* pack. If it wasn't for the climb I would have brought you a gourmet picnic with those chocolate *whatyoumahcallits* you're always craving.

(Pause)

I overprepare. I like things neat and tidy; and I'd say CDC rules fall in the category. At least they did, right off the bat. Now, *well*...I look around and I think you were right about a lot of things. But that's me and I can't help it. I dig planning, neatness. I hate it when my plans fail.

(Pause)

You said something that day. Right before you left, you said 'If you want something, take the risk.' I didn't know what you were talking about at first. But I've had plenty of time to find out. I've been reading some C.S. Lewis. Volume and a half later I found what you were talking about.

(HODGE takes out a small book, or perhaps he's transcribed the passage in a journal.)

HODGE

It's from an essay. 'On Living in the Atomic Age.' Here's the juicy part, the part that probably popped into your mind when we were arguing. Here it goes.

(HODGE clears his throat).

HODGE (Reading)

"How are we to live in the atomic age?" I am tempted to reply: 'why, as you would have lived in the sixteenth century when the plague visited London almost every year, or as you would have lived in a Viking age when raiders from Scandinavia might land and cut your throat any night; or indeed, as you are already living in an age of cancer, an age of syphilis, an age of air raids...

(Pause)

In other words, do not let us begin by exaggerating the novelty of our situation. Believe me...you and all whom you love were already sentenced to death before the atomic bomb was invented: and quite a high percentage of us are going to die in unpleasant ways.

(Pause)

If we are going to be destroyed by an atomic bomb, let that bomb when it comes find us doing sensible and human things--praying, working, teaching, reading, listening to music, bathing the children, playing tennis, chatting to our friends over a pint and a game of darts--not huddled together like frightened sheep and thinking about bombs. They may break out bodies... a *microbe* can do that."

(HODGE pauses.)

HODGE

A *microbe*.

(Pause)

"They may break out bodies, a *microbe* can do that, but they need not dominate our minds."

(HODGE puts the book down.)

HODGE

That's it right there. More I think about it, I know that's what you meant when we were up on the trail. I think that's what your brave, feisty heart was telling you.

(Pause)

You're right about risk. If you want a full life, risk's the price of admission. And tomorrow might not even be there. Every day, you tango with death and danger because faith demands it, and because life's too valuable to be hoarded to yourself.

(Pause)

When I'm done with my fourteen days, I'm coming to see you. I haven't given up. I won't. I think you've seen at least one of these recordings, so.. prepare yourself. You're not getting away that easy.

(HODGE coughs, drinks.)

HODGE

Consultant that I am, I thought good and hard about it. I wrote it out, ran the numbers. I made a pros and cons list.

(Pause)

And then I took a risk. A *big* one; relatively speaking.

(Pause)

You're worth any risk life might throw at me.

(Pause)

You're worth it, Sierra. And I'm not sure where I'm going...I'm not exactly sure, but I've got an idea. But wherever it is, whatever opens up after we graduate, I think you'll want to come with me. In the choice words of Dwight Schrute, 'Michael: you have no idea, what I'm capable of...

(Pause)

(We hear a KNOCK offstage.)

(HODGE stop the recording; the projection screen blinks off.)

(He turns a light on.)

(Another KNOCK)

HODGE

*Coming!*

(HODGE stands, exits.)

HODGE (O.S.)

Hey.

(Pause)

Are you sure want to...come in?

(HODGE enters, followed by SIERRA, dressed in a winter coat.)

(They keep their distance.)

SIERRA

Freezing out there.

HODGE

Yeah.

(Pause)

Sorry. I don't look terrible, but I'm not dressed for the...

SIERRA

Nice P.J.'s.

(HODGE smiles.)

HODGE

I uh...I tested positive a few weeks ago. I'm still...or I *could* still be contagious.

SIERRA

I know. I saw the videos.

(SIERRA holds up her phone.)

HODGE

Did you see the one just now...

SIERRA

The one where you told the whole world my back isn't sweaty? *Yeah*. Saw it.

(A Pause.)

HODGE

Why'd you come here?

SIERRA

What was the risk?

HODGE

The risk?

SIERRA

You said in the video you took a big risk. What was it?

HODGE

Getting covid.

(Pause)

My friend was contagious, so I went over and infected myself.

(Pause)

I did it. I scared the living daylights out of myself, but you know what? I faced what I was afraid of. I went out and just got it *over with*. So now it's...

(They pause.)

SIERRA

No way.

(Pause)

*Are you serious?*

HODGE

I did it for you. I did it to win you back.

SIERRA

I don't believe you.

(HODGE kneels down.)

HODGE  
Here I go. Sierra Justine Kile,

SIERRA  
Nooooo.....

HODGE  
In sickness and in health would you...

SIERRA  
No, no you INFECTED Yourself? Like, *'get in bed with your sister, Davy. It's your turn for Chicken Pox.'*

(HODGE chortles.)

SIERRA  
Are you serious?

(HODGE grins, chuckles, then laughs).

SIERRA  
Oh my goodness.

HODGE  
Should have seen your face.  
(Pause)  
Been practicing that one for a long time.  
(Pause)  
Would have been perfect for Tik Tok.

SIERRA  
Okay, you're saying in real life, you *did not* go infect yourself. That was just a prank.

(HODGE nods.)

(SIERRA gives him a playful punch on the shoulder.)

SIERRA (somber now)  
Hey, um...  
(Pause)  
I'm so sorry. I heard about your Grandmother.

HODGE  
I got it from her. I went and visited, helped her out. Took every precaution too, but the thing was already bouncing around. Five people at her home...gone. They kicked me out,



HODGE CONT'D

but I kept coming back. I was there at the end; I was there to... hold her hand.

(Pause)

So it was her or someone else.

(Pause)

It was painful. But she wasn't scared.

(They pause.)

(Perhaps SIERRA is tearing up a bit).

SIERRA

I'm sorry. On the trail, when we...I shouldn't have said some of *those*...

(Pause)

I want you to know I respect you.

(Pause)

And I miss you.

HODGE

Miss you too.

(Pause)

So what are you watching these days...

(Unable to hold off, SIERRA rushes over and wraps HODGE in a hug. He is caught off guard, but hugs her back).

HODGE

I'm contagious... *Are you sure you want to...*

(HODGE holds her. He lets go, leans over to the laptop, presses a few buttons.)

(The same song from scene one, 'Still in Love With You' plays over the speakers.)

(They dance, close and unafraid.)

LIGHTS FADE.

END OF PLAY.