

I DON'T THINK SO: LIFE'S STAGES

A Play made up of 14 Monologues

By

Katherine H. Burkman

I DON'T THINK SO: LIFE'S STAGES

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I DON'T THINK SO: LIFE'S STAGES

The song, "I don't Think So," is co-written by Katherine Burkman and Deborah Burkman with music co-written by Deborah Burkman and Ricky Calcao. The singers on the CD for the music are Deborah Burkman and Mark Schuh. Recorded and mastered at *In the Closet Studios* in San Francisco, CA.

I DON'T THINK SO: LIFE'S STAGES had its premiere at The Sherrie Gallerie in Columbus, Ohio on August 9 , 2009, produced by Sherrie Hawk with WILD WOMEN WRITING (Carole Dale, Patricia Ake, Susie Gerald, Ann C. Hall, AnneMarie Brethauer, Katherine H. Burkman and Laura Zakin) and at The Sanctuary for the Arts in Sunbury, Ohio on August 30th, 2009, produced by the director of the Sanctuary, Sydney Schardt, with WILD WOMEN WRITING.

CAST

(In order of appearance)

I'll Turn my Ring Around/ Marcie, age 10.....	Haley Hawk
Time Out With Clare/ Clare, age 13.....	Heather Carvel
Foot in my Mouth/Margery, age 18.....	Heather Caldwell
The Perfectionist/ Roger, age 20s or 30s.....	David Fawcett
Enter, The Bear/Jane, age 29ish.....	Susie Gerald
I'll Have his Head/Agave, age 40-50.....	Heather Carvel
Curtis Confesses/ Curtis, age 30-40.....	David Fawcett
Emails from the Dead/ Hector, age 30-50.....	David Fawcett
Saved by the Wal/Kate, age 40s.....	Heather Caldwell
The power of the Dead Line/ Jackie/ age 30-40.....	Heather Carvel
The Writer/Alice, middle-aged.....	Haley Hawk
My First Pedicure/ Ellen, age 60-70.....	Susie Gerald
The Date/ Marsha/ age 70s.....	Katherine Burkman

"All of the monologues were penned by Burkman and demonstrate her protean dramatic range. The inside of Burkman's creative head must be a riot of conversation and colorful characters." Pam Spence, *The Ohio Jewish Chronicle*, Sept. 10, 1909

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I DON'T THINK SO

The material in this collection may be used in a number of ways. It is a series of monologues which may be performed as a two-person show, one woman, one man. The men's monologues could be left out and a one-woman show becomes possible. A few women and a couple men could perform it. Separate monologues could be used for audition or with other material. Each of the fourteen monologues has the phrase, "I don't think so" in it. Perhaps its other thread, not unrelated to the title, is rebellion. If performed as written, the progression is from youth to age, LIFE'S STAGES.

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I'll Turn My Ring Around/ Marcie, age 10

Time Out with Clare/Clare, age 13

Foot in My Mouth/ Margery, age 18

The Perfectionist/ Roger, age 20s or 30s

Enter, The Bear/Jane, age 29ish

I'll Have his Head/ Agave, age 40-50

Curtis Confesses/ Curtis, age 30-40

Emails from the Dead/ Hector, age 30-50

Saved by the Wal/Kate, age 40s

The Power of the Dead Line/Jack, age 30s

The Writer/Alice, middle-aged

My First Pedicure/ Ellen, age 70s

Hey There, Sauerkraut/ Grandpa, age 75-103

The Date/ Marsha/age 70s

Setting: An empty stage with some blocks that can be used as chairs, a bed, a stool, etc.

Time: The Present

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The following song should be recorded and played as the audience enters. When the play begins it is possible to replay the song and let the actors do a dance to it.

I DON'T THINK SO

MAN.

*My dear you look divine today
In fact I think I'll have to say
You always take my breath away*

WOMAN.

I don't think so. I don't think so. I don't think so

MAN.

*If you are sad, then I'll be too
If you are glad, I'll follow you
Just tell me what to do*

WOMAN.

I don't think so. I don't think so. I don't think so

MAN.

*I'll walk with you and talk with you
And hold your hand and understand
Just tell me what you want*

WOMAN.

I don't think so. I don't think so. I don't think so

MAN.

*If I guess your favorite color
Will you love me and no other
Just tell me how to love you*

WOMAN.

I don't think so. I don't think so. I don't think so.

I don't think so. I don't think so. I don't think so.

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*Although you're very smart
And sweet and kind, my heart
Will not respond to all that you have said
You'd never guess my favorite color
So don't go through the trouble
If I love you back
It must be in my own peculiar way*

MAN.

*Peculiar ways are good
Love me any way you would
For I love you and am sure
That you're favorite color's purple!*

WOMAN.

*I don't think so. I don't think so. I don't think so.
If I'm sad just say okay
You be you and I'll be me
I'll love you more if you consent to be.
If you're just me
Then I can't see
If we're the same
It's just a game
You be on your page
I'll be on mine
We can meet in the middle for tea.*

MAN.

*Is your favorite color green?
I'll try and I will dream
Adoration's on the shelf
As I learn to be myself
My favorite color's yellow
And I think I am a fellow
Who can meet you anytime you want for tea.*

TOGETHER.

WOMAN. I don't think so.

MAN. Think so

WOMAN. I don't think so

MAN. Think so, think so, think so now.

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WOMAN.

*You surely are dramatic
Your pronouncements are emphatic
And I'm pleased that you like yellow
I'm really feeling mellow
My favorite color's blue
And perhaps I love you too.*

MAN.

I love you too.

TOGETHER.

WOMAN. I don't think so.

MAN. Think so

WOMAN. I don't think so

MAN. Think so, think so, think so now.

TOGETHER.

And I love you, love you, love you too.

I'LL TURN MY RING AROUND

MARCIE, 10 years old, is jumping rope

MARCIE.

One potato, two potato, three potato, four
Five potato, six potato, seven potato, more. *(She stops jumping and notices audience. Speaks to them)* Hi. Were you watching me jump rope? My name's Marcie. What's yours? I'm a good jumper because I practice a great deal. Practice makes perfect. That's what my piano teacher says. But I don't like to practice the piano. I like to practice jumping rope. *(Pause)* Actually I have a problem, and maybe you could help me with it. But I don't know how to say it. The problem. Let's see. It has to do with my father. My father is at the office where he does things like insurance. Only I notice when he gets calls at night, he always tells whoever calls him not to make a claim. "Your insurance will just go up," he tells them. I don't understand as I think you take out insurance so you won't lose money or something, but what's the point of paying for insurance if you don't make a claim. But that's not the problem. *(Getting to the point)* My mother is a shrink. Jungian actually. Have you heard of Jung? He's the one who first was with Freud and then he wasn't. Whoever Freud may be. What's a shrink? Well, think about it. People go to a shrink with a problem and she shrinks the problem until it's so small it has to be thrown out. She's upstairs in her office with a patient. So I'm not supposed to hang around in the hallway. So you see, I have nothing to do. My father won't let me cross the street alone or I could go down the other side of our street and ring Gloria's bell and maybe she could play. But how can I do that if I'm not allowed to cross the street? You know I'm 10 years old, so I think if I looked to the left and right and then the left again I'd be fine. But he's adamant. That's a new word I just learned. It means he's stubborn. But that's not really the problem. *(Gets to real problem)* The problem is I need a new way to remember. This is how it goes. I'm at the table eating dinner, and my father gets all huffy about something or other. He says something that makes me cry. I would leave the table, but I'm not allowed. So, I turn my ring around. I like rings and I always wear 1 or 2, sometimes 3. I turn the ring around on my fourth finger. The reason I do that is so that I'll remember not to talk to my father ever again. But every single time I forget. I mean he says something funny, or he offers to read to me, or to help

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me with my homework, and the ring has worked its way back around so that it doesn't allow me to remember not to talk to him. *(She plays with her ring)* You see what I need is a new way to remember. Because he just makes me furious. He's always saying, "Oh, you're so sensitive." Well if I'm so sens-itive, why doesn't he stop hurting my feelings all the time? And I thought the ring turning was such a good idea. You think I should just go write myself a note after dinner and carry it around with me? I don't think so. By the end of dinner he may have made me laugh or something and I'll forget to write the note. And I don't always have a pocket to put a note in. Any other ideas? You think I should **not** not talk to him but tell him he's hurt my feelings? I don't think so. When you're feelings are hurt, it's very hard to discuss things. You try it. You'll see. I wonder if my mother has solved all her patients' problems. Her clients' problems. She calls them clients. I'd ask her about my problem, but she's my mother so I can't. I could try Mr. Freud, but my mother has a picture of him and he looks older than Grandpa and Grandpa is very nice but he doesn't have a clue. *(Gives up)* Oh, well. Thanks for trying to help. I'll just stick to turning my ring around and maybe one day it will stay turned around and I'll just never talk to him again. Excuse me. I have to practice some more. *(She begins to jump rope again)*

One potato, two potato, three. . . .

TIME OUT WITH CLARE

A young girl, 13, is sitting on her bed surrounded by make-up, a mirror, a guitar, and a gun. She wears several bracelets.

CLARE. I'm in time out. You would think I were 8 or 10, when perhaps time out is not such a bad idea. But I'm 13 and a bit beyond all this stuff. My mother thinks this is a punishment, but actually I enjoy spending time in my room alone with the door locked, so she can go you know what herself for all I care. *(Takes audience into her confidence)* What did I do to deserve this banishment from the living room/dining room/kitchen/family room, you ask? I simply teased my brother, who needs teasing to keep him from becoming the superhero he thinks he is. Don't want him to fly off the roof or anything, so I was actually protecting him. He was bragging about his workouts and his girlfriends and his muscles, and all I did was tell him I heard at school that he was gay. That'll do it every time. I don't actually think he is gay, but maybe I'd like him better if he were. Mr. Macho. *(Holds out her arms)* Do you like my bracelets? I made some of them, bought others, and traded some with my friends for the others. My goal is to cover my whole arm up to the elbow. I try to wear this makeup so I won't look like my mother, who never wears any. She must think she's beautiful just as she is. I admit she has nice skin, but beautiful. I don't think so. Anyway, I like to bring out my eyes. *(Picks up gun)* The gun? Why do I have a gun on my bed? Do you want to guess? It's not actually loaded . . . yet. I saved up to buy it, but I have to save some more to get ammunition. At the moment, it just gives me a feeling of protection. I'm thinking about taking it to school and getting caught. Then I would deserve time out. I could be very secretive and hide it in my backpack. Then I would show it to my friends and my so-called friends in the bathroom and be able to count on one of the so-called ones to turn me in. I would probably get into the paper. I would most assuredly be suspended. Maybe even sent away from home, incarcerated, real time out. Then my mother and my father would be sorry for their lack of understanding and be sure they drove me to it. They would miss me and be sleepless over their inability to control me. Even my brother would probably wish he had been a bit nicer from time to time. Did I tell you that he makes fun of me all the time but is too devious to get caught. The time out should actually be his. Maybe I should use the gun on him. Just kidding. *(Moves toward an*

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imaginary window) Or I could actually just go to the window and shoot out into the night air. Ah, I feel a song waiting to be written. I'll call it, "The Gun." (She picks up a guitar from her bed and begins to sing. She struggles thinking up some of the words here and there.)

*Rather than see a shooting star
Perhaps I'll shoot a star myself
And when it hurtles to the earth,
I'll catch it just before it lands
And ride it up and save its life
And marry it and be its wife.
Or maybe I'll just shoot that tree
The one that's singing songs to me
Then its dying songs will sound
Sadder than the melody
that makes me feel the world's gone wrong
The sadder song will make me strong
I don't propose to shoot the moon
Until it's round and full
Nor do I plan to shoot the squirrel
It's really harmless after all
I could, of course, just shoot myself
the great misunderstood
But then my star would miss me
The tree be heard no more
So I guess I'll do my homework
And perhaps sleep on the floor
Yes, I'll sleep upon the floor
I shall sleep, shall sleep, shall sleep upon, I'll sleep upon the floor.
What do you think? I write songs all the time, but I keep them hidden. (Picks up the gun and aims at audience) So if you know what's good for you, you won't tell. (She pulls trigger) Bang. I bet I scared you. I sometimes scare myself. (Pause) Just kidding.*

FOOT IN MY MOUTH

MARGERY, an attractive woman, age 17 or 18, is talking to somebody in the audience.

MARGERY. You have to understand one thing: there is no way that I am going to be *in* or involved *with* the freshman play. I have swung my last lantern, rolled my last hoop, and sung my last school song. In other words, I have had it here! *(To specific member of audience)* Oh? You think if I allowed myself to get more involved in college activities that I would be less unhappy, less desperate? You think that if I took up knitting and sat in the back two rows with the other knitters that I would enjoy the lectures more? I would need to learn to knit with one hand and take notes with the other. A bit challenging that, even for a multitasker like you? I don't think so. *(Seeming to answer a question)* Yes, the courses are good. Not all of them. But some. I freely admit that when Professor Hedgrow illustrates his appreciation of music lectures with his own superb piano-playing that I am often almost enthralled. Especially for some reason the Chopin. But in the back of my heart, that indescribable feeling lingers which brings me to the brink of a cliff—though I am on flat, flat land. And of course it isn't my heart that hurts: I have learned in science 104 that feelings are not heart-felt a bit; they come from the brain. But wherever these feelings come from, I am rarely, rarely transported into moments in which I am not trying to figure out how I can possibly get through not only the rest of this god-forsaken day, but how I can get through the year. And through the rest of my stupid life. Let me count the ways. . . the days. . . the nights. *(Asking the person she is talking to)* Could it be the people? I seem to always have my foot in my mouth. I was chatting amicably last night with one of my house mates and had a hopeful moment as we seemed to be actually bonding, agreeing, for instance, that the lack of boys at a girls school was not a plus but a decided minus. Having established some rapport with this other student, perhaps a first in the months I have been incarcerated here, I ventured a cryptic remark about the overabundance of debutantes attending the school, all of whom needed to discuss coming-out parties, one-upping each other with tales of elegance. Coming out was, I ventured, a thing in my previous experience that gay people did or didn't do and the main metaphor was the closet. I had not known that young women did not come out of closets but came out of large mansions just

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to show their availability to members of the opposite sex, who also lived in large mansions. The idea was, I suggested, ludicrous. *(Pause)* I can tell by the expression on your face—you have guessed it: my newfound now lost friend is herself a debutante. And me? Still at cliff's edge. I look down and see. . . nothing. Vast stretches of it. *(Again responding to audience)* The cliff is a cliché? O. . . kay. But there are a few hills here that enhance the sense of a cliff. Last week I borrowed a bike and rode off with an acquaintance who also seems to hate the place. I didn't know the brakes were on the handle bars and I was going down hill, down another hill, down another, seeking the brakes with my feet. . . headed for a large, trafficky road. I turned into a curb to prevent certain death and I landed in a bush. Apart from some nasty scratches, I was alright. The bike is not. The debutante from whom I borrowed the bike is not. This near embrace with death happened at the beginning of the ride, so there was no ride. No escape. Not just no "coming out." No getting out! *(Arguing with audience)* It's true that my life here has a few ups, but it has far many more downs. I admit that I sometimes sit and study under a tree in the courtyard and find a sense of beauty and peace. . . for a few moments. But then the sense that I am living in a virtual nunnery takes hold of me and the peace fades, leaving me agitated. The coffee here is so terrible that I have taken to drinking it black because it doesn't seem to make much difference and black is becoming my color. I would clearly like to think of myself as some sort of tragic heroine, banished from hearth and home to learn who I am. But most of my work in English is on Andre Gide and in his novels nobody gets to know who he or she is. I am a figure in a novel by Gide. . . indeed. *(Agitated)* At the off-campus house where I dwell with nine other girls, I often trip over one or other of them on her knees, praying I presume. I am not used to this. I come from a Jewish area of Chicago and though, to turn a saying around, one of my best friends is a wasp, I am not familiar with the version of waspdom that prevails here. My roommate is from a small town in Maine and is engaged to a Persian prince whom she is not allowed to kiss or be kissed by until after their marriage. Living with us, as you well know, is a warden. She is a Ph.D. candidate whose job is to keep us behaving properly. I don't think she is needed, but what does the word warden suggest to you? What I am trying to tell you is that I live in an alien land amidst aliens from whom I am alienated. *(Pause)* As I walk from the small, off-campus house and pass under the gorgeous archway that leads to this picture-perfect, gothic campus, I find myself on the moon. I am quite alone,

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on the moon, stranded. There is the chatter in the distance of the foreign species with whom I share it, but I remain alone. Perhaps a few strains of a Chopin Ballad drift by. *(Pause)* Tell me, would you consider saving me? Coming to my rescue here? Blowing up the moon? There is no man in it or on it for that matter. *(Pause)* Help me. Please. Or are you one of them? Are you, too, getting ready to come out?

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THE PERFECTIONIST

Roger, a man in his 20s or 30s speaks to the audience. He is dressed to perfection.

ROGER. Did you know that one is allowed to make 26 mistakes a day. On bad days, one is allowed to make 50. Who has given this permission? I am a recovering perfectionist and I learned this at one of my 12 step meetings. I don't know how many mistakes I make a day, but I don't want to make any. *(Pause.)* Needless to say this perfectionism has caused me numerous problems, probably about 26 a day and 50 on a bad day. When I was in school, I could never get myself to write or hand in papers that weren't perfect. They had to be dragged out of me by the brute force of my mother, my father, my teachers, and finally even my shrink. Imagine a Jungian shrink dragging papers out of me. I don't think so. But I was under a lot of pressure to produce. *(Brag)* I have found a job that allows me to enjoy my perfectionist tendencies. I sort things. Big things in this pile, small things in that pile, blue things in the other pile, etc. And I make the piles impressively neat. It doesn't pay much, but at least I don't lose sleep over my job. *(Pause)* It's my social life that's at risk, and this is where I need your advice. See, I met this really neat girl, well woman I suppose. And I want to ask her out. I met her at a party, a disorderly one where people were drinking a lot. I was very uncomfortable. Don't get me wrong, I'll take a drink of wine, but only one glass and I sip it. Well, this girl and I got to talking but she was slurping a glass of beer. Slurping. I liked what she was saying but I didn't like the slurping. I had only just met her, so I could hardly say, "Look, I think you are attractive and intelligent and the right height, but I can't abide the way you slurp." I began thinking that if I married this girl, I could wait until we were married maybe six months and then tell her, but I don't think I could hold out beyond a first date. There are other girls I haven't taken out because of their slightly sloppy attire, their slightly too loud voices, or their slightly too big feet. You can see how perfectionism can inhibit one's social life. I saw that movie recently, someone-or-other and the Real Girl. It was about a shy guy who bought himself a doll and got her organized. But that didn't work for him and I don't think it would work for me since I want some real love. Haven't you found that when you criticize a date, she doesn't usually want to go out a second time? I certainly have. *(Explains)* Look at what happened to my mother and father, for example. My mother is supremely neat. She keeps a beautiful

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house, chairs covered all the time, couch too. No dogs allowed. My Pop, on the other hand is a slob. Can you imagine the fights they had. . . .have? No wonder I'm in Jungian therapy. But I'm beginning to think that my shadow (that's a Jungian term) is my perfectionism. I need to face it outright, stare it down, and begin to live. What do you think? Can you empathize with my problem? Or at least sympathize? Do you slurp beer? Just tell me how to handle the shadow. He's pulling me down, down, down. How do I face him? How do I outface him? Or at the very least, how do I tell Mary Jane that she is adorable except for the way she slurps beer? Isn't it likely that she might reply, "And you, Roger my lad, need to relax. A good slurp and even a burp might do you a world of good." A burp! That's just too much. I don't think this relationship is going to work out. But thanks for listening. You might, however, refrain from smiling, you know. As if I were a joke. You might give me some advice instead of just sitting there. Oh, well. We'll just call you my first mistake today. 25 to go.

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ENTER, THE BEAR

JANE, a woman in her late 20s, sitting at a counter in a drugstore. She talks to Jim, who is the audience.

JANE. Yes, Jim, a real bear! I was in the dining room for some reason and Fred was patching something on the wall in the living room. He was so busy I hadn't been able to get his attention over something I wanted to discuss, but I don't remember what it was, what I wanted to discuss. Enter, the bear. It was just like those commercials on television where a couple are camping and a bear comes and takes their tent. The wife sees the bear but the husband is oblivious. He's eating cereal or something they are advertising. I saw the bear. Fred did not see the bear. *(She takes a handkerchief from her pocket and wipes her face)* Actually, the bear didn't come all the way inside the living room. It stood at the door, keeping it half open as if he were not sure of his intentions. He entered into a quiet conversation with Fred, who didn't look up so he didn't know he was talking to a bear. I didn't hear much of it because I was frozen with fear. Now there's a cliché for you, but I really was. The conversation was something like, "Hey, Fred, what are you doing?" "Just patching the wall here." "Nice job." "Thanks." Something like that. But after all this calm conversation, the bear bounded into the living room and smashed through the glass that divided the living room and dining room. I honestly don't know if Fred looked up even then. All I know is I bounded right out of the back door and ran all the way here. *(She is still catching her breath)* I always feel pretty calm at your drug store. It's so 40s or 50s, and I love that you serve black cows. Just a little vanilla ice cream in the root bear, Jim. Good grief, I ran out of the house so fast I don't have my purse. I'll have to pay you later. Okay? *(She looks carefully at Jim)* You don't seem very concerned, Jim. Look over where? Oh, there, in the field. Yes, I can see two bears romping as if they didn't have a care in the world. Yes, they do look pretty tame. Hey, Jim, look, there's an elephant too and some other animal I don't recognize. *(JANE turns to talk to someone sitting next to her)* Do you see the bears? Don't you care? *(Turning back to Jim)* I didn't know there were bears in the neighborhood, Jim. Foxes too? Isn't that dangerous? Oh, they pretty much keep to the field? They don't usually call at the houses. You think my experience was the exception to the rule? *(She accepts an imaginary black cow, and a spoon and she begins to eat and drink)*

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Look, Jim, my hands are shaking. I have to tell you it's pretty awful when you can't relax over a black cow at the corner drug store because there's a field where bears and other majorly large animals are romping. I do feel calmer though. Must be the black cow. *(She eats a bit more)* But the problem, Jim, is, I just don't know if I should risk going home. I don't think so. I m not even sure I want to go home. I mean ever. I actually, truly, Jim, mean ever.

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