

University of British Columbia

Bryan Wade

Seven ways to fate and all

Abstract:

This script is the outcome of a practice-led research project exploring the exponential growth in British Columbia of fentanyl-detected illicit drug overdose deaths. A September 2017 summary from The BC Coroners Service's confirms a 143% increase in the number of deaths. In the canon of dramatic screenplays, few scripts explore the domain of drug addiction exclusively as a subject. In *The Man with the Golden Arm* (1955), Frank Sinatra plays Frankie Machine, a drug addict who becomes clean in prison and yearns to be a drummer. Yet, his heroin addiction is never specified. In *Clean and Sober* (1988) Michael Keaton is an alcoholic and cocaine addicted realtor who hides in a treatment center. However, in the recent, Emmy Award winning television series, *Breaking Bad*, Walter White's sidekick, Jesse Pinkham, is clearly a heroin addict. My screenplay differs from the above dramas in that most characters are not confirmed addicts. In my dramatized script I portray characters from many walks of life: teenagers, parents, actors, politicians, and the homeless, and show how they struggle with the impact of illicit drug usage. It can happen to anyone. As a character states in Way Five, "It (meaning addiction) is a health issue." Rather than a screed about illicit opioid use, my screenplay attempts to inform, open conversations and transform attitudes.

Biographical note:

Bryan Wade is a playwright, radio dramatist, novelist and associate professor, who teaches in the Creative Writing Program at U.B.C. He has been a playwright-in-resident at Factory Theatre and the Blyth Festival, along with being an invited artist at the Stratford Festival and the Playwrights Colony at the Banff School of Fine Arts. His stage plays have been produced in Toronto, Quebec City, Seattle and Chicago. His radio dramas have been broadcast nationally on the C.B.C. in Canada and on ABC in Australia. His most recent publication is *Brave New Play Rites*, an anthology of short plays, which he edited for Anvil Press. His most recent audio script, *Scavenge*, is a podcast produced by Chatterbox Audio Theater.

Keywords:

Creative writing – Scriptwriting as research – Drug addiction – Overdose deaths

INTERTITLE. On a black screen, two words FADE IN: *WAY ONE*.
They FADE OUT:

INT. BATHROOM. NIGHT

Darkness. We hear the click click click of a lighter. Then a flame appears. A trembling hand lights a tea light in the chrome soap tray hanging over the rim of an old style claw foot bathtub. A second and third tea light are lit on the nearby counter and window shelf.

MAC (21, holocaust thin) clambers into the empty tub, wearing only a t-shirt and boxers. They tie off their arm with a rubber tube, open a flap, angle the powder into a spoon.

The lighter flicks again. We watch the powder heat up and liquefy in the spoon. The point of a needle penetrates the liquid, sucks it up.

Mac studies the loaded needle. Then plunges it home into their vein. They smile. The rush is immediate. They slide down in the tub, nodding off against the rim.

Mac's eyes close. Eyelids tremble, close, flick open, slowly shut.

EXT. TOWNHOUSE. NIGHT.

MOM (mid-40s, determined) and DAD (50, blue-collar worker) approach on the walk to Mac's townhouse. She carries a bakery box, tied with string. He wears a jacket with the word, *COACH*, on its sleeve. They stop, caught in the halo of light at Mac's front door. A long beat.

DAD

What are you waiting for?

MOM

I don't know.

DAD

Ring the doorbell.

MOM

Maybe we shouldn't.

DAD

What do you mean?

MOM

Maybe we shouldn't be here.

DAD

This was your idea.

MOM

I know.

DAD

You said we should celebrate.

MOM

It has been a miracle.

DAD

Free and clear. Zero substances for a year.

MOM

We have been blessed.

DAD

Then ring away.

MOM

He/she hates surprises.

DAD

Push the buzzer.

MOM

Never did. Remember when he/she was a baby and we took him/her to someone's place, how we had to show him/her every detail of the room? Colic does that.

DAD

Pardon me?

MOM

It's not easy having a colicky baby.

DAD

We got through it.

MOM

Our cross to bear.

DAD

We survived.

MOM

You were so good. Taking her/him for drives. Be gone for hours.

DAD

Car was the only thing that would put her/him to sleep.

MOM

Where did you go?

DAD

Everywhere. Nowhere.

Pause. He pushes doorbell, which buzzes harshly.

INT. BATHROOM. NIGHT.

While doorbell buzzes in background, we study Mac's face as their head lolls against rim. Drool snakes out of their open mouth and down their chin.

EXT. TOWNHOUSE. NIGHT.

Mom scowls at Dad.

MOM

What did you do that for?

DAD

To let Mac know we're here.

MOM

I'm not ready.

DAD

We can't stand outside Mac's front door all night.

MOM

What will I say?

DAD

We came to...to celebrate.

MOM

I don't know.

DAD

We came to congratulate. (Sings to Happy Birthday.) Happy anniversary to you, happy anniversary to you, happy anniversary dear Mac, happy anniversary to you

MOM

Do not give up your day job.

DAD

Thanks. (A beat. She deposits box on doormat.) What are you doing?

MOM

Its clear Mac is not here. When he/she comes home, he/she will see the box, open it and voila.

DAD

You can't leave it outside. Critters will get at it.

MOM

What do you mean?

DAD

Racoons. Squirrels. Coyotes.

MOM

Coyotes do not eat cupcakes. They eat rabbits. Come on.

She turns and starts to leave. He takes out a key, opens the front door.

MOM

Hey!

He scoops up bakery box, enters townhouse. She follows him inside.

MOM

How did you get in?

INT. TOWNHOUSE KITCHEN/LIVING ROOM. NIGHT.

Dad holds up key, while he looks around compact space. Mom joins him.

DAD

With this

MOM

Where did you get that?

DAD

Landlord gave it to me.

MOM

But...Mac will be furious if he/she finds out.

DAD

I pay the rent...I figured it was only right that I...

He gestures towards the bathroom door, which is ajar. Light from the tea lights spills out.

Must have left a light on or something.

He crosses to the door, pushes it open, looks inside. Pause. He pulls door close, faces Mom.

MOM

Is Mac in there?

DAD:

No. I mean, yes. I mean, you shouldn't go in there.

MOM

What's going on?

She crosses to him. He blocks her way to the door.

Let me in

She tries to go around him. He blocks her. A beat. He lets her go. She opens door, steps inside.

No. No. No. No. NOOOOOOOOOOOOO! (O.S.)

Dad jumps, startled by Mom's gut wrenching scream from bathroom. He puts bakery box on counter, heads into bathroom.

INT. BATHROOM. NIGHT.

Dad discovers Mom on her knees by the tub, reaching in, touching Mac's cheek and hair.

MOM

DON'T JUST STAND THERE! DO SOMETHING!!!

DAD

But hon...there's nothing...

MOM

CALL 911!!! GET AN AMBULANCE!!!

While Dad digs out cell phone and dials, he watches Mom kiss Mac's hands.

It will be okay, baby. Help is on the way. This has got to be some kind of mistake. Your momma is here. I will make it better. I will make the pain go away.

DAD

(to dispatcher) I need an ambulance. It's an emergency.

INTERTITLE. On a black screen, two words FADE IN: *WAY TWO*. They FADE OUT:

INT. REHEARSAL HALL. NIGHT.

ACTORS ONE, TWO and THREE face us. The room has brick walls and a taped off floor.

ONE

Here are some stats.

TWO

Do we have to do this part?

ONE

Kind of.

TWO

I want to see the junkies.

ONE

Don't use that word.

TWO

I want to go to the Downtown Eastside and see the junkies.

ONE

They don't like to be labelled that way.

TWO

Isn't that what they are?

ONE

It's more productive to say they have a substance-use disorder.

TWO

What does that mean?

ONE

It's self-explanatory.

THREE

Seven three eight.

TWO

What about addicts? Can I call them that?

ONE

No. They prefer to not be defined that way either.

THREE

Patent 738.

TWO

I've heard there are tours.

THREE

That's what started the ball rolling. This epidemic.

TWO

Would you be interested in going with me?

ONE

No thanks.

THREE

In 1992 Purdue Pharma submitted a patent for a pill that would change how doctors treated pain.

TWO

I'll pay.

THREE

Purdue claimed in its application that the new pill would treat pain "without unacceptable side effects".

ONE

No.

TWO

How come?

ONE

Folks on the Downtown Eastside are not on exhibit.

THREE

The drug was given Canadian Patent #2,098, 738.

TWO

It will be edgy. Sketchy.

THREE

Official title in the application: controlled release oxycodone compositions.

TWO

It will be realer than real.

THREE

Its name: OxyContin.

TWO

We can live stream it on Facebook.

THREE

In the next two decades thousands of Canadians, no, make that tens of thousands of Canadians became addicted to OxyContin.

TWO

We can Instagram it.

THREE

What had started out as a prescription from your doctor to control back pain had become a nightmare.

ONE

These stats are courtesy of the BC Coroners Service.

TWO

Make a podcast.

ONE

In 2012 there were two hundred and sixty-nine illicit drug overdose deaths in B.C.

THREE

In 2012 Purdue withdrew OxyContin from the market replacing it with OxyNeo.

ONE

In 2013 there were three hundred and thirty-two overdose deaths.

TWO

Interview the addicts! I mean, the folks with a substance-use disorder.

THREE

Purdue claimed that OxyNeo could not be crushed or chewed like OxyContin.

ONE

In 2014 there were three hundred and sixty-six overdose deaths.

TWO

Tweet it out to my followers.

THREE

OxyNeo could not be abused or misused. It would not release the full dose at once getting you high.

ONE

In 2015 there were five hundred and thirteen deaths.

TWO

Take selfies.

THREE

But OxyNeo was just as addictive.

ONE

In 2016 nine hundred and twenty-two deaths.

Actor Two takes out their cell phone and poses with Actor One.
They take a selfie.

THREE

By 2013 illicit fentanyl started to appear on
Canadian streets.

Actor Two poses with Actor Three, takes a selfie of them.

ONE

Almost twice as many illicit drug overdoses as
in 2015.

TWO

(Sends the photos on their cell.)
We are now out there!

THREE

Drug makers use presses to turn out pills that
look like OxyContin.

ONE

Here's an interesting stat from ICBC.

TWO

Enough with the stats.

THREE

They stamp them with a small 80 and dye them
green.

ONE

In 2015 there were two hundred and ninety-three
fatal victims from car crashes in B.C.

TWO

What do traffic accidents have to do with this?

THREE

Call them fake 80's.

ONE

I'm comparing one with the other.

TWO

Let's go for a beer.

THREE

In an hour a pill press can produce almost 5000 pills.

ONE

In 2015 there were almost twice as many illicit drug overdoses compared to traffic fatalities.

TWO

There's a microbrewery right around the corner.

THREE

Pill presses can be bought online for as little as \$1800 US.

ONE

Some say it's safer to be driving than injecting.

TWO

You can get those samplers. With four types of beers.

THREE

The manufacturer recommends that if you order a pill press, that you don't have it sent it to your home but a business address.

ONE

You have mandatory seat belts, air bags, speed limits.

TWO

I lean towards the lagers.

THREE

It's not illegal to order a pill press.

ONE

On the street it's like Russian roulette.

TWO

Avoid the ales.

THREE

Think of it as a way to supplement your income. Like Airbnb.

ONE

Except for a handful of Insite injection sites.

TWO

Too hoppy for me.

THREE

A few grains of fentanyl go a long long way.

ONE

Now they're handing out Naxolone kits like candy.

TWO

So what do you say?

THREE

We all need alternate sources of income.

ONE

Here is one more stat.

TWO

Organic beers! On me!

THREE

In the sharing economy.

ONE

Last week.

TWO

I need to relax.

THREE

Vancouver is in the top three of the most expensive cities in the world.

ONE

In one day.

TWO

All these stats give me a headache.

THREE

How we rank on lists is critical.

ONE

Thirteen.

TWO

All right. Fine. I'll go by myself.

THREE

Shows what a world class city we are.

ONE

People.

TWO

I'm going.

Actor Two starts to leave.

THREE

With our bike lanes. And ride sharing.

ONE

Sisters and brothers. Nephews and nieces.

TWO

I'm really going.

THREE

We are always moving forward.

ONE

O'deed.

TWO

Last chance.

(beat)

See you.

Actor Two exits.

ONE

One day last week thirteen people o'deed.

THREE

In the sharing economy.

Actors One and Three stare at us. Lights in the rehearsal hall fade to black.

INTERTITLE. On a black screen, two words FADE IN: *WAY THREE*. They FADE OUT:

INT. SUBURBAN REC ROOM. NIGHT.

Techno music pulsates in background. In semi-darkness we watch CHLOE (14, earnest) strike a wooden match and light tea

lights, placing them on top of a stack plastic milk crates. As light grows, we note the retro bean bag chairs and painted milk crates to sit on.

PAIGE (O.S.)

There you are.

(entering)

What you doing?

PAIGE (14, stylish) checks out her friend.

CHLOE

Lighting candles.

PAIGE

Cool.

Pause. Music increases in intensity. There are yells O.S..

You are so brave. Inviting like...everyone. I like... would not have done it.

CHLOE

Feelings would have been hurt.

PAIGE

But the whole grade nine class.
(O.S. a bottle shatters, there are whoops)
HEY!

GUY (O.S.)

What's up?

PAIGE

Don't be a douche!

GUY (O.S.)

Say what?

PAIGE

This is Chloe's parents' place. They would not be pleased.

GUY (O.S.)

Who went and made you the Queen Bee---atch!

Pause. More whoops and yells. Laughter off. We get a sense of many teenagers.

CHLOE

Thanks for trying.

PAIGE
Davis is such a prick.

CHLOE
I'll clean it up later.

PAIGE
Maybe he will fall down on the glass and bleed out.

Pause. Chloe admires her work. There is a circle of burning tea lights on the top crate.

Nice.

CHLOE
Thanks.

PAIGE
Nervous?

CHLOE
Oh. Not really.

PAIGE
I am.

CHLOE
Paige, that's not like you.

PAIGE
I know. Truthy share.

CHLOE
Truthy share.

PAIGE
I've never done E.

CHLOE
Me neither.

PAIGE
I am so like...looking forward to this.

CHLOE
Me too.

Pause. Chloe lights tea lights that circle base of a crate.
Paige sits in bean bag, checks her phone.

CHLOE

Hope Marc shows.

PAIGE

He will.

CHLOE

Hour late.

PAIGE

He's into you.

CHLOE

No, he's not.

PAIGE

Yes, he is.

CHLOE

Marc is like Grade Eleven. And I'm...I mean,
we're only Grade Nine.

PAIGE

Older guys are cool. They can drive. They know
stuff.

Chloe's cell tings. She takes it out of her back pocket,
checks it.

CHLOE

He's here. Outside.

PAIGE

What did I tell you?

Chloe stops lighting candles and stands.

CHLOE

Oh my God Oh my God I am freaking. How do I
look? How is my hair?

PAIGE

Amazing.

CHLOE

Seriously?

PAIGE

Seriously amazing.

MARC, (16, self-obsessed) enters rec room.

MARC

Ladies ladies, sorry for the Deee-lay.

PAIGE

No prob.

MARC

Got caught up in some bizz-ness.

CHLOE

Drink?

MARC

Can't. I'm driving.

CHLOE

Cool.

PAIGE

Did you get the stuff?

MARC

Got something even better.

He takes out a flap, opens it. It is filled with white powder.

Cooo - caine!

PAIGE

Seriously?

MARC

Seriously.

PAIGE

Crazy how things work out sometime.

CHLOE

So no E?

MARC

Sorry, Chloe: No E.

PAIGE

Coke rocks, Chlo.

MARC
(offers a rolled bill)
Line?

PAIGE
Thanks.

She snorts the line.

MARC
(offers bill to Chloe)
All you have to do is snort.

CHLOE
Be back in a minute.

She exits.

MARC
What's up with her?

PAIGE
Nerves.

MARC
Cool.

He snorts a line.

PAIGE
Feels weird.

MARC
Coke is like that.

PAIGE
Can be.

MARC
You've done it before?

PAIGE
Sure. Lots.

MARC
Sweet. (beat) Where did she go?

PAIGE
I've got an idea. Follow me.

He wraps up the flap of cocaine, pockets it. They exit.

INT. MEDIA ROOM. NIGHT.

A huge screen plays a frenetic YouTube video. Techno music plays VERY LOUD. The room is jammed with drunken teenagers dancing and making out. Paige leads Marc leads through crowd.

INT. FRONT HALL STAIRCASE. NIGHT.

Paige and Marc step over a passed 14 year old girl on the landing and head to the second floor.

INT. SECOND FLOOR HALL. NIGHT.

Paige taps on a closed door. Marc stands behind her.

PAIGE
Hey, Chlo. Are you in there?

INT. CHLOE'S ENSUITE BATHROOM. NIGHT.

Chloe sits in an empty upscale claw foot bathtub, fully clothed, with her arms crossed.

CHLOE
Go away.

PAIGE (O.S.)
What you doing?

CHLOE
Go away.

PAIGE (O.S.)
Are you decent?

MARC (O.S.)
I came here to party. With you. At your party.

CHLOE
That's nice.

MARC (O.S.)
Can we come in?

CHLOE

No. I mean, yes. I mean, I don't know.

MARC (O.S.)

Cool.

CHLOE

I need a minute.

INT. SECOND FLOOR HALL. NIGHT.

Paige looks at Marc, shrugs. She gives him, a what do we now look? He gestures at door.

MARC

LIKE WOW! It's kicking in, Chloe!

PAIGE

YEAH!!! LIKE CRAZEEEE!!!

MARC

You don't want us getting too far ahead of you.

CHLOE (O.S.)

All right already. Come in.

Marc smirks in triumph to Paige. He opens the door and enters the bathroom.

INT. CHLOE'S ENSUITE BATHROOM NIGHT.

Marc crosses to the tub, checking out the bathroom. Paige stays by the door.

MARC

Niiiiiiice. Very niiiiiiice.

CHLOE

Thanks.

MARC

Mind if I join you?

Chloe nods no. He climbs in the other end of the tub, facing her.

Must be sweet. Kicking back, having a bath in this.

CHLOE

I wanted E.

PAIGE

Me too.

MARC

The E cupboard was bare.

CHLOE

I had my mind set on E.

MARC

Coke is no slouch.

PAIGE

This is real good stuff, Chlo.

CHLOE

Yeah?

PAIGE

Smooth as a baby's ass.

Marc and Paige exchange a look; she shuts and locks the door. He takes out the flap, opens it.

MARC

Some of this has your name on it.

CHLOE

Who's your dealer?

MARC

Can't tell you that.

CHLOE

Do you trust him?

MARC

Totally.

PAIGE

What's up with you?

CHLOE

Don't know. I've seen posts.

PAIGE

The E was coming from same dealer, right?

MARC

Right. Have some, Chloe.

CHLOE

My mom heard things on the news. About Oxy.

MARC

This is 100% clean.

CHLOE

About some stuff dealers are lacing in.

MARC

Me and my dealer go way way waaaaaaay back. He would never ever mess me up.

PAIGE

Marc has got our backs.

MARC

This is like...the real thing. Not fake coke.

Pause. He offers Chloe the rolled bill. She takes it.

What your mom saw on the news. It was made up.

PAIGE

Fake news. To scare everyone.

While Chloe snorts, Paige kneels in the middle, outside the tub.

MARC

Feel it? Feel the russsssssh?

CHLOE

Oh yeah.

MARC

(offering her rolled bill)
Your turn.

PAIGE

Thanks.

She snorts a line.

MARC

(to Chloe) Have another hit.

Pause. Chloe snorts another line. So does Marc.

CHLOE

Now what do we do?

MARC

Reeee-laxxxxx.

PAIGE

(taking Chloe's hand)

We sit back and have the trip of our lives.

CHLOE

Okay.

MARC

(taking Chloe's other hand)

This stuff is as pure as snow, Chloe.

CHLOE

Cool.

They look at each other. Marc is chill. Paige giggles. Chloe eagerly waits.

INTERTITLE. On a black screen, two words FADE IN: *WAY FOUR*. They FADE OUT:

EXT. DOWNTOWN ALLEY. NIGHT.

SAM, (40, a free spirit) sits against a stack of milk crates. He has an overcoat with a missing epaulet, water proof sports pants over jeans, three pairs of socks and sneakers. He shivers.

GERI (38, persistent), appears in the alley. Geri is over dressed too, but wears gumboots.

GERI

Hey. (a beat) Hey. I know you.

SAM

This is mine.

He spits.

GERI

I seen you around.

SAM

My spot.

GERI

At the Sally Ann.

SAM

No rain here.

GERI

For the dinner.

SAM

Find your own spot.

GERI

It's Sam, right?

SAM

Maybe.

Pause. Sam dry heaves, coughing and spitting. Nothing comes out.

GERI

How long since you hit it?

SAM

Do I look like I own a watch?

GERI

Four hours? Five?

SAM

I don't know. Before it got night.

GERI

It's after ten. Which means around six hours.

SAM

Who went and made you Mr.Know It All?

GERI

Hockey game just got out. Was panhandling. Like my sign?

Geri pulls out a hand printed cardboard sign. HELP HOMELESS VETERAN. NEED FOOD. Sam stares at sign.

SAM

Seen better.

GERI

Keep it simple. Catch their eye. When they mob past.

SAM

How much you get?

GERI

That's for me to know and you to find out.

SAM

Got any smokes?

GERI

Got all kinds. Menthol. Plain. Filtered.

SAM

Plain is good.

Geri takes loose cigarettes from a pocket. Hands one to Sam. Geri searches other pocket, finds a lighter and lights Sam's cigarette. They steady Sam's hands, which shake. Geri sits on single crate, with the sleeping bag and sign tucked between their knees and chest. In the distance a siren approaches. It quickly becomes ear splitting LOUD, until it SCREAMS past the alley with red lights flashing. Neither Sam nor Geri look.

SAM

Cops.

GERI

Paras.

SAM

Cops.

GERI

Paramedics.

SAM

I know cops when I hear them.

GERI

On their way to St. Paul's. With another junkie.

Pause. Geri pulls out a red toque.

GERI (CONT')

You see this?

SAM

Don't want it.

GERI

I'm not asking if you want it.

SAM

Never wear toques.

GERI

It belonged to a guy we knew. Lyall.

SAM

Don't know no Lyalls.

GERI

Sure you do. You and him used to pal around.

SAM

Keep to myself.

GERI

He is an Indian. I mean, he was.

SAM

A brown guy?

GERI

No. Native Indian. The first people on the block.

SAM

Okay.

GERI

Went by the shelter. Asked how come I hadn't seen him around. They said he was part of the thirteen.

SAM

Thirteen is not a lucky number.

GERI

No kidding. Thirteen folks od'ed last week. In one day.

SAM

Bullshit.

GERI

Last Thursday or Friday.

SAM

Prove it.

GERI

Got his toque.

SAM

He could have dropped it.

GERI

Lyall wore this thing all the time. Summer. Spring. Indoors and out.

SAM

Sold it at the flea market.

GERI

It was like him. I want to put it up somewhere. To remember him.

SAM

With a sign?

GERI

Maybe. (a beat, pointing) I could put it there. You got a stick?

SAM

Does this look like a forest?

GERI

Don't be such an a-hole.

Geri stands and looks around, holding their stuff. Sam butts out cigarette. He shakes, then leans over, dry heaves again. Whistling, Geri wanders to disposal bin, lifts lid, looks inside.

A hand rummages in the bin's garbage, pulls out a plastic toilet brush, missing half its bristles.

GERI

Look what I found.

Geri waves toilet brush proudly as they shuffle back to him.

SAM

That's no stick.

GERI

It will do.

Pause. Geri puts their stuff on milk crate, pulls the red toque over bristle end of the brush. Then sticks the handle in a slot in the top milk crate stack Sam leans against. Stands back, admiring it.

Now when everyone sees the red toque, they will remember Lyall.

SAM

Or else clean their toilet bowl.

He convulses, rolling on ground. Geri comforts him.

GERI

Easy there, Sam. Easy. Let me call 911.

SAM

I am good.

Pause. His convulsions become chills. His teeth chatter.

GERI

Like hell you are.
(Wraps him in their sleeping bag.)
How much are you using?

SAM

A quarter.

GERI

A quarter gram?

SAM

Yeah.

GERI

That's crazy. That's like one and a half grams a day.

SAM

My dealer tells me the same bullshit.

GERI

No wonder you are sick.

HSA (O.S.)

Socks! Who needs socks?

GERI

Down here!

HOMELESS STREET AIDE, (19, zealous but naive), appears. Hsa wears a new backpack, neon orange rain jacket & pants. Also holds two ziplocs with pairs of socks in each bag.

HSA

Do you folks needs some warm, dry socks?

GERI

In a minute. Can you give me a hand here with my friend?

HSA

What would you like me to do?

GERI

Help me keep him warm.

HSA

Listen, I'd like to...but I'm just a volunteer.

GERI

He's sick.

HSA

I don't know first aid.

GERI

Withdrawing.

SAM

I'm fine!

HSA

Let me call my supervisor.

SAM

No calls.

GERI

Who are you with? The Baptists? Sally Ann? Church of the Apostle?

HSA

No, I'm with C.U.S.S.

GERI

What is that? Some disease?

HSA

Christian University Student Society. We help those in need. Those less fortunate than us.

GERI

My friend is in real bad need.

HSA

I could call 911.

SAM

No!

GERI

Maybe you should.

SAM

No medics!

GERI

Unless...unless you have fifty dollars. That should cover it.

HSA

Cover what? I thought the ambulances were free.

GERI

Sam needs a quarter gram.

HSA

You want me to give you money for...for drugs?

GERI

(approaching Hsa)

Are you a Christian?

HSA

Yes, I am.

GERI

A true, God fearing Christian?

HSA

Of course, but I don't see----

GERI

What would Jesus do if he was here?

HSA

Our supervisor warned us about this. That...that there might be people who would try to talk us into giving them money.

GERI

Jesus helped the blind. The lame. The poor.

HSA

I can not give you money...for something not good.

GERI

Sam is sick. Convulsing.

HSA

I am really sorry to see that.

GERI

What's in your pack?

HSA

Socks.

GERI

How many?

HSA

About three dozen pairs. But they don't belong to me. C.U.S.S. paid for them.

GERI

The socks and the pack should be enough. For a swap.

HSA

I'm supposed to pass them out to folks like you on the street.

GERI

No one said it couldn't be all at once.

HSA

I would need to consult with my supervisor about this first.

GERI

This man is dying!

SAM

I got the chills, that's all.

GERI

Shut up, Sam. (To Hsa.) Let me have your pack and I'll be right back.

HSA

I don't know.

GERI

You know that in your heart this is what Jesus would do if he was here.

HSA

I do know that he would give him comfort. But helping out to buy drugs...

GERI

No money is exchanging hands here. It's a swap. Didn't Jesus say something about lambs inheriting the world?

SAM

I'm no lamb!

HSA

Our Lord offered us many parables. One of them I have always tried to live by. (Slips off backpack, giving it to Geri.) It is better to give than to receive.

GERI

Jesus blesses you. I'll be back in five.

HSA

What should I do until then?

GERI

(backing away)

Comfort Sam.

Pause. Geri hustles away. Sam laughs. His laughter builds till it is an out of control coughing fit.

HSA

Are you okay, Sam?

SAM

(sitting up)

You been had, pal.

HSA

Pardon me?

SAM

He/she is not coming back.

HSA

Of course he/she is. I mean, he/she said they would be.

SAM

You been conned. Big time. How much money do you have?

HSA

I only have...it's none of your business. (beat) Here. Have some socks.

SAM

Thanks. These will keep me warm.

HSA

And dry. Don't forget about that.

Hsa looks at far end of alley, hoping Geri will return. Sam opens a Ziploc, checks out the socks.
INTERTITLE. On a black screen, two words FADE IN: *WAY FIVE*.
They FADE OUT:

INT. PRESS CONFERENCE ROOM. DAY.

JANE 1 (45, brilliant and committed) and JANE 2 (45, committed and brilliant), enter and take their places behind wooden podiums on the right and left. On the wall behind them are national flags and symbols. ADVISOR, (25, self-confident), follows them. Advisor gives both Janes a paper speech, then stands in the center with a tablet.

JANE 1

'I am deeply disturbed by the escalating numbers of opioid-overdose deaths.'

JANE 2

'I am deeply disturbed by the escalating numbers of opioid-overdose deaths.'

JANE 1

'It is a shocking fact that hundreds of Canadians died of accidental overdose in 2016.'

JANE 2

'It is a shocking fact that hundreds of Canadians died of accidental overdose in 2016.'

ADVISOR

Introduce yourself!

JANE 1

'As federal Minister of Health, I am determined to work with all partners--

JANE 2

'As federal Minister of Health, I am determined to work with all partners--

JANE 1

Why do you keep repeating everything I say?

JANE 2

Why do you keep saying everything I was about to say?

ADVISOR

Ladies, ladies, you need to stick to the script.

JANE 1

I am trying to.

JANE 2

Ditto.

ADVISOR

Please explain who you are.

JANE 1

I am Jane Philpott, the Minister of Health.

JANE 2

I am Jane Philpott, the Minister of Health.

ADVISOR

Excellent. Now, explain what this scene is based on.

JANE 1

An opinion piece I wrote for the Globe and Mail entitled, "Getting to the root of Canada's opioid crisis", January 16, 2017.

JANE 2

This is an opinion piece I wrote for the Globe and Mail entitled, "Getting to the root of----"

JANE 1

She's doing it again!

JANE 2

Don't interrupt me!

JANE 1

Stop repeating everything I say!

JANE 2

I say it too!

ADVISOR

Ladies, ladies, this is not getting us anywhere. We need to work together as a team. Right?

JANE 1

I guess so.

JANE 2

I suppose you're right.

ADVISOR

Course I am. That's what I'm here for... to advise. To facilitate.

JANE 1

So. What should be the next step?

JANE 2

Yes. What's next?

ADVISOR

What if we alternate?

JANE 1

You mean share my opinion piece?

JANE 2

You mean share my opinion piece?

ADVISOR

Exactly! (opens tablet) That way we can get through it much quicker.

JANE 1

I guess that could work.

JANE 2

I don't see how it could hurt.

ADVISOR

Fantastic. Now we're talking. All right. Let's get started.

JANE 1

'At the federal government level, we took several important steps in 2016.'

ADVISOR

(studying tablet) Next!

JANE 2

Oh. Okay. 'We made naloxone more widely available to help reverse overdoses; we overturned a ban---'

ADVISOR

Next!

JANE 2

I wasn't finished my sentence.

ADVISOR

You mis-heard me. I meant alternate between paragraphs.

JANE 2

Paragraphs?

ADVISOR

The piece is too long!

JANE 1

You never said anything about it before.

ADVISOR

It was a print piece.

JANE 2

I worked a long time on it.

JANE 1

So did I.

ADVISOR

With text, one can be...informative. The relationship between the printed word and the reader is intimate, one on one. Context is interior. Intellectual. Here, the relationship between you and the audience is performative. It's not one on one, it includes the group dynamic. Context is exterior. Visceral. How everyone feels!

JANE 1

Is there something wrong with my performance?

JANE 2

Is there something wrong with my performance?

ADVISOR

Come on, come on, lets lose those negative algorithms.

JANE 1

I'm always open to productive input.

JANE 2

I'm always open to productive input.

ADVISOR

Okay. Now you brought it up. More eye contact with the audience would help.

JANE 1

Eye contact. Got it.

JANE 2

Eye contact. Got it.

ADVISOR

And maybe, just maybe, you could smile a little more?

JANE 1

But...

JANE 2

But...this is a serious topic. People are overdosing.

JANE 1

People are dying.

ADVISOR

People die every minute, every hour, every day, right? You need to sell this. And remember, we don't have that much time here.

JANE 2

We don't?

JANE 1

We don't?

ADVISOR

No, attention spans in live interaction have to be compressed. (swipes) Next part!

JANE 1

I guess that's me?

JANE 2

Actually, I was the one he/she interrupted.

JANE 1

All right. You go first.

JANE 2

'These actions bolster those of provincial governments, front-line health-care providers, ---'

ADVISOR

(swipes) Next!

JANE 1

'In 2017, we must turn the tide on this crisis.'

ADVISOR

(swipes) Next!

JANE 2

(tentative) 'We need to ensure---'

ADVISOR

(swipes) Next!

JANE 1

(even more tentative) 'These commitments from more than thirty-five organizations across Canada will provide tools---'

ADVISOR

(swipes) Next!

Pause. The Janes look at each other.

It's your turn.

JANE 2

Are you sure about that?

ADVISOR

Absolutely.

JANE 1

Perhaps it is my turn.

ADVISOR

No, it's hers.

JANE 2

You're turning my opinion piece into a mockery.

JANE 1

You're turning my opinion piece into a mockery.

ADVISOR

I'm not doing that. I'm trying to make sure people listen. That they pay attention.

JANE 2

I think I should consult JT bout this.

JANE 1

I think I should consult JT about this.

ADVISOR

Wait a minute.

JANE 2

He doesn't like it when folks are silenced.

JANE 1

No. He doesn't like it when folks are oppressed.

ADVISOR

No one said anything about doing something to anyone.

JANE 1 & 2

It is 2017.

ADVISOR

I am here to facilitate.

JUNE 1 & 2

We have more to say.

ADVISOR

I am certain that you do...it's just we're in a time squeeze. Only a minute left.

JANE 1 & 2

Oh.

ADVISOR

What if you each say one more thing? That is significant and insightful?

JANE 1 & 2

Everything we say is significant and insightful.

ADVISOR

Of course it is. What I meant is that it could be something with real significance.

JANE 1 & 2

Fine.

Pause. They look at each other, nod.

JANE 1

'Addiction is not a crime. Addiction is not a mark of moral failure.'

JANE 2

'It is a health issue. For many, it is a mechanism to manage unbearable pain, an attempt to relieve suffering when life offers few alternatives.'

ADVISOR

(applauds) Excellent! That was truly full of insight!

JANE 1 & 2

Thank you.

JANE 1

Coffee?

JANE 2

Fine.

They exit the way they entered.

ADVISOR

Hey. You forgot the speeches. (beat) It's okay.
I've got it covered. No problem.

He picks the speeches up from the podiums and exits after the Janes.

INTERTITLE. On a blank screen, two words FADE IN: *WAY SIX*.
They FADE OUT:

INT. BASEMENT. NIGHT.

In the semi-darkness we see the remains of a family home which no longer houses a family: children's bicycles, shovels, hoes and rakes; shelves of discarded toys, lunchboxes and toasters. We also hear a rhythmic KA-THUNK, KA-THUNK, KA-THUNK.

We move past an out of date furnace, a brick chimney, a child's stuffed bear missing its arm. In the corner lit by an overhead spotlight is a TDP-5 Tablet Press Machine. The gleaming chrome machine sits on top of a group of stacked milk crates. It rhythmically stamps out pills, which drop one by one into a large plastic tray.

We slowly glide closer to the pill press machine.

As we move in, we see the pills are green. Then we notice they are stamped with the number 80.

We listen to the endless KA-THUNK, KA-THUNK, KA-THUNK. We watch pills being made, drop into the plastic tray. It feels like this press machine could operate forever. BLACKOUT.

INTERTITLE. On a blank screen, two words FADE IN: *WAY SEVEN*.
They FADE OUT:

INT. SUBURBAN HALL. NIGHT.

Twenty years earlier. Mom, (now 25, more animated) and Dad (now 30, more vigorous) enter from Mac's bedroom, walking backwards. They stop. In the background we hear running water.

MOM
Come on.

DAD
You can do it.

MAC (O.S.)
Bah!

MOM
That's right.

DAD
Come on, Mac.

MOM
He/she's stopped.

DAD
Taking a break.

MOM
Maybe I should pick him/her up.

DAD
He/she can do this.

MOM
It's a long way.

DAD
Got to learn some time. Come on!

MAC (O.S.)
Bah! Bah! Bah!

MOM
Come on, honey!

Mac, (now 14 months, giddy), enters from their bedroom. He/she is in a pull-up diaper and t-shirt and walks, wobbling. Each step is a small miracle. Watching, parents step backwards.

MAC
Bah! Bah! Bah!

MOM
Bath!

MAC
Bah!

MOM

It's baaath, Mac.

MAC

Baaah!

DAD

Close enough. Keep moving.

Mac takes a few steps, then face plants. Mac wails. Mom moves to pick Mac up but Dad stops her.

MOM

Our child is in pain.

DAD

It will pass.

Pause. Mac's wailing stops. He/she pushes up into upright position, wipes away tears.

MOM

Did Mac have a tumbly wumbly?

MAC

Yes!

MOM

Tumbly wumbly over now. Tears have flapped their wings and gone bye bye!

MAC

(takes a step.) Bye bye!

DAD

That's it. You can do it!

MOM

You're going to have a bath!

MAC

(takes another step) Bah!

Mom darts through bathroom doorway. We hear taps being cranked shut. Water stops running. Mom leans out of bathroom doorway, a yellow plastic mother duck and baby duck in each hand.

MOM

Look who I found! Momma duck! And Baby duck!

MAC

Duck!

MOM

That's right. They're waiting to play with you.

MAC

(walking pace picks up) Duck! Duck! Duck!

MOM

Come on!

Mom backs into the bathroom. Mac follows. Dad follows behind him/her.

INT. SUBURBAN BATHROOM. NIGHT.

Dad follows Mac into the bathroom. Mom kneels by a claw foot bathtub, waving ducks.

DAD

I knew you could do it, Mac!

MOM

Here's Momma duck and Baby duck!

MAC

Momma! Babiee!

Mom hands over ducks to Mac. He bangs them against the rim of the bathtub.

MOM

Careful, Mac. Don't want to make Momma duck and Baby duck cry!

Mac slams the ducks hard against the tub until Mom intercedes, taking hold of his/her hands.

You're giving Momma and Baby duck ouchie wouchies. Be gentle.

Mac smiles, and quietens.

Maybe Dad will get you undressed and into to the tub while I check out the temperature.

DAD

I'm on it.

Dad pulls off Mac's diaper and eases off the t-shirt, while Mom tests water temperature.

MOM

Temp is perfect.

Dad picks up Mac, who has the ducks, and swings him/her above his head.

DAD

UP YOU GO!

MOM

Be careful!

DAD

(swings Mac up and down) WHOOOO! WHEEEEE!

MOM

Get him/her in the tub.

DAD

Okay okay.

Dad deposits Mac gently into the six inches of water.

DAD

You're having a bath!

MAC

Bah! Bah! Bah!

DAD

You walked all that way. On your own. I'm so proud of you.

MAC

Momma! Babiee! (dunks ducks in water.) WHEEEEE!
WHOOOOO!

Pause. Mom and Dad stand together, beaming. He slips his arm around her waist.

MOM

I wish...I wish Mac could just stay like this.

DAD

Yeah.

MOM

I know he/she has to grow up and everything
but...

DAD

Mac will turn out just fine.

MAC

(looks up at them, beams) Bah! BAH! BAH!

MOM

We love you, sweetie. Kiss kiss kiss!

FADE OUT as Mac plays with the ducks and the Mom and Dad watch
with pride and love.

THE END