WELCOME TO CHALMETTE

By
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A documentary play based on media accounts and more than thirty interviews with residents of Chalmette, Louisiana who, in August of 2005, survived Hurricane Katrina, the breach in the levees, and the more than 900,000 gallons of crude oil that spilled onto their community.
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WELCOME TO CHALMETTE

Cast
In order of appearance
Minimum of 11 actors

**Kitty**: Woman, 40-50. Kitty is a schoolteacher and is married to the Principal of Chalmette High School.

**Rodney**: Man, early thirties. Rodney is a fireman in the Chalmette Fire Department.

**Kevin**: Man, mid to late forties. Kevin works for the Chalmette Post Office.

**Joy**: Woman, in her early sixties. Joy has lived her entire life in Chalmette.

**Kelly**: Young woman, 18-21. Kelly has grown up in Chalmette and only recently left Chalmette to attend college at UCLA.

**Scott**: Man, 50-60. Scott is an executive who works in upper management at the Murphy Oil Refinery in Chalmette. Prior to Katrina, Scott lived in New Orleans.

**Cal**: Male, 40-50. Cal is an attorney who lives and works in New Orleans, but is quite familiar with Chalmette since his family has lived there for centuries.

**Chorus**: A minimum of four actors. Two males and two females. Chorus members play Johnny, Rachel, Becky, Mom, Debbie, Cecile, Papa, Rory, Jean, Anderson Cooper, Wolf Blitzer, Frankie, Andy, Brother, Kenny, Suzie, Rebecca, Partner, LDEQ Official, EPA Official, Lawyer, and various members of the community who make appearances at different times.
Special thanks: to the Louisiana Bucket Brigade for their help and assistance in organizing and conducting the interviews that created this play: www.labucketbrigade.org; to Director Lauren Checki, whose brilliant creativity first brought this play to life at Tulane Law School in March, 2006; and to Dennis Gilmore, who directed and produced a subsequent version of Welcome to Chalmette at the Henderson County Performing Arts Center in March, 2009, as a part of the 2008 Texas Non-Profit Theatres POPS Festival.

Special Note: This play is a portrayal of the events that unfolded in Chalmette, Louisiana, in August of 2005. One single play cannot possibly include all stories, and consequently, some very important stories have been left out. A few of the names of characters have been changed to protect the identities of individuals, and some characters are the combination of various different interviewed individuals-so that more stories could be included within the confines of one single play. Additionally, because the public relations office of Murphy Oil declined to grant requested interviews, the character of Scott is based on quotes from Murphy Oil's website, interviews Murphy Oil employees did with media outlets, various interviews with community members who personally know Murphy Oil employees, and, in some instances, pure speculation on the part of the author. Thus, one must understand that this play presents only a few perspectives among the many that exist to explain the events that unfolded in Chalmette, Louisiana, in August of 2005.
SCENE ONE

Chalmette, Louisiana. A few months after the storm, Fall of 2005. THEY enter, one by one, returning to see their homes for the first time since Katrina. The set consists of simple objects, entirely out of place and thoroughly damaged. Any object on stage is covered in a black sub-
stance.

KITTY. (Enters.) Oh my God.
RODNEY. (Enters.) Is that?
KITTY. This isn’t-
RODNEY. That can’t be-
KELLY. (Enters.) Oh my God.
RODNEY. My couch?
KELLY. (Picks up a box.) Daddy’s medals?
KITTY. Mother’s china?
JOY. (Enters.) Oh my God.
KELLY. My yearbook!
JOY. The wedding photos.
KITTY. My letters?
KELLY. Where’s my desk?
KITTY. Where are my letters? (KEVIN enters and just stares.)
RODNEY. Is that my bed?
KITTY. I had a box, a shoebox-
RODNEY. Why is it in the kitchen?
KITTY. Why is the sofa-
RODNEY. In my bathroom?
KITTY. I put all of mother’s letters in that box-
JOY. I can’t find them.
KELLY. It’s gone.
KITTY. They’re gone! (Pause. Kevin collapses. Everyone coughs
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intermittently.)
RODNEY. Do you smell that?
JOY. My head-
KELLY. I feel dizzy.
JOY. I need to sit down.
KITTY. What is that-
RODNEY. That smell-
JOY. It’s strong.
RODNEY. Those fumes-
KELLY. Where is it coming from?
JOY. I can’t escape it.
KITTY/RODNEY/KELLY/JOY. It’s everywhere.
KELLY. What is it?
KEVIN. I can’t breathe.
CAL. (Enters as the others freeze in place. Cal addresses the audience.)
Welcome to Chalmette. Chalmette, Louisiana, here in St. Bernard Parish. Now, for those of you who aren't from around here, I'd like to welcome you to one of the most unique places in this country. I suppose I'm not really the one to give you the proper introduction. I don't actually live in Chalmette. I's just an attorney that lives and works in New Orleans. But I’m no stranger to the Parish. You see, my mother's family is the second largest landowner in St. Bernard's Parish. So my brother lives in St. Bernard and my aunt and my uncles and my cousins and friends of mine, etc, etc. Back when I was just a young pup, my grandparents owned a plantation in St. Bernard called Pecan Grove. It starts at the Mississippi River and goes all the way to Lake Borgne. So my mother's family have been residents of St. Bernard's Parish since 1803, 1804. And my father's family, they got here in 1787. So we always make fun of my mother's family. They're latecomers. They're 19th century people. Whereas my father's family, the 18th century people, they're the true New Orleanians. But really, I’ve spent a lot of time in the Parish. And I’m gonna tell you something about the people of Chalmette. They are an unbelievably unique community, culture, people. People for generations have been born, grown up, lived up their lives in St. Bernard, and have never moved anywhere else. And they would never think of living anywhere else. They love their lifestyle. They love their family
and neighbors. And the fact that they can get in the car and drive right down the street to the same grocery store that their mother and their grandmother and their grandmother before them went to. And they send their kids to the same school that they went to and their parents went to and their grandparents went to and its just a tremendous community with unbelievable ties to the parish. Most folks here, they were here in the sixties when Hurricane Betsy came through. And after they got wiped out by Betsy they came back and rebuilt. But now these same people, in 2005, have been impacted again, this time by Katrina. And this time, well this time it's different.

SCOTT. (Enters, speaking on his cell phone.) They’re saying it’s oil.
KELLY. Do you think it’s mold?
KEVIN. No.
CAL. It’s oil.
JOY/KITTY/RODNEY/KELLY. Oil?
SCOTT. Our oil.
JOY. How do you know?
SCOTT. Jack called.
KITTY. I called Wayne-
RODNEY. I asked my buddy at the Fire Department-
SCOTT/KITTY/RODNEY. And he said-
CAL. A tank at the Murphy Oil Refinery ruptured.
SCOTT. It spilt.
KELLY/KITTY/KEVIN. But how?
SCOTT. We didn’t fill the tank up high enough.
CAL. Oil is lighter than water.
SCOTT. So when the levees broke-
CAL. The flood waters lifted the tank up-
KELLY. It just floated?
SCOTT. That’s what Jack said.
RODNEY. And the tank fell over.
JOY. And out come the oil.
CAL. Over 900,000 gallons of crude oil.
KELLY. (Pointing.) Right here-
KITTY. (Pointing.) Over there.
KEVIN/KELLY/RODNEY/KITTY/SCOTT/JOY. It’s everywhere.
CAL. It is the world’s largest residential oil spill in the history of mankind.

SCOTT. This is not good.

CAL. So my brother calls me, all my relatives are calling me and they said we got oil all over the parish and will you help me? Will you represent me?

SCOTT. This is bad.

CAL. And so that's how I got started working on this lawsuit.

SCOTT. This is very bad.

CAL. And I mean, this is serious.

SCOTT. I’m gonna have to call you back. *(Hangs up phone.)*

CAL. Hundreds in Chalmette have lost their lives, and now thousands have lost their homes.

KELLY. Oh God.

KITTY. This isn’t.

JOY. Is this?

RODNEY. This can’t be-

KITTY/KELLY/JOY/KEVIN/RODNEY. This isn’t my home.

SCENE TWO

*Chalmette Louisiana. The sun is shining and birds are chirping. Saturday, August 27, 2005. Joy enters carrying a suitcase and addresses the audience from her driveway.*

JOY. I always leave. It's never a question of, you know, whether to evacuate or not. It's just a question of what time, and where to go. I remember watchin’ the TV that Friday afternoon. And I remember, they said she was headed for Florida. But then I woke up early the next mornin' and I saw where she was comin', and I remembered my mama talking about that route as hurricane alley. It's the same, almost identical to Betsy, very close to Betsy, and so I knew. I started packin'. *(JOHNNY enters, walking briskly, with his tool belt on and a tool in his hand.)* I’m loadin’ the car now, and I think we oughta plan to get outta here in the next hour, before four.

JOHNNY. What?
JOY. There’s a run on the gas stations, they’re sayin’ on the radio.
JOHNNY. You go on ahead. (Starts to exit.)
JOY. Ok. Why don’t we go ahead and put your bag in the car now.
JOHNNY. I ain’t packin’ a bag.
JOY. Well what are you gonna take? We won’t be back til Monday or Tuesday, and you’re gonna need somethin’ to wear. You can’t walk around your sister’s buck naked.
JOHNNY. I told you I’m not goin’.
JOY. But you can’t stay!
JOHNNY. I never go. I always stay.
JOY. I know that, they’re sayin’ this one’s a strong one.
JOHNNY. They always say that.
JOY. This one’s a cat five.
JOHNNY. Maybe she is, maybe she ain’t. It’s all the same to me. I ain’t got no time for these storms. Now if you want to ‘vacuate, that’s just fine by me. But I ain’t got the time to pack up my whole life and go spend two days with my sister up in Mandeville.
JOY. What’s so important that you got to stay here?
JOHNNY. (Points with his tool offstage.) I gotta fix our fence. (Pause, looks at a worried Joy, and softens.) Don’t worry ‘bout me. I’ll be fine. (Exits.)
KEVIN. (Enters to deliver some mail to Joy.) Hi there Miss Joy. You look like you’re leavin’.
JOY. I am. Are you?
KEVIN. Aww, no. I don’t think so.
JOY. You’re not leavin’? Whatcha gonna do?
KEVIN. Deliver your mail. (Smiles and hands her a stack of mail.) Somebody’s gotta make sure everyone gets their mail.
JOY. You need a ride? Cause if you need a ride-
KEVIN. That’s awful sweet of you Miss Joy, but me and Frankie, we’ll be just fine here with the boys.
JOY. You sure? You know, cause when Betsy came through here-
KEVIN. I know, I know. But my house here, she didn’t take on no water durin’ Betsy. Don’t worry Miss Joy. We’ll be fine.
JOY. Men. You and my husband both. Just tell a woman “don’t worry.” You think it’s that easy huh? (Exits. Kitty enters and sets up her
sign-in table at Chalmette High for the Emergency Shelter.)

KEVIN. (To audience.) I don’t know, I guess I never really considered the option of leaving. I figure somebody’s gotta stay and deliver the mail. You see, there’s two kinds of folks here in Chalmette. There’s the folks that evacuate every time a storm heads this way, and then there’s those of us that stick it out, cause you know nothin’ much ever really happens. These things come flyin’ at us all the time. You can’t hit the pause button on life everytime a hurricane enters the Gulf.

KITTY. Well hello there, Kevin. How are you?

KEVIN. I’m doin’ just fine, how about yourself?

KITTY. Doing alright. Did you see the game last night?

KEVIN. I did. Incredible win.

KITTY. It was, wasn’t it?

KEVIN. I’m tellin’ you, that Riley boy, he’s got quite an arm. He sure can throw that ball!

KITTY. Wayne says he thinks the boys could go all the way this year.

KEVIN. They sure looked good last night.

KITTY. You got anything for us over here at the school today?

KEVIN. ‘Fraid not much today. Maybe a letter or two. (Hands a few things to Kitty.)

KITTY. That’s alright, I wasn’t expecting much today.

KEVIN. It sure is nice to see the school back up and runnin’ again. You all do a nice job with it, you know. You’re always here, lettin’ folks in.

KITTY. That’s just what us school folks do.

KEVIN. You expectin’ a lot of folks this time? (RODNEY enters, carrying a backpack, followed by RACHEL.)

KITTY. We usually get around a hundred or so.

KEVIN. I know they’re sayin’ she’s a cat five.

KITTY. I heard that. Well, maybe we’ll have more folks that usual. We’ve got food to feed 150, and we had an extra generator delivered. I’m sure we’ll be fine.

KEVIN. Guess I’ll see you on Monday?

KITTY. We’ll be here!

KEVIN. Tell your husband I said the boys had a great game last night.

KITTY. I will. Give Frankie my regards.

KEVIN. Take care now. (Exits.)
RACHEL. You have your sleeping bag?
RODNEY. Yep.
RACHEL. What about your cell phone charger?
RODNEY. Yes!
RACHEL. And your granola bars? I set out a box of granola bars on the-
RODNEY. Rachel! I’ll be fine! (Hugs Rachel.) Don’t worry.
RACHEL. I’m not worried, I just want to make sure you have everything.
RODNEY. I do. Thank you. Now, take those little rascals on up to Covington and let your mom and dad deal with them for a couple days. Make yourself a margarita and kick up your feet, and give yourself, what is that thing you call doing your nails?
RACHEL. A manicure.
RODNEY. Yeah, get one of those.
RACHEL. Okay. (Hugs Rodney.) I love you.
RODNEY. Love you too. Call me when you make it to your parents’.
RACHEL. I will! (Rodney kisses Rachel, and she exits. Rodney walks over to the sign-in table where Kitty is set up.)
KITTY. Hello there. Welcome to Chalmette High.
RODNEY. Thanks ma’am, nice to meet you. Name’s Rodney.
KITTY. Nice to meet you, Rodney. Kitty Warner. (She shakes his hand.)
RODNEY. Any relation to Wayne Warner?
KITTY. He’s my husband!
RODNEY. Oh well, he must be proud. Great game last night!
KITTY. It was, wasn’t it?
RODNEY. So they have you manning the sign-in table?
KITTY. Well, there are many responsibilities that come with being married to the Principal of a high school. This just happens to be one of them.
RODNEY. Can you tell me where the firemen are supposed to check in?
KITTY. Sure can. I believe we have you stationed up on the second floor.
RODNEY. Thanks.
KITTY. No, thank you. We really appreciate the Fire Department coming out. We just feel safer knowing that guys are here.
RODNEY. Oh, no need to thank us. We’re just doin’ our job. *(Rodney exits.)*

**SCENE THREE**

*Various driveways in Chalmette and New Orleans, just before the storm. Scott stands, holding a bag full of golf clubs, as he attempts to pack his car to evacuate. He addresses the audience.*

SCOTT. You know, the worst part about evacuating is preparing to evacuate. We’re never away for more than three days, but still, for some god forsaken reason, my wife packs the Expedition like we’re driving to Houston and never coming back. Last time, when we left for Danny, she tried to convince me we needed to take all of her mother’s antique china. You know, in case we need to stop in the middle of the traffic jam on I-10 and have a tea party. *(BECKY enters.)*

BECKY. What’s that?

SCOTT. These are my golf clubs.

BECKY. Oh no, there’s no room for those. The backseat is already full, and I still haven’t packed Tootsie’s toys or his crate.

SCOTT. Ok, well then we’ll just have to take something else out.

BECKY. Take something out? What do you think we can take out?

SCOTT. Hmm, I don’t know, maybe the nine 24 packs of Diet Dr. Pepper.

BECKY. Six. There are only six.

SCOTT. Ok, well that’s 6 too many. Seriously, you are going to have to pee at every gas station between here and Houston.

BECKY. You know I need Diet Dr. Pepper when we evacuate. *(Grabs the golf clubs from Scott.)* This is not up for discussion. *(Exits.)*

SCOTT. It’s always stressful when you evacuate. But this time, it just seems like something-

KELLY. *(Enters.)* Something this time-

SCOTT/KELLY. Something is different.

JOY. *(Enters.)* We’ve got to get out of here.

CAL. *(Enters.)* This is serious.

JOY. I think this is the big one.
CAL/SCOTT. We have to leave.
JOY. But where?
CAL. Where should we go?
SCOTT. Texas?
JOY. Up to Mandeville- (MOM enters.)
KELLY. (Addresses Mom.) Oklahoma. You and Daddy need to drive to Oklahoma.
MOM. (Speaks to Kelly.) Oklahoma?
KELLY. Yes, Oklahoma. You can stay with Gracie and Max.
MOM. Oh no, I already told you.
CAL. No way am I driving all the way to Oklahoma.
SCOTT. Texas, sure, but-
MOM. I ain’t drivin’ to Oklahoma.
KELLY. You can’t stay here!
KELLY. Mom!
JOY. We have to go.
MOM. We don’t have the money to evacuate-
CAL. We have no time.
KELLY. We have no choice.
MOM. Of course there’s a choice. You always got a choice. And you, my dear, chose to leave Chalmette for some fancy school out there on the West Coast. So come on now, and we’ll drive you up to Baton Rouge so you can fly back to that fancy school of yours. But no way am I leavin’. You know, not all of us can just up and leave our home because we choose to. There might be a hurricane on her way here, but no way am I gonna choose to leave my home. (Exits.)
CAL/JOY. So I left.
JOY. I packed my things into my car and-
SCOTT. Drove all the way to Houston. (Exits.)
CAL. Went and stayed with my wife’s parents in Arkansas. (Exits.)
KELLY. I went back to school in California. (Exits.)
JOY. I left. By myself. I left Johnny behind, and drove straight through the night. Guess I got to Debbie’s house sometime around three in the morning.
DEBBIE. (Enters.) Oh look at you! What a horrible drive! Here, let me take your things. Where’s Johnny?
JOY. At the house.  
DEBBIE. Oh! Well that sounds like my brother. No hurri-cane is gonna make him move an inch. I don't guess Johnny’d evacuate unless it was the end of the world. (Exits carrying Joy’s suitcase.)

JOY. And so here I am, two hundred miles from home and all I can think about is my husband, in Chalmette. I couldn't sleep at all. I just laid there. All night long. Laid there and said the rosary. Over and over. Then after about eight in the mornin' I finally got a hold of ‘im.

JOHNNY. (Enters, speaking on cell phone.) Joy?
JOY. Johnny!
JOHNNY. How you holdin’ up over there?
JOY. Where you been? I been callin' all mornin.’ Couldn’t get you to answer-

JOHNNY. I’m just fine here Joy. Eye of the storm already passed us. Been hardly no damage at the house.
JOY. Oh thank God.
JOHNNY. Babe, I gotta go now. Battery’s dying and I don’t got no way to charge it back up.
JOY. Ok, I’ll drive home this afternoon.
JOHNNY. See ya soon. (Hangs up phone and exits.)
JOY. And he hung up. That was the last time I talked to him.

SCENE FOUR

Back at Chalmette High School, Monday, August 29, 2005. Approximately 8:30 a.m.

KITTY. (Enters and addresses the audience.) In all, I'd say we probably had about 300 folks stay with us last night in the shelter, which was a bit more than we had expected. But nothing too eventful happened. We signed everyone in, assigned them to classrooms, and then we all went to sleep. Or tried to sleep. Sleeping in a sleeping bag on a cement classroom floor is not exactly what I call getting my beauty sleep.

CECILE. (Enters.) Mornin’, Ms. Warner.
KITTY. Oh, and here is one of our custodians. This man here is the real man behind all the action around here. (To Cecile.) Cecile, how are we
doing this morning?

CECILE. We’re doin’ just fine, Ms. Warner, just fine. Insp-ected all the bathrooms, the cafeteria, the gym, the rest of the first floor. Folks are just startin' to wake up, and we’re all set up to serve breakfast in the cafeteria.

KITTY. Thank you, Cecile. Do you think we can start sending everyone home soon?

CECILE. I think so. Radio says the eye is passin' over us right now.

KITTY. Certainly seems like it. It’s awfully calm right now.

CECILE. Sure is. Katrina ain’t been that bad after all. A whole lot of fuss for nothin’.

KITTY. What time is it?

CECILE. ‘Bout eight-thirty.

KITTY. It seems so quiet.

CECILE. I think the worst is over.

KITTY. Well, I hope we can get everyone out by noon. We’ve got to get your full crew in here to clean this place so our students can be in class tomorrow!

CECILE. Don’t you worry Ms. Warner, we’ll have this place clean in no time.

RODNEY. (Comes running in.) Kitty! Kitty!

KITTY. Rodney?

RODNEY. Cecile, we’ve got to move all the folks on the first floor up to the second floor, NOW!

KITTY. What?

RODNEY. (Waves his hand-held radio.) There’s a wall of water-

KITTY. Water?

RODNEY. Water, headed straight for us-

KITTY. Oh my God!

RODNEY. Fifteen foot high- (Cecile takes off running.)

KITTY. Cecile, where are you going?!

CECILE. First floor. We got five folks in wheelchairs and two boys on ventilators. Somebody’s gotta carry ‘em up. (Exits running.)

RODNEY. We have no time! (Exits running.)

KITTY. Oh God. (Turns to audience and pleads with them.) Everyone, please, I have to, you need to listen to me. I need your attention. Please!
(Elevates her voice to a scream.) LISTEN TO ME! A fifteen foot wall of water is headed our way. We have to move. NOW!

SCENE FIVE

Following the break of the levees, Kelly sits on her bed in her college dorm at UCLA and addresses the audience.

KELLY. Sure I left Chalmette. I left to go to school at UCLA. I didn’t want to leave. Not really, but I had to leave. I never fit in when I was growing up in Chalmette. I don’t think I was ever Catholic enough. But Chalmette is my home. It’s where I’m from. This has just been, well, my family, we have been traumatized beyond words. And I've just had this gaze from 2000 miles away, watching CNN. So sure, I wasn't here when the hurricane hit, I was in California. But it was still awful. And everyone says something like “oh you must be so glad to have not been there, to not have to evacuate and travel from place to place.” And the truth of it is, I would give anything not to be stuck 2000 miles away. That first week, when I didn't hear from anybody, I didn't know if anyone that I knew in my entire life was dead or alive or anything. And then the second that that ended, and people started calling, I was the only person that people could get in touch with. I have been transmitting calls between 70 or 80 people. I can’t take a shower without the phone. I can’t go to class without the phone. One of the counseling officers at my school just started answering my phone for me and transferring messages to different people.

PAPA. (Enters talking on cell phone.) Kelly?

KELLY. Grandpa?

PAPA. Your Mimi and I are staying at Aunt Debbie's in Mandeville.

MOM. (Enters talking on cell phone.) Kelly, it's Mom.

RORY. (Enters talking on cell phone.) Hey, it's Rory.

CHORUS/MOM/RORY. We got out.

MOM. Just barely.

RORY. The firefighters got me off my roof.

JEAN. (Enters talking on cell phone.) Hi, my name is Jean and-

KELLY. I'm sorry, who are you?
JEAN. I'm your cousin George's daughter's cousin's cousin from Houston.
KELLY. Oh.
JEAN. I just got your number and I'm wondering--
KELLY. Where are you?
RORY. Baton Rouge.
PAPA. Brittany and Tim are still at the hospital in New Orleans.
MOM. We're stayin' at Cousin George's.
MOM/RORY/PAPA. My cell phone isn’t workin.’
RORY. So I am goin' to give you a number here where you can call me.
JEAN. Do you have somethin' to write with?
KELLY. Yes.
PAPA. Ok, it's 225-
MOM. 561-
RORY. 761-
JEAN. 0239-
RORY. 1691.
RORY/MOM/JEAN/PAPA. Did you get that?
KELLY. Yes.
PAPA. Where's your Uncle Terry?
JEAN. I can’t find my mom.
RORY. Have you heard from Jessica?
MOM. I heard Kyle is still missing.
PAPA. Is Camille stayin' at George's?
JEAN. Does Delores know where my mom is?
MOM. Where's Judi?
PAPA. Tell your ma Judi's with us.
RORY. Tell him Ryan is in the hospital.
KELLY. Ok.
JEAN. Have you heard from Camille?
RORY. No one's heard from Camille.
MOM. I need you to make us hotel reservations in Baton Rouge.
JEAN. Did you call FEMA?
RORY. Have you heard from Jacob?
KELLY. No-
MOM. I saw him on CNN.
WELCOME TO CHALMETTE

PAPA. Tell your Ma that I saw Camille at the Superdome.
MOM. She's on a bus out of New Orleans?
KELLY. That's what Papa said.
JEAN. Tell your family, if they need a place to stay, they have one in Houston.
RORY. Thanks Kelly.
MOM. Thanks sweetie.
JEAN. I'll call back tomorrow. (Exits.)
MOM. We're gonna be alright.
PAPA. Give Delores, Jennifer, and George our number. (Exits.)
RORY. Call me as soon as you hear from George. (Exits.)
MOM. You were right.
KELLY. What?
MOM. I should’ve left.
KELLY. Oh, Mom-
MOM. I love you.

SCENE SIX

Chalmette High School, Chalmette, Louisiana. August 29, 2005. Approximately 8:35 a.m. As Kitty yells orders at different individuals, Rodney and CECILE run back and forth behind Kitty, carrying various CHORUS MEMBERS upstairs (on and off across the stage.). Other CHORUS MEMBERS run back and forth carrying boxes of food from the first floor up to the second. THEY do not finish carrying folks until Kitty stops yelling. Offstage voices scream excited utterances continuously while Kitty continues to yell and absolute chaos ensues. With each individual statement, Kitty addresses a CHORUS MEMBER.

KITTY. No, there's no time. Hurry! Drop it. Forget about it. Good god, get upstairs! Please! No! Upstairs! Please, upstairs! There's no time! No time!
RODNEY. (Runs in carrying someone, says his line, and exits running. At this point, the bottom of his pants are wet.) The water!
KITTY. Water? What, already?
CHORUS MEMBER. (Runs onstage with water up to his knees,
carrying a large box of fruit loops, says line, and exits.) It’s here!

KITTY. Oh God. The water is here. The water is here!

CECILE. (Enters carrying someone with water up to his knees, says his line, and exits running.) Doors just busted in!

KITTY. Remain calm.

RODNEY. (Enters and exits, with water up to his waist, as he carries someone across stage and exits.) It's just pourin' in now-

KITTY. We must remain calm.

CHORUS MEMBER. (Enters soaking wet carrying box of food.) Up to my neck. It’s already up to my neck! (Exits.)

KITTY. No time, we have no time! Everyone run!

RODNEY. (Enters, soaking wet and out of breath. It’s gone. The whole first floor, it’s all gone. (Silence. The offstage voices cease to yell.)

KITTY. (Out of breath and almost in tears.) Did we, oh God, did we-

RODNEY. I think so.

KITTY. No one is downstairs?

RODNEY. I think we got everyone.

KITTY. Oh God.

RODNEY. And we thought we dodged the bullet.

KITTY. Oh Lord help us all.

CECILE. (Enters dripping wet.) Rodney! I got us a boat!

RODNEY/KITTY. A boat?

CECILE. This guy from across the street, he just rowed over here in his boat-

RODNEY. Yes!

KITTY. No! Rodney! You can’t leave us!

RODNEY. We’ll be back.

KITTY. Where are you going to go? The whole city’s under water!

RODNEY. Yes, and it came up fast, so you know there's a lot of folks trapped in their houses-

CECILE. Stuck in their attics-

RODNEY. Hopefully on their roofs.

KITTY. Oh God.

RODNEY. (To Chorus/Cecile.) Let’s go.

CECILE. We'll be back.
RODNEY. You stay here. (*Exits followed by Cecile.*)

KITTY. (*Turns to address the audience.*) That was three days ago. And now, three days later, I'm just running on automatic. Autopilot. I don't know what I'm doing. What am I supposed to be doing? We have two little boys on ventilators. Two men on dialysis. They keep coming up to me saying if they don't get their dialysis soon, I don't know. They could die. What am I supposed to do? For days, we have been trapped in this school. A little arc, in the middle of a giant flood. And every day, things keep getting worse.

CITIZEN ONE. (*Enters.*) Mrs. Warner!

KITTY. Yes?

CITIZEN ONE. Some man, I don't know, but I think, I think he just had a heart attack in the hallway! You gotta come quick! (*Exits.*)

KITTY. Is anyone here an EMT?

CITIZEN TWO. Mrs. Warner!

KITTY. Yes?

CITIZEN TWO. There's a woman, in the gym, and I think she's in labor.

KITTY. In labor?

CITIZEN TWO. She's giving birth! (*Exits.*)

KITTY. Is anyone here a doctor?

CITIZEN THREE. (*Enters.*) This is it? This is all the food I get?

KITTY. I'm sorry, but it's all we have.

CITIZEN THREE. Ms. Warner, I'm tellin' ya, I've been livin' off of one small box of stale fruit loops and one slice of bread for three days. I don't know how much longer-

KITTY. Have you seen me take one more bite of food than you've gotten? Have you seen me eat before everyone else here has eaten?

CITIZEN THREE. No. No, I guess not.

KITTY. I'm giving you everything I have. This is all I've got. (*Citizen Three exits. Kitty turns to address the audience.*) You know the hardest thing, I think, was just the isolation. We were completely cut off from the outside world. Cell phones only worked late at night, on the roof, and only for a second. In a world where video phones show TV pictures from Afghanistan, we couldn't talk to our own government leaders a mile away. (*Talks on her cell phone.*) Hello?
Hello? Can you hear me? *(Rodney enters, talking on his cell phone.)*

**KELLY.** *(Enters talking on cell phone.)* You're where?

**CAL.** *(Enters talking on cell phone.)* I can’t hear you.

**JOY.** *(Enters talking on cell phone.)* Are you there?

**KITTY.** We're still here.

**KELLY/JOY.** Where?!

**RODNEY/KITTY.** In Chalmette.

**KITTY.** At the High School.

**SCOTT.** *(Enters talking on cell phone.)* Can you hear me?

**CAL.** I can’t hear you.

**KITTY.** We’re running out of time. We’re running out of water.

**KELLY.** I’m running out of battery!

**RODNEY.** I don’t think anyone’s listenin’.

**SCOTT/CAL.** I keep calling-

**KITTY/RODNEY.** You never answer.

**JOY.** Johnny?

**RODNEY.** Rachel?

**KELLY.** Mom?

**CAL/JOY/SCOTT/KELLY.** Where are you?

**KITTY/RODNEY.** Right here. *(Pause. Kitty & Rodney. exit. The others hang up their cell phones.)*

**CAL.** With no way to reach my family-

**KELLY.** Sitting thousands of miles away-

**JOY.** I felt helpless.

**CAL.** Hopeless.

**SCOTT.** I didn’t know what to do.

**KELLY.** So I turned on the T.V.

**JOY.** For hours-

**CAL.** Days-

**SCOTT.** For an entire week all I did was watch

**CAL/SCOTT/JOY/KELLY.** CNN.

**KELLY.** I thought maybe-

**CAL.** Just maybe-

**JOY.** They’ll show Chalmette-

**CAL.** Maybe-

**KELLY.** Maybe I’ll see Mom or Dad-
SCOTT. And then I’ll know.
KELLY. Everything’s going to be ok.
JOY. Maybe.
CAL. But once I started-
JOY. I couldn’t stop.
KELLY. I never left my couch. *(ANDERSON COOPER and WOLF BLITZER enter, carrying microphones. They are reporting live continuously the entire time they are on stage, as Scott, Joy, Kelly, and Cal. watch the T.V. The lines in this scene are rapid fire, almost overlapping one another.)*

ANDERSON COOPER. This is Anderson Cooper, and you're watching a special edition of 360.
WOLF BLITZER. I'm Wolf Blitzer and you're in the Situation Room.
ANDERSON COOPER. Tonight-
WOLF BLITZER. There are tens of thousands of people stuck-
ANDERSON COOPER. AND
WOLF BLITZER. In the Superdome.
WOLF BLITZER. Right now-
ANDERSON COOPER. A crisis in New Orleans-
KELLY. Where about Chalmette?
WOLF BLITZER. Fights, fire, gunfire-
ANDERSON COOPER. AND
WOLF BLITZER. In New Orleans.
JOY/SCOTT. Show me Chalmette!
ANDERSON COOPER. This is a special edition of 360.
WOLF BLITZER. You’re in the Situation Room.
ANDERSON COOPER. A levee broke yesterday.
WOLF BLITZER. Another levee broke today.
WOLF BLITZER. Water is still pouring into that city.
ANDERSON COOPER. AND
WOLF BLITZER. It just keeps getting worse.
WOLF BLITZER. I’m Wolf Blitzer, and you’re
KELLY/CAL/JOY/SCOTT. Where?
WOLF BLITZER. In the Situation Room.
ANDERSON COOPER. I’m Anderson Cooper, and-
WOLF BLITZER. AND
ANDERSON COOPER. You’re watching CNN.
SCOTT. Where’s Chalmette?
ANDERSON COOPER. In New Orleans-
WOLF BLITZER. Men roaming the city-
ANDERSON COOPER. Shooting at people.
WOLF BLITZER. Chaos, anger.
ANDERSON COOPER. A desperate city feeling abandoned.
ANDERSON COOPER. This is America?
JOY. What about Chalmette?
WOLF BLITZER. You’re in the Situation Room.
ANDERSON COOPER. I'm telling you Wolf, we are looking at people who are dying in front of you. (Kevin and FRANKIE enter, both are soaking wet from head to toe, standing on their roof waiving for help.)
WOLF BLITZER. For those of you watching back at home-
JOY/KELLY. Oh my God.
WOLF BLITZER. You are watching our latest footage-
KEVIN. HELP!
WOLF BLITZER. People standing on the roofs of buildings-
JOY. Is that in Chalmette?
KELLY. No.
ANDERSON COOPER. Tonight, in New Orleans-
CAL/SCOTT. They’re only showing New Orleans.
ANDERSON COOPER. I’m Anderson Cooper.
FRANKIE. HELP!
ANDERSON COOPER. This is a special edition of 360.
WOLF BLITZER. They’re holding signs-
ANDERSON COOPER. Standing on their roofs-
KEVIN. HELP!
ANDERSON COOPER. Desperate for help.
ANDERSON COOPER/WOLF BLITZER. In the city of New Orleans tonight-
ANDERSON COOPER. Desperation and danger-
FRANKIE. HELP!
WOLF BLITZER. I'm Wolf Blitzer.
ANDERSON COOPER. I’m Anderson Cooper.
WOLF BLITZER. You're in the Situation Room.
KEVIN. OVER HERE!
ANDERSON COOPER. Days without food.
ANDERSON COOPER/WOLF BLITZER. And at the Convention Center-
WOLF BLITZER. They're defecating on the carpets.
FRANKIE. It’s no use.
ANDERSON COOPER. I’m Anderson Cooper-
WOLF BLITZER. I’m Wolf Blitzer-
ANDERSON COOPER. This is a special edition of 360.
WOLF BLITZER. You’re in the Situation Room.
KEVIN. HELP!
ANDERSON COOPER. I’m Anderson Cooper.
FRANKIE. No one’s ever gonna hear us.
WOLF BLITZER. I’m Wolf Blitzer.
ANDERSON COOPER. This is a special edition of 360.
*WOLF BLITZER. (Spoken simultaneously with the line before.) You’re in the Situation Room.
ANDERSON COOPER. I’m Anderson Cooper.
*WOLF BLITZER. (Spoken simultaneously with the line before.) I’m Wolf Blitzer.
ANDERSON COOPER. This is a special edition of 360.
*WOLF BLITZER. (Spoken simultaneously with the line before.) You’re in the Situation Room.
KEVIN. HELP!
FRANKIE. We’re gonna die on this roof.
CAL/JOY/SCOTT/KELLY. SHOW ME CHALMETTE! (Silence. Anderson Cooper and Wolf Blitzer exit. Rodney is heard offstage, as a bright flashlight is shone on Kevin.)
RODNEY. St. Bernard Fire and Rescue, we see you!

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