

EDEN IN SILENCE - EXCERPT

By Jamie Olah

(c) 2016

CHARACTERS

The cast should depict a diverse cross section of womxn. Roles should be cast against stereotype and should include a wide variety of body types and ethnicities. Please contact playwright for casting options.

EDEN.....A woman in her late 20s.

EMILY.....Eden's younger sister. Early 20s.

SKYLER.....Eden's coworker. Early 30s.

MEREDITH.....Eden's boss. Early 40s.

ZOE.....Eden's coworker. Mid 30s.

VIVIAN.....Eden's mother. Early 50s.

KIM.....The mother of Eden's ex-boyfriend. Late 50s.

NOTES

## STAGE DIRECTIONS

Eden in Silence is an image-based play where movement is a primary vehicle for storytelling. All stage directions were authored by the playwright, and should be given the same weight as the spoken word.

## SCRIPT NOTATION

The presence of corresponding slash-marks indicate where a character speaks over another character's lines.

## ENSEMBLE

Excluding EDEN, all actors are part of the ENSEMBLE when not portraying a named character. If an action is performed by a specific actor it is noted as ENSEMBLE/CHARACTER.

## SOUND

Silence is essential. Lean into it.

SCENE 1

*It is the year 2009.*

*Lights up on a white stage with a large white-framed window suspended just upstage right of center. A couch sits center with a blanket draped over its back. It is flanked by a side table set with several framed photos and a floor lamp. A coffee table sits downstage of the couch, and is set with a vase of flowers, a stack of books, and a pair of bird figurines. EDEN is folding laundry. She cradles a cell phone between her ear and her shoulder.*

*(The following actions are completed by the ENSEMBLE laterally and without acknowledgment of EDEN: i.e. if an ENSEMBLE member enters from stage right, she crosses the stage directly while performing her task and exits stage left.)*

*At the first ENSEMBLE member's entrance, a sustained, low bass tone begins almost inaudibly. The tone builds throughout the scene and ends abruptly when the window is broken.)*

EDEN

Hi Emily. (pause) It's good to hear your voice too. (pause) Yeah, I know it's been a while. (pause) Yeah, Paris was great. We hit up all the biggies - the Eiffel Tower, Notre-Dame, the Louvre. Have you ever been to Les Puces? (pause) It's this huge flea market. It was amazing, we were there for hours. I ended up finding this pair of bird statues just like the ones Mom and Dad used to have on their mantle. You remember the little ones... (pause) Yes! (pause) I know! I just looked down and there they were, and in Paris of all places! (pause) Of course I got them. Christopher thought they were too expensive...

*An item of clothing is taken from the laundry basket and dropped on the floor. Without missing a beat, EDEN picks it up and continues folding.*

EDEN

...but they were just so perfect and I really wanted something special to remember the trip. I mean, it's not every day you celebrate five years with someone.

Well enough about me already - how was your gallery opening?! I'm so sorry that our trip conflicted with the show. It was the only time that Chris could get off from work.

*The laundry basket is tipped over. EDEN picks it up and resumes folding.*

EDEN

How did it go? Have you sold any paintings yet? I heard Mom and Dad bought the big one. *(pause)* Really? That's great! *(pause)* Wow. *(pause)* Oh my God, Emily, that's amazing! The entire hotel lobby? *(pause)* When do they need them by? *(pause)* Oh, gosh, um, how much? For supplies? *(pause)* No. Yes. *(pause)* Of course. Yes, I have enough. I just need to check with Chris first.

*The floor lamp is tipped over. EDEN rights it.*

EDEN

Of course. Yeah, of course, I'd love to help out. I just need to make sure - I need to check first.

*The flowers in the vase are tossed to the ground and the vase is sent spinning. Flower petals slowly fall from the sky. EDEN returns the vase and the flowers.*

EDEN

Can I let you know tomorrow?

*A framed photo is thrown to the ground. EDEN picks it up. One by one, photos are strewn about the room.*

EDEN

Sorry. No. Everything's fine.

*Clothing items are thrown about.*

EDEN

Well that's just amazing news. I'm so proud of you.

*EDEN moves about the space, struggling to right the room while continuing her conversation on the phone.*

EDEN

Yeah. Uh huh. Uh huh. Yes, I'm still here. Oh. Yeah. Uh huh.

*The filled laundry basket is lifted and its contents are dumped on the floor. The lamp is once again tipped over. The books are opened, pages are ripped and thrown in the air. The blanket is removed from the couch and beaten against its back.*

EDEN

Yeah. Okay. Uh huh. Just. One sec. I. I need to...

*Unable to keep up, EDEN stands with her arms full. She looks at the items in her hands, then looks around at the chaos that surrounds her. For the first time she registers the magnitude of the destruction. She drops the items, including the phone. EDEN stands, absorbing the shock of each new development.*

*The sofa is flipped end over end. It's cushions are slashed and their contents scattered. The side table is overturned. A final burst of falling items is punctuated by the breaking of the glass window. The ENSEMBLE exits.*

*Eden is left alone onstage. A high pitched ringing is heard, as when suffering from tinnitus. EDEN slowly walks to the side table and rights it, then goes to the window and touches its frame.*

EMILY

(barely audible through the phone) Eden? Eden? Is everything okay? Are you still there?

*EDEN hears EMILY's voice. She sifts through the wreckage to locate the phone and puts it to her ear.*

EDEN

Emily? Can I come over? I'll be there in 15 minutes.

*EDEN hangs up the phone.*

*(This is the last time EDEN will vocalize until expressly noted in the script.)*

*The tinnitus fades as EDEN sifts through the rubble, collecting her clothing. ENSEMBLE/SKYLER enters and sets a rolling suitcase in front of EDEN. EDEN looks at the suitcase. ENSEMBLE/SKYLER gently guides EDEN's hand to the zipper. EDEN unzips the suitcase as ENSEMBLE/SKYLER exits.*

*EDEN deliberately chooses several items from the debris and places them in the suitcase: a framed photo, a book, and a men's shirt. She notices the bird figurines. She delicately picks up one of the birds, leaving the other on the table. She wraps the bird in the men's shirt, places it inside the suitcase and zips it shut.*

*EDEN stands center and watches as the ENSEMBLE swirls about, rapidly cleaning the stage. Debris is thrown into large black garbage bags, items are swept up, furniture is removed, and the broken window is replaced. An upholstered chair is brought on and placed behind EDEN. When the flurry of cleaning concludes the stage is bare except for EMILY, EDEN, her suitcase, and the chair.*

SCENE 2

*EMILY approaches EDEN and embraces her. She gently takes the suitcase from EDEN and places it next to the chair, guiding EDEN to sit.*

*EMILY exits. She enters with a blanket folded over her arm and a bowl of soup in her hands. She crosses to EDEN, places the soup in EDEN's hands, lays the blanket over EDEN's shoulders, and exits. EMILY enters with another blanket and carries a bowl of soup in her hands. She crosses to EDEN and sits on the floor. They cradle the bowls in their hands and eat.*

*EDEN's cell phone rings. She pulls it out and checks it, then looks to EMILY. EMILY takes the phone from EDEN and answers the call.*

EMILY

Hello Christopher. (pause) Yes, this is her sister. (pause) I'm sorry. (pause) No, she isn't available right now.

*EMILY hangs up the phone and sets it on the ground. They continue eating.*

*EDEN's cell phone rings. EMILY actively ignores the call. The call goes to voice mail. They eat.*

*The cell phone pings once. Twice. Pause. Ping. EMILY reads the messages.*

EMILY

He talks to you like this?

*EMILY dials.*

EMILY

Christopher? It's Emily. Listen, I don't know everything that's going on right now, but you need to back off. (pause) Yes, I understand. (pause) No, she's not ready to talk to you. (pause) Excuse me? (silence) I don't know who you think you are, by my

EMILY

sister doesn't owe you a damn thing. She has made her decision, and you need to respect that. This conversation is over. Do not call again. Goodbye.

*EMILY hangs up.*

EMILY

What the fuck was that?

Are you okay?

*EDEN nods.*

EMILY

Breakups always bring out the worst in people. It's going to be shit for a while. I'm here. We'll get through this together, okay?

*EMILY pulls out a printout of apartment listings. EDEN reaches for her suitcase as the ENSEMBLE removes the chair, blankets and bowls. A rolling door is placed onstage. EMILY and EDEN cross to the door and pass through.*

EMILY

(reading from the printout) Vintage building. Heat and cooking gas included. Large Closets. Hardwood floors. 3 blocks to the CTA. \$50 Application Fee. No Security Deposit.

It's a bit small.

*EDEN agrees. They exit back through the door, which is rolled across the stage. EDEN and EMILY cross the stage to the door and enter as before.*

EMILY

Huge garden apartment. New kitchen. Updated bathroom finishes. Eat-in kitchen. Laundry room in building.

*EDEN doesn't like it.*

EMILY

Ok.

*They exit and the door is moved again. EDEN and EMILY notice a strange smell upon entering and promptly exit. The door is rolled just upstage of center left. They enter.*

EMILY

Steps away from the lake. Large sunny top floor unit. Available immediately.

*EDEN goes to the window and looks out. EMILY joins her.*

EMILY

Nice view. It's in your price range. We'll make it feel like home.

*EDEN sets down her suitcase and walks with EMILY to the door. They embrace.*

EMILY

Are you sure you don't want me to stay the night? Okay. Call if you need anything. I love you.

*EMILY exits and EDEN locks the door. EDEN goes to her suitcase and opens it. As she removes a pillowcase from her suitcase, a drably appointed twin bed rolls on along with a side table. EDEN takes the pillow from off the bed, puts on the pillowcase, places it back on the bed, and returns to her suitcase. As EDEN takes clothing out of her suitcase a basic, functional dresser is placed next to the bed. EDEN puts her clothing inside and returns to her suitcase. As EDEN takes a towel out of her suitcase a bathtub is rolled on. She places the towel over the side of the tub.*

*EDEN takes out the framed photo and book and sits with them on the bed. She removes the backing from the framed photo to reveal a small stash of hidden money. She tears the lining from the book to extract a series of photocopied documents including her passport, drivers license, and birth certificate. She takes off her pants and turns them inside out. She cuts at a small patch that has been sewn behind the front pocket and pulls out a spare car key. She places the cash, documents, and the car key on the dresser.*

*A garbage bin and a laundry hamper are brought onstage. EDEN throws the frame and the book into the garbage. She takes off her shirt and throws it, along with her pants, into the hamper.*

*EDEN goes to the suitcase and pulls out the men's shirt containing the bird figurine. She unwraps the figurine and places it on the side table. EDEN holds up the men's shirt. She puts on the shirt, then turns out the light and climbs under the covers.*

*After a moment, Eden gets out of bed. She checks that the door is locked, then takes a chair and wedges it under the handle. She climbs back into bed.*

*Silence.*

### SCENE 3

*An alarm clock rings loudly and the lights snap on. EDEN jumps out of bed, unsure of where she is. Copy paper begins to fall from the ceiling downstage of EDEN's new apartment. Ringing phones and other office sounds are heard. They remain low in the background throughout and rise and fall when the ENSEMBLE transitions. EDEN sees the paper falling and rushes to change into her work clothes.*

*The door is shifted downstage and adorned with a bathroom sign marked "WOMEN". EDEN emerges from behind the door and rushes downstage, adjusting her clothing and tripping along the way.*

*EDEN begins picking up the papers and organizing them. Walls are rolled on to form a cubicle. A rolling office chair, a desk, and a computer complete EDEN's office. MEREDITH appears from behind the cubicle with her always present cup of coffee. The papers stop falling as MEREDITH speaks.*

MEREDITH

*Good morning Eden. Jesus Christ, what a shit storm! Bonnie and the partners moved the meeting up to 9:30. I need the annual report and the Spinelli files. This day was fucked from the word go. Plan on staying late this week.*

*EDEN hands her a stack of papers.*

MEREDITH

*Thanks. Conference room. 15 minutes.*

*MEREDITH exits behind the cubicle as the ENSEMBLE enters from both sides of the stage carrying stacks of papers and other office items. They directly cross the stage and exit as one ENSEMBLE member places a file box at the downstage corner of EDEN's cubicle. MEREDITH enters.*

MEREDITH

Good Morning Eden. I need the dates for the Johnson case. Thank the Lord for coffee, amiright! Fuck, it looks like you could use a cup. Late night, huh? Well, enjoy it while you can.

*EDEN hands MEREDITH the files.*

MEREDITH

Thanks.

*MEREDITH exits. ENSEMBLE transitions as before, this time depositing five more file boxes, which begin to form the fourth wall of the cubicle. MEREDITH enters carrying a stack of papers and hands them to EDEN.*

MEREDITH

Good morning Eden. Here. Scan and send them to accounting, then make me eight copies. Bonnie needs them right away. And Eden, today's the third time this week you've been late. Shit happens. I get it. But let's not make this a habit. Ok? Thanks.

*MEREDITH exits. ENSEMBLE transitions. Two boxes are taken away and four are added. ZOE enters.*

ZOE

Eden. There's a call for you on line two. It's your mother.

*A phone with a spiral cord descends into the cubicle. EDEN holds it between her ear and shoulder as she sorts the stack of papers she is holding. VIVIAN enters holding a phone to her ear with the cord extending offstage. ZOE exits as VIVIAN speaks.*

VIVIAN

Well there you are! Your father and I have been worried sick. We haven't heard from you in at least a month. Did you get any of my emails? Would you like us to come down and visit?

*ZOE enters.*

ZOE

Eden? Bonnie needs page 5. Thanks.

*EDEN hands ZOE the page. ZOE circles around the back of the cubicle.*

VIVIAN

I mean, I know your studio won't be big enough for the three of us, so we would get a hotel room close by. I think it would do you good.

*ZOE enters.*

ZOE

Bonnie needs the Bradley file.

*EDEN hands her the file. ZOE circles around the cubicle.*

VIVIAN

Listen, I'll talk to your father about taking off a few days so we can come visit. I'll make all the arrangements. You won't have to lift a finger.

*ZOE enters.*

ZOE

Bonnie needs the contact sheet for the Colby case.

*EDEN hands her the file. ZOE circles around the cubicle.*

VIVIAN

Ok? Good. It's all settled then. We'll see you in a few weeks.

*ZOE enters.*

ZOE

Bonnie needs one of your kidneys. Just kidding. She needs the addendum to section 38 for the partners. Skyler will pick them up first thing tomorrow.

*ZOE exits.*

VIVIAN

I hope work is going well. We're thinking of you. Love you sweetheart. Bye.

*VIVIAN exits. EDEN lets go of the phone. It ascends. The ENSEMBLE transitions, removing three boxes and depositing four. SKYLER enters.*

SKYLER

Good morning, Eden.

*EDEN hands the file to SKYLER.*

SKYLER

Thanks.

*EDEN goes back to her work.*

SKYLER

Hey, Eden? Is everything okay? I don't mean to pry. I know I'm still new and we don't know each other very well, but... Zoe invited me to join you both for drinks later. I hope that's okay?

*EDEN manages a smile and a nod.*

SKYLER

Great. Okay. Well, I'll see you later then.

*SKYLER exits. EDEN's cell phone pings. EMILY enters typing on her phone. EDEN reads the text messages.*

EMILY

Hey! Call me when you get a chance.

*ZOE enters.*

ZOE

Mail.

*ZOE sets a stack of letters on EDEN's desk, then exits.*

EMILY

Don't want to alarm you but Chris stopped by.

*Ping.*

EMILY

It was intense.

*Ping.*

EMILY

I'm worried about you.

*Ping.*

EMILY

Call me, okay?

*EMILY exits. EDEN sorts through the mail and stops at a particular letter. She drops the mail to the floor and rips open the letter. The office sounds disappear as KIM enters.*

KIM

Dear Eden, I feel compelled to write this letter to you.

SCENE 4

*ZOE and SKYLER enter. Background noises of a crowded bar that increases as the scene progresses, causing the women to raise their volume.*

ZOE

Brrring! Brrring! 5 o'clock! It's happy hour bitches!

*ZOE and SKYLER arrange the file boxes in three stacks across the front of the cubicle. They open the top file boxes and pull out alcoholic drinks. EDEN hides the letter in her back pocket as ZOE thrusts a drink into her hands. The women sit on the file boxes as if at a bar.*

SKYLER

Thank you so much for inviting me out.

ZOE

Of course! Eden and I have been wanting to for weeks now. But you know - work, life, blah blah blah. So, tell us about you! You're from New York, right?

SKYLER

Just outside of Rochester. We just moved from Florida, though.

ZOE

Eck. Florida. Sorry, don't get me wrong. Great to visit. I mean, hello Miami beach! But all those hurricanes? I don't know how anyone actually lives there.

SKYLER

Yeah, it wasn't my favorite either, but Derek's in the Marines, so we didn't have much choice.

ZOE

Oh, so that's his name! I was hoping we'd get to that husband of yours. I've seen him drop you off in the morning - you've got yourself quite the hottie there. I mean, his biceps are the size of my face. How long have you been together?

SKYLER

15 years.

ZOE

Shit!

SKYLER

Yeah. We started dating in high school.

ZOE

Holy fuck! I didn't know people like you existed anymore.

SKYLER

Well, we do.

ZOE

And you have a son, right?

SKYLER

Bobby. He's one and a half.

ZOE

Don't tell me you also have a dog.

SKYLER

Well...

ZOE

Oh my God. I'm not even going to ask you about a white picket fence because I think my head might explode. Shit. You two bitches have got it made. I've been on six dates in the past two weeks and every one of them was a complete loser. I mean, you should have seen the bonehead I went out with last night.

SKYLER

What happened?

ZOE

Well first off he did not look anything like his picture, the lying sack of shit. Six foot two my ass. He was five five and the scrawniest little asshole I've ever seen. And if that wasn't enough, he spent the entire night talking about fantasy football. I mean, no offense Eden, I know Christopher plays that shit all the time but I don't know how you stand it.

*The bar noise fades. ZOE and SKYLER continue drinking as EDEN listens to KIM.*

KIM

For the past five years you have been like one of my daughters, and it feels unnatural for us to part ways without a moment of closure. I am sad that you are leaving our family, but I want you to find happiness

KIM  
even if it means that we will no longer be a part of  
your life. I know...

*ZOE sees EDEN's face. Bar noise resumes.*

ZOE  
Oh shit. Shit. Shit. Shitty shit. Oh, I'm such an  
asshole. I'm so sorry Eden. I completely forgot.

SKYLER  
What?

ZOE  
They broke up.

SKYLER  
Really?

ZOE  
Yes. Oh, I'm such a piece of crap.

Eden. I'm totally going to make it up to you. You know  
what? When I broke up with Javier last year the best  
thing I did was get right back out there. You know Josh  
from accounting?

SKYLER  
The one with the curly dark hair? He's really cute.

ZOE  
Yeah. He's also really single. Eden, he would be  
perfect for you. He's sweet and funny, the perfect  
rebound. Can I give him your number?

Eden. We've known each other for three years now. It's  
just a date. What do you think? Come on, it'll be fun.  
I know you'll have a great time. Eden? Eden. Come on,  
Eden.

*EDEN reluctantly agrees.*

ZOE  
(lifting her glass) Whooo! Back in the saddle!

*They clink glasses. Bar noise fades. ZOE and  
SKYLER continue drinking as EDEN listens to KIM.*

KIM  
I know who my son is and I accept your decision to move  
on. Your presence brought joy into our family, and I am  
proud to have known you. I hope you will think fondly  
on our times together; I know that I will. Sending you

KIM  
wishes for great joy and success in the life that lies ahead of you. With all my love, Kim.

*Bar noise resumes as KIM exits.*

SCENE 5

ZOE  
Eden? Earth to Eden! Hello? Hey, you need another drink! I'll get us another round.

SKYLER  
Wait, I think I want to try something new. Have you ever tried a sidecar?

*Papers begin falling and office noise layers in. EDEN sees them and crawls over the file boxes back into the cubicle. Over the following sequence, the ENSEMBLE deposits more file boxes to slowly trap EDEN inside her cubicle.*

SKYLER  
How about a cosmopolitan?/

*(ZOE and SKYLER continue with the following for the duration of the scene until noted.)*

ZOE/SKYLER  
(switching off) Old fashioned. Amaretto sour. Eden. Tom Collins. Sex on the beach. Black Russian. Eden. White Russian. Screwdriver. // Moscow Mule. Eden. Mint Julep. Bloody mary. Long island ice tea. Eden. Daiquiri. Mai tai. Zombie. Eden. Piña colada. Margarita. Sangria. Eden. Brandy alexander. Negroni. Gin and tonic. Eden. Grasshopper. Fuzzy navel. Singapore sling. Eden. Caribbean breeze. Gibson. Gin sour. Eden. Brandy alexander. Gimlet. Pimm's cup. Eden. Rob roy. Tequila slammer. (if needed, repeat from beginning)

MEREDITH  
/ Good morning, Eden. I need those files. Shit. Fuckity fuck. Partners. Meeting. Goldbergs. Harrisons. Williams. Buckleys. Don't be late. Eden. Shit. Shit. Shitty shit shit. ///

*KIM enters.*

KIM  
// Dear Eden. (repeats every fifteen seconds until noted)

*EMILY enters.*

*Ping.*

EMILY  
/// Hello?

MEREDITH  
I need coffee.

*Ping.*

EMILY  
Eden, are you there?

MEREDITH  
You need coffee.

*Ping.*

EMILY  
Text me when you get a chance.

MEREDITH  
We all need coffee.

*VIVIAN enters with a rolling suitcase, texting on her phone.*

MEREDITH  
(over VIVIAN and EMILY) Staying late again. Fuck. Fuck. Fuck. Fuck. I need the files. Eden. I need the files now. Where's my coffee? Did someone make coffee? Page eight. 103. 48. 52. Conference room four. 20 minutes. Eden. Nine o'clock. Nine thirty. Lunchtime. 28 copies. Two copies. 45 copies. Don't be late.

*Ping.*

VIVIAN  
We're caught in traffic but we'll be there soon.

*EDEN's phone rings. It goes to voicemail. EMILY leaves a message.*

EMILY  
Hey, it's me.

*Ping.*

VIVIAN  
Good.

EMILY

I've been trying to get a hold of you for days. With an s. Days.

*Ping.*

VIVIAN

Love. Visit. Great.

EMILY

I know you're busy with work but I'm starting to worry.

*Ping.*

VIVIAN

Pancakes. Hotel.

EMILY

Just give me a call.

*Ping.*

VIVIAN

Eden. Waffles. Nice.

EMILY

I love you.

*Ping.*

VIVIAN

We love you.

*Only EDEN's head is visible in the cubicle. As the chaos peaks, the phone descends in front of EDEN. It rings loudly. ALL freeze and look at EDEN.*

ZOE

Eden. It's Christopher.

*EDEN looks at the phone dangling in front of her.*

*Silence.*

*EDEN gags. She barrels through the boxes and through the bathroom door. The sound of retching can be heard. After a moment EDEN exits the bathroom to all eyes on her.*

*Beat.*

*The office is whisked off stage and EDEN walks slowly to her apartment.*