

Next of Kin

A Play

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SAMPLE

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## **CAST OF CHARACTERS**

*(3 men, 2 women)*

### **DON**

(40 - male)

He is the oldest of the three siblings, and the most damaged. High strung. Angry, grounded, and lost.

### **KAREN**

(35 - female)

She's the middle child. Filled with love and forgiveness, but can't seem to forgive herself.

### **JOEY**

(30 - male)

He's the youngest of the three siblings, and wants nothing more than to have a solid complete family.

### **MARK**

(65 - male)

He is a man who craves the feeling of being loved. He's the father of the three siblings, whom he walked out on many years ago. He left his wife for her sister, and left his family, in the pursuit of religion.

### **EMMA**

(25 - female)

The daughter of the funeral home director. She is the voice of slanted reason. She is also very pregnant.

### **Time:**

The play spans many years of time, from 30 years ago, through today.

### **Locations:**

The Woods - Kitchen - Bedroom

SCENE ONE

THE WOODS

*THE PRESENT*

*Lights rise on DON and JOEY. They are in the woods. Sounds of birds and wind through the trees might be heard. They are lit by one beam of light. DON wears a back pack.*

*He looks around making sure this is the perfect spot.*

DON

This is it.

JOEY

Are you sure?

DON

Close enough. I think so. Don't you think?

JOEY

It's nice. Peaceful.

DON

It is, isn't it?

JOEY

Yes.

DON

Good enough?

JOEY

Only you would know.

DON

So, do you want to do it here?

JOEY

Do you think people can see us?

DON

Who cares? This is a beautiful thing we are about to do. We don't need to feel ashamed.

JOEY

It just seems like something that should be private.

DON

Just relax. It's all going to be all right.

JOEY

I know. I've just never done this before.

DON

Well, you've done it before in a way. Maybe not quite like THIS. But we've both done it before.

JOEY

Right.

DON

Look. We can take it slow. There's no need for this to be rushed.

JOEY

Thanks for being so understanding.

DON

We are a team. I love you, Joey.

JOEY

I love you too, Donnie. Have you thought about when you're leaving?

DON

I'm going to stick around a while. You know, help you with the loose ends. About time we all worked together.

JOEY

Thanks. It'll be nice to have you around for a bit longer.

DON

I feel the same way.

JOEY

We didn't get much time to catch up on this trip.

DON

No. This wasn't what I thought it would be. Not at all. But that's life. Enjoy it while you got it. At least we have the right now.

JOEY

When does Karen get back to Amsterdam?

DON

She'll be on the plane for another three hours I bet. That is one long ass flight.

JOEY

Too bad she couldn't stay, too. It would have been nice to do it with all three of us.

DON

Her job isn't very flexible. Mine is too flexible.

JOEY

This is weird.

DON

What's weird?

JOEY

This. What we're... You know.

DON

Don't be silly, Joey. After all we've been through with this. This part is far from weird. This is natural and beautiful.

JOEY

I don't know if beautiful is the right word.

DON

I think it is. This is how life goes. It starts, then it ends. And then...

JOEY

How are you feeling?

DON

About?

JOEY

You know. Are you okay?

DON

I feel pretty shitty. But, what can you do? I mean, I think things came together. I'm thankful for that. I wish it didn't happen... But it did.

JOEY

Right.

DON

I just said so many bad things... Things I didn't really mean. Then it happens. Wow.

JOEY

The doctor said it wasn't...

DON

I know what she said. But I think we all know what happened. How it happened. And why it happened. That's why we're here now.

JOEY

I think we all have our time to go. Nothing changes that.

DON

But sometimes we can speed it along for someone. I did my fair share of that.

JOEY

I don't believe that.

DON

Well... Thanks.

JOEY

Do you have it?

DON

Of course I have it.

*DONNIE pulls out a cardboard canister the size of an oatmeal box out of his backpack. He sets it on the ground in front of them.*

JOEY

That's everything? The whole thing... Right in there?

DON

That's the whole enchilada. Sad, isn't it? You can fit an entire life into one tube. All you are. All you were. All your memories, all your thoughts...

JOEY

Is that cardboard?

DON

The sides. Yeah.

JOEY

I thought...

DON

What?

JOEY

I thought we had a talk about that.

DON

We did.

JOEY

That's kind of cheap.

DON

It's a modest functional urn.

JOEY

It was the cheapest wasn't it?

DON

We're just using it to get the ashes here. Does it have to be a gold fucking goblet?

JOEY

I didn't mean anything by it, Donnie.

DON

I know. This is hard for me too. This isn't supposed to be about money.

JOEY

Right. What do we do?

DON

Well, we open it and... Well, There's a couple of ways, I guess. We could pour it out. We could scoop it out and spread it. We could pour it in a circle and dance around it. What sounds best to you?

JOEY

I mean should we say something first?

DON

What do you want to say?

JOEY

Something nice. I don't know... Good bye?

DON

We have been saying things about this for about as long as I can take. I don't know if There's anything else I can say.

JOEY

I didn't get to say much.

DON

You're the youngest.

JOEY

Well, now that I can talk I don't know what to say.

DON

Let's just take a moment and reflect.

JOEY

What do you mean?

DON

Think good thoughts to ourselves.

JOEY

Right.

DON

Yeah. Think good thoughts. Quietly.

JOEY

Sounds like a plan.



DON  
Okay. I think I'm going to sit.

JOEY  
Me too.

DON  
Seems more intimate.

JOEY  
A little.

DON  
Let's think... Then we can figure out the next step. But let's do the reflection thing now.

JOEY  
Okay. Let's think.

*They both stare at the urn for about twenty seconds.*

DON  
What are you thinking about?

JOEY  
I hadn't started yet. I keep getting stuck on the concept that there is a body in there. It's kind of freaking me out.

DON  
It's just ashes and...

JOEY  
I've heard that it is not what you think. I've heard that it's more like gravel. Like crushed bones.

DON  
You mean like bone chips?

JOEY  
Yeah. Crushed bone chips.

DON  
Well, I suppose that's natural. It would make sense.

JOEY  
I don't like that. It makes it too real.

DON  
It's all real, Joey.

JOEY  
I don't want to touch any of it.

DON  
Fine. I'll do it; you don't have to.

JOEY  
Thanks.

DON  
Why don't you open it?

JOEY  
Why me?

DON  
That way we are both part of it. I'll sprinkle and pour. You open.

JOEY  
Oh, right. Right. How does it work?

DON  
There's a strip at the top of the canister that you pull around the top in a circle. Then the top pops off.

*JOEY does it.*

JOEY  
Donnie.

DON  
What?

JOEY  
It's got a metal top.

DON  
What do you mean a metal top?

JOEY  
Like a can of soup.

DON  
What?

JOEY  
It's sealed like a can of soup.

DON  
Well, the sides are cardboard. The top must pull off the sides.

JOEY  
No. The sides are metal under the cardboard.

DON  
So It's a sealed can?

JOEY  
Makes sense. Hermetically sealed or something like that.

DON  
Are you saying we need a fucking can opener to get that shit out?

JOEY  
Donnie, please. Show some respect.

DON  
I am showing respect. I am just not believing they would put it in a fucking soup can.  
What do we do? Do you have a can opener?

JOEY  
No.

DON  
Do we need one?

JOEY  
Looks like.

DON  
Well that's just great. What do we do now?

JOEY  
There was a Quick Trip about a mile down the road. I bet they would have one.

Let's break it open on a rock.

DON

Are you nuts?

JOEY

Come on. Let's do it.

DON

This is supposed to be a sacred event. We shouldn't do it by smacking it against a rock.

JOEY

No. I'm saying we can smack a rock against it. Pop the top off.

DON

No. Absolutely not.

JOEY

There should be a pull-tab or something.

DON

There's nothing.

JOEY

This is wrong.

DON

Stay calm.

JOEY

Why would they make you use a can opener? That is demeaning. This is a loved one, not a snack. Our loved one has become a canned good.

DON

I'll go get the can opener. You can stay here.

JOEY

You'll never find me. We are really out here.

DON

I'll find you.

JOEY

Hey.

DON

JOEY  
What?

DON  
I've got an idea.

JOEY  
What?

DON  
Let's just leave it like this.

JOEY  
No.

DON  
Think about it. Then we can always come here and see the can.

JOEY  
That's not right.

DON  
It's perfect.

JOEY  
I am not leaving a loved one in a can.

DON  
It's always something. This has been one screwed-up deal.

JOEY  
You stay here. I will be right back. And besides... I think you two could use some time alone. You know?

DON  
What am I supposed to do?

JOEY  
Talk to the can. Love the can. Be the can.

DON  
I guess a little time alone wouldn't be a bad thing.

JOEY  
I'll be right back.

DON

We will be right here.

CROSS FADE:

SCENE TWO

THE KITCHEN

*One week ago. Morning.*

*Kitchen. JOEY sits at table with head in hands.  
DON and KAREN arrive with suitcases.*

DON

Mom! Surprise!

KAREN

Mommy!

DON

Joey! How the hell are you? You look fabulous. It's great to see you!

KAREN

My little brother. Joey, I can't believe It's you. It has been so long.

DON

Come on, Joey, give big brother a hug.

KAREN

Joey?

JOEY

Hi.

KAREN

Okay.

DON

Shit, Joey. No need for a fanfare, but how about some eye contact, a hug, a fuck off...  
Anything.

Fuck off. JOEY

JOEY?! KAREN

What's going on? DON

Is Mom here? KAREN

Yeah. JOEY

Did you tell her we were coming? KAREN

No. JOEY

How long have you been here? KAREN

About an hour. Listen-- JOEY

Maybe we should let her know we are here first. DON

I don't think It's going to be an issue. JOEY

Don't kid yourself. I've seen stories where people are so startled from surprise parties that they go into a coma. DON

That would be a little embarrassing, not to mention a little disturbing. KAREN

We should let her know quietly. I'm really questioning this surprise party thing. DON

Well, where is she? KAREN

JOEY

She's in the living room. Listen...

KAREN

Well why didn't you say so? We should keep our voices down.

JOEY

Not important.

KAREN

I know, but still... I want her to be surprised.

JOEY

It's all going to be a big surprise.

DON

Joey, you're not being yourself. Why are you acting like this?

KAREN

Come on, Donnie, none of us have seen each other in a long time. It takes a while to get back into the groove.

DON

This isn't racquetball. It's not like we need a little warm-up time to get along. We're family.

KAREN

I know, but still. Give the kid a break.

JOEY

I need to tell you guys something. Sit down.

DON

Screw sitting, I've been on a plane for ten hours. Speak.

KAREN

Joey, are you sick?

JOEY

I do feel a little nauseous.

DON

Don't baby him, Karen. He's a big boy now. Jesus Mary, look at this place. She was never big on a feather duster.



JOEY

We need to talk.

DON

I've never seen this place before. You did good for her, Joey. I like it. It smells a bit. But she never had a nose for smell.

KAREN

I remember. What were those candles that she would burn around the house? For the bugs? Burned our noses, but she thought they were pretty.

JOEY

Citronella.

KAREN

She always called them lemon.

DON

Dad hated them. I think it was her way of getting even.

KAREN

She could never tell the difference. Lemon, cinnamon, Pine sol.

JOEY

Right.

DON

You do look sick, Joey. You okay?

KAREN

Are you all right?

JOEY

As a matter of fact, no. I feel like I am going to puke.

KAREN

I know. I think We're all a little nervous.

DON

Got just the thing. I picked up some bitters in London before I left.

KAREN

You would love London, Joey. I flew there from Amsterdam to meet Donnie. London is like a big movie, only real.

DON

I love it. Took me a while to learn to drive on the wrong side of the street, but now it just seems natural.

KAREN

And Amsterdam is like a slice of heaven. I went to a hash bar last weekend.

DON

Excuse me?

KAREN

I just watched, and breathed. Breathed deep.

DON

Where is she?

KAREN

I almost forgot. I don't hear her.

JOEY

I told you... She's in the living room.

DON

How's she look?

JOEY

Not too good.

DON

What's wrong with her?

JOEY

You know how people change.

KAREN

I'll go find her. Is the living room this way?