

My Sister Michelle
(A Play)

ACT I

Scene 1

Beth sits in Barnette's office smoking. Enter Barnette

BARNETTE

...You can't do that in here.

BETH

There's no one else around.

BARNETTE

That's not the point

BETH

Then what is?

BARNETTE

I have asthmatic patients.

BETH

Won't do them any harm if they're not here.

BARNETTE

No it's...I know you're upset but at least let me read the results first.

She puts out her cigarette

BARNETTE

Neither of your children are candidates to give you a kidney.

BETH

Shit.

BARNETTE

Mhmm. Right well, there are several surgeries we could start...

BETH

How does that happen?

BARNETTE

I'm sorry?

BETH

What does it mean they're not a match?

BARNETTE

It means you have different blood types and...

BETH

But how? They're my boys.

BARNETTE

That's also something we wanted to talk to you about.

BETH

What?

BARNETTE

Although having different blood types is common between parents and children, your entire DNA sequence doesn't match.

BETH

What does that mean!?

BARNETTE

Well it SHOULD mean that either their father is not really their father, or you are not their mother.

BETH

My boys aren't really mine?

BARNETTE

Well we were feeling unsure of this too and so we ran some tests.

BETH

What sort of tests.

BARNETTE

Maternity and Paternity tests. And we...

BETH

Don't you need my permission or something?

He bursts out in laughter. He sees she's serious. He stops.

BARNETTE

...No not since Romney.

BETH

Well how'd they turn out?

BARNETTE

You are not a match. But if you could...

BETH

...You're sure?

BARNETTE

They have a 99% accuracy rate. But we felt there needed to be...

BETH

So they were switched at birth?

BARNETTE

I was getting to that, so if you'd give me a moment to speak...That's what we thought at first but that wouldn't explain why your husband was a match with your children.

BETH

He was?

BARNETTE

Yes, now we have seen many cases where the husband doesn't match...a lot actually, but this is the first time that the mother is the odd man out.

BETH

So he cheated on me?

BARNETTE

Um no that's not how it works...

BETH

I knew it. All along. You know I saw the used condoms. He said he was just jacking it. The stray panties were a dead give away. I never believed they were his for a second, you know, they were at least five sizes too small....

BARNETTE

...We think you're a chimera.

BETH

A what? ...A fucking what?

BARNETTE

(Taking a pause, enjoying the chance he gets to speak)

It's a condition where in a set of twins one zygote absorbs the other in utero.

BETH

I was supposed to have a twin?

BARNETTE

No you are a twin.

BETH

Well where the fuck is the other one?

BARNETTE

You are the other one. Look, imagine my fists are the embryos.

Barnette's right hand creeps up on the left one and "devours" it.

BETH

(Getting more frustrated)

So how come I'm not related to my sons?

BARNETTE

Well you are, but the DNA in your blood isn't yours but your "sister's"

BETH

Stop that! I don't have a sister.

BARNETTE

You're your own sister.

BETH

I said quit it.

BARNETTE

Now you have never adopted?

BETH

No but why does that...

BARNETTE

No recent blood transfusions?

BETH

No! Why are you...

BARNETTE

And neither have your sons?

BETH

Would you get to the point?!

BARNETTE

...Is that a no?

She nods her head.

Barnette starts giggling in joy

BARNETTE

Wonderful, this is just wonderful!

BETH

Why?

BARNETTE

Because! You really ARE a chimera!

BETH

Great, I ate my sister as a baby what's so wonderful about that?

BARNETTE

Well...before we were 100% sure of your condition...which we are now, we contacted some...local media.

BETH

You told the news?

BARNETTE

Well yes, but believe me we only had the best intentions!

BETH

What happened to patient confidentiality?!

BARNETTE

Romney ...again. But anyways, you are the first chimera discovered in years, which will obviously bring this hospital...and you, publicity, and funding! But sorry I seem to be getting away from myself.

BETH

Especially because I came in here, because my fucking kidney is failing!

Pause

BARNETTE

Well anyway we took DNA samples from other parts of your body and...

BETH

Really? You don't need permission for that?

BARNETTE

Do you even read the paper? But the point is that the only places you are not "you" is your blood, and unfortunately your kidneys.

BETH

So what's that mean?

BARNETTE

Well that you can not get a kidney transplant from your sons....

BETH

Oh no... no, no, no SHIT.

BARNETTE

...And that you are "Legally"...two people.

BETH

Huh?

BARNETTE

Well if you believe that life begins at conception, which it legally does now...

BETH

Fucking Romney.

BARNETTE

Then you are technically two people...in one body.

BETH

(She takes it in)

Can I smoke now?

BARNETTE

Sure.

She lights up another cigarette

BARNETTE

Now we could go with a surgery to save her.

BETH

Who?

BARNETTE

Well your kidney.

BETH

For the love of god, unless you want to give me a heart attack too, do not call my kidney "her".

BARNETTE

Ha ha of course. Now, in the matters of life insurance...

BETH

Life insurance?!

BARNETTE

Well yes.

BETH

Why are you talking about life insurance?

BARNETTE

I was trying to be subtle but if you won't take the hint...

She doesn't

BARNETTE

Then I'll just have to come out with it...You remember when your parents would talk to you about "Doggy heaven"?

BETH

Ya, my dog died when I was nine.

BARNETTE

Yes well this is the same discussion, only with you in place.

BETH

I'm going to die?!

BARNETTE

(He taps his nose)

There we are! I couldn't quite phrase in the right way.

BETH

But you were just talking about how we could do a surgery!

BARNETTE

Could do a surgery, not would.

BETH

Why not?

BARNETTE

Beth let's be honest here. A surgery like this could cost hundreds of thousands of dollars. And with no insurance...

BETH

Thousands...

BARNETTE

Healthcare just isn't what it used to be.

BETH

(She thinks)

Well that's not a problem! My other kidney's okay right? And I only need one.

BARNETTE

Well ya...

BETH

So we'll just take this sucker out!

Barnette doubles over in laughter. He's wiping his tears away when he sees Beth's face.

BARNETTE

Oh sweet Jesus you're serious... Beth as long as that kidney has a different DNA than yours; it's its own person.

BETH

So?

BARNETTE

So taking it out would be murder. Or even worse

He whispers.

BARNETTE

Abortion.

BETH

We... we could keep it in a jar! Hook it up to machines! Leave it on a shelf and label it! They want me to treat it like a sister? Fine I'll take it to the park and push it on the fucking swing set!

BARNETTE

No. As far as the government is concerned, you have an unborn child in you.

BETH

(Trying to steer the conversation back)

Well...how am I going to get life insurance? I can't even afford health insurance, and I have a preexisting condition?!

BARNETTE

Beth you really should watch the news from time to time. But if you weren't living under a rock you'd know that the Affordable Death Act gives life insurance to just about anyone.

BETH

But not health insurance?

BARNETTE

No the government only cares about dying people and unborn ones.

BETH

Well great I'm a double whammy.

He slides several papers in front of her. She signs

A knock on the door. Enter Sonova a chipper and enthusiastic, but starry-eyed youth. Mid 20's.

SONOVA

Hello? Is this Doctor Monroe's office?

BARNETTE

Yes, can I help?

SONOVA

...Adam Street?

BARNETTE

Yes. Can I help you?

SONOVA

No I'm just here for the protest.

BARNETTE

Protest? There's no protest here.

SONOVA

Yep! The flyers all said 3 P.M. June 3rd. We're having a sit-in to protest the illegal killing of the chimera people.

BARNETTE

Shit.

BETH

Flyers? Who's had time to make flyers? I found out today!

SONOVA

Oh I have!

BARNETTE

Well who are you?

SONOVA

(Sticks her hand out)

Sonova P. Hartwell. Pro life activist and freedom fighter!

He doesn't shake it.

BARNETTE

Who's protesting? Are there more of you?

SONOVA

Oh yes! I handed out flyers to a bunch of people.

BARNETTE

Are they coming?

SONOVA

Well not right now. But I'm sure the others'll be coming soon!

BARNETTE

How did you even get this location?

SONOVA

It was all on the news.

BARNETTE

My address?

SONOVA

It was an in depth report.

BARNETTE

Well could you take it outside? I'm with a patient right now.

SONOVA

(Gasps)

You're the chimera!

BETH

(Sigh)

Yes. I'm the God. Damn. Chimera. Look at the freak everyone!
She ate her sister as a fetus!

BARNETTE

Beth, please!

SONOVA

Wow. Neat!

BETH

Ya, great; you got to gawk at the freak of nature, now get out.

SONOVA

Oh no! I'm not here to make fun of you, I'm here for you.

Beth raises an eyebrow.

SONOVA

For your cause!

BETH

I don't need a cause. There's no cause for a cause.

SONOVA

I promise I'll behave! Look, I'll just sit right here, reeeally quietly.

BARNETTE

It's up to you.

BETH

(Doesn't even care)

Fine.

Sonova squeals with joy. She sits and is quiet. She holds up the sign she's been carrying. It says, "Save the Kidney". Pause.

BETH

I'm sorry I don't think I can do this.

SONOVA

No, no see I'll be barely noticeable.

She curls up into a ball. In this pose she re-raises her sign. Pause

SONOVA

Oh, wait!

She pulls out a pocket recorder, and points it at Beth/Barnette.

SONOVA

Speak clearly and from your diaphragm.

BATH

(Getting fed up)

Why?

SONOVA

It's an old recorder.

BETH

Why do you have to record us?

SONOVA

Just for my blog. I'm covering the whole story, as well as protesting it.

BETH

What story? I found out I was a chimera (pronounces it like Chi-Mere-uh)...

SONOVA

(Correcting her)

Chimera (Kim-air-uh)

BETH

Shut up! ...I found out I was a Kim-air-uh...

Sonova nods and smiles in approval.

BETH

Yesterday.

SONOVA

Well I need full coverage.

BETH

Just get out.

SONOVA

I thought you'd be supporting us.

BETH

Why?

SONOVA

Well don't you want to save your sister?

BETH

My kidney is going to kill me if I don't get it removed, or get surgery. And right now neither of them look like they're happening. (*A sudden idea*) Hey Sonova, you want the kidney saved don't you?

SONOVA

Of course! That's why I'm here. To protect those without a voice, in danger of murder and abortion!

BARNETTE

Hey!

BETH

And there are other people that would want to save it too?

SONOVA

Sure! Lots!

BETH

Well you know, what my...sister, really needs is a surgery.

SONOVA

Okay.

BETH

But I don't have any health insurance.

SONOVA

Right.

BETH

But if I don't get the surgery, the evil abortion doctors like him...

BARNETTE

Hey!

BETH

Are going to take her out? So do you think all those people who want to help would want to... make donations?

SONOVA

Of course! ...For what?

BETH

Well if we raised about... how much Barnette?

BARNETTE

500,000 give or take.

BETH

500,000 dollars we could get my sister the surgery after all.

SONOVA

Sure! Lot's of people would.

BARNETTE

Beth I'm sorry but I don't think we could get that many people to pay out of pocket for that.

BETH

Barnette could I talk to you for a second?

They walk to one side of the room. Sonova follows.

BETH

Uh. Alone?

SONOVA

Oh! Right

She walks to the other side, grabs her sign and plugs her ears. Maybe she's humming or singing.

BETH

Do you know how hot blooded people like her are? I bet they'd fight tooth and nail for something like this.

BARNETTE

I don't like it.

BETH

You heard her! I bet we could fire up a whole crowd of people like her, and they'd all be begging to give me their money.

BARNETTE

We? Beth I don't want a part in this.

BETH

Why not?

BARNETTE

Because I'm an evil abortion doctor. Why do you even need me?

BETH

Well to do the surgery first of all.

BARNETTE

If it works.

BETH

And it will! Promise.

BARNETTE

...We could at least try.

BETH

Thanks, Bar.

Beth goes over to Sonova and takes her fingers out of her ears.

BETH

I was thinking about how much you want to help...

SONOVA

And I do!

BETH

And I just thought that if I were to campaign like this I would need help.

Sonova's eyes widen.

BETH

Would you be interested in managing all the little parts of running the campaign?

SONOVA

(In awe)

It. Would be. An honor.

BETH

Are you sure?

SONOVA

Yes! I could write your speeches, get you air time... I'm going to go get you a spot on the news right now!

She runs out of the room.

BETH

She can do that?

BARNETTE

Apparently. Why do you need her?

BETH

Do you know anything about pro life rallies?

BARNETTE

No.

BETH

Neither do I! We need someone to be our "In" to these people.

BARNETTE

I don't know...

BETH

It'll be great! It'll be the next hot button issue, to get all their conservative juices flowing.

BARNETTE

To protect those without a voice!

BETH

Oh, move over Terri Schiavo!

BARNETTE

She did...Years ago, really Beth you should watch the news sometime.

Sonova rushes back in

SONOVA

Okay! I just wrote your speech, for your press conference tomorrow morning which I also just booked.

Beth gives a questioning look to Barnette, who shrugs his shoulders.

BETH

Sonova I've got a good feeling about this partnership.

SONOVA

Oh you bet! Your kidney is going to be just fine!

BETH

My kidney? You mean Michelle.

ACT I

Scene 2

Beth is addressing an unseen crowd reading from a script written by Sonova. Sonova stands behind her holding her sign.

BETH

My sister Michelle has been ignored for most of our life, and is now being threatened by the liberal abortionists. It's time to take a stand against the killing of innocents and give Michelle a voice. She has repeatedly been given the waste and bile of life, and has made the best of it. She has filtered the negativity and purified the urinary tract of our life She shoots Sonova a look.

Sonova gives her a thumbs-up.

BETH

And it's time I repay her. The socialists and pro-choicers are planning on euthanizing Michelle if she does not make a recovery. I think, we, as a people can protect her, and get her the surgery she so desperately needs. Together we can all help, and save my little sister Michelle.

ACT I

Scene 3

Beth storms in. Barnette is on his cell. When he sees her he immediately shuts it. He is ecstatic.

BARNETTE

Beth! I wasn't expecting you. Not that I'm complaining.

BETH

Stop fucking around Barnette.

BARNETTE

You never let me start.

BETH

What's the matter with you?

BARNETTE

The ralliers! They've all been chipping in! Each one of them must have given at least 100\$ alone! I'm telling you Beth there's a business in this.

She slams down papers.

BARNETTE

What're those?

BETH

They're letters...From the nice folks at the IRS.

BARNETTE

Oh? And what do they say?

BETH

Well they found out that Michelle's been enjoying a free ride for the past 40 years of our life.

BARNETTE

So?

BETH

So, that's roughly 22 years of income tax she never paid.

BARNETTE

Income? Has she been working?

BETH

According to them she's been "assisting me". How could you not know about this? You're always telling me the laws...

BARNETTE

I'm a doctor not a tax collector! How much is going to be left?

BETH

How much did we make?

BARNETTE

Roughly 600,000

BETH

Then we have roughly 50 left. Any surgeries we can do with that?

BARNETTE

Not on your life...not on your life...Beth...Shit, that's... that's it!

BETH

What? That I'm dying?

BARNETTE

No Beth. When we were talking about life insurance and we took out a policy on you...

BETH

Great. You get to cash out when I die.

BARNETTE

No! Listen, while we were getting that taken care of I...also took a policy out on Michelle.

BETH

Why?

BARNETTE

Well. At the beginning it was so I could get a little extra pay on the side, but that's not the point! If Michelle dies, you stand to gain nearly 750,000!

BETH

But that was yesterday. Won't it take at least a couple weeks before it's verified or whatever?

BARNETTE

Beth, it is not the time to be saying dumb shit like that.

BETH

It doesn't matter. The only way she dies is if I die.

BARNETTE

Well, not necessarily. See if we removed it...

BETH

But we can't! Isn't that what this whole thing is about? They won't let me take Michelle out! They'll arrest us, or something...won't they?

BARNETTE

Or something...It's best not to think about it but here's the thing. I remove it. We say she died of... natural circumstances! We take it out, we say we did all we could, but it was just her time.

BETH

So, we lie.

BARNETTE

Well, it'd be more like bending the truth.

Beth shoots Barnette a look

BARNETTE

Okay, we'd be bending it a lot. It's not any less bullshit than we're being put through.

BETH

...We could give it a try.

ACT I

Scene 4

Beth is addressing the audience again, with Sonova behind her. She is in a hospital gown in hospital bed on wheels. Sonova looks forlorn.

BETH

Last night Michelle passed away...from a heart attack. We did an emergency procedure and took her out but to no avail. Although she is gone, I know she lives on in our memory. She would have been touched by our effort, and all we did for her. Don't think of this as our failure. Think of this as a victory for the future of those who can't stand up for themselves. She may be gone but her cause isn't. Don't be disappointed, this is the time to replace despair with hope, and let's all remember my sister Michelle.

She takes out her "kidney" and raises it to the sky/the audience. Beethoven's 9th symphony 4th movement plays (Ode to Joy)