

**Maggie Brown**

Age: 16, Grade: 11

School Name: Bob Jones High School, Madison, AL

Educator: Brandy Panagos

Category: Dramatic Script

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**End of Days**

Characters

KIT, a teenage girl recovering from the death of her parents.

SIMON, a young bookworm with a long-time love for Kit.

DAVID, a traveling bookseller who finds himself an outsider in a tight-knit community.

JOSEPHINE (JO), a mischievous, abrasive ten-year-old girl.

PREACHER, an older gentleman devoted to Christ after all hope seems lost.

ASA, a tall, gentle war vet in her late twenties/early thirties.

DANI, a pessimistic woman who has made unspeakable sacrifices for her survival.

Setting: The play is set almost entirely in one house, somewhere in or around Virginia; the set itself can be constructed by using on rotating set piece to show the inside and outside of the house, with the inside featuring a small kitchen and living room. During the scenes that take place outside, the piece can be rotated or taken offstage.

Time Period: between five to twenty years in the future.

*(We open with a crack of thunder. Lights up on KIT and SIMON, who are sprawled out together downstage. Simon is holding a book and Kit has a shotgun across her lap.)*

KIT

The clouds are starting to form again.

SIMON

Rain's a good omen, Kit. Besides, the drought's been a week long. We're running out of water.

KIT

I'm not talking about the rain. This isn't that kind of thunder.

*(Simon stills for a moment.)*

SIMON

You think it's them again, don't you.

KIT

I've never been wrong.

SIMON

There's a first time for everything, right?

KIT

Remember when we were kids and I used to predict the snow? You used to get so angry 'cause you wanted to be surprised. Once I told you it would snow on Christmas Day and you didn't speak to me for weeks.

SIMON

Yeah. I remember.

KIT

I used to love knowing what came next. But I don't want to know anymore. I wish I hadn't seen it all coming.

SIMON

Do you know how long we have, then?

KIT

Not long. I can feel it getting closer.

SIMON

We haven't seen one since...

KIT

Since the end of the world. Just say it.

SIMON

Don't call it that, Kit. We're still here.

KIT

Our families aren't.

SIMON

I know, believe me. But there has to be something left out there. I'm reading Don Quixote...

KIT

Again?

SIMON

Yes, again. Books aren't meant to be read just once. It makes me want to go on adventures.

KIT

Adventures are dangerous, Simon. Besides, you'd get lost three steps out the door. You couldn't find your way out of a paper bag.

SIMON

I wouldn't mind getting lost if you came with me.

KIT

Let's plan on it, then. Someday, it'll be you and me against the world.

*(They exit as another crack of thunder rocks the ground. Lights up on the interior of Kit's house. There's a small living room and kitchen. Jo and Preacher are inside.)*

PREACHER

You remember what Kit told you about emergencies?

JO

Yessir. Hide under the table 'til she says I can come out, or a grown-up comes to get me.

PREACHER

Right. Bad things are coming, Josephine. Real bad things.

JO

I'm not stupid! You guys tell me over and over again how dangerous it is out there...

*(Dani and Asa enter with buckets of water.)*

DANI

It's no use, Preacher. Children rarely comprehend these things. She would do well to learn caution from her elders.

JO

*She survived just the same as you. (he stalks over to close the blinds)*

ASA

Are all the doors locked? It's getting rough outside.

PREACHER

Kit and Simon ain't back yet. Said they wanted fresh air.

JO

Well, they'd better stop "getting air" and get a damn clue.

ASA

We talked about the language, Jo.

JO

You can't make me stick soap in my mouth if we're about to die!

*(Lightning strikes. The lights flicker. Kit and Simon run in from stage left---a horrible noise follows them, a distorted, rhythmic groan that sounds like thunder, a heartbeat, and a machine all at once.)*

KIT

It's coming.

SIMON

I thought you said we had more time...

PREACHER

No use in worrying now. Get down and stay down.

*(All characters huddle together in and around the table. The ground continues to rumble, along with the sickening noise and flickering lights. Asa begins to panic, showing signs of PTSD. Kit clutches her shotgun to her as if it is a lifeline. Preacher begins to sing a spiritual hymn. After awhile, the shaking stops.)*

JO

*(hands over her eyes)* Is it over?

KIT

For now. If that thing makes one wrong move, we'll be crushed in seconds. We should stay downstairs for the night, just in case. *(to Asa, who is rocking back and forth)* Are you alright, Asa?

ASA

The noise is the worst part. Brings me right back to the war. All that time in the army, and I never saw monsters like those...

KIT

You should get some rest. I know your leg's been bothering you.

ASA

I'm fine. *(She winces)* I should be the one keeping watch. I'm the adult.

KIT

Don't worry about us. If I see any danger, I'll wake you.

SIMON

You sure you don't want to trade off? I can---

KIT

No, Si. It should be me. I saw it coming before.

SIMON

If you're sure...

*(Asa, Dani, Simon, and Jo settle down on the floor. Lights shift to a cool blue---Kit is alone, leaning on her shotgun. The Preacher speaks up from his seat on the couch.)*

PREACHER

You ever plan on using that thing?

KIT

The gun? I'm not about to pull it on another human being, if that's what you're asking.

PREACHER

That was your daddy's gun. He didn't have a gentle soul like yours. Would've turned that gun on anyone and everyone, if he had survived those first few days.

KIT

I know he was cruel sometimes... but I can't look back in anger. Not after everything we've lost.

PREACHER

There are better ways to hold onto his memory. Why keep that gun if you ain't gonna use it?

KIT

Maybe I want to pretend I could stand a chance against those things. Like David against Goliath.

PREACHER

Listen to me, Katherine. Don't make yourself a hero. Don't put that on yourself. It ain't worth it. Find a different path to hope.

KIT

I don't believe anymore, Preacher. Not after watching my sister die. Not after burying Simon's parents in his backyard.

PREACHER

I wasn't talking about religion. God keeps me steady during storms like these---but I can't make you trust in Him. All I can offer you is hope. I don't care where you find it.

KIT

I appreciate that. Right now, I just need to get through the night.

PREACHER

Having those bad dreams again?

KIT

They aren't nightmares. I'm always standing on the edge of my life, looking down. Like I'm not really part of it. It's not frightening, it's just...empty. Somehow, that's worse. That hole where a feeling should be. *(She's starting to get tired)*

PREACHER

You're drifting off already. Go to bed with the others. *(Kit protests)* I may be old, little girl, but my eyes are just as good as yours. *(Kit drifts off to sleep, still sitting up.)*

PREACHER

Lord, have mercy on her. Have mercy on us all.

*(The lights fade out. It begins to rain; there is a moment of quiet before Simon's voice echoes through the silence: "Kit... Kit..." The lights snap back on, and Simon is shaking her awake.)*

SIMON

Kit, wake up! Someone's outside the house.

KIT

What? That's crazy... go back to sleep.

SIMON

He's hurt, Kit. He needs help.

DANI

Would you keep it down? Josephine was snoring all night and I couldn't...

KIT

Simon, Asa, run out and help him in. Hurry!

*(Simon runs offstage, Asa following behind.)*

DANI

Wait, Kit. Whoever that is, he could be dangerous!

KIT

It doesn't matter, Dani. He's a human being and he needs us. It's a risk I have to take.

DANI

What do you know about risk? You're just a child. I don't see why Asa follows your orders.

KIT

Maybe it's because I won't leave a stranger out in the rain. Now, shut up and stay out of the way.

*(Dani storms out. Simon and Asa re-enter with DAVID propped between them. He's wearing a massive jacket with tons of pockets. Kit approaches cautiously.)*

KIT

Are you alright? Can you speak?

DAVID

Y-yes. I-it's been awhile. Thank you, thank you so much. I haven't seen life in m-miles.

KIT

What's your name? Where did you come from?

DAVID

It's D-David. I come from everywhere. And nowhere. Everywhere. But nowhere in particular.

JO

That makes no sense, mister David. Everybody comes from somewhere.

SIMON

That's a heavy load you're carrying. Are you a traveller?

DAVID

You could call me that. I wander here and there. Through cities, through no man's land. Sometimes I see people. I s-sell them the things they miss. Books, jewelry, pencils...

KIT

Sell them for what? Currency died a long time ago.

DAVID

Favors, shelter, stories. There's nothing I love more than stories.

JO

Oh, I love stories! Do you have one for me?

DAVID

I've got plenty!*(to Kit)* I'll give you anything. Anything you want for saving me. A gift. Take this*(He presses a box into Kit's hand)* But please...let me stay...

*(He moves as if to plead with Kit, but he collapses. She checks his pulse.)*

KIT

He's unconscious. It's a miracle he survived this long. He's skin and bones...

ASA

I'll take him upstairs. Seems like he needs a warm place to sleep, for once.

*(Asa and David exit. Jo takes a book from David's backpack and studies it while Simon and Kit stand center left.)*

SIMON

What's that? He said it was a gift, right?

KIT

It's a music box like the one I had as a kid. But I probably shouldn't open it.

SIMON

Come on, Kit. When was the last time you heard music? When was the last time you sang?

KIT

I don't want to think about it, Simon. If I remember the music box, how I used to sing with Mom ... I'll remember everything else from before. I don't know if I can come back from that.

SIMON

But you're strong. You always have been. You kept me alive during that first winter, when we didn't have anybody else. I would have died if it weren't for you. If you're strong enough for that, you're strong enough to remember how to live. *Really* live.

KIT

So you think I'm dead on my feet? Is that it?

SIMON

I think you're going through the motions. You don't have anything to hold onto. Not really.

KIT

I have you. That's enough, isn't it?

*(They lean into each other for a moment. Jo sneaks up behind them and starts singing abruptly.)*

JO

Kit-Kat and Simon, sitting in a tree, K-I-S-S-I-N-

KIT

Jo, where did you... what are you doing?

JO

I'm boooored. I took one of Mister David's books, but I can't read any of the words.

SIMON

Maybe because you aren't paying attention to Preacher's lessons. He's probably looking for you.

JO

Why do I have to learn all this stuff anyway? None of it means anything anymore. I bet I'm the only person alive who still has to go to school.

SIMON

You aren't the only one. Dani said she saw a few makeshift schools on her way from New York.

JO

Well, Dani told *me* there were wanderers jumping from town to town like ticks, sucking all the blood out til there's nothing left. Sounds like mister David, if you ask me.

SIMON

That's ridiculous, Jo. Once he wakes up, you can ask him more questions. Come on.

*(Simon exits, but Jo lingers behind.)*

JO

Kit... are you ever gonna tell him?

KIT

*(with great strain)* Tell him what?

JO

You know....that you—

KIT

I can't promise him something I can't give him. *(beat)* There's nothing to tell.

JO

But what if—

KIT

*(She snaps, venom in her voice)* Go away, Josephine!

JO

I-I'm sorry... I don't know what I did wrong..

*(Jo exits hesitantly. Kit sits with the music box for a moment before she exits opposite, frustrated. Enter Asa, Dani, and Preacher.)*

DANI

He's mumbling in his sleep. Thrashing and spitting like a madman. We should've left him outside for *them* to find.

PREACHER

If I hear another cruel word leave your mouth, it'll be you who's left outside for those monsters.

ASA

He does seem off, but we don't know what happened to him.

DANI

And we don't need to know. He could corrupt Josephine's mind with his delusions.

PREACHER

That's true. She doesn't remember what it was like in those first few months.

ASA

I remember finding her in a snowdrift. She was so small. For someone to abandon her like that...

DANI

I don't want her getting the wrong idea from that man's ramblings. She's too fragile.

PREACHER

As are we all. But no matter who this man is, he deserves our mercy.

DANI

Then let's pray to your God that we don't regret this.

*(The three of them are in tableau as lighting focuses on Jo, Simon, Kit, and David, who are in the living room. The kids are sorting through David's "stuff".)*

JO

Look, I found a silver dollar! Where did you find all of this?

SIMON

If I had this many books, I'd never sell them. I don't know how you do it.

DAVID

I've gotten imm-mensely lucky.

JO

Sweet, a deck of cards! Kit-Kat, will you teach me how to play poker?

KIT

*(distracted)* What? Oh, sure...

JO

You don't seem super excited about all this cool stuff. What's in that box beside you?

DAVID

P-please, don't touch that one. It's...for my son. I m-mean to give it to him someday if I ever find him again.

KIT

It's hard to believe you made it all the way here from California without finding him.

DAVID

Teddy and I, we didn't speak much. One night he t-took off without a word, and when the end came, I th-thought there was no hope. But then I realized the world is just as wide as it used to be. My Teddy has to be alive somewhere out there. So I went looking for him.



KIT

But what about the monsters? Weren't you afraid?

DAVID

They c-can complicate matters, but I'm careful. Once, I passed a whole herd of them. It was magnificent.

KIT

How can you say that? They've killed half the planet.

DAVID

I've spent a lot of time watching them, travelling with them. God only knows how they came to be, but they're only trying to stay alive. Just like the rest of us.

SIMON

Do you know how to kill one?

JO

Yeah! Do they bleed? What color? Do they sleep? What does their poop look like?

DAVID

They can be killed. I was cornered by a smaller one--a cub. I shot an arrow into its stomach. The weak spot. It was horrifying. I swore never to harm a living thing again.

KIT

But it's possible for us to beat them. To stop living in fear of them.

DAVID

The f-fear never goes away. You just live in spite of it.

SIMON

Kit, we could really leave! We could go on those adventures we always talked about.

KIT

You and me against the world. I remember.

SIMON

It feels so real I can almost touch it. David, how do we get there? To California?

DAVID

I c-could show you! We could travel together someday, and I could tell you all my stories...

SIMON

You'd really take us in?

DAVID

Of course. You've been so kind. You remind of my son... I'd love for you to meet him someday.

KIT

For now, we should probably just lay low. Let's not rush into this.

JO

I'm ready to go right now. Let's go fight some big bad monsters!

*(Jo laughs and punches at the chair, David engaged with her. Lights fade on them, and Kit finds stage downstage right, with Simon following behind her.)*

SIMON

Hey, are you ok? I know that was a lot to take in.

KIT

I'm fine. Just needed some air. I still can't believe it's actually possible.

SIMON

We can leave our neighborhood without worrying that we'll never make it back. There are cities out there. People like us.

KIT

Part of me thought we were the only ones left.

SIMON

I don't have to keep reading the same book over and over. Jo could go to a real school, with real kids...and you could play music like you always wanted to.

KIT

That does sound nice. Maybe our world doesn't have to be so small.

SIMON

We just have to keep hoping.

KIT

What is it you're hoping for, Si?

SIMON

That you'll be there to see it all with me. *(He kisses her)*

KIT

Was that... was that real?

SIMON

I'm sorry, Kit. That was so stupid of me. So stupid.

KIT

No, Simon. These little moments: I feel almost guilty, stealing them for myself. I get scared that they're just dreams. It's not you. *(coyly)* Besides, it wouldn't be the first time.

SIMON

What do you... oh! Third grade, behind the swingset. You just wanted to see what it was like.

KIT

But you thought people couldn't kiss until they got married! So you made me a ring out of weeds and proposed to me right then and there. The class hamster was our parson.

SIMON

I'm starting to think that wasn't a legal certificate.

KIT

Do you ever wonder why we keep coming back to each other after all this time?

SIMON

To be honest, no. There's never been a doubt in my mind.

*(They kiss again, and the lights fade out.)*

*END OF EXCERPT*

*END OF EXCERPT*