

**THE HIDDEN  
KENNEDY**

**BY**

**DAVID R. REMSCHEL**

# THE HIDDEN KENNEDY

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## THE HIDDEN KENNEDY

### CHARACTER LIST

ACTRESS 1: Rosemary Kennedy, Gloria Swanson, Nurse 1

ACTOR 1: Joseph Kennedy Sr., Joseph Kennedy Jr

ACTRESS 2: Sister Paulus, Rose Kennedy, Eunice Kennedy,  
Miss Devereux, Nurse 2

ACTOR 2: Jack Kennedy, Teddy Kennedy, Doctor Good,  
Doctor Freeman

*THE HIDDEN KENNEDY* received its world premiere at  
Fredericksburg High School on April 5<sup>th</sup>, 2024, featuring the  
following cast and crew:

Actress 1: Sophia Lutz

Actor 1: Aidan Spraggins

Actress 2: Alisha Wille

Actor 2: Diego Martinez

Stagehand: Kenny Baker

Stagehand: Sydney Davis

Stagehand: Elisabeth Boyd

Stagehand: Kaylee Crenwelge

Stagehand: Elijah Grimmer

Setting: Various locations in the life of ROSEMARY KENNEDY  
(1918-2005)

# THE HIDDEN KENNEDY

## ACT 1

*A bare stage.*

**ACTRESS 1.** *(Appearing in a pool of light.)* Hello. My name is *(Name of Actress)* and tonight I will be playing the role of Rosemary Kennedy.

**ACTOR 1.** *(Appearing in a pool of light.)* My name is *(Name of Actor)*. I will be playing the role of Joseph Kennedy Senior.

**ACTRESS 2.** *(Appearing in a pool of light.)* My name is *(Name of Actress)* and I will be playing the role of Sister Paulus-

**ACTOR 2.** *(Appearing in a pool of light.)* My name is *(Name of Actor)* and I will be playing Jack Kennedy more commonly referred to as JFK.

**ACTRESS 2.** I will also be playing Rose Kennedy.

**ACTOR 1.** Joe Kennedy Jr.

**ACTOR 2.** Teddy Kennedy.

**ACTRESS 2.** Eunice Kennedy.

**ACTOR 1.** Doctor Good.

**ACTRESS 1.** His nurse.

**ACTOR 2.** Doctor Freeman.

**ACTRESS 2.** And his nurse. Along with a host of other characters in tonight's dramatic endeavor.

**ACTRESS 1.** These events-

**ACTOR 1.** And the people within them-

## THE HIDDEN KENNEDY

**ACTRESS 1.** Are all very real.

**ACTOR 2.** We take you, now, to the moment where our story begins. The birth of protagonist, Rosemary Kennedy.

**ACTRESS 1.** *(Singing.)* God Bless America, Land that I love.

**ACTRESS 2.** The Kennedys were an affluent family who found success while much of America failed.

**ACTRESS 1.** *(Singing.)* Stand beside her and guide her, Through the night with the light from above.

**ACTOR 1.** Joseph Kennedy was a shrewd man of business who excelled in areas of trade, politics and even the infant motion picture industry as producer of the company FBO.

**ACTRESS 1.** *(Singing.)* From the mountains-

**ACTRESS 2.** Rose Fitzgerald who, at one time, had been a progressive woman fell in love with the man Joe and adapted to his more conservative tendencies.

**ACTRESS 1.** *(Singing.)* To the prairies-

**ACTOR 2.** They married in 1914.

**ACTRESS 1.** *(Singing.)* To the oceans, White with foam!

**ACTOR 1.** They had nine children.

**ACTRESS 1.** *(Singing.)* God bless America-

**ACTOR 2.** Amidst the rising terror of The Spanish Flu, Rose went into labor with their third child and first daughter.

**ACTRESS 1.** *(Softly singing.)* My home sweet home. *(We are taken to the family room of The Kennedys'. Actor 1, as Joe Sr., paces about, smoking a thin cigar. Actress 1, as Nurse, enters and approaches Joe Sr.)*

**JOE SR.** *(Unawares.)* Where is that blasted Doctor!?

**NURSE.** *(Quietly clearing her throat.)* Begging your pardon, Mr. Kennedy?

## THE HIDDEN KENNEDY

**JOE SR.** Yes? What is it?

**NURSE.** I've done everything I can, but the baby is coming out. I need to begin the delivery process.

**JOE SR.** Not until Doctor Good has arrived.

**NURSE.** But sir, I have the experience to-

**JOE SR.** I said no! You will do as I say and wait! That is the end of the discussion!

**NURSE.** Yes sir. *(Beat.)* With all due respect, Mr. Kennedy, what am I to do until then?

**JOE SR.** How in hell should I know? I'm not a doctor! Push the blasted thing in so it won't come out!

**NURSE.** You cannot be serious-! *(Off of his deadly stare.)* Yes, sir. Forgive me, Mr. Kennedy. *(She disappears behind the partition.) (From off.)* I am sorry, Mrs. Kennedy. I cannot deliver the child until Doctor Good has returned.

**ROSE.** *(OFF)* Oh! Oh, it hurts so bad! Please, take it out!

**JOE SR.** Try holding your legs together, darling. That ought to do the trick!

**ROSE.** *(OFF)* It hurts so bad!

**NURSE.** *(OFF)* Begging your pardon, Mrs. Kennedy. But I am just going to give the head a slight push back into you.

**ROSE.** *(OFF)* *(A loud shriek of pain.)* Oh!

**JOE SR.** *(Seething.)* Where is he!?! *(A door opens.) (Actor 2 as Doctor Good enters in a flustered hurry.)* There you are! Where have you been, Good? It has been hours, you know!

**DOCTOR GOOD.** Forgive me, Mr. Kennedy. We are packed in like sardines what with this blasted Spanish Flu and all!

*(Nurse rushes around to the front of the partition.)* Ah, Nurse.

**NURSE.** *(Leading him behind the partition.)* Thank goodness you're here, Doctor Good. The babe is practically begging to come out.

**DOCTOR GOOD.** *(OFF)* Very good, Nurse. Let us check in

## THE HIDDEN KENNEDY

on the patient. *(To Rose.)* You seem to be doing quite well, Mrs. Kennedy. Here. Let's just have a little look-see.

**ROSE.** *(OFF)* Oh, please! Please! Just let me push it out, Doctor!

**DOCTOR GOOD.** *(OFF)* Yes. I do believe that would be the best option, now.

**ROSE.** *(OFF)* You mean-?!

**DOCTOR GOOD.** *(OFF)* Yes, Mrs. Kennedy. Push. Push. Push! *(Rose lets out a loud and most tragic holler and then we eventually, finally hear the sound of a babe crying.)*

**ROSE.** *(OFF)* Oh! Oh, let me hold her! Oh, please give her to me so I can hold her!

**JOE SR.** Doctor! Good! Has it happened? Has the baby been delivered? *(The partition is drawn aside, revealing a most exhausted Rose, cradling her swaddled baby.)*

**ROSE.** *(Weakly.)* Come, Joe. Come and see your daughter.

**JOE SR.** *(Approaching his wife.)* My child. My sweet and beautiful daughter. Here is your Daddy. Here I-*(Draws away.)*

**ROSE.** What is the matter, Joe?

**JOE SR.** Why won't she look at me? I called to her and, blast it all, she has her eyes fixed upon you. I insist you have her look at me.

**ROSE.** I am her mother, Joe.

**JOE SR.** Well, I don't like it.

**ROSE.** Perhaps if you were to hold her a moment-

**JOE SR.** Eh, not now. Maybe later.

**ROSE.** Alright. *(Pause.)* What are we to name her, Joe?

**JOE SR.** *(Calming down.)* Eh, Rosemary. We'll name her Rosemary. After her mother. Do you like the name, Darling?

**ROSE.** I do. Rosemary Kennedy. Yes. Yes, I like that name very well, indeed. *(Back to the babe as Joe pushes her out of the place.)* Did you know, my little angel, it was A. A. Milne

## THE HIDDEN KENNEDY

that said, “Sometimes the smallest things take up the most room in your heart”. I think he was right. I really, truly think he was right.

**ACTOR 2.** *(Coming out into a pool of light.)* Those first few months were, indeed, precious for Joe and Rose Kennedy. They could be seen walking up and down their perfect, little walk in their perfect, little neighborhood together with their three perfect, little children: Joe Junior, Jack and Rosemary, and most everyone would say that they were-*(Beat.)*-A normal, happy and, yes, perfect, little family. *(Beat.)* But they were living in a dream and were soon faced with the inevitability that it was time to wake up back into reality. *(Actress 1 becomes Little Rosemary and begins playing with her brother, Jack, and sister Eunice. It is a happy sight and almost a touch tragic as she is clearly slower than her siblings. But they continue, nonetheless, even as Joe Sr. enters with a small red ball and-)*

**JOE SR.** Alright, children. Come, come to Father. Yes. Yes, Jack. Thatta boy, son. You too, Eunice! Very good. Eh, Rosemary. You are going the wrong-The wrong direction. Come here. In front of Father. No. No. Here. Here. Just-Just-*(Setting the ball down.) (Handling Rosemary to sit.)* No. There! There. Thatta girl. *(Picking the ball back up.)* Now, we are going to play a round of catch-ball, heh? Jackie, you’re up first. *(He tosses the ball to Jack.)* Whatta catch, son! That does it! Here. G’head and toss it back to Father. *(Jack throws the ball back to him.)* Now, Eunice! I am counting on you! See the ball? And-! *(He tosses the ball to Eunice who catches it and throws it right back to him.)* Well done, Eunice! That’s just fine! *(Turns his attention to Rosemary.)* Now, Rosemary. It is your turn. Are you ready? See the ball? Get ready to catch the ball. And-! *(He tosses it. The ball passes over Rosemary’s head. Only after it has passed by her, does she clap her hands together to try and*



## THE HIDDEN KENNEDY

*catch it. Even with this failed attempt, she lets out a large guffaw and falls backward, enjoying the hell out of her folly. Joe Sr. stares in disbelief and rising irritation.)*

**LITTLE ROSEMARY.** Ball fall! Ball fall down, Dada!

**JOE SR.** *(Simmering.)* Yes. The ball did fall. Very. Very perceptive, darling Rosie. *(Deep sigh.) (Retrieving the ball.)* Shall we try again?

**LITTLE ROSEMARY.** Try again! La-la! Ball fall on the ground!

**JOE SR.** Be still, girl! Now, pay attention to the ball. See the ball? Watch it sail through the air and then into your hands, understand? Here. *(He throws the ball. The same happens as it had before. Her hands clasp together just after the ball has sailed by.)* No! No! That isn't-! *(He goes, retrieves the ball, assumes his previous position and tries again, coaching her and throwing the ball and each and every time, his efforts fail. Finally, he retrieves the ball and hurls it at her. It hits her on her head, and she begins to weep. Not loudly. At least, not just yet.)* Here now, girl. Easy does it. Let's not get carried-*(At this very moment, Rosemary pitches her head back and proceeds to wail and sob.)* Oh, for the love of-! *(But Eunice and Jack, ever the protective siblings, have run off to alert Rose.) (Seeing Rose approaching from off.) (To Rosemary.)* Let's stop all of that crying, now. Please, Rosie. Won't you stop all of that awful, damned crying! *(But she does not stop her crying.)*

**ROSE.** *(Entering.)* What happened, Joe?

**JOE SR.** Eh, happened?

**ROSE.** I was inside, tending to Joe Junior when Jackie and Little Eunice practically trampled me over on their way into the house. They said you struck Rosie with the ball. *(Beat.)* Well??

**JOE SR.** We were playing ball, and she could not keep up with the others.

## THE HIDDEN KENNEDY

**ROSE.** Try being more gentle with her.

**JOE SR.** I do try.

**ROSE.** Then I insist you try harder.

**JOE SR.** But-!

**ROSE.** “You cannot stay in your corner of the forest waiting for others to come to you. Sometimes, you have to go to them.” Remember that, Joe.

**JOE SR.** This is not some children’s book, Rose. This is real, actual, real life, we are talking about here and I will be damned if I am going to have a defective child!

**ROSE.** *(Lovingly.)* Come along, Rosie. Let’s get washed up before supper. *(She leads her daughter off, leaving Joe Sr. by himself. For a long while, he remains. Staring off after his wife, then he takes the ball and hurls it aside, with great force.)*

**ACTOR 1.** Joe Sr, regarded perfection as the crucial component to leading a successful life. Jack and Joe, the two eldest, and little Eunice, the newest Kennedy addition, each excelled at sporting endeavors and academics, bringing Joe Sr abundant joy and satisfaction. Rosemary, on the other hand, faltered and struggled at even the simplest of activities. This brought about a great worry to Joe Sr, who thought that his daughter’s shortcomings would give his neighbors and colleagues cause to view he and his family as anything but perfect.

**ACTRESS 2.** He tried most everything to pull Rosemary out of the rut she was in. Tutors. Professors. Professionals from every corner of The U.S. of A came on to try their hand at helping free poor Rosemary Kennedy of her certain peculiarities. But their answer was quite clear each and every time. *(During the below action, Actress 1 becomes Rosemary and sits alone. Playing with her doll and absent of what is being said around her. Joe Sr stands to her side.)*

## THE HIDDEN KENNEDY

**ACTOR 2.** *Your daughter is different.*

**ACTRESS 2.** *Your daughter is slow.*

**ACTOR 2.** *Your daughter is-*

**ACTRESS 2.** *It is obvious she is-*

**BOTH.** *Retarded.*

**JOE SR.** *God help me!*

**ACTOR 2.** *But all is not lost.*

**JOE SR.** *No?*

**ACTRESS 2.** *Of course not.*

**ACTOR 2.** *There are institutions she can be taken to.*

**JOE SR.** *Institutions?*

**ACTOR 2.** *Perhaps that is too strong'a word. What I mean to say is that *your* daughter can be taken to a-*

**ACTRESS 2.** *A special school that caters to children like your daughter.*

**ACTOR 2.** *Like *your* daughter.*

**JOE SR.** *Eh, yes. Eh, thank you for your input. Please see your way through to the main office and my secretary will arrange for you to be compensated for your troubles. (He looks down to Rosemary, still oblivious to the world around her. She looks up at him and waves, happily. Unable to hide his dissatisfaction, he shakes his head and exits off. Actress 2 enters and makes her way to Rosemary.)*

**ACTRESS 2.** *In fact. The only person who had any amount of luck getting through to Rosemary was her younger sister, Eunice. (As little Eunice.) Okay, Rosie. Today we're going to read from-(Big pageantry.) Your favorite-Winnie the Pooh!*

**LITTLE ROSEMARY.** *Hooray! (Beat.) Oh, but Daddy won't like it. Reading from a little, children's book. Maybe he will be mad.*

**LITTLE EUNICE.** *I won't tell him if you don't. (Beat.) Shall I read it or not?*

## THE HIDDEN KENNEDY

**LITTLE ROSEMARY.** Yes, silly. Read it! Read it!

**LITTLE EUNICE.** (*Producing the book.*) Here. You start.

**LITTLE ROSEMARY.** But this book is filled with hard words.

**LITTLE EUNICE.** And you will not learn if you do not try. Besides. It's just me with you now, right? Trust me, okay? Do you trust me?

**LITTLE ROSEMARY.** (*Beat.*) Yes. Yes, I trust you, Little Sister. (*Taking the book and, with great trouble*)- "Then, s-s-sudd-

**LITTLE EUNICE.** Suddenly.

**LITTLE ROSEMARY.** Yes. Suddenly again, Christopher Wobin, who was still l-loo-looking at the world, with his-oh, I can't do it, Eunice! Please, won't you read it instead?

**LITTLE EUNICE.** (*Taking the book and with ease.*) Then, suddenly again, Christopher Robin who was still looking at the world with his chin in his hand, called out "Pooh, promise you won't forget about me, ever. Not even when I'm a hundred." Pooh thought for a little. "How old shall I be then?" "Ninety-nine." Pooh nodded. "I promise," he said.

**LITTLE ROSEMARY.** (*Beat.*) Whoo! I don't think I will ever be able to read all of that.

**LITTLE EUNICE.** You won't if you don't keep trying. But I will help you.

**LITTLE ROSEMARY.** Every time?

**LITTLE EUNICE.** Every time.

**LITTLE ROSEMARY.** You promise?

**LITTLE EUNICE.** (*Beat.*) I promise.

**JOE SR.** (*Entering.*) Good morning, Eunice. Rosie, have I got the most wonderful news to tell you!

**LITTLE EUNICE.** What is it, Daddy?

**LITTLE ROSEMARY.** Yes! Tell us! Tell us!

## THE HIDDEN KENNEDY

**JOE SR.** Very well. You are to be sent to a special school.

**LITTLE EUNICE.** Both of us?

**JOE SR.** No. It will just be Rosemary.

**LITTLE EUNICE.** *(Sad beat.)* Oh.

**JOE SR.** Here now, child. We should all be so, very happy for your sister. At this school, they will help our Rosie in ways that others could not. Help her read. Write. Do arithmetic. Things that you already know how to do so well.

**LITTLE EUNICE.** But I can teach Rosie, Daddy. Can't I, Rosie?

**LITTLE ROSEMARY.** Yes, Daddy! Eunice is teaching me! She is very good at it!

**JOE SR.** I am afraid that is the end of the discussion. Say your goodbyes to each other and we will be off presently. *(Eunice looks to Rosemary then runs away, crying as she goes.)*

**LITTLE ROSEMARY.** Poor Eunice.

**JOE SR.** She will be fine.

**LITTLE ROSEMARY.** Will she?

**JOE SR.** In time, yes. *(He exits.)*

**ACTRESS 2.** *(In a light downstage.)* So it was that Rosemary Kennedy was taken to Devereux School in Devyn-Berwyn, Pennsylvania. It was an institution known for its rigoristic teaching methods, put into practice by headmistress and founder, Miss Helena Devereux. *(Joe Sr. enters and makes his way to Actress 2 who is playing Miss Devereux. They shake hands.)*

**MISS DEVEREUX.** Mr. Kennedy.

**JOE SR.** Miss Devereux, ma'am. I am most happy to finally meet you.

**MISS DEVEREUX.** *(Never missing a beat.)* Where is your wife?

**JOE SR.** In the car, still. It was too difficult for her to be here

## THE HIDDEN KENNEDY

now.

**MISS DEVEREUX.** And the child?

**JOE SR.** Rosemary is also in the car.

**MISS DEVEREUX.** I understand. *(Beat.)* The two of them are quite close to one another, yes?

**JOE SR.** Decidedly so.

**MISS DEVEREUX.** And you are envious of this relationship?

**JOE SR.** I did not say that!

**MISS DEVEREUX.** *(Beat.)* Mr. Kennedy, I can tell you are a man who demands respect from his subordinates.

**JOE SR.** Eh, yes. Especially from my children.

**MISS DEVEREUX.** I feel very much the same. Mr. Kennedy, I assure you, I can remedy this predicament of yours, but there are certain-certain stipulations I must relay to you before your mind has been made up.

**JOE SR.** Very well. Name your stipulations.

**MISS DEVEREUX.** She will be treated like all the others. Those that behave. Those that succeed in their studies will be rewarded. Those that prove stubborn to learn or act in a manner that I do not find conducive to their academic progression will be dealt with accordingly.

**JOE SR.** Accordingly, ma'am?

**MISS DEVEREUX.** Corporal punishment usually remedies the issue. *(Beat.)* Perhaps you find it too stringent?

**JOE SR.** Eh, not stringent at all.

**MISS DEVEREUX.** I must also iterate the importance of continual and uninterrupted study. This means she will not be allowed any visitors until she has met the required academic level we deem sufficient here.

**JOE SR.** This will be most hard on her mother.

**MISS DEVEREUX.** It is non-negotiable.

**JOE SR** *(Beat)*. Of course. Of course, we agree to your terms.

## THE HIDDEN KENNEDY

**MISS DEVEREUX.** Then you will not be disappointed. That is my assurance to you and Mrs. Kennedy. Now. Go and fetch the child.

**JOE SR.** *(Exiting.)* Very good, ma'am. *(He returns, dragging a most disagreeable Little Rosemary.)* Here now, Rosie. Let's not have any of-*(Receiving a nasty bite on the hand from Rosemary.)* Oh, little devil! *(Little Rosemary breaks away from her father with a great yank and starts to run off. She is instantly halted by Miss Devereux.)*

**MISS DEVEREUX.** That will be just about enough of that, girl. I am Miss Devereux, and I am to be your teacher. The first lesson of our day is that acting like a wild baboon is expressly prohibited. Are we quite clear on the matter?

**LITTLE ROSEMARY.** *(Turning her attention to Joe Sr.)*  
Daddy is leaving me here?

**JOE SR.** *(Willing himself to not look down at her.)* It is for the best, Little Rosie.

**LITTLE ROSEMARY.** *(Grabbing at her father.)* Oh, Daddy! Oh, Daddy, please don't leave me here! This place is bad! This place is no good! Please take me home!

**JOE SR.** I am sorry, Rosie.

**MISS DEVEREUX.** Come along, now.

**LITTLE ROSEMARY.** *(Pulling away from her father.)* No! No! I won't go away with you! You are a very mean, very bad lady! I won't go away with you!

**MISS DEVEREUX.** Now is the ideal time for you to depart, Mr. Kennedy!

**JOE SR.** Eh, goodbye, Rosie. Your Daddy loves you very, very much. Goodbye. *(He exits. Little Rosemary looks up at her captor.)*

**LITTLE ROSEMARY.** Mama!

**MISS DEVEREUX.** Your mother is gone, child. And she will

## THE HIDDEN KENNEDY

not return until you have matured in your thinking.

**LITTLE ROSEMARY.** I hate you!

**MISS DEVEREUX.** Perhaps, but in time you will come to respect me. Now. Let us begin with some arithmetic. What is two times four?

**LITTLE ROSEMARY.** No! (*Miss Devereux produces a ruler and strikes Little Rosemary across the hand.*) Ow! Never do that again!

**MISS DEVEREUX.** What is two times four? (*Little Rosemary hauls back and spits into Miss Devereux's face. Miss Devereux wipes the spittle away from her face and smashes Little Rosemary.*) You will learn, child. That I can assure you.

**LITTLE ROSEMARY.** I won't!

**MISS DEVEREUX.** If you do not, then you will never see your mother again! (*Little Rosemary glacially concedes.*) I ask again. What is two times four? Think very hard.

**LITTLE ROSEMARY.** (*With great trouble.*) Four? (*Miss Devereux takes the ruler and hits Little Rosemary's hand. Hard.*)

**MISS DEVEREUX.** What is two times four?

**LITTLE ROSEMARY.** Five! (*She is hit again.*) Six! (*She is hit again.*) Seven! (*And again.*) Eight! (*She holds out her hand expectantly. Miss Devereux puts the ruler away.*)

**MISS DEVEREUX.** Very good, child. It is eight because two four times over is eight. You are capable of retaining information despite what others may think of you. Now, let us continue with literature.

**LITTLE ROSEMARY.** Please, Miss Devereux. Please, no more!

**MISS DEVEREUX.** You'd like to see your mother again, wouldn't you? This is the way to do it. Here. (*Producing a bible.*) What is the title of this book?



## THE HIDDEN KENNEDY

**LITTLE ROSEMARY.** I dunno!

**MISS DEVEREUX.** You *do not* know. Then sound it out.

**LITTLE ROSEMARY.** The B-B-

**MISS DEVEREUX.** What sound does that second letter make?

**LITTLE ROSEMARY.** I (*Pronouncing it Eye*)?

**MISS DEVEREUX.** So, say it after the b. Ba-Ba-Bi-

**LITTLE ROSEMARY.** Ba-I-B-Lay. Biblay!

**MISS DEVEREUX.** (*Deep sigh.*) The correct pronunciation is bible. (*Producing the ruler.*) Hand, please. (*Little Rosemary complies and receives yet another sharp slap to the hand with the ruler.*) Open it, child. Open it to a page and read it.

**LITTLE ROSEMARY.** Any-Any page?

**MISS DEVEREUX.** That's right. The first page that you come upon. I want you to flip to it and read a passage from it. Go on. Do it now. (*Little Rosemary does so and shows Miss Devereux the page she's come to.*)

**LITTLE ROSEMARY.** Is this a good page?

**MISS DEVEREUX.** It is a very good page. Now, read a passage from it.

**LITTLE ROSEMARY.** B-B-Ba-Less-Ed are the M-Ma-Ma-Eek f-for they sh-shall in-in-in-I don't know the word, Miss Devereux.

**MISS DEVEREUX.** Blessed are the meek for they shall inherit the world. Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled. Blessed are the merciful, for they will be shown mercy. Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God.

**LITTLE ROSEMARY.** Oh. That sure is hard.

**MISS DEVEREUX.** It is difficult for you now, perhaps, but with hard work and dedication, you might just find success. (*Beat.*) You want to be successful, don't you?

**LITTLE ROSEMARY.** I want to be successful, Miss

## THE HIDDEN KENNEDY

Devereux. For my Mother. For Daddy.

**MISS DEVEREUX.** I, I really think you do. *(Beat.)* Now, put out your hand, please.

**LITTLE ROSEMARY.** But I read from the biblay!

**MISS DEVEREUX.** You tried but, alas, you failed to do so. Now, do not waste my time. Your hand, please. *(Little Rosemary complies and receives her standard slap on the hand.)*

**ACTOR 2.** *(Entering.)* Rosemary continued her schooling at Devereux and, despite the efforts of Miss Devereux to instill the desired knowledge into her pupil, the child could not retain any of the information she was presented with. *(Miss Devereux walks down a "line" of young girls with Rosemary waiting impatiently at the end. This effect can be as simple as having Actresses 1 and 2 record the lines).*

**MISS DEVEREUX.** Three times five equals?

**ACTRESS AS GIRL.** *(OFF)* Fifteen!

**MISS DEVEREUX** *(Patting girl on the head).* Very good. *(To next girl.)* Three times seven equals?

**ACTRESS AS OTHER GIRL.** *(OFF)* Twenty-one!

**MISS DEVEREUX.** *(Patting girl on the head.)* Excellent! You have practiced! *(To Rosemary, now.)* Well, Rosemary Kennedy. Let us see if you have acquainted yourself with your three times tables. What is three times nine?

**ROSEMARY.** *(Pause.)* Eh, nineteen?

**MISS DEVEREUX.** Incorrect. Hand, please. *(Administers her punishment.)*

**ROSEMARY.** Oh! Miss Devereux, it is so hard!

**MISS DEVEREUX.** Try again!

**ROSEMARY.** Twenty-seven! Is it twenty-seven?

**MISS DEVEREUX.** It is. But you must be confident when you give your answer, child. Speak with confidence, or you will

## THE HIDDEN KENNEDY

never garner respect for yourself. Now, let us move on to our literary studies. (*Producing her bible.*) Read the following passage from the bible.

**ROSEMARY.** (*With great trouble.*) “And if you faithfully obey the voice of the Lord your God, being careful to do all his-his-?”

**MISS DEVEREUX.** (*Without looking.*) “-Being careful to do all his commandments that I command you today, the Lord your God will set you high above all the nations of the earth.” (Deep sigh.) Unsatisfactory attempt. Hand, please. (*Rosemary puts out her hand and receives the expected slap.*)

**ACTOR 2.** (*Entering.*) The news of Rosemary’s shortcomings at Devereux was especially hard on her parents. To Rose, it meant she would be delayed the opportunity to visit her beloved daughter. But to Joe Sr., it meant more disappointment. More self-perceived humiliation by those colleagues who, like him, expected-no demanded nothing less than absolute perfection.

**ACTRESS 2 AS ROSE.** Oh, but Joe. Surely there is something we can do so that we might see our Rosemary again.

**JOE SR.** You know Miss Devereux’s rule, Rose. She is to remain alone at Devereux until she exhibits progress.

**ROSE.** But if you were to say something. Surely then-

**JOE SR.** That is the end of the discussion. (*Beat.*) I’ve got to go to California, dearest.

**ROSE.** Must you, again?

**JOE SR.** FBO is churning out stinker after stinker. It is time I straightened them all out. Make them see things the Kennedy way, heh? Don’t worry. I will only be gone a week at the most.

**ROSE.** Alright, darling. (*He prepares to exit.*) I love you, Joe. (*He looks down at the ring on his finger and removes it before*

## THE HIDDEN KENNEDY

*finishing his exit as we go to Eunice, now a teenager, sitting at a table and beginning to ascribe a note.)*

**EUNICE.** To my dearest sister Rosie. I am writing to inquire about your health and well-being at Devereux. It is so different. So quiet without you here at the house. Even with our brothers constantly causing a ruckus.

**ROSEMARY.** *(Reading very legato.)* I miss you ever so much, my darling Rosemary. As does Mother and Daddy. *(Away from the letter.)* Bad Daddy. He doesn't miss me. If he did, he wouldn't have sent me to this bad place. *(Back to letter.)* I hope you are getting on well in your studies. While, you might have had a certain difficulty with reading, you always showed such a v(eye)v(ead) ima-ima(*hard g*)ination. I have enclosed your copy of Winnie the Pooh for your enjoyment. *(Away from the letter.)* Bad Miss Devereux took my book away. I hate her! I really do! *(Back to letter.)* There is a quote from it that I have found most comforting when writing this letter to you. "If there ever comes a day when we can't be together, keep me in your heart. I'll stay there forever." Sincerely, your sister Eunice.

*(Folds up letter.)* Oh, Eunice. How I love you.

**ACTOR 2.** *(Appearing in his pool of light.)* Rosemary grew in beauty that would be the envy of any Hollywood starlet. She became interested in the newest styles, dresses, and hairdos. Especially hairdos. Her hair was to become her most treasured source of pride. So it was, that on her twentieth birthday, Rosemary was finally able to attend Devereux's social function. A dance, to you out there, that Miss Devereux allowed to those pupils who exhibited sufficient academic progress. This was precisely what Joe Sr. feared more than anything else. His daughter utterly humiliating the good Kennedy name in public. So, in an effort to keep this embarrassment from occurring, Joe Sr. called on his two eldest sons and demanded that one of them

## THE HIDDEN KENNEDY

chaperone their sister at the social. The news was not met with universal favor.

**ACTOR 1 AS JOE JR.** (*Entering.*) Can you believe it?!

**ACTOR 2 AS JACK KENNEDY.** (*Following Joe.*) I'll admit-it is something.

**JOE JR.** I'll just refuse. That's what I'll do!

**JACK.** What, to Father?

**JOE JR.** (*Fearful beat.*) Why not? You do it all the time and get away with it *every time!*

**JACK.** (*Smugly.*) Heh, I guess I do at that.

**JOE JR.** Then, it is time I became the black sheep of the Kennedy children, heh? Alright, I refuse to take Rosemary to the social gathering!

**JACK.** Don't you think you're coming across as-well-as a bit of an ass.

**JOE JR.** I do not care! Think what society would say about us. About me. I am the eldest, you know. Their condemnations would be directed at me probably!

**JACK.** You make our sister sound as if she were some kind of-of circus freak!

**JOE JR.** Brother, that is precisely what I think of her as. A freak not worthy of sharing our glorious name! Oh, they should have done away with her from the start.

**JACK.** I refuse to hear you talk this way about Rosie.

**JOE JR.** Alright. You take her, then.

**JACK.** What, me?

**JOE JR.** Why not? It is clear she fancies you above the others. Certainly, above me. Won't you do this, Jackie? For me, heh? (*Off of Jack's indecision.*) I'll make it worth your while! I'll-I'll lend you the Phaeton for-for a week.

**JACK.** (*Beat.*) Make it a month and the deal's settled.

**JOE JR.** Done! (*He spits in his hand. Jack does the same and*

## THE HIDDEN KENNEDY

*they shake. The scene becomes the Devereux school social. Rosemary appears in a beautiful red dress. She is, in every sense of the word, immaculately beautiful and radiant. However, she seems troubled. Practically terrified. She looks about the place at the many other attendees and closes in on herself. Jack enters from the other side of the hall and observes his sister for a moment. Then, he comes up from behind her and puts his hands over her eyes. She lets out a loud holler and whirls around to see who it is.)*

**ROSEMARY.** Oh, Jack! You frightened me so!

**JACK.** What are you doing standing over here by yourself? Girl as pretty as you ought to be dancing with all of the fellas in the place.

**ROSEMARY.** But, Jack, I'm nervous. What if I-What if I make a scene or do something stupid?

**JACK.** That's not gonna happen. Hey, I won't let it happen.

**ROSEMARY.** You mean it?

**JACK.** Course I mean it. *(Beat.) (Offering.)* Dance with me, Rosie? *(She hesitantly takes his hands, and he swoops her to the middle of the hall. Her head hangs back as he does this, and she laughs loudly. So, so very happily. They stop once they've arrived in the center of the hall. A slow song starts up.)* Why'd we stop?

**ROSEMARY.** It's a slow song, Jack.

**JACK.** Yeah, so?

**ROSEMARY.** I'm no good at dancing to slow songs.

**JACK.** Then I'll teach you. Here. It's easy. Step. Step. Slide. Step. Step. Slide. Here. *(He goes through the steps, counting aloud as he does so. She stares down at his feet so as to make sure she notes every step he takes.)* Look at me.

**ROSEMARY.** But-

**JACK.** I'll lead. You follow, okay?

## THE HIDDEN KENNEDY

**ROSEMARY.** *(Nodding.)* Alright. You lead and I'll follow.  
*(They continue. She starts by looking down at their feet but he gently prompts her to look back up into his eyes.)*

**JACK.** Thatta girl. *(They dance about the place. As she counts inwardly, Rosemary bobs her head with each notation. Sometimes she steps illy but for the most part, she continues on in fine style. The song reaches its conclusion. The attendees clap for the musicians. Jack joins. Rosemary does the same then, turning back to Jack, she wraps her arms around him and embraces him.)*

**ROSEMARY.** I love you so, Big Brother.

**JACK.** *(Guilt rising.)* Hey, and-eh-I love you right back.  
*(Another song has started up. Rosemary, sensing the change in his mood, pulls away to inspect his face.)*

**ROSEMARY.** Jack? Brother, what is the matter? *(No response.)*

Jackie, won't you tell me?

**JACK.** *(Long pause.)* I've had such a great time. Here. Tonight. With you. We're going to have more of them. Good times, I mean. We'll take you out of Devereux. Forever, heh? And we won't care what people think. We'll just live. And if people don't like that, well then, to hell with them. That's what I say! What do you think about that?

**ROSEMARY.** You care an awful, awful lot, Big Brother. I think that's called love. Is what A. A. Milne said.

**JACK.** You love Winnie the Pooh. You always have.

**ROSEMARY.** Of course.

**JACK.** But it's just silly fluff for children. It doesn't have any real substance to it. *(Beat.)* Does it?

**ROSEMARY.** Sometimes the silly things are what make life worth living.

**JACK.** *(On the verge of tearing up.)* You are the most

## THE HIDDEN KENNEDY

profound person I have ever met.

**ROSEMARY.** That is a good thing?

**JACK.** Yes. It is a very good thing. *(She embraces him again. Practically melting against her brother.)*

**ROSEMARY.** Promise you won't forget me, ever, Jackie.

**JACK.** Okay. I won't.

**ROSEMARY.** Not even when I'm a hundred.

**JACK.** Never, ever, ever. *(Another slow song has begun to play.)*

**ROSEMARY.** I'd like to dance to this song now. *(He starts to hold her at arm's length, but she holds onto him in her embrace.)*

**JACK.** Rosie-?

**ROSEMARY.** No. Not like everybody else. Like this. Please.

**JACK.** Of course. Just like this. *(They continue to dance to the song, until Rosemary finally pulls away from Jack and then twirls down center to her writing table while Jack makes his exit.)*

**ROSEMARY** *(While writing and reading in her standard legato fashion).* Dearest Sister. I had the most wonderful time at th' dance with brother Jackie. I did not know he was so good at dancing. He was very good. I look forward to coming home for the Thanksgiving holidays. I look forward to the wonderful dishes that have been prepared. Your last letter told me that you had traveled with Mother. That is very-

**EUNICE.** *(Reading the letter with ease and grace.)* Good. Where did you go? Were the foods nice? I'll bet they were delicious. I would like to go with you on one of your travels. If that would be alright. *(Away from the letter.)* Of course, it would be, Rosie. *(Back to letter.)* I have been taking French and my teacher. Her name is Miss Billet. She says that I am showing real promise. I will write a phrase to you now. "Tu me



## THE HIDDEN KENNEDY

manques et je t'aime, sœur". Do you know what that means? It means," I miss and love you, Sister." And I really, truly do. Miss Devereux has grown nicer to me. She hits me-*(Holding back the oncoming tears.)* She hits me with her ruler less than she used to. I hope you do not hate her for doing this. *(Away from the letter.)* How I'd like to hit that monster with a ruler! The horrid bitch! *(Back to the letter.)* She says it will help me get better at my studies. I want to get better. For you. For Daddy. And for the rest of the family. So, you won't think that I'm a defective. Well, it is time I ended my letter. Please pass my love along to our parents and the other children. Goodbye, Eunice. *(Eunice folds the letter up in on itself and proceeds to sob.)*

**ACTOR 2.** Years passed and Rosemary's academic career continued along much too glacially for her father's liking. This drove a wedge between he and his wife, pushing them further and further apart. While Rose corresponded through letters with her beloved daughter, Joe Sr found solace in the affections of female socialites and Hollywood starlets including Marlene Dietrich and Gloria Swanson. *(The scene becomes a lavish hotel room. Joe Sr stands, looking out a window. Actress 1 as Gloria Swanson puts her arms around him.)*

**ACTRESS 1 AS GLORIA.** Joseph Kennedy, I fear that window has stolen all of your attention away from me.

**JOE SR.** *(Grunt.)*

**GLORIA.** You are thinking about her again, aren't you? Your Rosemary?

**JOE SR.** She is all I *can* think about these days. More than the other children. More than business, even. I have never felt this way before. I am just. Just waiting. Waiting for her to sully the beautiful Kennedy legacy that I have worked so hard to obtain. *(Deep sigh and then, lowly.)* What do you know about

## THE HIDDEN KENNEDY

lobotomies?

**GLORIA.** I know that even the thought of such a thing severely lowers your chances of ever seeing me again. *(Beat.)* Joe, you cannot be serious!

**JOE SR.** There is a man. A neurologist who specializes in this type of procedure. A Doctor-Freeman. I have, just this week, spoken to him. He has agreed to oversee the procedure.

**GLORIA.** And how does Rose feel about this business?

**JOE JR.** She doesn't know the first thing about it.

**GLORIA.** She will find out somehow. Some day.

**JOE SR.** *(Lowly.)* It is none of your concern when or even if she does find out. *(Gloria turns away from him. Willing herself not to cry.)*

**GLORIA.** *(Long pause.)* You are a monster, Joe Kennedy.

**JOE SR.** I am a name. A beautiful name. And I will do anything. Anything! To protect it! *(Gloria exits, leaving Joe Sr alone in the room.)*

**ACTOR 2.** The clinical definition of a lobotomy is the surgical severance of nerve fibers connecting the frontal lobes to the thalamus that has been performed especially to treat mental illness.

**ACTRESS 2.** The procedure would commence as follows:

**ACTOR 2.** Two holes are drilled into the patient's head and then pure ethyl alcohol is poured into the prefrontal cortex. *(WE GO TO the interior of Joe Sr's automobile. He is at the wheel. Rosemary sits, unassumingly, in the seat beside him.)*

**ROSEMARY.** Where are we going, Daddy?

**JOE SR.** I am taking you for a drive. You like drives, don't you?

**ROSEMARY.** I always have, yes!

**JOE SR.** That's just fine.

**ROSEMARY.** *(Beat.)* Besides, anything is better than another

## THE HIDDEN KENNEDY

day being stuck in that Devereux place.

**JOE SR.** Surely it isn't all so bad as that?

**ROSEMARY.** Oh, it is and more than that even.

**JOE SR.** It cost an arm and a leg to send you to Devereux. I would rather you were more appreciative.

**ROSEMARY.** I'm sorry, Daddy. I do not mean to disappoint you.

**JOE SR.** It's alright. *(Beat.)* Surely there was at least one piece of your time there that wasn't so tortuous?

**ROSEMARY.** Lemme think. I sure liked the dances.

**JOE SR.** *(In disbelief.)* The dances?

**ROSEMARY.** Oh, yes! Especially the ones Jackie took me to. They were the best 'cause he was always the best dancer. Better than anybody at the dance. But he stopped taking me and it wasn't as fun anymore.

**JOE SR.** Yes. I know he did.

**ROSEMARY.** How do you know that? *(No response.)* Where are we goin', Daddy?

**JOE SR.** On a drive. Like I just told you.

**ROSEMARY.** Yes, but after the drive? Where are we going, after we finish driving?

**JOE SR.** We are going to see a very famous neurologist, Rosie.

**ROSEMARY.** Oh! *(Beat.)* What's a neuro-neurolo-?

**JOE SR.** A *neurologist*. It is a kind of doctor.

**ROSEMARY.** Oh, not another doctor!

**JOE SR.** But this doctor is special, dear Rosemary. This one will help you become more level-headed. More. More normal.

**ROSEMARY.** But Father. I like how I am. I always have. Don't take me to this doctor if he is gonna change me. Please, don't. *(Joe Sr emits a great sigh and pulls the car over to the side of the road.)* Daddy, what is it? Why have we stopped?

**JOE SR.** *(Pause.)* I want only the best for each of my children,

## THE HIDDEN KENNEDY

Rosemary. If that means I must send them to the best schools, then so be it. If it means finding the best doctors. I will do that and far more. *(Beat.)* This procedure is for the best. I really wish you would take my word for it, Rosemary.

**ROSEMARY.** It would make you very happy if I were to do this, wouldn't it?

**JOE SR.** *(Beat.)* Yes. It would make me very, very happy.

**ROSEMARY.** Well. I've always wanted you to be happy.

*(Beat.)* What does Mother think of this?

**JOE SR.** Your Mother-*(Beat.)*-Your Mother agrees with me. If she could be with us right now, she would have been. Seeing you off as she always preferred to do.

**ROSEMARY.** *(Pause.)* Alright.

**JOE SR.** *(Did he hear correctly??)* Yes?

**ROSEMARY.** Yes. I will go to the-*(With trouble.)*-Neurologist.

**JOE SR.** My Rosie. My darling, precious Rosie. *(Touching her face.) (Pause.)* Well. *(Beat.)* Come. Best we not keep them waiting, heh? *(He pulls the car back onto the road and)-*

**ACTRESS 2.** A successful lobotomy would make the patient far less agitated. A failed procedure would often render a patient apathetic and emotionless.

**ACTOR 2.** Between the years 1940 and 1944, more than 500 lobotomies were carried out in the United States. Many of them were performed by Doctor Walter Freeman. *(Rosemary is laid back in her chair which has since become a gurney. Actor 2 adopts the persona of Doctor Freeman.)*

**DOCTOR FREEMAN.** Hello, Rosemary. How are we feeling today?

**ROSEMARY.** Nervous. I feel very, very nervous.

**DOCTOR FREEMAN.** Well, don't you worry your sweet head. It will all be over before you know it. *(Producing a pair*

## THE HIDDEN KENNEDY

*of medical scissors.)*

**ROSEMARY.** *(Terror rising.)* What is that for?

**DOCTOR FREEMAN.** Why, to cut your hair, of course.

**ROSEMARY.** Cut my hair!?! *(He raises the scissors to make the first cut. Rosemary turns her head, violently, to the side.)*

No!

**DOCTOR FREEMAN.** Rosemary-!

**ROSEMARY.** I say no! I will not let you cut my hair! No!

**DOCTOR FREEMAN.** If you continue acting this way, we will be forced to restrain you.

**ROSEMARY.** No!

**DOCTOR FREEMAN.** Rosemary-!

**ROSEMARY.** Please, no-!

**DOCTOR FREEMAN.** Very well. *(He turns the gurney, upright, so that the back end is facing the audience.)* Nurse.

Your assistance, please! *(Actress 2 as Nurse enters and crosses behind the gurney.)*

**ROSEMARY.** No! Stop! No! No! *(Continues crying out as the cuts are made.) (Eventually, the gurney is turned back around. Rosemary has been completely shaven. She cries and continues to mutter and shake her head from side to side.)*

**DOCTOR FREEMAN.** There. That wasn't so bad now, was it?

**ROSEMARY.** *(Whimpering.)* You have made me ugly!

**DOCTOR FREEMAN.** Nothing could be further from the truth. *(Beat.)* Now. Let us begin the procedure. You may feel some great pressure-

**ROSEMARY.** Pressure-?!

**DOCTOR FREEMAN.** My advice to you, Rosemary, is to think of a song.

**ROSEMARY.** A song-?

**DOCTOR FREEMAN.** A special song, yes. And sing it.

## THE HIDDEN KENNEDY

Aloud. It will help divert your attention from the procedure. For example, do you know “God Bless America?” *(She nods.)* Wonderful. Then you should sing that. Go on, child. Sing away!

**ROSEMARY.** *(Singing nervously.)* “God bless America,  
Land that I love.”

**DOCTOR FREEMAN.** Very good, Rosemary. That’s just fine.

**ROSEMARY.** Doctor Freeman?

**DOCTOR FREEMAN.** Yes, Rosemary?

**ROSEMARY.** Will it hurt very much?

**DOCTOR FREEMAN.** After this first stage. You won’t feel a thing. Nurse. The partition, please. *(The partition is turned back around.)* Go ahead, Rosemary. Keep singing.

**ROSEMARY.** *(OFF)* *(Singing nervously.)* Stand beside her and guide her,

Through the night with the light from above.

**DOCTOR FREEMAN.** *(OFF)*. The drill please, Nurse.

**ACTRESS 2 AS NURSE.** *(OFF)* Yes, Doctor Freeman.

**ACTRESS AS ROSEMARY** *(OFF)* *(As the sound of the drill permeates throughout the place. Getting louder and louder.)*

From the mountains to the prairies,

To the oceans white with-white with foam,

God bless America-

*(Beginning to fade out.)*

My home-

My home-

My ho-

My-

**DOCTOR FREEMAN.** *(OFF)* Rosemary? Rosemary, can you hear me? *(His voice slowing drastically.)* Rosemary, please answer if you can hear my voice. *(No response.)* Very good.

## THE HIDDEN KENNEDY

Hand me the medical scalpel, Nurse.

**ACTRESS AS NURSE.** Yes, Doctor Freeman. *(The procedure continues behind the partition. After a good, long count of time, the partition is pulled aside revealing Rosemary still lying on the gurney. Only now, she is wearing the vibrant red dress from the social. Another sound. Low and slow. Begins to pick up over the silence. It is the song that had played during she and Jack's dance together at Devereux. Jack Kennedy appears wearing his ensemble from the social and makes his way to Rosemary still laying on the gurney. He places a hand on her and, as if by magic, she rises up and off of the gurney. He leads her, hand-in-hand to the center of the place where they begin to dance to the music. This time, there are no faults in Rosemary's dancing. She is, in every sense of the word, perfect. The song finishes. They stare at each other for a long, long while until-)*

**ACTOR 2.** *(Dropping character.)* Rosemary Kennedy went in for her lobotomy in November of the year 1941. Of the nearly 500 performed by Doctor Freeman that year, hers was one of his unsuccessful procedures.

**ACTRESS 1.** *(Dropping character.)* She was twenty-three years old. *(We hold on the two actors, standing directly center for what may seem like an eternity then we fade, slowly into)-*

**END OF ACT 1**

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