

ON THE INSIDE

by Dennis Bush

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ON THE INSIDE

A Dramatic Ensemble One Act Play

by Dennis Bush

SYNOPSIS: In a world with more questions than answers, eight characters' unique journeys are woven together in a tapestry of our time. They find connections despite being isolated, confront fears when hope is in short supply, and move forward when tragedy weighs them down. Confronting unfathomable emotional and physical challenges, these compelling characters are survivors – and, ultimately, with humor and unflinching candor, they inspire us. With rich, complex characters that will delight actors and audiences, this contemporary one-act mixes heartbreaking drama with moments of laugh-out-loud comedy to make a powerful, positive impact.

DURATION: 45 minutes.

TIME: Present.

SETTING: Set in eight separate personal spaces.

CAST OF CHARACTERS

(2 females, 3 males, 3 either)

- NINA (f)..... Early 20's, a good daughter, a rule follower; understands that accidents happen, even when you follow the rules. *(24 lines)*
- BLAIR (m/f)..... Late teens/early 20's; witnessed a terrifying accident and struggles with the emotional and physical impact. *(15 lines)*
- TROY (m)..... Early to mid-20's; uses his muscles to create an image and a persona and hides behind that façade. *(15 lines)*
- PATRICK (m)..... Early 20's; recovering from a broken leg; with his roommate away, he's all alone with this thoughts and insecurities. *(21 lines)*

- RAHJ (m/f) early 20's, troubled by the words hurled at him by a stranger; desperately trying to overcome his insecurity. *(15 lines)*
- LAUREN (f) Early 20's; after surviving a harrowing ordeal, she shuts herself off from the world, but can't escape her lingering fears. *(28 lines)*
- SUDI (m/f) Late teens, early 20's; beginning to see the world and herself in different ways; feels like she's about to emerge from a version of herself that she doesn't recognize into an insightful, powerful new self. *(14 lines)*
- DYLAN (m) Early 20's: has been bounced around by life; leads with kindness and caring; heroic without knowing it. *(27 lines)*

SET: Simple set.

PROPS: None.

DIRECTOR'S NOTES

On the Inside can be presented with a very simple set. The play is well suited for either live or virtual performances. Directors are encouraged to be creative with casting and staging, and to avoid literal use of inferred props or to group actors together so it appears that conversations are happening. None of the characters speaks directly to the others, during the play.

PREMIERE PRODUCTION

On the Inside had a virtual reading with actors from all around the United States in August 2020. The play had its world premiere production in Phoenix, Arizona in October, 2020. The world premiere was directed by Dennis Bush and the cast and crew included:

NINA	Nancy Leal
BLAIR	Trinity Ananyeva
TROY	Connor Pfafman
PATRICK	Colin Lavigne
RAHJ	Kenyan Cole-Suggs
LAUREN	Rylee Garvey
SUDI	Janeth Guerrero
DYLAN	Jaden Gomez

DEDICATION

The playwright offers special thanks to Joe Pascale, Logan Umbanhowar, Nick Petrovich, Monika Rzezniczek, Emily O'Brien, Melissa Teitel, Linda Webber, Mark Fontana, Karen Brown and Dylan Suehiro for their kind assistance and inspiration, during the creation of *On the Inside*.

AT RISE: *Lights up on one of eight separated performance spaces. The spaces should not be organized in any particular order.*

NINA: I can see you, but I can't hear you. (*A beat.*) I've tuned you out—muted you, in my mind. It's just how it is. It's how it needs to be. (*A beat.*) It's a starting point.

Lights up the second separated performance space.

BLAIR: When I have to sit still for something is when I'm least able to sit still. Like now. It's pretty much killing me to sit still. (*Clarifying.*) I'm exaggerating when I say that. It's not really killing me. Just like when I say, "I'm starving," I'm not actually starving. But you knew that. You should know it. Because if you don't know that, you're stupid.

NINA: A starting point is more realistic than a starting line. A starting line indicates that everybody is equal and we're all starting from the same place with the same advantages or disadvantages. That's never true. Even in actual races—like sprints or marathons or whatever. One of the runners may have gotten a good night's sleep and eaten a big, healthy dinner and breakfast, but the runner next to him may have had to work late at a job to help pay the bills for his family. The runners aren't starting out equal. But by getting in their starting position to run the race, they're agreeing to the rules, and they race the best they can. But it's just a race. (*A beat.*) Life is not a race. People who say "life is a race" are usually starting out with an advantage, but they want other people to think everything is equal. But it's not. It's definitely not.

Lights up on the third separated performance space.

TROY: If I don't post something on social media—on multiple forms of social media, it's like I don't exist. People aren't thinking about me. I'm not relevant. I have to be relevant. But it can't be obvious. Relevance can't feel forced. People have to think it's casual—what I post—it has to feel like it's casual. Like, "Oh, hey, I just happened to take a photo while I'm looking very casually pensive"—just on the

verge of brooding, but not crossing that line, because brooding isn't casual. Or cool.

Lights up on the fourth separated performance space.

PATRICK: My roommate's not here, now. I mean, he's never here at this time of day. He works. But he's off this week. On vacation—a road trip. I was going to go. I assume that he'd have asked me to go, if I hadn't broken my leg two months ago. It was an accident. I usually tell people it happened while I was snowboarding, but I don't snowboard. You wouldn't know that, but I've been told—by people who actually know me—that I blush a little bit when I lie. So, I've been trying to stop lying. That doesn't mean I'm going to tell you what actually happened. (*Firmly.*) I'm not. I have to maintain a little control of the situation.

NINA: A few years ago, I was in Denmark on vacation with my family. That piece of information right there tells you that, as far as traveling goes, my starting point might be different than yours. One of the days we were there, we took a tour of a royal palace. If you have a royal palace, your starting point is different than other people. We already had our tickets—because my mom loves to plan and organize things, which made our starting point that day different than the people who had to wait in line to buy tickets.

Lights up on the fifth separated performance space.

RAHJ: "You can't do it, if you don't try. But you won't try, I can tell that about you—just by looking at you. I can tell you won't try, so you can't do it—you can't do anything—if you don't try." (*A quick beat.*) That's what he said to me. Some guy standing outside the hardware store, when I was coming out after getting a new key made. A spare key for the front door—so the neighbor can go in and water the plants when I'm out of town. Which happens pretty regularly. And there's something particularly tragic about coming home to a bunch of dead plants. So I'm doing what I can to keep it from happening. And while the guy in the hardware store was making the spare key, I started to wonder how long it would be till we didn't use keys anymore, because all our locks would be opened with our phone or,

eventually, I guess, with telekinesis. That's what I was thinking—about telekinesis—when I walked past the guy who said, “You can't do it, if you don't try.”

Lights up on the sixth separated performance spaces.

LAUREN: I have a boyfriend. I told my mom I have a boyfriend. He's not really my boyfriend. I don't even know him. I just copied some of his pictures from Instagram and showed 'em to my mom and told her he was my boyfriend. He's from Portugal. He speaks Portuguese. Because he's from Portugal. He could also speak Portuguese if he was from Brazil. Languages tell you what countries colonized other places. He's very handsome in a friendly, approachable Portuguese kind of way. (*Clarifying.*) I don't ever plan on approaching him. And he's not going to show up at my house and demand that I stop using his pictures, I'm almost positive of that. (*Justifying.*) I think Portuguese people are very laid back, so he probably wouldn't mind that I'm using his pictures.

NINA: We got to stand in the “Tour Starts Here” line instead of the “Buy Your Tickets Here” line.

Lights up on the seventh separated performance space.

SUDI: Starting over can't be starting over if you haven't started yet. (*Clarifying.*) If you haven't been making your own choices. If somebody else has been making your choices for you, they're not your choices, so you can't start over because the over isn't yours to over.

Lights up on the eighth separated performance space.

DYLAN: I'm a bouncer. (*Quickly clarifying.*) Not like in a bar or club. When parents—usually the mom, but sometimes the dad—when they rent a bounce house for their kid's birthday party or some other little kid kind of celebration, my boss asks if they want to add an “ambassador of fun” to the rental package. So they get the bounce house or bounce castle—depending on the model they rent—and they get me.

TROY: I understand cool. Like, "Oh, hey, did I just accidentally flex—in a totally unplanned and unrehearsed way—so my bicep is prominently on accidental display?" And, "Oh, hey, when I casually notice my bicep, I flex my tricep—totally accidentally and like it just happened like a reflex or whatever." (*A beat, with a confident smirk.*) And I use the blushing-face emoji when somebody says, "flectastic" or "swole, bruh." Because I'm humble. I'm casually humble in a relevant way.

BLAIR: People accept exaggerations up to a point. When my uncle told my aunt he wanted a divorce, my aunt said, "You won't be able to live without me." (*A beat.*) Two days later, my uncle was playing golf, and just as he took his tee shot on the 11th hole, he was struck by lightning and killed. (*A beat.*) His tee shot sailed through the air like it was supercharged. It landed on the green and rolled right into the hole. (*A miraculous fact.*) A hole-in-one. (*A beat.*) I was there when it happened. I was sitting in the golf cart watching it all. (*A beat.*) So, I know the difference between exaggerations and truth.

LAUREN: When you look like me, you don't want people looking at you. When I was little, my mom always called me her "Mini Me." No pressure, there. Just a constant series of expectations that were impossible for me to come anywhere close to. (*Simply.*) I don't measure up to my mom. I can't. She's got a big, important job. I forget what exactly she does, but I know it's important. She has a huge office and two assistants. One of her assistants has his own assistant. (*A beat, simply.*) My dad moved out. (*Quick pause.*) Not because one of my mom's assistants has his own assistant. (*Quick pause.*) I'm almost positive that's not the reason. But I don't know for sure. He just moved out. I'm not sure where he lives now. He doesn't communicate with me. He doesn't know what to say. He blames himself. I can't help that. Blaming himself isn't the same as me blaming him. (*A beat.*) I don't go out of the house anymore. (*A beat.*) It started with me not wanting to go to school. So I didn't go. I went to school online. At my own pace. I did college the same way. Most days I don't leave my room unless I absolutely have to. My room is pretty much like a studio apartment. I have my own refrigerator and microwave, and my own bathroom. So, it's pretty self-contained. (*A beat.*) I'm pretty self-contained.

RAHJ: People will say anything to you. They'll yell things at you. If they're far enough away that they think you won't get up in their face about it.

PATRICK: The road trip with my roommate is supposed to include hiking. I just got the cast off. Like yesterday. There're still some pins and screws and some other metal stuff in my leg holding it together. So hiking isn't an option. At least for a while. I don't really like to hike anyway. Hiking is overrated. It's just walking with occasionally appealing scenery and vistas.

RAHJ: People are bullies. Or cowards. Or both. One because of the other. Or the former because of the latter.

PATRICK: If I have to hike four hours for one beautiful view, I won't think the view is beautiful enough to justify the four-hour hike.

SUDI: (*More confidently than before.*) If somebody else has been making the choices for you, they're not your choices, so you can start over because the over isn't yours to over. (*A beat.*) The same goes for starting fresh. The people who say, "Let's make a fresh start" are always the people who have done crappy things they want people to forget they've done. Like my cousin. She borrowed money from my mom. A lot of money. And she never paid it back. And, then, like two weeks ago, she said, "I think we should make a fresh start."

NINA: When the tour was about to start, the guide came out and told us that we'd have to put plastic booties over our shoes to protect the carpets and other stuff. (*Explaining.*) Because it's an actual, functioning royal palace where presidents and prime ministers and kings and queens go for important meetings and events. So the palace people want to keep things clean. And some of the carpet is from the 18th Century and needs to be protected. So, I put on the booties they gave me. And this guy like twenty people behind me and my family—wearing a cowboy hat, which made him look silly, because we were in line outside a palace in Denmark, not in a corral with horses. And the guy—the guy in the cowboy hat—started yelling at the tour guide, telling her he wasn't gonna wear any plastic booties. He wasn't going to wear any booties at all. The fact that he was wearing grungy flip flops that had dirty and crusty stuff around the toes should've made him the first person to grab the booties and say thank you. But he was yelling like he was loco crazy—like when

you're so crazy that your crazy has crazy on top of crazy. He was like, "You can't make me wear 'em. You can't!" And my mom turned around and said, "You can make the rules in your house, but this isn't your house. It's not even your country. And the guy came walking toward us like he was gonna hit somebody and he pointed at my dad and said, "You better keep your woman in line." (*A beat, simple facts.*) My dad didn't like getting pointed at, and my mom didn't like the guy talking to my dad like she was my dad's property. (*A quick beat.*) And I didn't like any of it. So, I took a step toward the man, looked up at him and said, "Put on the damn booties."

SUDI: She really said that. (*A beat.*) "I think we should make a fresh start." (*A beat.*) I don't think so. Not happening. (*A beat.*) It probably will happen, because my mom doesn't like confrontations or arguments or thinking that people are mad at her because she expects them to pay her back what they borrowed. (*A beat.*) But it shouldn't happen. Most definitely not.

BLAIR: About fifty people a year get struck and killed by lightning. That's from all over the world. (*Reiterating.*) Fifty people from all over the world get struck and killed by lightning.

SUDI: It shouldn't happen. It really shouldn't happen. (*A beat.*) But it does and it will. (*A beat.*) It will and it does.

NINA: (*A reality that never leaves her mind.*) Accidents happen. Even when you wear the booties. Even when you follow the rules. And even when you do good things. (*A beat.*) They happen. Accidents happen.

TROY: (*As he flexes.*) Oh, hey, did I just accidentally flex—in a totally unplanned and unrehearsed way—so my bicep is prominently on accidental display?

DYLAN: So, yeah, technically, I'm an "ambassador of fun," but what I really am is a bouncer. (*With swagger.*) I'm a bouncer.

NINA: But, just because an accident could happen, doesn't mean it will happen. So the possibility of an accident or something else happening is no excuse for not following the rules and doing good things. Even if nobody else is watching. Especially if nobody else is watching.

PATRICK: It's been so quiet in the apartment without my roommate here. (*A beat.*) Nobody's been here. (*A quick beat.*) I mean, actually here, not virtually here. A couple people besides you have been virtually here. But virtual visits—no offense—don't seem completely real.

RAHJ: I was playing a word game on my phone and I was struggling a little. I'm a little dyslexic. I always say "a little dyslexic" instead of just "dyslexic" because if it's a little thing, people figure you've got it under control. Playing the word game is a way to practice the things I learned when I was younger—when I found out I was a little dyslexic—to get it under control, instead of it controlling me. The former instead of the latter. So, I was struggling—like I said—and, in my head, I heard the voice of the guy from outside the hardware store saying, "You can't do it."

PATRICK: If a person is in the room with you—actually in-person in the room with you, you can't just make them disappear with the click of a button. You have to acknowledge their actual existence. You have to deal with them.

RAHJ: Over and over in my head, I heard him say, "You can't do it." And I thought, "Yeah, you're right. I guess I can't."

BLAIR: Of the fifty people a year that get struck and killed by lightning, ten percent of them—about five of the fifty people—get struck and killed by lightning on a golf course. So, my uncle was one of only about five people to get struck and killed by lightning on a golf course this year. (*A beat.*) He's probably the only person to have ever gotten a hole-in-one after getting struck and killed by lightning. (*A beat.*) It all happened so fast. On his follow-through after hitting the ball, the lightning struck him and his club. He dropped to the ground and kind of flopped around a little.

DYLAN: (*As if he senses disbelief.*) I'm a bouncer. I am. (*A beat.*) Literally. (*A beat.*) I bounce up and down so the kids get the highest quality bounce experience. I gauge the intensity of my bouncing depending on the kid's age and how bounce-savvy they are. I know you're sitting there thinking, "That doesn't take any skill. Anybody could do that." But you're as wrong as a three-year-old in a bounce house with a mouthful of caramel popcorn.

BLAIR: And the ball went right into the hole. I couldn't see the ball from where I was sitting in the golf cart. But one of the groundskeepers or maintenance guys—or whatever they're called—saw the ball land on the green and he took a video of the ball rolling into the hole. So, there's proof. Which is nice. My uncle would've shown that video to everybody he knew—and strangers, too. Even after it happened, I just sat in the golf cart. I couldn't move my legs. I couldn't move anything. I couldn't even close my mouth from when my jaw dropped open when the lightning struck.

PATRICK: Since I broke my leg, I've only left the apartment a handful of times—all for doctor's appointments related to the broken leg. I'm supposed to start physical therapy next week. It's going to be painful. That's what everybody says. I guess I'll see for myself.

BLAIR: I was still sitting in the golf cart—like I was paralyzed—when the ambulance came. The police came, too. They were all very impressed that my uncle had gotten a hole-in-one. I'm kind of embarrassed to admit that I had to be put onto a stretcher and taken to the hospital in a separate ambulance. Nobody was impressed by the fact that I couldn't move.

DYLAN: I Heimlich-manuevered that giant, gooey mass of caramel popcorn out of the kid's throat before his mom even knew what was happening. And I kept the other kids bouncing like nothing was wrong. That's skill.

BLAIR: But I couldn't. I really couldn't move my legs or my arms. I could wiggle my toes a little, but wiggling your toes isn't enough to get you to stand up and walk away from a golf cart—which was about twenty feet where my uncle got struck and killed by lightning. Wiggling your toes doesn't fix any of that.

RAHJ: *(Like it's on a loop in his head.)* "Just by looking at you, I can tell you won't try, so you can't do it—you can't do anything."

PATRICK: For the first four days after I got home from the hospital, my roommate would check on me like twenty times a day. Then, like ten times a day, the week after that.

DYLAN: When they hire a bouncer, the parents take it easy. They get a little drunk. One of the dads flirts with some other guy's wife. One of the moms pukes because they thought the cake was gluten free and it wasn't.

PATRICK: And, then, he just stopped. No messages. No calls. No texts. Nothing.

DYLAN: Things happen. But they happen outside the bounce house. Outside my area of supervision.

PATRICK: I wouldn't hear from him all day. He'd come home at around 6:30 or 7:00—sometimes later—and just plop down on the end of the sofa and watch whatever was already on the TV, while I was laying on the sofa—with my leg raised. He'd plop down on the other end, which would make my leg bounce, which made it hurt, which made me wanna kick him in the face—with my good leg.

NINA: My mom and dad started their business to help people who couldn't help themselves—to give them a leg up. Sometimes, people make up rules that aren't equal, just so they get to do what they want, but they keep everybody else from getting what they want or need. Those aren't good rules. If rules aren't fair, they're not good rules.

SUDI: You have to pay attention to what's going on around you. You have to pay attention to everything. And yourself. You're part of everything. I'm part of everything, even if your parents or your friends don't see it that way. See yourself. See everybody and everything else. But, first, see yourself.

TROY: If I'm at a pool—like a pool party at somebody's house or a pool at a hotel, when I'm on vacation—I'm never the first guy to take off my shirt. I'm also not the second guy to take off my shirt. I'm the third guy to take off my shirt.

DYLAN: The big parties are all pretty much the same. And they're the ones where they don't really need me. A kids' birthday party isn't the time to relinquish your parenting responsibilities and act like the margarita machine is your new best friend. But it happens. (*Being very clear.*) It happens outside of my area of supervision, like I said.

PATRICK: He'd look at me and my broken leg and kind of grunt. Kind of like a grunt and a burp combination. Like that was his assessment of my broken leg, and the fact that I was laying on the sofa was getting in the way of his preferred way to watch TV and play video games. But I had to lay on the sofa. It's what the doctor said I was supposed to do. Technically, he said to lay in bed or on the sofa, but the sofa's in the living room and I wanted to feel like I was still living—having some kind of life. And the pain medication really

knocks me out, so laying on the sofa turns into sleeping on the sofa pretty much every night. And, when I wake up, it's the next day and he's already at work. So, I just stay on the sofa. I eat stuff and take naps and watch TV and wait for him to get home.

TROY: The first guy who takes off his shirt at the pool is like the first steak you toss onto the grill. Everybody's like, "Oh, steak. Cool." The second guy is like the second steak that goes on the grill. You're comparing it to the first steak. Sometimes, that comparison is a good thing for the first steak and, sometimes, it's better for the second steak. People are noticing. People are comparing. And the meat is on the grill. There's nothing the first or second steak can do to change what people think of them—how they feel about them. The sizzling ship of steak has sailed.

DYLAN: The parties that I have to muster up all my skills for are when the only kid at the party is the kid who's having the birthday. Either the kid doesn't have any friends or the parents don't have any friends, so they don't want the kid to have any friends. It's a sad reality, but it happens.

TROY: The talk dies down. The comparisons fade. People know there's steak on the grill, but, yeah, whatever. It's not special.

PATRICK: It's like I've been in a holding pattern—like in some otherworldly dimension—and the only time I feel like I'm really existing in the world—like I'm real—is when he was home. It's like I'm a supporting character in his life and I don't exist except in context to him.

DYLAN: I do my research. I ask if the kid has any bladder control issues, because nobody wants a kid bouncing around with a bladder that gets uncontrolled all over the inside of the bounce house. Same goes for vomit. A bouncing kid who starts to throw up generates projective vomit. (*Sharing insider information.*) In the bounce business, we call that "bounce barf." And nobody wants that. Especially not inside a bounce house.

SUDI: When you start to notice things that your parents do—like habits and quirks and stupid things—and you're looking at them objectively, like they were just some person you'd meet out in the world, it's kind of weird. And it makes you start to realize things about yourself, too.

DYLAN: A kid who's the only one at his own birthday party will spill his guts to me in the sanctity of the bounce house. And by spill his guts, I don't mean vomit. I'm talking emotional spillage. He'll tell you his innermost thoughts and fears. I don't tell the kid's parents what he told me. What happens in the bounce house stays in the bounce house. (*Quickly clarifying.*) Except vomit. Or urine. Or an unexpected number two. Those things don't stay in the bounce house. They get pressure washed out and disinfected.

SUDI: And, as you're realizing things about yourself, you take baby steps in admitting those things to yourself. That's the hardest part. That's why you take baby steps. And when you start to tell people those things—it's not admitting, it's not like it's something that requires an admission of guilt or whatever. (*Simply.*) It's the sharing of factual information. Sharing your truth—whatever that truth is. And, as you do that, you have to give other people time to adjust. You're not waiting for them to decide if they can be okay with the information, but you have to let them have time to adjust—because they haven't been in your head as you were doing all the realizing and understanding. You have to give them time to let go of their dreams of who they thought you were going to be. Who they wanted you to be as a reflection of who they are. Who they needed you to be, because if you're not that, then, who are they?

LAUREN: Even before my dad moved out, I didn't really talk to him all that much. And, sometimes, it can be two or three days between the times when my mom and I have a conversation—an actual conversation. Most mornings, she says "Have a good day!" without opening my bedroom door. And when she comes home, she asks, "Did you have a good day?"—still on the other side of my closed door. And she doesn't ever wait to see if I answer.

DYLAN: (*Reiterating.*) What happens in the bounce house stays in the bounce house. And that's the way it has to be.

RAHJ: I don't know why I even bother trying. It's not like playing a word game on my phone is going to fix everything—or anything.

TROY: Being the third guy—the third guy at the pool to take off my shirt—lets me control the timing of the reveal. It lets me see what the reaction was to the first two steaks on the grill, and allows me to make objective comparisons—between them and me. Sure, sometimes, you'll get a guy who thinks he's going to steal my thunder and be the third guy to take off his shirt. But I shake my head and wave him off like a traffic cop telling a guy in an Audi R8 convertible inching into the intersection, "It's not your turn, buddy. It's not your turn." And he listens because, deep down, most people just wanna be told what to do and when to do it.

LAUREN: Even when she started getting weird messages from a guy at work—not one of her assistants or her assistant's assistant—she didn't say anything about it. She didn't even tell HR. And they're the people you're supposed to tell. But, she didn't think it was anything to worry about.

TROY: And when the time is right—when it's the perfect moment—I walk over to the pool. (*Quickly clarifying.*) With my shirt still on. And I take a step, like I'm going to jump in the water. But, wait, like, "Oh, dude, I'm such a knucklehead. I almost jumped into the pool with my shirt on." And everybody is watching—because I almost jumped into the pool with my shirt on. And I stop. Sometimes, I let out a little casually carefree, "Dude, I'm such a knucklehead" laugh. And I peel off my shirt just slowly enough to show that I have respect for my clothes and I don't want to stretch out the shirt. In that moment—that perfect moment—everybody at the pool is glad I showed up. And glad that I took off my shirt. And nobody even remembers there're two steaks on the grill. They'll probably be burnt to a crisp and get thrown in the trash. I'll smile, as I ball up my shirt and toss it in the direction of where I was sitting—but it'll accidentally land on the deck next to the prettiest lady at the party. And she'll pick it up and wave it at me, like, "Look what I found. Aren't I lucky." And I mouth, "Thank you," and jump in the pool.

LAUREN: (*Like it's just another piece of information.*) It went on for about six months like that. And the messages kept getting weirder... scarier. But she never said anything about it.

RAHJ: Once a voice like that—and an idea like that—gets in your head, it's hard to get rid of. It's like it finds a little corner in your brain and stays there. It moves in and, pretty soon, you start to think the voice knows you better than you know yourself. It's like it's the smart part of you. The honest part of you.

NINA: It's kind of complicated. (*Clarifying.*) My parents' business. It invests in companies that do good things. (*Explaining.*) Companies that care about their employees, the environment, and operate in a holistic way. We're all connected—even when it seems like we're not, which is most of the time.

LAUREN: My dad used to play basketball at the park about a mile from our house. It wasn't a league or anything. There weren't any official teams. "Pick-up games" is what he called them. Every time he went to the park, he played on different teams with different people. Not all different people. Sometimes, the same people were there at the same time he was.

BLAIR: I wasn't really paralyzed. My body thought it was because my brain must've been confused and told my body it was paralyzed. But I wasn't—not physically. Not really. But it took me about a week and a half before I could do anything more than wiggle my toes. About two weeks after my uncle got struck and killed by lightning and got a hole-in-one, I was able to start moving around, again. I wasn't running around playing basketball or anything like that, but I was walking.

RAHJ: And when that voice is what's telling you that you can't do something—so why even bother trying, you listen to it. Because it seems like it knows.

LAUREN: He started playing basketball pretty regularly with two guys. They'd play for hours and, then, come back here and hang out after they were done at the park. It was like my dad was in college again—hanging out with his buddies and drinking Gatorade and beer. (*Clarifying.*) Not at the same time. They'd start with Gatorade and, then, switch to beer.

BLAIR: It was more like staggering than walking. It was like learning to walk all over again, because my brain went from being totally confused to being still kind of confused.

PATRICK: How long is the appropriate amount of time to wait before sending somebody a message when they're on vacation? Like, say, six hours? Is six hours an appropriate amount of time?

NINA: A percentage of the profits from the investment business goes to help small businesses and people that couldn't get help from a bank. My parents created a fund. A philanthropic fund that changes a lot of people's lives. We still got to do really great things, like go to Denmark and Belgium and Egypt and Hong Kong but, because my mom was a planner and an organizer, we got to help people, too. We got to live a life of purposeful prioritizing of the pursuit of a positive impact. I wish I came up with that on my own. I didn't. It's on the front door of the investment business—in purple lettering in a really pretty font. I picked the font. That was my contribution. When people walk through the front door, they see my "Purposeful prioritizing of the pursuit of a positive impact"—in the font I picked from about a thousand possibilities. And, as they go through the door, a bell rings.

PATRICK: I'm pretty sure that six hours is more than enough time to wait before sending somebody a message when they're on vacation. No doubt about it. Six hours is more than appropriate.

TROY: You never go out with the woman who picks up your shirt, when you accidentally throw it a few inches away from her feet. When you get out of the pool, you thank her for picking it up, and you stand there shirtless talking to her for about three minutes—just enough time to be like, "Oh, hey, did I accidentally flex my bicep as I ran my fingers through my wet hair to slick it back just right." Putting my shirt back on, after that, is the punctuation to the conversation. It's like the curtain going down at the end of the show. And when I'm walking away, with my shirt back on, I give 'em one more, "Oh, hey, isn't it amazing how my bicep practically dances, as I run my fingers through my hair in a totally casual way."

LAUREN: My dad put up a basketball hoop on the front of our garage. "Ten feet high," he told me. "Just like the NBA." My mom wasn't happy about the addition of the basketball hoop. She said, "It's not really my aesthetic." It's not like she was home when they were playing. She didn't have to hear the sound of the ball bouncing on the driveway or banging against the front of the house.

PATRICK: Or five and a half hours. That's probably more than appropriate. Or five hours, if you don't see the value of half hours, when determining what the appropriate amount of time is to send somebody a message when they're on vacation. Or four hours. Four is a good, solid number. Four corners of a room. Four hours since I took the last dose of pain medication. Four hours is definitely long enough to wait.

LAUREN: One Saturday morning, my dad made me get up so I could run after the ball when it bounced off the front of the garage and landed in the yard or went out into the street. He called it "rebounding." But when I'm the only one running after the ball—because, let's face it, my dad is lazy—it's just forced exercise.

SUDI: It's the sharing of factual information. Sharing your truth—whatever that truth is.

NINA: It's more of a chime than a bell. It's not like there's a bell hanging on the door. It's a little sensor thing under the carpet that makes the chime go off when you walk on that part of the carpet.

LAUREN: As I was chasing a ball out into the street, one of my dad's buddies pulled up in a ridiculous car. It was a little convertible sports car and he got out by jumping over the door instead of opening it. There's a word for guys like that. I'm not sure what it is, but I'm pretty sure there's a word for it.

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