

# BROWNSTONE 213

By Ann Cerv

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**HEUER PUBLISHING LLC**

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**CAST OF CHARACTERS**

Keb .....	Suicide victim 1947 (27 lines)
Francis .....	Contemplating suicide today (14 lines)
Laree .....	Died of cancer last year (13 lines)
Trina .....	Died in fire 1955 (7 lines)
Kat .....	Died in fire 1955 (9 lines)
Roma .....	Drowned in tub 1972 (6 lines)
Ted .....	Janitor electrocuted 1980 (12 lines)
Fred .....	Janitor electrocuted 1980 (12 lines)
Silvia .....	Died of heart attack 1996 (4 lines)
Walter .....	Died of broken heart 1996 (4 lines)
Charlie .....	Hit by a car, died 1951 (1 line)
John .....	Keb's best friend ( <i>Non-Speaking</i> )
Marie .....	Keb's lost love ( <i>Non-Speaking</i> )
Rick .....	Fireman, died in fire 1955 ( <i>Non-Speaking</i> )
Janice .....	Keb's cousin (1 line)
George .....	Keb's old gym mate ( <i>Non-Speaking</i> )
Girls .....	Taunting little jump-ropers (3 lines)
Guests .....	Waltzing wedding guests (3 lines)

**MUSIC SUGGESTIONS**

1940'S:	Frank Sinatra, Vera Lynn, Duke Ellington, Charlie Parker, Billie Holiday
1950'S:	Nat King Cole, Laurence Welk, Elvis Presley, Buddy Holly, Harry Belafonte
1960'S:	The Beatles, Miles Davis, Bob Dylan, Jimi Hendrix, Simon & Garfunkel
1970'S:	Fleetwood Mac, Bee Gees, Joni Mitchell, Stevie Wonder, Led Zeppelin
1980'S:	Michael Jackson, Bruce Springsteen, Talking Heads, The Police, Cyndi Lauper
1990'S:	Beck, The Smashing Pumpkins, New Kids on The Block, Nine Inch Nails, Nirvana
TODAY:	???

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### One Act Drama

*At open, a present-day teenage boy, Francis, stands at the edge of a four-story building roof. It is an old building with a few kitchen chairs sitting about, an old 50's style grill, a door leading up to the roof, and two separate walls of windows. One wall on each side of the roof, indicating two apartments. There are strings of white lights hanging across the set. The boy is surrounded by three a.m. street noises, the flash of a nearby neon light, and a distant alley dog barking. You can hear his heavy breathing and a strong heart beat. The moment lasts only a short time before a voice is heard. All sounds pause for the next 30 minutes as the boy is thrown into the lives of past residents and workers of the building, starting with the building suicide legend Keb Krat.*

*Keb: (Soft singing is heard from edge of roof, then a voice.) It's not a good time. (A distant voice that causes Fran start to lose his balance but is caught by Keb, as the street sounds stop. Keb is a young man in his early 20's. He wears clothes that are from the 1940's. Brown pants, suspenders, and a white shirt. He is very calm and nonchalant.)*

*Fran: My God! (He looks around in fear of the voice, but relieved he didn't fall.)*

*Keb: It's not a good time, Francis, right? It's not a good time. Falling, jumping. Not a good time. Oh the fall's the cats' pajamas, I'll give you that. But it's just the sudden stop that's...just not. (Looking into the sky for the time, then at an old pocket watch.) It's not a good time, 3 a.m., not a good time at all. You won't be found until sanitation picks up at 5:15. By then, cats and dogs, hell, the rats will have you. (Fran is speechless with fear. As Laree, an older woman appears. She has a cigarette in her mouth. She is an angry, mad-at-the-world woman. She wears casual house clothes. Her hair never looks quite right, for she wears a wig after loosing her hair to treatments. She has a very rough smoker's voice.)*

*Laree: Let him jump! Mind your own business. Let the fool jump. Leave a mark on the world. A big bloody mark!*

*Keb: Oh I'm not stopping him, it's just not a good time, that's all.*

*Laree: I know you Keb Krat you goody-goody-little-howdy doody, "Leave it to Beaver" type. What goods it done ya? NONE! Life's CRAP! Death's CRAP! Everything in-between, CRAP! CRAP! CRAP! Let him jump!*

Fran: Keb Krat? *(Sound of little girls in the distance skipping rope.*

*Then, they appear on the roof, stage right. Fran listens to the girls, and suddenly knows who this legendary man is. He points to the girls.)* That, Keb Krat? *(Keb covers his ears.)*

Girls: Keb Keb, Krat Krat. Should have worn a hat, hat. For from the Brownstone he did fall, and now he isn't very tall. *(The girls continue quietly, as if they are just a dream.)*

Fran: Keb Krat? You're...DEAD! You're so, way dead. You're the psycho that jumped off the roof, over 60 years ago.

Keb: *(He mouths the word "psycho" and indicates with facial gestures that Fran himself is no different, for he is standing ready to do the same jump. Still holding on to Fran, he takes a look at his vulnerable, suicidal position on the roof, he sees that the girls could soon sing about Fran rather than himself. With a mocking hurt tone.)* I love those little girls. Keb Keb, Krat Krat, thinks that you're a brat brat. Soon you'll have good old Fran! *(Makes a "cut" signal to the girls. They stop and freeze. He then kicks Fran on the backside.)* And you can sing to "KICK THE CAN."

Girls: *(Girls continue jumping briefly.)* Soon we'll have good old Fran and we can sing to kick the can. *(Girls exit.)*

Fran: *(Still very scared that he is in the presence of a dead man.)* This is different, I have issues, a "good" reason. I'm not insane.

Keb: *(Looking at Fran again, and pulling him in close as if he is a good friend, an understanding fellow. He speaks with a slight insane tone.)* Insane is a person that no one wants to take the time to understand. Right? Wrong! Get used to it. Maybe it's just that absence of balance. *(As he and Fran now lean dangerously close to the edge.)* You got balance kid? *(As Fran almost falls for a second time.)*

Laree: *(Coming near both Keb and Fran. She gives Fran a bit of advice.)* Take it from me slup, jump before something worse gets a hold of ya, and takes ya anyway. *(She is speaking from experience. She is speaking about cancer. She exits roof.)* Takes your hair, takes your insides, takes your dignity! Go while you have a choice!

Keb: Laree. Cancer. Lung. Last December.

Laree: *(Yelling from off stage.)* It's none of his damn business!

*Music engulfs the roof. A WALTZ is playing in celebration of a newly married couple. Live trombone players appear with a vocalist and a whole party of dancing wedding guests of the couple. The roof turns into a festive scene, with strings of lights crossing the stage in every direction that now light the roof. Keb and Fran observe for a few moments, then*

as Keb begins to speak, the music is muffled to a low hum.

Keb: Welcome to the wedding I woulda had. *(He looks at his watch, then at Fran.)* You've got time. *(Keb jumps from the wall, just as the bride and groom dance near. She is dipped by her groom as if to parade her in front of Keb whom is unnoticed by the wedding party and their guests. He goes unseen, unheard. Keb leans down near her, but unable to touch her, as he presents her to the audience and Fran.)* Ah Marie! *(The stage freezes. Marie and the groom are frozen in a dip.)* The perfect specimen of a woman I will live an eternity without. Isn't she magnificent? I would have put this sloth to shame. He can't even dance! John! It's one two three, one two three. It will take him a century to figure this out. *(He flips the tails of the groom's tux.)* I was to meet Marie in the following year of my life. John, one of my dearest friends met her instead. *(Nearing Marie and smelling the air.)* She smells divine. *(Leaning near John.)* Now John could use a breath mint. *(The music starts up and the couples unfreeze for 9 more counts. Keb continues around the dance floor introducing other family members and friends as he mingles among them. The party freezes.)* Here is my high school gym mate George, he has a nervous nose, and has to itch it every third step. His partner is irritated with his sweaty palms. One two three, wipe two three, *(George and his partner only, unfreeze and do as Keb said they would. Then, the stage again comes to life for 9 more counts. He approaches some ladies off to the side enjoying small plates of appetizers.)*

Guest #1: Marie shouldn't have worn her hair like that. It makes her look old.

Guest #2: She is much too thin, and that dress makes her look even thinner.

Keb: *(He stands near Guest #3 and just before she chokes, he says:)* Gossip always has a way of coming back up on one.

Guest #3: You know that John was a friend of that Keb Krat who jumped to his death off the Brownstone last year. I hope John is a little more mentally withhhh... *(Chokes on food.)*

Keb: *(Moving on to another guest.)* This is my cousin Janice, her under girdle is too snug. *(Janice tugs and rearranges her girdle.)* Size sixteen, wants to be an eight.

Janice: *(Overhearing what the last woman said about Keb.)* Keb Krat was my cousin, and a wonderful young man. I hate to say it, but I feel that “he” and Marie would have made a better couple, than she and John. *(The dance continues for 9 more counts.)*

Keb: Thanks Janice. *(Keb is now standing high above the crowd, as he looks across at Marie. All are once again frozen. He yells over to Fran who is out of Keb’s view, but near John and Marie, who are frozen and inches from kissing.)* Fran! Hey, you there? Tell me. Are they about to “kiss”? *(Fran, still stunned, gives him a questioning look.)* Marie and John, are they about to rip my heart out with a kiss? This is the best part! *(He gives a little blow into the ear of the lady he stands nearest, who then unfreezes and bumps into a lady next to her and so on, until a line of guests all domino over to Marie and her groom who then miss a very close kiss. The music stops and the guests disappear just as quickly as they appeared. As Keb has a good laugh, returning to Fran sitting stunned at what he just saw.)* It took the best part of the 60’s and the 70’s to perfect that little trick. Fabulous, don’t you think? *(Keb waves hand in front of Fran’s face.)* Isn’t she a vision? Where do you think a guy like me would have met a gal like that? *(Realizing that Fran is the first living person he has associated with since his death, and gets very excited that he may be able to answer a few questions.)* She doesn’t look familiar to you does she? Not a relative of yours, or maybe a pin-up model you might recognize, or....ah, I’ll never know. That’s okay, I’ve already decided where we would have met. In the park, she drops her book, “The Grapes of Wrath.” She’s not only a “doll” she’s smart. I would pick up the book quoting...“Jesus is my Savior, Jesus is my Savior now. On the level’s not the devil, Jesus is my savior now.” She’s very impressed with my literary skills, but I must say it is my fastidious good looks that wins her in the... *(Looking back at the dazed and lost, Fran.)* Anyway, my boy, that’s what you have to look forward to. Personally, I would choose the “HEAT,” you know— *(He points to hell.)* —the big oven, but then I gave up any choices I had.

Fran: So why did **you** do it? What was the...pusher? *(He makes a pushing motion with his hands, towards the edge of the roof.)*

Keb: That’s the worst of it. I **don’t** know. Not that I forgot, or it just slipped my mind. I’m not allowed to remember. Not even standing here. *(As he stands on the wall, at the edge of the roof, showing us exactly where he jumped from. He looks up to heaven.)* It drives me crazy. He really did cover all the bases. He’s goooood.

Fran: There must be comfort knowing you “would have had” a great life. It won’t be that way for me. All I’ll see is that my life really wasn’t worth living.

Keb: I could sit here and tell you that I would trade you even up, my existence for the one you’re tossing, I don’t even care what it is that’s making you so desperate, a woman I’m guessing. *(With a chuckle, and now in a kidding manner.)* Unless you’re jumping because your name is...“Francis” and you can no longer endure the taunting from your adolescent peers.

Fran: *(Interrupting Keb.)* Don’t start with the name! I was named after my grand “mother!” Who would do that to a son? “Francis”! You could never understand!

Keb: Okay. *(He pauses to let Fran calm down.)* What I wouldn’t give to just be able to walk through that door, and leave this roof. But I guess after you go we’ll at least have some new blood on the roof. Well...you know what I mean. But you don’t talk much, that would have to change...

Fran: So that’s it then. You sit here and watch that “dance” over and over? *(There is now some hesitation in his voice, mixed with sarcasm and a little anger.)*

Keb: Yes—and no. There are others. Some like me, that know we’ve “gone,” and others that believe that their lives have just continued uninterrupted. Like... there *(He points over towards the stairs.)* I’m sure you’ve noticed Rick. Over against the stairs. He’s our “hero” firefighter. The fire of 1955. He has little respect or tolerance of me. He is a life saver. To him, I lack respect for life. It keeps him at a distance. Understandable. Under different circumstances, I think we could have been friends. Do you see him near the far wall? He’ll leave now that I’ve spotted him. We’re both ill-fated to the same roof, so the game has gotten easy. But damn he’s good! *(At this discovery, Rick exits to another part of the roof. He is hard to see against the stairs because he is camouflaged to match the wall of the stairs. He blends in with the set so the audience is left wondering if he has been there since the opening line. Keb chases after him.)* He’s here somewhere ya just can’t see him. He died in the same fire that took the two girls, Kat and Trina. He knows he didn’t make it out of the building, therefore...not saving the girls. He can’t bare it. It was a horrible sight. It happened here on the roof. They were trapped, the smoke was unreal. Kat, she’s the gal through the window, she was expecting number four. She makes award-winning peanut butter almond cookies. *(At this time, a light goes on in the*

*window, where you see Kat stirring cookies. She is in a 50's style dress and is in her late 20's. Trina appears from the door leading up to the roof. She is carrying a full laundry basket. She is also in her 20's and is wearing a swim suit from the 50's, and a pair of sunglasses. She hangs her bowling shirt first, and gives a nice follow through bowling swing. A popular 50's tune is heard on the radio near the window.) Trina is the one with the laundry. Hell of a bowler. Neither thinks that a day has passed since June 1st, 1955. (Fran whistles at Trina impressed with her swimsuit figure.) Yah, she's a shapely dame. (Laree enters stage and takes her seat near Kat's window, still smoking. Roma has also joined the group. She is in her 20's, but is a gal from the early 70's. She is a full fledged hippie. She is wearing short shorts, a 70's style blouse, and a leather strap around her head. She has a mixed drink, and is a bit drunk. She starts to paint her toenails.) You've met Laree, she not only knows she's passed, but lets everyone else feel it in her wake. I've never seen her without a light in her hand...and it killed her.*

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