EXTRACT

The End of the World As We Know It

ten short plays

by

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“It’s the end of the world as we know it …

and I feel fine”

1993 REM,
“The End of the World as We Know It”

The End of The World As We Know It

Time: New Year's Eve, the present.

Place: Various

Scene Order:

Act 1 : The Death of Language

1. A Difficult Birth
Reykjavik, Iceland. Midnight.
Petyr/Caroline/Simon

2. Drew Barrymore and Sigmund Freud meet the Cookie Monster
Vancouver, Canada. 10pm. Lee/Kat/Wolf

3. The Celine Dion Songbook.
Kansas City, USA. 11pm. Paul/Tracey

4. Saturday Night Birmingham, Sunday Morning Walsall.
Walsall, England. 11am. Matthew/Claire

5. The Gift of the Gun.
Cape Town, South Africa. 11.30pm. William/Ben

Interval

Act 2: Erase and Rewind

6. Beijing Big Mac
Beijing, China. 6pm.
Len/Susannah

7. Tel Aviv Disco Bombing.
Tel Aviv, Israel. 8pm. Julia/Ariel

8. The Choice
Bali. 9pm. Vince/Rod/The Boy

9. The Dead Son
Chichibu, Tokyo. 10pm. Ke-Lo/Tung/Twan

10. The First Fireworks.
Sydney, Australia. Midnight. Dawn/Helen

Part One : The Death of Language

1. A Difficult Birth

Hospital Waiting Room. Reykjavik, Iceland. Midnight.

PETYR sits alone on the row of seats. Pause.

CAROLINE enters.

CAROLINE: Here you are. I've been up and down, all over – no one could tell me where I was supposed to …

PETYR: You're here now.

CAROLINE: Eventually.

PAUSE.

PETYR: Would you like to sit down ?

CAROLINE: Yes. Thank you.

CAROLINE SITS.

CAROLINE: Thanks for the call.

PETYR: It's okay.

CAROLINE: No. I mean it. You didn't have to and you did – immediately. I appreciate that.

PETYR: I'm glad you could come.

CAROLINE: Of course I could come. It doesn't matter what … she's still my … When did you hear ?

PETYR: About an hour ago.

CAROLINE: Who …

PETYR: The hospital.

CAROLINE: How did they …

PETYR: She gave them my name.

PAUSE.

CAROLINE: Oh. Good. That's good. But how did they …

PETYR: I was a patient here once.

CAROLINE: Really ?

PETYR: Gall bladder. Perhaps they looked me up on there … system.

CAROLINE: Very … resourceful. (PAUSE) So … how bad …

PETYR: I just got here.

CAROLINE: You haven't seen –

PETYR: Not yet.

CAROLINE: But how will we know what to …

PETYR: They'll tell us.

CAROLINE: But when ?

PETYR: Soon.

CAROLINE: But how much time have we …

PETYR: Soon.

PAUSE.

CAROLINE: All this waiting. I can't stand it. Coffee ?

PETYR: No. But you go.

CAROLINE: Is that alright ? I just can't bear –

PETYR: I'm okay.

CAROLINE: Okay. Won't be long.

CAROLINE EXITS. **SIMON** ENTERS.

SIMON: Mr Russik ?

PETYR: Yes. (CALLING) Caroline.

SIMON: You're Mr Russik ?

CAROLINE RETURNS.

PETYR: Petyr.

SIMON: Petyr ?

PETYR: My name is Petyr.

SIMON: Simon Delaunay. I'm the Resident -

CAROLINE: How is …

SIMON LOOKS AT **CAROLINE**, THEN AT **PETYR**.

CAROLINE: It's okay.

SIMON LOOKS AT **PETYR** AGAIN.

CAROLINE: I'm the mother. Caroline Helmers.

SHE PUTS OUT HER HAND. SLIGHT PAUSE. **SIMON** SHAKES IT.

SIMON: Of course. Please. Sit down.

THEY ALL SIT.

PETYR: How is she ?

SIMON: Usually it's a quite routine condition. If she'd come to us even a few months ago –

PETYR: I haven't seen her for six months.

SIMON LOOKS AT **CAROLINE**.

CAROLINE: Don't look at me. She hasn't deemed me worthy of a phone call for three years.

PETYR: So how bad is it ?

SIMON: If we'd seen her a few months ago –

CAROLINE: I think we've established that.

PETYR LOOKS AT **CAROLINE**.

PETYR: Go on Simon.

SIMON: If we had seen her it may have been possible to stop the infection before it spread.

CAROLINE: But you didn't.

SIMON: No. And the infection has spread.

CAROLINE: Meaning ?

SIMON: It will now be very difficult to save both of them.

PAUSE.

PETYR: (REALISING) Jesus.

CAROLINE: Personally I'm not surprised.

SIMON: We can continue to try and treat the infection but then there is a possibility that both mother and child will die. Or we can remove the child -

PETYR: How long is she –

SIMON: About seven and a half months we think. It's difficult to be exact.

CAROLINE: Can the baby survive ?

SIMON: In these situations we don't like –

CAROLINE: Will my Grand child live Doctor ?

SIMON: Infants younger than this child have survived in similar circumstances.

CAROLINE: Well then – what are you waiting for ?

SIMON: The mother -

PETYR: Her name is Janet, Doctor.

SIMON: Janet is very weak. The trauma of the baby's removal could kill her.

CAROLINE: So ?

PETYR: Caroline – Jesus.

CAROLINE: What ? She's brought this on herself. Pumped her self so full of that garbage she didn't know if she's Arthur or

CAROLINE: (CONT) Martha. You tried to stop her. We all tried to stop her. She knew it might kill the child – your child – but she continued to do it. You gave her everything Petyr. She was lucky to have you. And how – how did she repay you ?

PETYR: It doesn't matter what's she done. She's still a –

CAROLINE: A what ? A human being ? A daughter ? A mother ? She's nothing. A waste of space. A bad seed. Good riddance.

PETYR: You are talking about your child.

CAROLINE: And you are talking about your child. We did everything we could. Everything. She chose this. She put that … stuff in front of you, me, Donald – everybody. Now she's trying to put it in front of your child. My grand child. She made her bed – now let her bloody well lie in it.

SIMON: Perhaps I should come back.

CAROLINE: You're not going anywhere.

SIMON: Mr Russik needs time to think.

CAROLINE: What is there to think about ?

SIMON: With respect Mrs Helmers – it's not your decision.

CAROLINE: What do you mean it's not my … Of course it's my …

SIMON: The next of kin is the only person who has the right to decide on behalf of the patient.

CAROLINE: Next of kin ? I'm her mother. I am the next of kin.

SIMON: Not according to the mother.

PAUSE.

CAROLINE: Oh. I see.

SIMON: She nominated Mr Russik. And only Mr Russik. He must decide on behalf of the patient. And as in our law the rights of an unborn child revert to the mother – he must decide for the child as well.

CAROLINE: Well fine. Then you tell him Petyr. Go ahead.

PAUSE. **PETYR** TURNS AWAY.

CAROLINE: Don't you dare. Don't you dare think twice about this. We are talking about an innocent child.

PETYR: She was my wife.

CAROLINE: Was ! And then she chose to run off with that …

PETYR: You don't have to remind me.

CAROLINE: Well you clearly need reminding. How can you even hesitate ? You heard what he said. There is a chance and only a chance that she could survive if we don't do something now. But if we don't that baby – your child – my Grand child will die. What do you need to think about ?

PETYR: Even if I do agree to this the baby still may not …

CAROLINE: But at least it will have a chance. She had hers – now give your child that same chance.

PETYR: I loved her.

CAROLINE: So did I. She was my only daughter. But you have to be strong now. Like I had to be when Donald died. You have to grow up now. You can save your child's life if you act now.

PETYR: (TO **SIMON**) Is that true ? Will I save the babies' life if I do this?

SIMON: It's not up to me. There are legal questions here which -

PETYR: I'm asking your opinion.

SIMON: And I am not allowed to give it. It is your decision Petyr. Not mine and not Caroline's. Yours. Once you have made that choice we will do all we can but you must tell us what to do. You must act in the best interests of the patients. Both patients.

CAROLINE: Think Petyr, think. Remember what she was like. When you first met her. That Janet. Not what she became. Our Janet. Think what she would want. She'd want us to save her child. To keep her alive through that new life. That's what she'd want. You know that. Petyr. Please.

PAUSE.

SIMON: Mr Russik ?

PAUSE.

PETYR: Okay.

SIMON: I'll bring you the papers to sign.

SIMON EXITS.

PETYR: Doctor ?

SIMON: (STOPPING) Yes Mr Russik ?

PETYR: Is it a boy or a girl ?

SIMON: I believe it's a boy.

SIMON NODS. HE EXITS. PAUSE. **CAROLINE** STANDS.

CAROLINE: You've done the right thing.

PETYR: It's not mine.

CAROLINE: What ?

PETYR: The baby. It's not mine. Couldn't be mine. It's been – years since Janet and I wee together like that.

CAROLINE: Oh. I see. (BEAT) Not yours. Well … you've done the right thing. Either way.

PETYR: (WATCHING **CAROLINE**) You don't have to gloat.

CAROLINE: (SCOFFS) I am not gloating.

PETYR: She's your daughter and you can't wipe the smile off your face.

CAROLINE: Nonsense.

PETYR: You finally got your revenge for her magnificent failure.

CAROLINE: Please Petyr. That's not fair. That's not …

CAROLINE TURNS AWAY. PAUSE. **PETYR** GOES TO **CAROLINE**.

PETYR: I'm sorry.

CAROLINE: You've always been like a son to me. Strange. I always felt you were more like my child than Janet.