

Seven Small Deaths

ANNA Late 20s, early 30s, sarcastic, smart, and pretty darn broken.

JAKE Late 20s, early 30s, sweet, sensitive, and always needs to be the hero.

DOCTOR NEELY 60s, gruff and good at his job.

AUTHOR'S NOTE: There is a scene in this play where Jake dresses Anna to help her get out of her hospital gown. It is extremely important to the playwright that this is handled tastefully and not sexualized. Anna should be wearing a tank top beneath her hospital gown and her undergarments should never be shown. This should be presented as an act of love, and the audience should never be distracted away from that by anything else.

SETTING: A doctor's office.

AT RISE: ANNA is sitting on an examining room table. Her nervous energy is coming off of her in waves. There is a knock at the door.

ANNA
I'm not naked!

JAKE enters, confused.

JAKE
Is that how you respond to knocks at the doctor's office?

ANNA

Listen, a knock is a question and I'm gonna give the answer--what are you doing here?

JAKE

Being supportive.

ANNA

(posing in her hospital gown) Don't you know you're not supposed to see the blushing patient after her pap smear?

JAKE

Ugh. Smear. I really hate that word.

ANNA

The whole thing is super unpleasant, so it's fitting that it has an unpleasant--

JAKE casually sets down a bouquet.

ANNA (cont.)

Jake. Why.

JAKE

They're nice!

ANNA

Jake, you give people flowers when you are congratulating them. Or when they're dead.

JAKE

Or when you're trying to be a nice human being.

ANNA

Eew, I hate those. Also you know I am literally allergic to every plant in existence.

JAKE

Oh, shoot, I'm sorry, I just saw them and...

ANNA

Your brain jumped out of your head?

JAKE

No, just... they're blue. And pink.

A moment.

ANNA

Yay, colors exist.

JAKE

And I thought--

ANNA

Yep, got it.

JAKE

I wasn't trying to--

ANNA

I feel like you're like--jinxing everything right now. Can you please just like... throw them away or something or get them out of my field of vision before I not so spontaneously combust?

JAKE looks at the flowers.

ANNA (cont.)

I'm sorry. I'm sorry. They're really nice, Jake. I just... today.

JAKE

No, you're right, I just... I don't know. I felt like I had to do--something.

ANNA

Yeah, try having all that restless energy while your legs are in stirrups. I talked Neely's ear off. Like I'm just lying there rambling endlessly and then all of a sudden I am having a full fledged conversation with a dude who's giving me a pelvic exam. And I was talking about Matt Damon. I have no idea why. I was just going on and on and on about Matt Damon.

JAKE

... do you like Matt Damon?

ANNA

No! I mean, I don't have any feelings one way or another towards Matt Damon, but he was the subject of my extremely long and embarrassing diatribe. So when Neely comes in here, you are responsible for all of the eye contact.

JAKE

Lucky for you, I minored in eye contact in college.

ANNA

Oh, I know, you and your freakin' soul-piercing eyes.

JAKE

Like double javelin eyeballs.

ANNA

Have I ever told you... uhhhhh, nahhhh.

JAKE

... did you just interrupt yourself?

ANNA

I don't know, don't interrogate me, I'm in a hospital gown, you're supposed to pity me.

JAKE

What were you gonna say?

ANNA

Something dumb.

JAKE

Come on.

ANNA

Ugh. It's gross.

JAKE

Now I need to hear it.

ANNA

K, fine, I've already embarrassed myself enough today with my Matt Damon lecture, might as well just go the full nine yards. I can clearly remember the first time we made eye contact and it made my heart feel like it was exploding and I guess it was really cool or whatever so yeah I'm dumb.

JAKE

... good story.

ANNA

Shut up, just... okay, so that first night, at Greg's party or whatever, I was like... drinking my Angry Orchard and thinking, wow, this tastes gross, and then I just... I remember, I was looking at his calendar and wondering why it was like a paint store calendar with like a picture of people painting a room and I just... looked a little bit to the right and--there you were.

JAKE

Yeah?

ANNA

Quit grinning like that, ya nerd.

JAKE

What? That's a cute memory.

ANNA

I'm never talking again.

JAKE

Is there more?

ANNA

No.

JAKE

Yes, there is.

ANNA

UGH fine okay I looked at you and I just really hoped that we would like be something, okay? Cuz I liked your... face. I guess.

JAKE

It's a pretty good face.

ANNA

Yeah, not bad. Better further away than up close.

JAKE

Thanks a mil, babe.

ANNA

You're welcome, babe. So, what did you think when you first saw me?

JAKE

... I don't want you to hit me.

ANNA

I won't hit you.

JAKE

Have you seen you in that red dress? You were ridiculously hot.

ANNA hits him.

JAKE (cont.)

K, thanks for dislocating my shoulder.

ANNA

Serves you right for your blatant objectification of women.

JAKE

You were by far the hottest object I've ever seen. Like even hotter than a lightbulb.

ANNA

That was extremely dumb.

JAKE

So why are you laughing?

ANNA

They're pity laughs.

JAKE

Suuuuure.

A moment.

ANNA

Okay, is Neely like--dead or something? What is going on? Can you go out there and check that Neely didn't like fall into a different dimension or something because it's literally been like a full twenty-four hours of waiting.

JAKE

Not even slightly an exaggeration.

ANNA

Nope. None at all. (*A beat. ANNA's anxious energy builds.*) Okay I really feel like I'm dying.

JAKE

Breathe, Anna.

ANNA

Nope, can't do it, haven't breathed since 2004. Distract me. Dance or something.

JAKE

I can't dance right now. I'd seduce you immediately.

ANNA

Please just--seriously, I need, um, yeah, just--anything you can do would be--yeah.

JAKE

Hey, hey--

ANNA

No, no, no, don't do your hey thing, I hate your hey thing.

JAKE

I'm not doing a thing--

ANNA

Yeah, well, you are--you're whole like, "hey"--like you say it all soft and sweet and then you try to get all serious or whatever and say really beautiful things and if you do that, my tear ducts are going to explode and my brain is going to start pouring out of my ears so I don't--I um--I can't have you doing that right now.

JAKE

Okay. What do you need?

ANNA

(a little irritated) I need you to distract me, I just said that--just tell me about work or whatever.

JAKE

Oh, uh, work today?

ANNA

No, work last February--duh, work today, Jake.

JAKE

Anna.

ANNA

I'm sorry. I'm sorry, okay, just--just help me. Okay?

(A moment.)

JAKE

Uh, okay. So today, I had to do tours because Jess called in sick, and we were going to the planetarium which we usually go to right after lunch. This was a group of, uh, second graders. Their teacher was on her phone the whole time which means that I have to--you know, keep them from groping Jupiter or turning Mars into a basketball. And so I've got this group of like twenty kids or so and there's this one little guy, his name was Simeon--and I only knew his name because his teacher would only look up from her phone to yell at him.

ANNA

Oh, one of those kids.

JAKE

Yeah. Simeon had picked up one of the diorama chipmunks and--I think he was trying to eat it? I don't even know. His teacher turned into like a karate master and chopped it out of his hand.

ANNA

Come on, Simeon, get it together.

JAKE

So, uh, Simeon was actually pretty quiet after lunch. And I was like, oh thank goodness, cuz the tour was actually moving at a reasonable pace.

ANNA

And you just wanted to get back to being a curating king.

JAKE

Psh. I'm the curating *emperor*.

ANNA

Fair point, go on.

JAKE

Okay, so Simeon is just chilling out next to Neptune, and I'm explaining Saturn's rings and stuff and the little guys are actually engaged and asking questions and the teacher gave me a thumbs up, so I was feeling all competent, and then I look up and I see that Simeon is silently--like *dead silently* throwing up on the blue planet. And I went over there and I was like, WHOA, whoa, whoa, what are you--and before I could even ask him like, what the heck dude, he looked up and me and was like--

ANNA chimes in at the same time:

ANNA & JAKE

Blue makes me barf.

A moment. ANNA stares at JAKE.

ANNA (cont.)

You told me that story last week.

JAKE

Oh. Uh, right, I...

ANNA

You were just lying to me.

JAKE

Anna--?

ANNA

Why did you lie about that?

JAKE

It's not--it's just--I was trying to think of a good story that would really distract you, and I just--

ANNA

No, you're acting weird, you were lying to me. Why--Jake, are you seriously gonna lie to me about--did you like not go to work today or something?

JAKE

Let's just talk about it when we get home--

ANNA

No, let's just like talk about it right now--did you not go to work today?

JAKE

No, I didn't.

ANNA

So that's why you're here *ridiculously* early.

JAKE

I wanted to be here.

ANNA

I scheduled my appointment specifically so you could be here.

JAKE

And yet, here we are, an hour early waiting for your results.

ANNA

They were ahead of schedule, I called this morning and--

JAKE

Anna, I know you called and changed your appointment two weeks ago.

A moment.

ANNA

It's my appointment.

JAKE

I wanted to be here.

ANNA

Yay for you.

JAKE

Great, really mature.

ANNA

Mature? You want to talk about mature? How about the guy who can't respect what I want, huh? I told you I wanted to do this on my own and that I didn't want you here, but you kept pushing and being sweet and being nice--

JAKE

What, are you seriously mad at me for--

ANNA

No, listen to me, you do all that crap, and then I have to be the freakin' Wicked Witch of the West to keep saying *no* to you, because you're so good at justifying your actions as something *nice*, gaslighting me into thinking that--

JAKE

Gas--Anna, I would never--

ANNA

What about what I want, Jake? It's my body. I should be allowed some privacy without you staring over my shoulder every second of the way.

JAKE

I want to be here for you.

ANNA

And I want to deal with this on my own. Has it ever occurred to you that I don't need you to bear all of my pain, Jake? Have you ever considered that I might want to like--suffer on my own?

JAKE

I don't want you to suffer.

ANNA

Oh, sweetheart, that's too bad. Because you can't kill seven babies without feeling like you're being freakin' shot to death.

JAKE

Seven?

A moment. It sinks in.

Seven?

ANNA

A month ago.

JAKE

You didn't tell me.

ANNA

I wanted to keep one to myself. I thought maybe if I didn't tell you, she'd... it'd... whatever.

JAKE

Anna.

ANNA

I know you think I should have told you, but I just...

JAKE

Hey.

ANNA

Don't.

JAKE

I want to--

ANNA

I know. But I can't like--be rescued right now. I don't--you can't help me.

A moment.

JAKE

Did you name her?

ANNA

It.

JAKE

Anna.

ANNA

You don't name an it.

There's a knock at the door.

JAKE

I'm sorry.

ANNA

For what. You're not the one who keeps failing.

NEELY (offstage.)

Anna? You ready?

ANNA

Please be mad at me.

JAKE

Breathe.

ANNA

I can't.

NEELY opens the door.

NEELY

Alright, Anna--oh, Jake, didn't know you'd be here. Good to see you.

NEELY and JAKE shake hands.

JAKE

Yeah, I took a little time off work, I thought--is it okay that I'm here?

NEELY

It's fine with me. Anna?

ANNA is looking at her lap. She can't look up.

ANNA

I mean, I'm not gonna kick you out. You're already here. My heart isn't as busted as my uterus.

A tiny moment. JAKE sits by her and takes her hand. ANNA lets him.

NEELY

So we wanted to do one last exam today and compare it with the tests that you did a few weeks ago just to make sure that we were seeing the right thing. Anna, have you ever heard of endometriosis?

A moment.

ANNA

My mom had it really bad.

NEELY

Very painful menstruation?

ANNA

Yeah, and... yeah, she had a hysterectomy when she was forty. But my periods--I mean, I get cramps and stuff, but... when my mom would get her periods, like, she would be like lying on the floor of the bathroom doubled over and... I've never, mine have never been that bad, I, um--

NEELY

Not all endometriosis results in extremely heavy and painful menstruation. Sometimes it can show itself in--

ANNA

I've never had any problems with my periods, they come at the exact same time every month, they're like--more reliable and on time than freakin' UPS, and they're always perfectly seven days long, I don't--

NEELY

Anna, we ran the tests, you have endometriosis.

A moment.

ANNA

Well. It--runs in my family. My mom and her,
like--sisters still had kids, my mom had me when she was
30, and I'm twenty-nine, so--

NEELY

There is a significant amount of scarring on your fallopian
tubes and ovaries, there's a large blockage that--

ANNA

Scarring?? Scarring??? How, I've never--

JAKE

Anna.

ANNA

No, no, it doesn't--I--no, it doesn't make any sense, I... it
doesn't...

NEELY

I'm sorry, Anna. Jake.

A great emptiness settles in the room.

NEELY (cont.)

There are other options. IVF is always a route you can
try, and of course, adoption and fostering and.. well, there
are plenty of things for the two of you to discuss as we
move forward.

JAKE

Thank you.

NEELY

Of course. This is a very painful thing. I understand.

ANNA

(bitter) You understand.

NEELY

Yes, I do.

ANNA

(biting) You hiding a womb under that lab coat, doc?

NEELY

(quite calmly) My wife. *(A moment.)* We pursued IVF. We have a son.

ANNA

Great.

A moment.

NEELY

I'll give you two some time. Please let a nurse know if you have questions and they'll come get me.

JAKE

Thank you, Doctor Neely.

JAKE stands and goes to the door with NEELY. They shake hands again.

NEELY

Really, truly, I am very sorry.

JAKE

Thank you.

ANNA curls up on the hospital bed on her side. NEELY starts to pull away from JAKE, but JAKE helplessly holds onto his hand.

JAKE (cont.)

(quietly) I don't know what to do.

NEELY

You do. You will.

JAKE

What did you do when...?

NEELY remembers for one soft, broken moment.

NEELY

I broke. And you can too.

NEELY exits. JAKE stands at the door. ANNA suffers. JAKE goes and sits by her on the bed. ANNA sits up.

ANNA

I have to get dressed. We have to... um...

JAKE stands and almost robotically gets her clothes. He hands them to her, one by one. Her pants, her shirt. She crumples over herself and puts her head in her clothes. If she cries, it's inaudible. JAKE considers her socks. He kneels before her. He gently takes her sock and puts it on one of her feet. She sits up and watches him. He looks up at her, never looking away from her as he puts the other sock on.

ANNA (cont.)

(miserable) What are you doing?

JAKE doesn't answer. He takes her pants from her and unfolds them. He holds them out for her. She steps into them. She keeps the hospital gown over

her legs as, together, they pull the pants up onto her body.

JAKE

Is this okay?

ANNA nods. JAKE gently unties her hospital gown. He helps her put her shirt on and together, they button her shirt all the way up. They both pause as they do the buttons over her stomach. ANNA puts her hands over her face and begins to weep. JAKE takes her shoes and helps her put them on. Once her shoes are onto, JAKE wraps his arms around her middle and just embraces her, his face pressed against her stomach.

ANNA

I didn't know.

JAKE

I know.

ANNA

I never would have--

JAKE

I know.

ANNA

I was--you know, I was fine before you came along with all of your--I didn't--I didn't think I'd ever get married, I didn't think I'd ever have this, I had convinced myself that I didn't even--that I didn't even want it, that I was fine with my career and my whatever and then you got this stupid idea in my head of being a stupid mother or

whatever, I mean, come on, really, me? A mother? Can you imagine? And just--don't touch me, please, just--just--

ANNA pushes him off and retreats.

ANNA (cont.)

You want a family.

JAKE

We can still have one.

ANNA

No. No, not the way you wanted--and I probably screw it up anyways--

JAKE

You heard Doctor Neely, we'll try IVF--

ANNA

Oh, wonderful, we can blow thousands of dollars on this stupid body of mine that has some kind of psychotic vendetta against you and I can just--I can just kill more things. Jake, I can't... I can't do this again. I don't want to, I don't even want to risk it. Every time--I can't even... no, no. No.

JAKE

I know, I--

ANNA

You don't know. You have no idea. You have absolutely no idea.

JAKE

I--? They were real to me too, all of them were so real to me--

ANNA

Were? Were? They ARE STILL so real to ME and I killed them, every single one of them, just--like my body can't handle love, it just--spits it out. And I just--I didn't even think I ever wanted anything like this, I didn't have a single freakin' maternal bone in my body and then you came along and I just--and then all of a sudden, I just--wanted things. And hoped for things. And I had never... if you'd never come along, I never would've wanted this and I never would have even known that I was...

JAKE

What are you saying?

ANNA

How you could possibly expect me to live my life staring my worst failure in the face every day.

JAKE

Me?

ANNA

No, me. Me. Of course me. The one who can't do this one--stupid thing for you, the freakin' husband of the year.

JAKE

Anna, this doesn't change anything.

ANNA

Of course it does.

JAKE

It doesn't. I still love you, I still want you so much, more than I can--

ANNA

I know. I know. You're so unbearably good. And I know you would stay with me being the best husband on the face of the earth until death do us part. But I'd always just

like--be constantly aware of the fact that... this isn't you what wanted.

JAKE

I want you.

ANNA

You say that now because you--have to. Because if you were left now... that's not the kind of guy you are. You're a--make it work kind of guy. And I don't want--a make it work kind of life, I want you to have what you want, and--don't try to convince that this is what you always dreamed about, really? Really?

JAKE

IVF, we can try--

ANNA

Look me in the eye and tell me could handle my body just--vomiting out another one.

JAKE

Anna.

ANNA

Go on, tell me. Because if it happens again, I'm going to--I don't know. I'm just gonna explode or something, I don't even know, I don't even think I'd be to even breathe anymore because, right now, I barely feel *alive* as it is. I mean, how am I supposed to go on living after I...

ANNA trails off.

JAKE

I never meant to make you feel like--

ANNA

I don't NEED YOUR HELP to feel anything, Jake, do you hear me? I hate myself enough for BOTH OF US.

JAKE

What do you want me to say? What do you want me to do? I don't--

ANNA

You don't have to SAY anything, there is nothing that could possibly FIX THIS. Why do always do that, run around trying to--be the stupid hero all the time. Look, I know I'm screwed up, okay, and when you are always trying to fix me, you're saying just like--you know, I'll love you if you just fix X, Y, and Z--and it's like--you have this amazing way of shining a light into all of the crappiest parts of me and I always feel like such a freakin' *nothing* standing next to you.

JAKE

You're not being fair.

ANNA

I don't HAVE TO BE FAIR RIGHT NOW. The world is giving me the middle finger, Jake, I'm gonna say whatever I want.

JAKE

Anna, stop it--just STOP IT.

A moment.

JAKE (cont.)

I know, I know that I don't fully understand what you're going through. I can't imagine the pain that you are experiencing, but just because you are hurting more than me doesn't mean that I'm not in pain.

ANNA

Poor baby.

JAKE

Listen to me. You tell me I'm perfect or whatever and you keep yelling at me for being good--and you know what, why are you the only one who's allowed to be flawed and in pain and--and guess what? I'm mad and I'm angry but I'm not ALLOWED to be because you get to--own all of that. I'm in pain too, Anna. Every time we had one, this future was just like--right there. And I could see so much. And when it was gone, it felt like that part of me--I don't know. But I wasn't allowed to tell you about that because you were dying too and I didn't want to make you die more, but I needed you, Anna, I need you now, we can do this, but we have to do it *together*--

ANNA

Maybe I don't want to.

JAKE

We can do this, we can--

ANNA

You're not hearing me. Maybe I don't want to be together any more.

A moment passes. Calm inside the storm. They both sit at different times in different places throughout the room. They grieve separately.

ANNA (cont.)

Did you hear me?

JAKE

Yes, I heard you.

ANNA

So go.

JAKE

I'm not going.

ANNA

I hate you. I hate you and all of your stupid white knight crap.

JAKE

Anna.

ANNA

You make me sick.

*A moment. ANNA hates herself. Maybe
JAKE does too.*

JAKE

I lied.

ANNA

I know.

JAKE

No, I mean--I'm sorry about that, I mean... I lied. When I talked about the first thing that I noticed about you.

ANNA

Okay.

JAKE

I remember seeing you at Greg's party. And you were really beautiful, but I just remembered there was something about you, the way that you were standing... I don't know. You wanted so much. You were so full of so much... I don't know. You were so smart and so clever and your eyes were so bright and I just thought... I'm someone who's always been so sure of things, but I looked at you and suddenly, I just... I felt like I didn't know anything. And I wanted to know you.

ANNA

Sucks for you.

JAKE

No.

ANNA

You're sitting with an infertile screwed up mess of a wife who just screamed that she hates you.

JAKE

You don't.

ANNA

I do.

JAKE

Anna.

A moment.

ANNA

You wanted to know me.

JAKE

Yes.

ANNA

Well, you know me. What'd you find?

JAKE

So much.

ANNA

So much crap.

JAKE

Hey.

ANNA

Don't.

JAKE

Let me. Please.

JAKE moves near her. ANNA lets him.

JAKE (cont.)

There's only one future that hasn't disappeared every time we lost one and it's the one I have with you, the man I am with you, the life we've lived together--the one I want to live more of. And if you are genuinely unhappy with me, if you want to go, you know I won't stop you. I'll want to, but I won't. But I've lost all of them, and I can't lose you too.

ANNA

You don't own me.

JAKE

Trust me, I know that.

ANNA

Why would you even--want that?

JAKE

I don't. I want to be with you.

ANNA

I'm not going to get better or like--be who you want me to be.

JAKE

Who do you think I want you to be?

ANNA

Someone less... me.

JAKE

But I love you.

ANNA

Then you're an idiot.

JAKE

Anna.

A moment.

ANNA

I can't give you what you want.

JAKE

You have. You already have--you do. Anna. Hey.

ANNA

Please.

JAKE

Hey. I love you more than any--dream or idea that I had for my life, because... you're real. And they are so real too.

ANNA

I miss them.

JAKE

I know.

ANNA

Payton.

JAKE

Yes. Alex.

ANNA

Oliver.

JAKE
Danielle.

ANNA
Rachel.

JAKE
Sweet Emma.

A moment.

ANNA
(barely audible) Sophie.

JAKE
Sophie?

ANNA
The last one.

JAKE
I like that name.

ANNA
Me too.

JAKE embraces her.

ANNA
I'm so sorry. The things I said..

JAKE
I know.

ANNA
I want you, but I didn't think--I didn't want you to feel like you had to. I wanted you--you always have an out with me.

JAKE

You don't have to make escape routes for me. I am super agile and dexterous.

ANNA

No, you're not. You fall up the stairs.

JAKE

Which is basically a skill, if you think about it.

A moment.

ANNA

I'm sorry I failed.

JAKE

You don't have to--

ANNA

Please let me. Please. I'm sorry. I just wish this--
(*She touches her stomach.*)--loved you as much as this does.
(*She touches her heart.*)

JAKE puts his hand over her stomach--and then, he touches her heart.

JAKE

This is all I needed anyways.

ANNA drops her forehead against his.

ANNA

I need you so much. And it makes me so scared.

JAKE

I can handle it.

ANNA

I'm a lot.

JAKE

I know.

ANNA

How are you...

JAKE

So...?

ANNA

You're just so... you.

A tender, tender moment. When ANNA is ready, JAKE helps her stand. He gets her coat and helps her put it on. She helps him put his coat on too. They take one last moment together in the room, an intimate moment. The next four heys are each a little different. Let the actors feel them out.

JAKE

Hey.

ANNA

Hey.

JAKE

Hey.

ANNA

Hey.

JAKE

Breathe.

They breathe together. They start to exit. They both turn back to look at the table, the examining room. They both look at each other. They leave together.

END OF PLAY