

# RACHAEL CORY

A DRAMA IN ONE ACT

By Robert Wing

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**RACHAEL CORY**

**By Robert Wing**

**SYNOPSIS:** Rachael Cory has it all – or so she is told. Beautiful, smart, loving and responsible, she’s everything “to make us wish we were in her place.” Or do we? As Rachael replays the events of her high school graduation party in her head, the audience learns that she has been betrayed by her best friend, dumped by her boyfriend, berated by her sister, used as a marriage counselor by her parents, and hero-worshipped by a young wannabe. Confessions and lamentations and abuse swirl around in her head, hastening her descent into madness – and death.

**CAST OF CHARACTERS**

*(2 MEN, 5 WOMEN, 0-20 EITHER)*

RACHAEL (f).....Rich, pretty, intelligent – tragically unhappy. She speaks little, but her actions convey much on what is supposed to be a happy occasion, her high school graduation party. *(15 lines)*

MOM (f) .....Pretentious and acutely class-conscious, she drinks too much – and talks too much. She has made Rachael her confidant, obliterating the line between parent and child. *(10 lines)*

LILLI (f) .....The disappointing daughter who resents Rachael because she’s always told to be more like her. *(10 lines)*

MEGHAN (f).....Rachael’s “best friend” who covets what Rachael has, namely her boyfriend. *(10 lines)*

AVERY (m).....Rachael’s boyfriend who initially liked being known as the boyfriend of the prettiest girl in school, but has grown tired of having to share the spotlight. (10 lines)

DAD (m).....Weak and miserable, he has allowed his life to be ruled by his wife and like his wife, confides in Rachael. (10 lines)

KENDRA (f).....An impressionable African-American freshman girl who Rachael used to babysit; Kendra sees Rachael as everything she wishes to be – depressing Rachael even further. (10 lines)

**SETTING**

The backyard of the Cory’s house, but really in Rachael’s head as she is recalling the evening’s events.

**TIME:** After Rachael Cory’s graduation party, “one calm summer night.”

**PRODUCTION NOTES**

**THE CHORUS:**

Chorus lines might be pre-recorded by actors or might be delivered by a chorus on stage. The decision is completely up to the director. A director might cast seven chorus roles in the play (one chorus member for each cast member, minus Rachael) or a director might divide the chorus parts between twenty actors, depending on how many students audition for the play. It’s the kind of play that can be staged with seven actors, or it can be turned into one of those “anybody-who-auditions-gets-a-role” plays. Again, directors have free rein.

**THE SET:**

Completely up to the director.

**LIGHTING:**

Completely up to the director.

**COSTUMES AND PROPS:**

Rachael is dressed in white; she's the only character wearing white.

Rachael's mother is dressed like a well-to-do suburban housewife. She carries a martini glass.

Rachael's father is in a suit and carries a briefcase. He's got that just-got-home-from-the-office look.

Lilli is dressed in black goth/emo/biker chick clothes – but not over-the-top.

Meghan is dressed like a popular high school girl.

Avery is dressed like a popular high school boy.

Kendra is dressed like a freshman girl who wants to be popular.

**NOTES ON THE “STRUCTURE” OF THE PLAY**

Please note the order and pattern of lines. It is thus: Mom, Lilli, Meghan, Avery, Dad, Kendra – and it *never* varies. This creates an internal rhythm of sorts that intensifies as the play progresses. The play is divided into six “scenes,” each one shorter, faster, and more disturbing than the one preceding it. This mirrors the rising sense of madness and desperation that culminates in the play's disturbing final moments. Also, please note that lines from “Richard Cory” are actually embedded in the play's dialogue.

“Rachael Cory” is a “director's play.” There are no stage directions; it's a blank slate. It's the perfect vehicle for any director who wants to stage a non-traditional narrative for an audience that might not like, understand, or have been exposed to more “experimental” drama. In the words of one of the actors from the first cast, “It's ‘out there,’ but not ‘too out there.’”

It is absolutely essential that the director always remember that Rachael is running through the evening's events in her head. The actors who speak to her are in her head. Rachael is descending into madness.

That being said, there's a tremendous amount of creative room given to the director. For example, the chorus may be a chorus in the tradition of Greek drama, with an assigned actors reciting lines live on stage. Or, if a director wishes to go "high-tech," he or she might want to pre-record the "chorus" and "*Rachael!*" lines using the cast members. Cheri Skurdall, *Rachael's* first director, did the latter. Using her skills as a choreographer and her love for modern drama as her guide, she wove actors and lines in and out of a pre-recorded "soundtrack" of cast members reciting "Richard Cory" and the chant of "*Rachael!*" Cheri then added a layer of disturbing, slowly-intensifying sound effects (a ticking clock, children's laughter, footsteps, a heartbeat, etc.) that reached a cacophonous crescendo as the play reached its tragic crescendo. The effect was disturbing and powerful.

The author allows for enormous creative input from directors, but on two points he is unwavering: a gun must never appear on stage, and at the play's end, when the stage goes dark, a gunshot must not be heard.

Please note that Rachael doesn't speak until scene six. It is essential that the actress who is cast in this role be able to convey her downward spiral through means other than verbal. Gwynne Jones, the first Rachael, was cast because of her background in modern dance. She moved around actors as they delivered their lines. A director must always remember that the actors are voices in her head. Rachael is running through the evening's events in her head. Rachael is descending into madness.

Directors are encouraged to be as creative as they wish. Again, this play might be performed with seven actors or eight or twelve or who-knows-how-many actors. It's up to the director. Also, because of the experimental nature of the play, it doesn't have to have a traditional set – and the costume and prop demands are negligible. *Rachael Cory* costs very, very little to stage. Experimental, educational and affordable – a good combination.

**FROM THE AUTHOR**

I have spent thousands of hours working with teenagers, and I have observed countless times that regardless of socio-economic background, students always believe that someone else “has it better.” Over the course of a year, my students and I explore many famous poems, and it never fails – “Richard Cory” *is the poem that chills them to the bone*. It is the poem that resonates the strongest, and it is the poem they always remember.

Each year when I ask students what they think “Richard Cory” means, responses ring out before hands have a chance to shoot up in the air. Responses of “No one has it all!” and “Looks can be deceiving!” typically kick-off one of the richest class discussions of the year. However, it isn’t the student who shouts out the answer that grabs my attention during these discussions. It is the student who quietly reads the poem over and over, or worse, copies the poem into his or her notebook who has my full attention...

**PRODUCTION HISTORY**

*Rachael Cory* was first performed at North Country Union High School in Newport, Vermont on April 29<sup>th</sup>, 2011 with the following cast:

RACHAEL.....	Gwynne Jones
MOM .....	Shannon Harkey
DAD.....	Chase Gosselin
LILLI .....	Lilli Diaz
MEGHAN.....	Meghan Corbett
AVERY.....	Avery Dull
KENDRA.....	Kendra Perkins
CHORUS .....	Pre-recorded; comprised of the cast

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*To Cheri Skurdall – Thank you for your encouragement, creativity and beautiful direction of this play.*

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BY ROBERT WING

**RICHARD CORY**

Whenever Richard Cory went down town,  
We people on the pavement looked at him:  
He was a gentleman from sole to crown,  
Clean favoured and imperially slim.

And he was always quietly arrayed,  
And he was always human when he talked;  
But still he fluttered pulses when he said,  
“Good-morning!” and he glittered when he walked.

And he was rich – yes, richer than a king –  
And admirably schooled in every grace:  
In fine, we thought he was everything  
To make us wish that we were in his place.

So on we worked, and waited for the light,  
And went without the meat, and cursed the bread;  
And Richard Cory, one calm summer night,  
Went home and put a bullet in his head.

—*Edwin Arlington Robinson, 1897*

SCENE ONE

**AT RISE:**

*Darkness. Atmospheric music.*

**CHORUS:** Whenever Richard Cory went to town,  
We people on the pavement looked at him:  
He was a gentleman from sole to crown,  
Clean-favoured and imperially slim.

*Rachael!*

*Rachael!*

*Rachael!*

*Rachael!*

*Rachael!*

*Rachael!*

*Lights up.*

DO NOT COPY

**MOM:** Rachael! There you are! I've been looking all over for you. What are you doing hiding out here when you have guests? (*Looking around. Breathing in the air..*) I ask you – is there anything better than a calm summer night? (*Snapping out of it.*) You have guests, young lady, and what is it I always say? “A proper hostess has one concern – the comfort of her guests.” Do you know where I found that advice? In a bath in Bath. (*Laughs at her little joke.*) I found that saying in a little book on 19<sup>th</sup> century etiquette that I bought in a gift shop at the Roman Baths in Bath, England. Bath was all the rage for decades in Great Britain. Very Jane Austen. Very Empire. (*Pronounced om – peer.*) You know what I mean, like empire-style dresses, cut just below the bosom and then dropping right to the floor. Kind of like a nightgown – but dressier. Remember Kitty Drake's dress at Easter? At the Country club? That chartreuse nightmare? Well, that style – but not that color! That's Empire. (*Again pronounced om-peer.*) Anyway, there's an entire section of the book devoted to matrimony – and let me tell you, they knew a thing or two about matrimony in those days. They understood that a good union – a union between a man and a woman, mind you, none of this same-sex business thank you very much – a proper union between a man and a woman has nothing to do with romance. Sure, it might start with a glance across a crowded room and there might be...tingly feelings all over – it might start there, but it cannot be *allowed* to flourish unless there is a strong foundation of common interest – and, don't let anyone tell you otherwise, *class*.

**CHORUS:** *Rachael!*

*Rachael!*

*Rachael!*

*Rachael!*

*Rachael!*

*Rachael!*

**LILLI:** Rachael! Dad's on the phone. I'd have brought out the phone out to you, but like I've said a thousand times, the phone doesn't work past the patio. I swear we are the only people in the world who don't have cell phones, 'cuz Mom's all like, "*Lilli, I knew a woman who got ear cancer from one of those things way back when they first came out. You are not getting a cell phone!*" And I'm like, "*Mom! You are so lame! Those first cell phones were like the size of toasters and were fueled by plutonium or something.*" She makes me so mad! It's like she lives in another world. She's all about "gracious living" and "effortless style." It's embarrassing! What am I going to do next year, Rachael? I start high school and I don't have a cell phone! I told her that everybody else has cell phones, and I asked her how she expected me to ever have friends if I didn't have one. And then, you know what she said to me? She said, "*Rachael has friends, and she doesn't have a cell phone. Maybe you'd have more friends if you tried to be more like her.*"

**CHORUS:** *Rachael!*

*Rachael!*

*Rachael!*

*Rachael!*

*Rachael!*

*Rachael!*

**MEGHAN:** Whooh! I can't believe it – we're high school graduates! I thought we'd never get here – *and* it went so fast at the same time. Remember freshman orientation? Remember how you and me and Kathy Nelson got lost and made the fatal mistake of asking a senior where Mr. Madey's room was? He sent us in the wrong direction – of course – and we ended up way over by the gym! And then you walked into the boys' bathroom by mistake. Hilarious! (*Reflects for a moment.*) But it didn't take us long, did it, Rachael? We ruled that school, didn't we? (*Reflects some more.*) I'm going to miss good ol' Belle Bridge High. I just know we're going to look back on these as the best years of our lives. Oh, before I forget. I talked to Jasmine, and she said she'd keep an eye on your lame sister. Jasmine's a sophomore, and even though your sister is only a freshman, she said she'd do the best she can to make sure that Lilli doesn't erase your legacy of coolness. She said she'd do it as a personal favor to you, but she can't promise anything. She's not a miracle-worker.

**CHORUS:** *Rachael!*

*Rachael!*

*Rachael!*

*Rachael!*

*Rachael!*

*Rachael!*

**AVERY:** Rachael, I think we need to talk about our relationship. We've had some really good times, times we'll never forget. (*Laughs.*) Remember Jr. Prom? Yeah...some very special times. I know we'll look back and...cherish those times... But I've been thinking about...things, and...and I was thinking that, you know, we're both going to be going to different colleges in the fall and this is our last free summer...well, our last free summer that's after high school...before college summers...you know what I mean. So, I was thinking... I thought...maybe we should think about...doing things differently. I mean, we don't have to spend...every minute of this summer together... You know what I mean? ...I think that you and I could benefit from...spending some time apart... Maybe we could explore our options this summer... Maybe we could keep things...open...this summer. Maybe see other people?

**CHORUS:** *Rachael!*

*Rachael!*

*Rachael!*

*Rachael!*

*Rachael!*

*Rachael!*

**DAD:** There she is, the best little girl in the world from sole to crown, the apple of her daddy's eye! Sorry I'm late, sweetie. I called, but it rang and rang, and then I remembered tonight was your graduation thingy and your mother was in full-on hostess mode and probably couldn't get to the phone, but then Lilli answered it, and well, she mumbled something and then hung up the phone or we were cut off or who-knows-what. Whew, I'm tired. (*Looks around.*) Have you seen your mom? Seen Lilli? (*Confidingly.*) I'll tell you what...let's hide! Twenty years of marriage has taught me that it's best to avoid your mother when she's channeling Martha Stewart. And your sister is *always* in one of her moods. She's either pouting or screaming. I don't know what to do with that girl. It's always something. I come home from a hard day's work and your mother's furious at your sister or your sister has barricaded herself in her room and cranked up the stereo. I don't know what to do. But you, Rachael – you've never given me a moment's grief... Boy, your old dad is exhausted.

**CHORUS:** *Rachael!*

*Rachael!*

*Rachael!*

*Rachael!*

*Rachael!*

*Rachael!*

**KENDRA:** Thank you so much for inviting me to your graduation party, Rachael. I've looked up to you ever since you were my babysitter. You don't know how I used to wait for Friday nights to come. Mom and Dad would go on their weekly "parents date," and you'd come over to babysit me! I'd talk about it all week long – it would drive my mom crazy! "Just six more days till Friday!" "Just five more days till Friday!" "Just four more days till Friday!" Dad, too. They both wanted to strangle me by Friday. I told them if they'd go out more often, then I'd see you more often, and I wouldn't have to drive them crazy – they didn't buy it. (*Laughs.*) So I made 'em suffer! (*Reflects.*) I'd obsess about every little detail. Would we make English muffin pizzas or macaroni and cheese? Would we watch *Sleeping Beauty* or *Cinderella*? Would you let me stay up late? Oh, you just don't know how much I looked forward to Friday nights... I don't have a sister – just a lame-o brother, Nathan, and he was, like, a million years older. (*Confidingly.*) You see, I was a...mistake.

DO NOT COPY

SCENE TWO

**CHORUS:** Whenever Richard Cory went to town,  
We people on the pavement looked at him:  
He was a gentleman from sole to crown,  
Clean-favoured and imperially slim.

And he was always quietly arrayed,  
And he was always human when he talked;  
But still he fluttered pulses when he said,  
“Good morning!” and he glittered when he walked.

*Rachael!*

*Rachael!*

*Rachael!*

*Rachael!*

*Rachael!*

**MOM:** Yes, I said class – and I meant *class*. Maybe it’s not the politically correct thing to say, but there you have it. Class matters. The way I see it, a woman can marry up or she can marry a man on his way up, a man with potential, but never, ever marry down, Rachael – ever. I know countless women who’ve made the fatal mistake of marrying men with no future because they were blinded by love. I’ve seen women throw away their educations, turn their backs on their families, and jeopardize the futures of their children – because they were blinded by love. I know what I’m talking about... My sister, your Aunt Deborah – she married Uncle Kenny because she was blinded by love. She dropped out of college to follow him to Los Angeles so that he could pursue an acting career. I told her she was a fool. I told her to come home, but she wouldn’t have it. Then what does she do? She has three children by him. (*Pauses.*) I ask you? How do you support a wife and kids by acting? Let me tell you – you don’t. She and I rarely speak to each other. She only calls when she needs money.

**CHORUS:** *Rachael!*

*Rachael!*

*Rachael!*

*Rachael!*

*Rachael!*

**LILLI:** How am I supposed to be more like you when I'm nothing like you to begin with? You're "sugar and spice and everything nice." You never say the wrong thing or complain or...disappoint. You're perfect! Everything about you is perfect – and *she* wants me to be like you. How do I be like you? Huh, Rachael? Your hair, your face...your brain – everything! Do you know what Mom said to me the other day when I told her that it was totally unfair that you're so hot and I'm not? Huh? Do you know what she said? She said, "*Life isn't fair, Lilli.*" Life isn't fair. Wow. There's some sympathy for you. Do you know what else she suggested? She suggested that I let *her* give *me* a makeover. A *makeover*. She said we could have a "Girls' Day Out," like you and she have. She said we could get manicures, see a matinee and head over to the mall for some new clothes... You know what she's trying to do, don't you? She's trying to turn *me* into *you*.

**CHORUS:** *Rachael!*

*Rachael!*

*Rachael!*

*Rachael!*

*Rachael!*

**MEGHAN:** You know, I think I made a good choice when I picked Michelle and Juliet to take our places at Belle Bridge. It's important that just the right kind of girls fill our shoes. I, for one, know that I don't want to hear about our table in the cafeteria being occupied by...band geeks. (*Reflects.*) There was that brief period where I flirted with the idea of having Daria Miller and Deeanna Gillespie replace us, but they just don't...glitter when they walk, you know what I mean? It's like they're almost up to our level – but not *quite*. Like when Daria got those blond highlights. I mean, come on! The girl has jet black hair and she goes and gets blond highlights? She looked like Pepe La Pew! And Deeanna? Definitely not. I mean, come on! Her father manages a convenience store. She's pretty and everything, but come on! Besides, she never knows when to keep her mouth shut.

**CHORUS:** *Rachael!*

*Rachael!*

*Rachael!*

*Rachael!*

*Rachael!*

**AVERY:** I know, I know! It's going to be hard for both of us since we have all the same friends and go to all the same parties...and stuff... But I think we are mature enough to handle it...like adults. It's just there comes a point where two people have to ask themselves, "Where is this going?" And that's where we are – *Where are we going?* Look, I don't want any drama, Rachael. We're better than that. And I don't care what other people say. Meghan told me that when a couple takes some time apart people jump to all kinds of conclusions. Yes! I've talked to Meghan about this. Maybe I should have spoken to you first, but I didn't think you'd understand. I didn't know how'd you react, and Meghan has always been a good friend to you and you trust her and she knows you really well, and I just needed someone to talk things through with. And Meghan came to the conclusion – I mean, I came to the conclusion – that it's best we give each other some breathing room, that we...just be friends.

**CHORUS:** *Rachael!*

*Rachael!*

*Rachael!*

*Rachael!*

*Rachael!*

**DAD:** Your mother keeps me on the fast track, let me tell you. Bringing home the bacon – the rat race and all that. Up at the crack of dawn to catch the train to the city, wheeling and dealing till dark, catching the train back home – a couple of stiff drinks and then it's off to bed to catch a few hour of shuteye so that I can do it all again the next day. But it's worth it. I'm glad I've been able to give you everything you've ever wanted. Your college education is going to cost me a pretty penny – \$57,000 a year – but it's worth it. An Ivy League diploma? It'll open doors for you everywhere, kid. Oh, I'm tired. They're killing me at the office. But I knew what I was getting into when I became a partner. More responsibility, longer hours, less time at home. Your mother may not like that, but it pays for all this. Where is your mother? In the house? Schmoozin' the guests? It's what she does. I'm telling you, if the roles were reversed and it was your mother who had to bring home the paycheck, we'd be millionaires. She knows just what she wants and she gets it. She's ruthless.

**CHORUS:** *Rachael!*

*Rachael!*

*Rachael!*

*Rachael!*

*Rachael!*

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