

# KEEPING IT TOGETHER

By Dennis Bush

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# KEEPING IT TOGETHER

*A Collection of Memorable Monologues*

**By Dennis Bush**

**SYNOPSIS:** How do we keep it together, amidst all the things we're dealing with? How do we keep moving forward and keep making positive choices? In *Keeping It Together*, thirteen compelling characters confront their fears, anger, paranoia and pain. They take audiences on a journey filled with hilarity and heartbreak.

## CAST OF CHARACTERS

*(1-13 females; doubling possible)*

### THE POTENTIAL TO MAKE MY LIFE HAPPIER:

AINSLEY (f)..... 19, a survivor who vividly remembers her past, despite efforts to let it go. She's determined to move forward, happily and with her past in the past.

### THE BURDEN WE ALL HAVE TO BEAR:

JESSICA (f)..... 23, beautifully dressed, elegant and poised.

### NOT IN FAVOR OF TAG:

NORMA (f)..... Mid-20's, is a teacher and an activist in an unlikely area.

### THE RESPONSIBILITY OF "IT":

NORMA (f)..... Mid-20's, delves into the deeper psychology of tag.

### FOR THE EXPERIMENT:

ROBBIN (f)..... Early to mid-20's, conducts an experiment.

### SOMETHING LIKE THAT:

SARAH (f) ..... Mid-20's, has always been picked last.

**AN IMPRESSIONIST:**

ANGEL (f) ..... 18, She makes a wonderful impression.  
This her last day as a museum volunteer,  
before she goes to college.

**WORTH BEING HEARD:**

JERRILYN (f) ..... 18, and ready to dance to a captivating  
new beat.

**KEEPING IT TOGETHER:**

MONICA (f) ..... 18, and feeling the pressure of an  
uncertain future.

**CHEMISTRY AND CONSEQUENCES:**

CARLA (f) ..... 17, believes in truth and kindness and  
looking out for the people you care about.

**TRIAL BY FIRE:**

SHELBY (f) ..... 16, is dressed in coordinated skirt and  
blouse with cute shoes. Her hair is pulled  
back. She is the very picture of perky,  
poised perfection.

**COLOR AND SHADING AND PAIN:**

BECKA (f) ..... Early 20's, finds deeper meaning in her  
tattoos.

**A PLAN AND A CLUE:**

SHANNON (f) ..... Mid- to late teens, gets dumped at the  
mall.

**DURATION:** 45 minutes

**SET/ COSTUME REQUIREMENTS:** *Keeping It Together* is a collection of monologues, each set in a different time and place. The monologues (individually or as a collection) can be performed on a bare stage or with very limited set pieces. Only minimal costuming is needed to suggest the characters.

**PROPS:** There are no specific props required for the monologues in *Keeping It Together*.

**DIRECTOR'S NOTES:** *Keeping It Together* is a collection of monologues, each set in a different time and place. The monologues (individually or as a collection) can be performed on a bare stage or with very limited set pieces. Only minimal costuming is needed to suggest the characters. Directors are free to arrange the order of the monologues, as they choose, and may opt to cast one performer per monologue or have fewer actors perform multiple roles. There is also gender flexibility, as indicated, with some of the pieces.

**PLAYWRIGHT'S NOTE:** The monologues in this collection may be presented as a complete play or as individual performance pieces. Directors are free to arrange the order of the monologues, as they choose, and may opt to cast one performer per monologue or have fewer actors perform multiple roles. There is also gender flexibility, as indicated, with some of the pieces. The collection includes 13 monologues for young women (though most are open to gender flexibility) written for individual showcase performances or excerpted from Dennis Bush's play, *Play the Game*. All the monologues in this collection have had successful workshop processes and/or showcases, including performances in New York City.

**PRODUCTION HISTORY:** *Keeping It Together* includes 13 monologues for young women (though most are open to gender flexibility) written for individual showcase performances or excerpted from Dennis Bush's play, *Play the Game*. All the monologues in this collection have had successful workshop processes and/or showcases, including performances in New York City. Original performers included Alexis Zimmerman, Carolina Quintero, Elena Conti, Cindy Szeto, Rachel Campbell, Brinley Nassise, Rachael Eng, Brisa Lopez, Billie Kurth, among others.

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## THE POTENTIAL TO MAKE MY LIFE HAPPIER

AINSLEY (f) ..... 19, a survivor who vividly remembers her past, despite efforts to let it go. She's determined to move forward, happily and with her past in the past.

**AINSLEY:** The problem with running away is that, if you don't have something or someplace you're running to, you end up running around in circles. And that just makes you tired. And dizzy. I'm not talking about a little kid who runs away from home because his mom made green beans for dinner, and he runs away to his friend's house down the street, because he hates green beans. That's not running away. It's just being stupid. That kid should eat the green beans and shut up. There are people out there who don't have anything to eat. And being hungry isn't fun. It's not adventurous or exciting. If you're in a situation that is so dangerous or scary that you have to run away – *escape* – from it, you know it can get way worse before it gets better. If it gets better. You have to find people who you can trust. People who can help you. And you can't wait for those people to find you. You have to find them. And, when you do, you have to be grateful that things are going to be different. (*She begins to cry.*) You have to remember what your life was like... (*Struggling to be clear, through her tears.*) And you have to believe – you have to *know* – that your life is never going to be like that again. (*She wipes away her tears.*) Every time I meet somebody new, I think, "This person has the potential to make my life happier." And I try to do the same thing for them. I'm a happy person. By choice. By necessity. Because every day I'm happy, it's one more step away from how things used to be.

## THE BURDEN WE ALL HAVE TO BEAR

JESSICA (f) .....23, beautifully dressed, elegant and poised.

**JESSICA:** *(With a breath and a smile.)* It's the one percent versus the ninety-nine percent. *(Clarifying.)* The haves and the have nots. *(As if it's obvious.)* I'm in the one percent. *(Clarifying.)* I have style. *(A quick pause.)* But you already knew that. It's something you have or you don't. And most people don't. You can buy stylish clothes, but that's not the same as having style. Going into a store and buying an outfit that somebody else put together and, then, saying you have style isn't any different than going into a grocery store, buying a hunk of meat and saying you're a hunter or a butcher. It's delusional. But it's what a lot of people think. And it's the kind of logic hurled at us by stores that want us to spend money on the clothes they're selling. *(A basic truth.)* Style isn't about money. It's not. *(With a gesture of simple elegance.)* This outfit was assembled from trips to three different Goodwill stores. Shopping isn't a leisure activity. It's a triathlon. I am a triathlete – a triathlete who tries things on. And then coordinates the selected items into an outfit – an ensemble. It's practically an Olympic sport. But you wouldn't understand. And that's okay. It's not really okay, but that's the burden we all have to bear.

## NOT IN FAVOR OF TAG

NORMA (f).....Mid-20's, is a teacher and an activist in an unlikely area.

**NORMA:** She's not in favor of tag. I mean, seriously, imagine that. She's "not in favor of tag." So, I asked her, "What do you mean, not in favor of tag?" And she said, "I'm not a fan." (*A quick beat.*) I'm not asking her to be a fan. Nobody's asking her to be a fan. She's not in favor of the 6th Grade Dance, either. She doesn't think it's appropriate for the boys. She says, "They just run around." (*A quick, indignant beat.*) Which is what sixth grade boys do. Which leads me to think that she's not in favor of running around at all, whether it's on the playground or at a dance in the cafeterinasium. But I wasn't going to be deterred. So, I asked her, "Which kind of tag?" "Exactly which kind of tag are you not in favor of?" And she looked at me like she had no idea that there was more than one kind of tag. So I pressed her on the issue. (*Recreating the confrontation.*) "Traditional run-and-catch tag? Freeze tag? Stick tag? Slap tag? Which kind of tag are you not in favor of? Or is it another kind? There are several different kinds of tag. Many different kinds. But, I'm sure you knew that." She didn't answer. She didn't have a clue. (*The ultimate insult.*) She wouldn't know a Lego from a Duplo. So, I told her, "Tag is an important tool for teaching socialization skills."

So, I told her, if she'd like some insight, she's welcome to join us on the playground between 11:03 and 11:33, any day. Because we could use the help! We're understaffed and she knows it. I offered to show her the rubric. (*Clarifying.*) The tag rubric. (*Clarifying further.*) We have a rubric, so we can properly assess the tag. (*Cheerfully.*) The same rubric works for all the variations. (*Quick pause.*) It's simple and easy to use. (*Quick pause.*) And we've been able to generate some really good data. I offered to show her our data. I said, "When you join us on the playground, I'll be happy to show you the binder full of our data." Not surprisingly, she hasn't taken me up on my offer. Maybe she's "not in favor" of taking people up on their offers. Maybe she's "not in favor" of the playground.

## THE RESPONSIBILITY OF "IT"

NORMA (f).....Mid-20's, delves into the deeper psychology of tag.

**NORMA:** The way a child plays tag tells us a lot about how that child will be as an adult. Or even as a fifth grader or high school sophomore. Aggressively chasing the other kids, running in the opposite direction to avoid engaging in the game, at all, giving up too easily or too quickly... they all tell us something about who that child is and who he or she will become. If a child is afraid of being it, that's really something to take note of. If a child does everything he or she can do to avoid being it, then, you might need to have a conversation with that child. That's deep for a second grader to understand. So, when you have those conversations – with the whole class or one-on-one, you have to plant those seeds – those messages – early. So, they don't mean one thing for girls and something different for boys... *(Adding a layer of depth.)* So the messages don't mean one thing for some people and something else for others. Tag is a metaphor for life. We run around trying to push responsibility off on other people. Tag, you're it. Tag, you're it. We don't take ownership of it. We don't celebrate the things that make us... us – make us it. We wait for other people to tell us what "it" means for them and assume that it's supposed to mean the same thing for us. Trying to tag someone is, in essence, reaching out. Reaching out to them. Trying to make a connection. Passing the responsibility of "it" on to somebody else. Sometimes, it's when we need a bit of time to recover from the responsibility we've been shouldering and, sometimes, when we need to encourage other people to take on the responsibility they need to experience to learn about themselves... to understand things in a different way... or just to let them know that they're not alone. We can't be afraid to play tag. We can't allow people who aren't in favor of tag to make the rules for those of us who know its value. When you join us on the playground, I'll be happy to show you the binder full of our data.

## FOR THE EXPERIMENT

ROBBIN (f) .....Early to mid-20's, conducts an experiment.

**ROBBIN:** My boyfriend and I have this thing we do... When we're at a party or any kind of social event where there are people we don't know or who don't know us, we do a kind of experiment. When somebody asks me, "What do you do?" I say, "I'm a receptionist." (*A quick beat.*) I'm not a fan of the whole "What do you do?" line of questioning at parties or anywhere. I'd rather somebody ask me who I am or what I'm passionate about or how I'd like to change the world. But nobody asks those questions. They ask, "What do you do?" And when I say, "I'm a receptionist," they smile. Or smile and nod. Or they say, "Oh, that's nice," while they nod and smile. When somebody asks my boyfriend what he does, he says, "I'm a receptionist." Just like me. We've practiced saying it the same way, so it doesn't impact the results of the experiment. Neither of us is actually a receptionist. We just say we are – for the experiment. So, picture this... Like two seconds before, I said, "I'm a receptionist," and the person who asked what I did just smiled and nodded. But, now, like two seconds later, when the same person asks Ernie – that's my boyfriend – the same question, and Ernie says, "I'm a receptionist," the person asked, "While you're in college?" "Or do you play in a band?" That was the follow-up question. He said, "I'm a receptionist." And they asked, "While you're in college? Or do you play in a band?" One lady said, "Saving money so you can buy a house. Good for you." (*Disgusted.*) Good for you. We did the experiment with at least twenty people at a housewarming party we went to, last week, and nobody – not a single person – asked a follow-up question or made an assumption that I was doing something else besides being a receptionist.

## SOMETHING LIKE THAT

SARAH (f).....Mid-20's, has always been picked last.

**SARAH:** I always got picked last. (*Quick pause.*) Always. (*Giving the ultimate example.*) When I was 10 and we were playing kickball at recess, Connie Klein got picked before me and she had a broken leg. And it was her kicking leg that was broken. (*Pause, then, reiterating.*) A girl with a broken kicking leg got picked before me for kickball. (*Quick pause.*) That's pretty much how it's been my whole life. (*Quick pause.*) I was even picked last for life. (*Explaining.*) I'm the youngest of seven kids and there's nine years between the next youngest and me. (*Pause; stating the obvious.*) I was a surprise. And from the way my mom talks about the... situation, it wasn't a good surprise. (*A fact.*) I wasn't an afterthought, I was an accident. And that's pretty much how I think of myself. I know that sounds like I am in self-esteem quicksand, but I think it's better to be honest instead of trying to live in a fairy-tale world. So, I know that when you're an accident and nobody wants you on their team, you end up being last in line for everything. (*Giving an example.*) Before a guy gets around to asking me out, he's usually dated a couple of my friends. Rick – a guy at work – dated every other single woman in the office before he got to me. I still went out with him. It was a free meal. At dinner – as a long strand of cheese stretched from his mouth to the lasagna on his plate – he said, “Well, I guess I finally got around to you.” (*Sarcastically.*) Sure made me feel special. When a guy is nice to me and shows some interest, it's like I have no idea what to do or how to act. (*Pause, then an admission.*) I guess it's 'cause I can't believe that they're really interested in me. They must be talking to me to get to one of my friends or something like that... (*Drifting off in thought; with tears in her eyes.*) Something like that.

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