



Arts Engagement
and Education

Elliot

“My sister and I had the stomach flu, right? For a whole day we couldn’t keep nothing down.”

From *Water by the Spoonful*

By Quiara Alegria Hudes: <http://www.quiara.com>

Gender: Male/Male Presenting

Style: Contemporary Dramatic

Age Range: 20's

Link to Buy Script: www.amazon.com

Plot Summary

The play begins with traumatized Iraq war veteran Elliot receiving the news of the sudden death of his mother, Ginny, and with him sharing the news with his musician cousin, Yazmin. As Elliot and Yazmin work through their own grief, cope with the grief of other family members, and struggle to make funeral arrangements that will please everybody, Ginny’s sister Odessa continues to run a pet project: an online chatroom that offers support for people, like her, struggling to recover from an addiction to crack cocaine.

As the action of the play unfolds, it’s revealed that Elliot (who is haunted by a particularly traumatizing experience in Iraq), is himself addicted to pain killers, and that Odessa was his biological mother: she gave him to Ginny to raise because she (Odessa) realized that she was unfit. Further revelations reveal the depth of that lack of fitness: in order to get a fix of her drug, Odessa abandoned Elliot and his weaker younger sister while they were suffering from a severe flu, with the result that Elliot’s sister died. Elliot continues to angrily blame Odessa for what happened, and when he reveals her past to a member of the chatroom community with whom Odessa was meeting in person, the guilt becomes too much for her and she relapses. Her subsequent re-use of crack leads to a near fatal overdose.

Before this moment:

Elliot Ortiz and Yaz Ortiz enter the coffee shop. Elliot is angry at Odessa for not showing up to help pay for the flowers. Odessa says she doesn't have any money. They continue to argue about it. Elliot tells Fountainhead (a recent addition to the online addiction group) that he's Odessa's son, but he was raised by his Aunt Ginny who just died. He continues to demand money.

Elliot says Odessa isn't the saint she portrays herself to be in the chat room. He asks Fountainhead if he knows about Odessa's daughter. Yaz tries to encourage Elliot to leave, but he begins to tell the story of one of his earliest memories where his sister died from dehydration.

Monologue: Scene VII

My sister and I had the stomach flu, right? For a whole day we couldn’t keep nothing down.

Medicine, juice, anything we ate, it would come right back up. Your co-worker here took us to the Children’s Hospital.

It was wall-to-wall packed. Every kid in Philly had this bug. ERs were turning kids away. They gave us a flier about stomach flu and sent us home. Bright blue paper. Little cartoon diagrams. It said give your kids a spoonful of water every five minutes.

A small enough amount that they can keep it down. Five minutes. Spoon. Five minutes. Spoon. I remember thinking, Wow, this is it. Family time. Quality time. Just the three of us. Because it was gentle, the way you said, "Open up." I opened my mouth, you put that little spoon of water into my mouth. That little bit of relief. And then I watched you do the same thing with my little sister. And I remember being like, "Wow, I love you, Mom. My moms alright." Five minutes. Spoon. Five minutes. Spoon. But you couldn't sit still like that. You had to have your thing. That's where I stop remembering. A Department of Human Services report. That's my memory. Six hours later a neighbor kicks in the door. Me and my sister are lying in a pile of laundry. My shorts was all messed up. And what I really don't remember is my sister. Quote: "Female infant, approximately two years, pamper and tear ducts dry, likely cause of death, dehydration." Cuz when you dehydrate you can't form a single tear.

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