

# **CEASE TO EXIST**

A play by William Cameron

## **CEASE TO EXIST**

### **Setting**

A hearing room at the California Institution for Women in Corona, California  
Various other locales are suggested by lighting changes.

### **Characters**

*Patricia Krenwinkel*, 62 — a prisoner at the California Institution for Women in Corona, California

*Charles Manson*, 30's — the infamous cult leader

*Katie*, early 20's — Patricia's younger self

*Steven Hernandez* — presiding commissioner of the parole board

*Debra Tate*, 50's — sister to Sharon Tate, Tate family spokesman at the parole hearing

*Tex Watson*, early 20's — Manson family member

Various others — 'Family' members, parole board members, murder victims

### **Casting**

*Cease to Exist* is written for a cast of 4 women and 3 men.

#### Females

1. Patricia Krenwinkel
2. Katie
3. Woman 1 — plays Debra Tate, various others as specified in the script.
4. Woman 2 — plays Mother, various others as specified in the script.

#### Males

1. Charles Manson
2. Man 1 — plays Steven Hernandez, various others as specified in the script.
3. Man 2 — plays Tex Watson, Father, various others as specified in the script.

(At top, in the darkness we hear women singing.)

WOMEN (recording)

(singing)

*Always is always forever  
As long as one is one  
Inside yourself for your father  
All is none all is none all is one.*

(Lights begin to rise slowly on PATRICIA; she is seated behind a table, her hands folded neatly on the table in front of her.)

*It's time we put our love behind you  
The illusion has been just a dream  
The valley of death and I'll find you  
Now is when on a sunshine beam*

(PATRICIA speaks to the audience; women hum the melody softly underneath.)

PATRICIA

No morning comes that I do not awaken and remember death. A day does not pass that I do not hear the screams, feel the knife in my hand, taste the blood.

(Short beat. Singing stops and a woman's voice reverberates.)

WOMAN 2 (off)

What are you doing to my husband?

(PATRICIA's hands cover her ears. Rap of a gavel, lights up on another table, opposing PATRICIA's. HERNANDEZ [MAN 2] is seated behind it.)

HERNANDEZ (MAN 2)

This will be a subsequent parole consideration hearing for Patricia Krenwinkel. Today's date is July seven, 2009, location is the California Institution for Women, Corona, California. Time is approximately three p.m. Inmate Krenwinkel incarcerated on April 28<sup>th</sup>, 1971 charged with murder in the first degree. Counts one through seven, 187 of the Penal Code, single term of life. Original sentence was death but that was overturned by the state supreme court, February 1972. This hearing is to be tape recorded. For the purpose of the Board's identification, each of us give our first and our last name, spelling our last name. I am presiding commissioner Steven Hernandez, H-E-R-N-A-N-D-E-Z.

PATRICIA

Patricia Krenwinkel, K-R-E-N-W-I-N-K-E-L, CDC number W-08314.

(Except for PATRICIA and HERNANDEZ, for now, all voices come from off.)

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MAN 1 (off)

Steven Kay, K-A-Y, Deputy District Attorney

WOMAN 1 (off)

Martha Keenan, K-E-E-N-A-N, deputy commissioner.

WOMAN 2 (off)

Debra Tate. T-A-T-E. Sister to Sharon Tate.

(In another area of the stage, lights rise on CHARLIE.)

CHARLIE (MAN 1)

From the world of darkness, I did loose demons and devils in the power of scorpions to torment.

(Lights out on CHARLIE.)

HERNANDEZ

(reading from a transcript)

Summary of the crime committed on or about August nine and August ten of 1969. Defendant, Patricia Krenwinkel, was arrested on a fugitive warrant on or about February 20th, 1970 on suspicion of murder.

(Music begins, a sustained minor chord that grows in volume under HERNANDEZ.)  
Counts one through five refer to the murders which occurred at the Polanski residence located at one-double-O-five-O Cielo, C-I-E-L-O Drive, Los Angeles. Counts six and seven committed at three-three-O-one Waverly Drive, Los Angeles. As to count one, Abigail Folger, cause of death, multiple stab wounds to her body. Count two, Sharon Tate—

(Lights up on CHARLIE, HERNANDEZ continues silently as CHARLIE speaks.)

CHARLIE

These children that come at you with knives...they are your children. You taught them. I didn't teach them. I just tried to help them stand up.

(CHARLIE'S light out quickly, music fades during next line.)

HERNANDEZ

Count seven, Rosemary LaBianca; cause of death, multiple stab wounds to the neck and trunk.

(Beat, HERNANDEZ puts the transcript aside.)

Miss Krenwinkel, I'd like to talk with you about why you participated in these crimes. From what I can gather, you were raised in a home that sounds fairly normal to me.

PATRICIA

I came from a middle-class home. Normal...in that sense, I suppose. My sister was...troubled, I guess you'd say and that was a source of tension in the family. The marriage. My parents divorced when I was fifteen. So, while it was...normal, my childhood also had its fair share of...sorry, I can't think of the right word.

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(Lights out quickly on HERNANDEZ. PATRICIA moves from behind the table, addresses the audience directly. Music under following dialogue: "Theme from A Summer Place".)

PATRICIA (cont'd)

I had a stepsister: Charlene, seven years older. Piece of work. Drugs, booze, got knocked up, trouble by the book. But my mother and father...

(Lights up on FATHER and MOTHER, in separate lights on opposite sides of the stage.)  
Nothing was talked about in that house. Nothing.

(FATHER and MOTHER address the audience.)

FATHER

Our daughter Patricia was a normal child.

MOTHER

An exceedingly normal child.

PATRICIA

Your sister's a heroin addict, you don't talk about it.

MOTHER

All her activities as a child, her father and I both went along with her. Didn't we, dear?

PATRICIA

Not a word.

MOTHER

(faint hostility)  
Didn't we, dear?

FATHER

(the same)  
Yes.

PATRICIA

Your parents' marriage is falling apart, you don't talk about it.

FATHER

Patricia presented no disciplinary problems at any time to her mother or me.

MOTHER

None whatsoever. She seemed perfectly happy.

PATRICIA

You can't look in the mirror without hating yourself. You don't talk about it!

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FATHER

The teachers said they enjoyed having Pat in their classes.

PATRICIA

There I was, in Los Angeles, fucking L.A., Hollywood, Tinsel Town with all the beautiful people and I...I was not beautiful.

MOTHER

Pat dated boys but at that time she was still quite...studious. She read a great deal.

PATRICIA

And even if I could talk about it, who would I talk to?

FATHER

She was a very normal child.

MOTHER

Exceedingly normal.

(Lights fade on FATHER and MOTHER. Music out.)

PATRICIA

So, when I was fifteen, maybe fourteen, I started with the drugs. Charlene, as it turned out, was good for something after all. Grass at first, Charlene turned me on to LSD. My drug of choice...amphetamine sulphate—straight-up speed. Suddenly I had this fierce energy, this insane kind of...confidence!

(A young girl appears, speaking the lines along with PATRICIA. This is KATIE [WOMAN 1], PATRICIA's younger self. As the line continues, PATRICIA'S voice fades and KATIE'S takes over.)

PATRICIA (cont'd)

(simultaneously with KATIE, fading as she speaks.)

Chubby, pathetic little Patty Krenwinkel—kids at school going out of their way to call me fat, to call me ugly...

KATIE

(simultaneously with PATRICIA, growing in volume as she speaks.)

Chubby, pathetic little Patty Krenwinkel—kids at school going out of their way to call me fat, to call me ugly—confidence! Me! Shit, man, who the fuck knew?

PATRICIA

Now, looking back I know I was barely functioning but at the time—

KATIE

I wake up in the morning, take it, want to go out and change the world, feed the hungry, heal the sick, end the fucking war, man! Been fat all my life, not now. Speed, it saved me!

PATRICIA

I was looking for salvation. What I found was the Family. What I found was...Charles Manson.

(As before, a woman's voice reverberates.)

WOMAN 2 (off)

What are you doing to my husband?

(PATRICIA's hands cover her ears. Lights shift, KATIE exits, PATRICIA returns to the table. Light up on HERNANDEZ.)

HERNANDEZ

Let's jump ahead to September 1967. You were...how old?

PATRICIA

Nineteen.

HERNANDEZ

And you were living with your sister, is that correct?

PATRICIA

In Manhattan Beach. Yes, sir. And I had a job at the Insurance Company of North America. See, living with Charlene, I...well, of course, I met a lot of her friends and one of her friends was named Billy. And this one night, we went to his home for a party.

(Guitar music. Lights out on HERNANDEZ. Lights shift as PATRICIA moves away from the table)

And there, sitting on the couch in front of a bay window, was a little man with a guitar.

(Music—a recording of Manson singing "Look at Your Game, Girl.")

I knew that I wanted to talk to him, to somehow get him to...notice me.

(KATIE appears, swaying to the music.)

I sat behind the others listening to him play for such a long time until I was the only one left. He was singing straight at me...

(KATIE freezes, staring ahead as CHARLIE appears in the shadows.)

No one had ever looked at me quite that way before.

KATIE

It's like he can see through me—

PATRICIA

Like he was a part of me—

KATIE

Like he wants me.

PATRICIA

Charlene came over and said we had to leave. It was time.

(CHARLIE steps into the light, addressing KATIE.)

CHARLIE

There is no such thing as time. Man invented time. Just what's here and now is what counts. I go there and I'm not here anymore. I come back and I'm not there anymore. It's infinite and it's nothing. Here and now. It's all perfect and the way it's supposed to be. There is no such thing as time.

PATRICIA

I turned to my sister and said...

KATIE

I'm staying.

PATRICIA

And my sister left. If I'd gone with her, I... if only...

(Music starts to play, "White Rabbit" by Jefferson Airplane. CHARLIE moves behind KATIE, moving gently to the music.)

I'd always been so uncomfortable in my skin, so...awkward in my body...

(CHARLIE holds KATIE around the waist from behind and starts to dance with her.)

But somehow, with this man...

(KATIE starts to move with him, tentatively at first but gradually relaxing into it.)

CHARLIE

That's right. That's good. No two moves, no two actions are the same.

(KATIE's dancing becomes freer as CHARLIE steps back and watches her.)

In your God-self there is no repetition. Everything is new. Let it be new.

PATRICIA

And that's how I met Charlie Manson.

(CHARLIE grabs KATIE's hand and they run to another area of the stage, laughing happily.)

We found another room in the house. Just the two of us.

(CHARLIE and KATIE embrace)

There was a full-length mirror on the wall.

(CHARLIE turns KATIE to face the audience, stands behind her looking at her reflection in the mirror. Gentle strumming of a guitar plays under.)

Charlie undressed me and I let him...but suddenly I'm that fat, ugly girl again.

(KATIE stands still, her arms crossed in front of her, her head down.)

CHARLIE

Look at yourself. You're beautiful.

(KATIE shakes her head.)

You are. You're perfect. You've got to see yourself as perfect—beautiful. You've got to love yourself. You've got to be free of all your inhibitions and your fears. They're weighing you down. They're choking you. You've got to break free. Look at yourself.

(KATIE lifts her head and looks as the music morphs into a recording of Manson singing. KATIE slowly unfolds her arms, looking at her reflection as she does so.)

MANSON (recording)

*Pretty girl, pretty, pretty girl*

*Cease to exist*

*Just, come an' say you love me*

*Give up, your world*

*Come on you can be*

(By the end of this verse, KATIE stands straight, open, arms at her sides “looking” at herself in the mirror. Music continues softly underneath.)

KATIE

Beautiful.

PATRICIA

And from that moment on, Charlie Manson was in my head. It started with love.

KATIE

Charlie is love.

PATRICIA

Not just physical love or romantic love, just...

KATIE

Pure love. Charlie shows us the way. He turns us around so we can look at ourselves, so we can see the love within.

PATRICIA

It started with love, before everything else, before all the...

(She makes a vague, dismissive gesture)

I just wanted him to love me.

