

Candidate 4 evidence

“White Noise”

Scene 1

[Curtains rise]

(An empty concrete road stretches out towards the horizon as endless, identical pastel coloured houses branch off like teeth from a smile. Perfectly uniform. The sky is crystal clear as not a single cloud dares to sabotage the conformity of the neighborhood. The sound of car doors closing are heard off stage followed by an ambient hum of family chatter that floats across the Smith family driveway, laughter is mixed with greetings and footsteps until the universally familiar chime of a doorbell is heard. With that the cloud of noise moves through the doorway into the hallway, finally settling in the contemporary dining room. The air fills with the clatter of seats moving, jacket zips splitting and further greetings a bit too bright like glasses clinking)

AUNT NEEVE: *[Entering dining room]* Careful with that, the last time you carried a pie we had to repaint the hallway *[Handing over a container stuffed with pie to Eric]*. Put it on the kitchen counter for me will you?

UNCLE DAVID: God the car ride was- *[dropping bags, stretching]* tightly packed to say the least. Felt like a sauna. *[undoing polo button]*

ERIC SMITH: Right, shoes off everyone, unless you want to vacuum later *[smiling warmly]*.

(As the guests rummage in the hallways, taking shoes and coats off. Sarah Smith enters the stage from the kitchen wearing a round electoral pin on a baby blue shirt displaying the words “VOTE SMITH” in white outlined letters on a red and blue striped background. She bursts in warmly greeting all the family members as Eric Smith heaves a mountain of tupperware food into the dining room.)

ERIC SMITH: Wine? *[picking up a bottle]* Now it's a party! *[facing into the hallway where Sarah is standing]*

SARAH SMITH: Careful now Eric! We don't want a repeat of last Christmas do we! *[smiling]*

GRANDMA O: True! Made a fool of yourself didn't you Ricky?

ERIC SMITH: Oh mom come on it was harmless. Don't be a Debby Downer.

GRANDMA O: *[sighing]* The older you get the more you're like your father *[shaking head gently]*.

GRANDPA O: Ain't nothin' wrong with that son *[in an American Italian accent]* don' go listen to your momma now *[grimacing, patting Eric's back firmly]*.

AUNT NEEVE: So Sarah, I've seen your poster all over town throughout the car ride. Looks like your campaign is going pretty well.

SARAH SMITH: It's been alright. Macmillan is killing us though. Last week his support spiked from some news coverage of him feeding the homeless in the city. Don't get me wrong, I'm all for that but come on. Getting a whole film crew to record it and broadcast it is clearly just a marketing stunt. It's crystal clear.

AUNT NEEVE: *[signing frustratedly]* His daughters go to the elementary school I work at. They're such little devils. Completely entitled. When I spoke to him at a parents meeting I realised that they're just leading in their fathers footsteps. The guy is unbelievably self absorbed.

SARAH SMITH: *[Shaking her head]* Damn right!

UNCLE DAVID: *[looking upstairs, smiling]* Who's this coming down the steps?

ERIC SMITH: *[grinning]* It's just little Zoe.

(Eric walks up closer to the stairs seemingly to greet Zoe. She pauses for a moment, hesitating before walking past him and into the dining room. There's a certain cautiousness to her which no one other than Eric seems to notice)

ERIC SMITH: *[Stopping to think before speaking]* Why don't we all settle down in the dining room. Follow Zoe's example.

[Curtains close]

Scene 2

[Curtains rise]

(Lights fade and then rise again. It is later in the evening and the centre of the room is occupied by a warm light. The energy has softened and voices have thinned. The family is gathered round the table with the members separated into bubbles of conversation, each seemingly engaged with their own gossip. Zoe is sitting quietly half engaged with a conversation between Aunt Neeve and Grandma O. The gentle buzz of a ceiling fan is heard.)

ERIC SMITH: *[Jolting up, breaking the quiet atmosphere in the room]* Why don't we lighten up the mood a little bit.

(Eric disappears into the corridor and returns holding a box displaying the words "Snakes and Ladders")

GRANDPA O: *[Rolling his eyes]* You've got to be kidding me Eric. Why don't we get some good old Monopoly going.

ERIC SMITH: No way Pops. *[Laughing]* Remember what happened last time?

GRANDMA O: In all fairness Fred, you almost started a fight with Rick.

ERIC SMITH: *[smiling]* How about just a few games. It won't do any harm to see if you'll like it. Besides, This one's Zoe's favourite. *[putting hand on Zoes shoulder]* Isn't that right?

(The warm light of the room cuts out for a few moments and re-emerges as a dark red light. The light focuses on Zoe so that only the hand and forearm of Eric is in view. The rest of the family disappear off the stage. Zoe freezes, turning pale and stiffens up. The ceiling fan explodes with sound, overflowing the room with a static sound. The sound of childlike crying mixed with white noise creates an overwhelmingly overstimulating sound. The red light flashes frantically in an unpredictable pattern as Zoe struggles to rip Eric's hand off her shoulder as he grasps her tighter and tighter. She starts screaming, shouting and kicking her feet as the other arm latches on and clenches Zoes mouth shut. An exceedingly hard kick to the table tips her cup on the ground, spilling a dark red liquid on the floor which slithers all over the carpet. Turning it blood red. She continues to struggle until, in an instant, Eric lets go. The light then cuts out again and reappears as it was previous to the flashback. The cup is returned on the table and the family are once again seated, only slightly bothered by the reaction. The white noise of the dryer is still heard faintly in the background.)

SARAH SMITH: *[As if nothing happened]* Well someone's a bit on edge to be jumping up like that at a touch. Looks like someone needs a rest.

GRANDMA O: I'll take her to her room. *[Ushering Zoe, who is still stiff and pale, and walking off stage].*

[Curtains close]

Scene 3

[Curtains rise]

(The scene changes into a suggestion of a school office. It is brightly lit with sparse furniture. Green shelves cover the white walls and there are pictures drawn by children on the walls. All separated into different age groups with different colored paper. Sarah Smith is sitting in front of a desk with a polite smile wearing a pink suit and trousers with her slicked back into a bun. She once again has her electoral campaign badge on. Across from her sits a woman with a brown folder in her hands wearing a grey striped suit and a worried expression on her face. The humming of a computer fan is heard.

SARAH SMITH: *[In an upbeat voice]* So what's it that you have called me in for?

TEACHER: Well, It's not so black and white but to put it plainly, I have been having concerns about your daughter Zoe. For the last few months she has been acting very introverted. And it all seemed to just emerge out of nowhere rather than being a progressive personality change. When the-

SARAH SMITH: *[cutting her off]* Oh I know, *[still in a playful and friendly tone]* I'm sure it's alright. after all children her age are littered with all sorts of hormone-

TEACHER: *[interrupting her]* It's not hormones Mrs. It seems to be a lot more serious than that. While all her peers play and socialise with each other at lunch breaks. She prefers to stay in the classroom and draw. We of course always bring her food but she will barely touch it. When it's time to go home she clings onto her teachers refusing to go home. Last week when her father came to pick her up she had a temper tantrum and it took us half an hour to convince her to go. But your husband told you about that already, didn't he?

(for a few moments Sarah looked at the teacher with a confused expression, the white noise of the computer fan intensifies.)

SARAH SMITH: Yes! Yes he did.

TEACHER: *[continuing]* All of this may seem semi-normal on the surface, however, this picture she drew on Friday. *[pausing to pull out a piece of creased paper]* It concerns me. I spoke with the school Counsellor and she commented that this kind behaviour is usually associated with a deep rooted trauma.

(The teacher lifts her arm to reveal a drawing depicting a mother and daughter standing in a pink bedroom. Holding their hand around the daughter in the picture is a taller dark figure with its face slashed out to the point where a hole is cut through the paper. She turns the drawing around to show three big stars drawn onto the back of the page with the words. "The stars mean love" underneath them. The white noise gets louder)

TEACHER: I would suggest we have her see the school counsellor once a week just to be safe. It's important that she knows she has someone to speak to.

SARAH SMITH: *[Laughing nervously]* I don't think that would be necessary. *[Smiling awkwardly]*

TEACHER: I think it's very important to address this Mrs-

SARAH SMITH: *[scrambling to stand up]* do me a favour and don't tell anyone else about this okay? I really don't need this spread during my campaign. Those journalists will cling onto anything they can find and I really can't afford to lose even a spec of support right now.

TEACHER: But Mrs Sm-

SARAH SMITH: *[leaving through the door]* I really need to go. I have a rally to attend to. *[The white is prevalent, but not intrusive]*

[Curtains close]

Scene 4

[Curtains rise]

(Scene cuts to later in the evening. Sarah and Eric are alone in the warmly lit bedroom.)

ERIC SMITH: *[Standing, undressing]* So, how was the rally today honey? I heard it went quite well for you.

SARAH SMITH: *[Zoned out]* It was fine. Nothing too special.

ERIC SMITH: *[Concerned]* What's wrong honey? You're usually very involved and personal with this matter.

SARAH SMITH: No, I'm just worried about Zoe. In school-

(Eric taking his shirt off, turns his back to the audience, revealing red lines resembling scratches coming diagonally down on his back and neck, he then turns forty five degrees which uncovers a familiar tattoo depicting three stars on his lower obliques. The white noise begins to pick up again.)

ERIC SMITH: *[Turning back around to face Sarah]* So what was it you were saying.

SARAH SMITH: *[Frantically]* Oh nothing! Just got some bad grades, that's all. Maybe she's a bit down about it. It's nothing to worry about though.

ERIC SMITH: Well why is it that you went instead of me this time? They usually call me.

SARAH SMITH: I don't know Ricky. *[wiping her brow]*

ERIC SMITH: *[suspiciously]* Did the teacher say anything in particular? Anything out of the ordinary?

SARAH SMITH: No, no not that I remember. Anyway Rick. I've had a really long day. Why don't we go to bed?

(Sarah and Eric lie in bed, there is a clear tension on Sarah's mind as she closes her eyes facing away from Eric. Her mind is clearly tremulous. The white noise fades away with the lights as they turn dimmer and dimmer. The sound of the breeze can be heard outside the window as if a warning for what's to come. Time passes and Sarah wakes to a thud. only a small white light from the

window lighting the stage. She sits up looking over at Eric for a few moments. Eric is not in bed. Her head snaps to the clock, it's past midnight. A muted shriek is heard from offstage Sarah freezes, eyes widening)

SARAH SMITH: *[Whispering to herself]* No...

(she slowly gets out of bed. Bare feet on the floor. The sound of her breath shallows as she gets closer to the hallway. As she walks towards Zoes room the white noise grows louder with each step. She reaches the door. Opening it just slightly. The white noises coming from the TV static in the room suffocates any kind of sound.

SARAH SMITH: *[Almost silent]* Zoe?

(Nothing can be heard through the wall of intense noise. Sarah walks into the room. Zoe is lying in her bed holding the bed sheets tightly)

ZOE: Please don't let him in again...

[Sarah pulls out her phone dialing three number swiftly]

SARAH: *[Whispering]* It's okay, I'm here now.

(She holds the phone up to her ear. A hand grasps her shoulder. White noise stops.)

(Blackout.)

[THE END]