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# Alone, Together

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(ALONE, TOGETHER)

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“Commissioned and originally presented in June 2020 as part of the  
University of California, Santa Barbara, Department of Theater and Dance LAUNCH PAD Zoom  
Festival *Alone, Together*; Risa Brainin, Artistic Director.”

Thank you to all the playwrights; directors; actors; designers; dramaturgs; artistic, production and administrative folks; donors; and audiences who have contributed to making LAUNCH PAD a vibrant home for new plays.

## Foreword

On March 10, 2020, one week before the end of winter quarter, everyone in the University of California, Santa Barbara community received an email from Chancellor Henry Yang instructing us to move to online teaching as soon as possible due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The theatre/dance faculty immediately came together to figure out what to do to best serve the needs of our students. Final projects and upcoming productions had to be canceled, and students were heading home for the foreseeable future to take classes on Zoom from their childhood bedrooms! We were all thrown into a bit of chaos: how could we create a remote curriculum for all of our aspiring young artists?

It was at that point that my dear friend, festival co-director and head of the B.F.A. acting program, Annie Torsiglieri, had the vision to say: “Let’s commission playwrights to write monologues and plays that are meant to be performed on Zoom.” Well, I went a little crazy and invited every writer who has ever worked with our new play development program, LAUNCH PAD, over the past 15 years to participate. That was around 30 writers, and 24 answered the call! We gave the writers this prompt: *Alone, Together*. A total of 39 plays were written, 23 directors engaged, 61 actors cast, 5 stage managers, 3 designers, 3 dramaturgs and 10 staff assembled virtually, and, together, we created an all-day, live Zoom festival in four chapters on Saturday, June 6, 2020.

What we couldn’t anticipate is that not only would we be rehearsing during a global health pandemic but also in the midst of a revolution. George Floyd was murdered on Monday, May 25, and it reignited the cry against racism in our country. Our company was composed of students, faculty, staff and professional guest artists from across the country. Many were protesting by day and rehearsing by night. Even today, as I write this, the protests continue. It was important to both Annie and me that all of the artists involved in *Alone, Together* knew (and still know) that UCSB Department of Theater and Dance and LAUNCH PAD stand with our Black communities across the country on this day and every day. BLACK LIVES MATTER. We are with you.

As Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. wrote in a famous letter from the Birmingham jail in 1963: “Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere. We are caught in an inescapable network of mutuality, tied in a single garment of destiny. Whatever affects one directly, affects all indirectly.” We, as artists, are committed to speaking out against injustice.

Xochitl Clare, one of our actors, announced *Alone, Together* on her Facebook page by quoting performance and installation artist Ester Hernandez who said, “We must continue to use our creative skills to give strength to our political, cultural and spiritual struggle.”

Xochitl then continued with her own thoughts: “‘Is making theatre really important now?’ my heart asks. As a young Black artist, struggling to grapple with our world, channeling my energy towards my craft has provided me some solace. Support me as I move forward in virtual solidarity with fellow theatre artists across the nation to do a very simple, yet important thing—to *come together*.” And that’s exactly what we did on 6/6/20. With an audience of 800 people over the course of the day, we all came together.

As theatre-makers, we communicate through the art we create. The 39 plays in this collection reflect many perspectives on life during the early days of the quarantine. They brilliantly offer moments of joy, pathos, insight, hope and comfort knowing we are never really alone.

—Risa Brainin  
Artistic Director, LAUNCH PAD

# Pandemic Therapy

By

JAMI BRANDLI

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(PANDEMIC THERAPY)

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*Pandemic Therapy* was commissioned and originally presented in June 2020 as part of the University of California, Santa Barbara, Department of Theater and Dance LAUNCH PAD Zoom Festival *Alone, Together*; Risa Brainin, Artistic Director. It was directed by Billie Stouter Hassebrock.

CAST:

KIM..... Violet Hansen  
STEPHEN..... Martin Wong  
LORI..... Xochitl Clare

AUTHOR’S NOTE

With this 10-minute comedy, I wanted to explore how a young married couple could have *very* different reactions to sheltering-in-place for 70 days. I also wanted to add a touch of the absurd with the therapist, the person who is supposed to be the most centered ... and it becomes clear she is not.

Special thanks to Risa Brainin and the LAUNCH PAD crew for this unique opportunity.

—Jami Brandli

# Pandemic Therapy

## CHARACTERS

KIM: mid-20s to mid-30s. Wife, dealing with anxiety and fear.

STEPHEN: mid-20s to mid-30s. Husband, dealing with a new-found passion.

LORI: 20 years older than Kim and Stephen; mid-40s to mid-50s. Their therapist who, during this strange pandemic time, is dealing as best she can.

NOTE: Kim and Stephen are the same age (there is NOT a 10-year age difference) and have been married for about eighteen months. They love each other deeply.

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*(STEPHEN appears in his Zoom pane, wearing a colorful apron over his shirt. He immediately notices he has some white powder on the side of his face.)*

STEPHEN. Ah, crap.

*(As he goes to wipe off the powder, KIM appears in her Zoom pane, wearing a sweatshirt. KIM catches him in the act of wiping; she's immediately annoyed.)*

KIM. You're at it again.

STEPHEN *(still wiping, playing it off)*. At what again?

KIM. I can smell them, Stephen.

*(STEPHEN stops wiping and smiles.)*

STEPHEN. They smell good, don't they?

*(KIM doesn't return the smile.)*

STEPHEN *(cont'd)*. They do smell good, and you know it. *(Sing-songy, trying to make her smile.)* I left you a surprise by the door, and it's really tasty.

KIM. I'm sure it's delicious, but no thank you.

STEPHEN *(off KIM's lack of smile)*. Anyway, I have a surprise for Lori, too.

KIM. A surprise for Lori? What is it?

STEPHEN. If I told you, it wouldn't be a surprise—

*(STEPHEN's cellphone dings. KIM is even more annoyed.)*

KIM. Who's that?

*(STEPHEN begins to text back.)*

STEPHEN. Um. Work.

KIM. Um. Work. This is our time—

STEPHEN *(overlapping)*. *Our time.* I know. I know. Sorry. *(Finishes text, some guilt.)* Sorry, babe.

KIM. Right.

*(An awkward beat as they "stare" at each other. STEPHEN finally breaks the "stare," needing to address the elephant in the room/Zoom.)*

STEPHEN. Soooooo. Kim. Are you going to—?

KIM. Where's Lori? She is never late—

STEPHEN. Kim. Are you going to come out—

KIM *(arrested by a terrible thought)*. Oh my God.

STEPHEN. What?

KIM. What if ... what if something happened to Lori?

STEPHEN. No—

KIM. She canceled last time, and I really think something might have happened to her—*(Overcome by the terrible thought.)* OH MY GOD, STEPHEN—

STEPHEN *(treads carefully)*. Kim. Babe. Lori is less than two minutes late. So let's not go ... *there* yet.

KIM. Go *where* yet?

STEPHEN. Go to ... the worst-case scenario.

KIM *(annoyed again)*. I'm just being practical.

*(Beat. He still treads carefully.)*

STEPHEN. Speaking of practical ... Kim. Honey. Are you going to come out of the office?

KIM. At some point.

STEPHEN. How about today. Are you going to come out of the office *today*?

*(Loaded beat.)*

KIM. Are you ever going to take off that apron?

STEPHEN. At some point.

KIM. I see.

STEPHEN. That's it. We need to tell Lori about you and the office.

KIM. I don't see *why* we need to tell Lori about me and the office—

STEPHEN. *Why?* Because she's our therapist!

*(LORI appears in her Zoom pane. She looks disheveled, though she's trying not to, and gives KIM and STEPHEN a big smile. KIM and STEPHEN quickly force a smile back, covering.)*

LORI. Sorry, I'm late. Kim. Stephen. Hello.

*(STEPHEN and KIM continue their forced smiles. A beat.)*

LORI *(cont'd)*. OK. What's wrong?

KIM. I think the question should be "What *isn't* wrong," don't you?

*(As STEPHEN shakes his head, LORI really thinks about that question.)*

LORI *(to herself)*. What *isn't* wrong ...

*(Then LORI explodes into laughter, which catches them off guard.)*

LORI *(cont'd)*. HA! KIM! That is so true. It's good to have a sense of humor!  
Very good!

KIM. That wasn't meant—

*(As KIM speaks, LORI retrieves bottle of beer in full sight and cracks it open.)*

KIM *(um, huh?)*. To be funny.

*(LORI nonchalantly drinks half the beer. KIM and STEPHEN look on, confused.)*

STEPHEN. Are you drinking ... a beer?

*(LORI smiles, calm.)*

LORI. No. Everything is going to be OK.

*(LORI downs the rest of her beer and then tosses the bottle behind her; it lands with a thud.)*

LORI *(cont'd)*. So. Day seventy, huh? Who would have thought that we would all be quarantined for seventy days?

KIM. And counting.

LORI. And counting! Yes. *Yes*. Seventy days *and* counting ... *(Gets lost in a thought.)* Crazy.

*(LORI then retrieves a bottle of whiskey and a shot glass in full sight. She pours herself a shot, throws it back. KIM and STEPHEN's mouths are now agape.)*

STEPHEN. Is that whiskey?

*(LORI smiles, calm.)*

LORI. No. Everything is going be OK.

*(LORI casually moves the bottle of whiskey out of sight. STEPHEN's phone dings. STEPHEN immediately attends to his text, and the women are annoyed.)*

LORI *(cont'd)*. Stephen, this is our time—

STEPHEN *(overlapping)*. *Our time*. I know, I know. Sorry—

KIM. He's texting back "work."

LORI. Stephen. Please. Finish. Your. Text. Now.

*(STEPHEN finishes his text. A beat.)*

LORI *(cont'd)*. Apologies again for having canceled our last appointment. Life's been ... *a little*. Well, you know. *Everyone* knows. So. How were the last two weeks?

*(A little stand-off between husband and wife.)*

LORI *(cont'd)*. This is not a trick question, guys. *(More serious.)* What's going on?

STEPHEN. I'll tell you what's going on, Lori. My beautiful wife has locked herself—

KIM. Stephen is obsessed with baking!

STEPHEN. I wouldn't say I'm obsessed—

KIM. Oh yes you are! Lori. He is *obsessed*. For the last ten days, he's been in that kitchen 24/7, baking muffins, scones, cookies, cupcakes, brownies, blondies, breads, buns—

LORI *(very impressed)*. Buns—?

KIM. And I can't take it anymore—

STEPHEN. Hot cross buns.

LORI. *Hot cross buns?* I LOVE hot cross buns.

STEPHEN *(can't believe it)*. You do? *Awesome!*

KIM. Hey. Do you hear me? I said I can't take it anymore—

LORI. Could you email that recipe, Stephen—?

STEPHEN. Of course—