Scene from *Haley*

*CATHERINE, a scientist, and her assistant LAURA sit to the left of HALEY, a gorilla. TOM, a television producer, and the CAMERAMEN stand to the right, behind a giant camera trained on HALEY and the women. CAMERAMEN stand around impatiently, chatting, smoking.*

LAURA
She says she wants to do another take, Mr. Williams

TOM
Dr. Carter or the gorilla?

LAURA
Dr. Carter, Mr. Williams.

TOM
Ah. Thank you, Laura, for that clarification. Again, this is documentary; we don’t do takes.

LAURA *quietly to CATHERINE*
He says it's documentary and they—

CATHERINE
I heard him. Okay, Tom, we're ready for you.

LAURA
She's ready for you, Tom.

*CATHERINE claps her hands, and HALEY looks up. TOM and the CAMERAMEN quiet down and gather behind the camera.*

CATHERINE, *signing as she speaks*
What is your name?

HALEY *stares*
What is your name? What. Is. Your. Name?

LAURA
Try the apple again.

*CATHERINE nods. LAURA stands next to CATHERINE and holds an apple so HALEY can see it.*
CATHERINE
Do you want an apple?
HALEY is still.
Do you—
HALEY grunts and grabs for the apple. LAURA calmly steps back, still holding the apple up in front of her.

CATHERINE signing to LAURA
Laura, may I have the apple?

LAURA signing
Yes you may.

LAURA hands CATHERINE the apple. HALEY grunts and grabs again. CATHERINE looks at HALEY as she bites the apple. HALEY grunts louder. CATHERINE bites the apple again. HALEY gets angrier still. LAURA, TOM, and the CAMERAMEN all take a few steps back. CATHERINE remains in place as HALEY gets louder.

TOM
Okay! Okay okay okay okay.

CATHERINE
Sh!

TOM
Dr. Carter, that's enough. Let's think of a way—

CATHERINE
Sh!

TOM to LAURA
--a way she can do this without getting us killed?

LAURA
Poor thing's tired.

HALEY screams as CATHERINE finishes the apple. HALEY covers her face with her hands.

CATHERINE
Haley, no!
TOM
Is that five? Can we—can we just take—let's just everyone take five. Let's everyone
calm down and take five.

CATHERINE
Really, Tom, that's unnecessary. It’s—

LAURA
--it's the lights.

CATHERINE
--and the camera—

LAURA
--all the people—

CATHERINE
--they frighten her. She chokes up, just like a person.

TOM
I don't care. Just get her please to please do something other than freak out, okay?
Everybody, you've all got five minutes!

Exeunt TOM, CAMERAMEN

LAURA
She's just frightened is all.

CATHERINE
No, she's angry. You can't force her to talk. It makes her feel exploited. You know that.

LAURA
I know. Beat. Couldn't you just—how about an orange?

CATHERINE
Damn it, she won't talk if she doesn't have anything to say. And she doesn't have
anything to say about a damned apple. I can't believe I ate that in front of her. I'm losing
my mind.
They look at HALEY, who's still covering her face.

LAURA
There is one—there's one topic you two haven't touched on in a while.

Podium Fall08-Winter 09
CATHERINE
What? Look at the log: we've done weather and feelings, addition, animals, furniture, presents. We've covered more in the last month than—

LAURA
What about Charlie?
CATHERINE glares at LAURA
Well, what about him? Dr. Carter, I don't know why it's so against the rules to—

CATHERINE
Laura.

LAURA
Just because someone dies doesn't mean he never existed. I mean, when people die—

CATHERINE
There's exploitation, and there's exploitation. I won't do that.

LAURA
--when people die you talk about that. That's allowed, right? Charlie was just like a brother to her.

CATHERINE
You don't talk about them on national television. You don't make a spectacle of it.

LAURA
She'd just be telling the truth, Dr. Carter. She'd just be sharing how she felt. And you know that'd get her to talk. You know it would. And you know we need her to—we really could use for her to talk.

CATHERINE
I never knew you were such a careerist. This is Haley—you'd really sacrifice Haley's feelings for your own career? You'd really drag Charlie out, wave him in front of Haley's face so you could go back to the mainland?

LAURA
No. Not like that.

CATHERINE
Just like that. I didn't know you were like that, Laura.

LAURA
Dr. Carter, you're not being fair.
CATHERINE
I can't believe it, but I'm surprised. I thought that you respected what we did here. I thought that you respected me, respected Haley. I thought that with you, I finally found someone who thought like I did.

LAURA suddenly irate
You didn't. No one thinks like you do. No one does because you're crazy. Only crazy people think like you. Hire them if that's what you want.

CATHERINE
Fine.

LAURA
Fine! Even they would know what it means that Charlie's dead. Even a crazy person, eventually, would be able to talk about that. Hell, even an animal. Ha! But not you—I don't even know what that makes you.

CATHERINE
It makes me a professional.

LAURA
It makes you dead. You're as dead as Charlie. Look at her: she's better than weather and furniture and—oh, God, Dr. Carter that's the point. I get it—I get it better than you do. Mocking: "They're just like us, they've got feelings, they can express how they feel." So let her do it.

CATHERINE
Go away, Laura. Go clean up.

LAURA
You don't have to come to terms with anything. But it's not right to keep Haley from doing it.

CATHERINE is silent. HALEY grunts.
Forget it. Just—I'm sorry Dr. Carter. It's been a long day.

CATHERINE
It has.

LAURA
I don't think you're crazy. I think you're brilliant.

Podium Fall08-Winter 09
CATHERINE
I know.

LAURA
And right. You're right. It's wrong to, you know, force it on her. We'll find another way to get her to talk. And if not, we'll find another way to—

CATHERINE
Go clean up.

LAURA
Yes, Dr. Carter.

CATHERINE
And send Tom back in.

Sam Biederman lives in Brooklyn and works at an advertising agency. His only other play, which he wrote in third grade, is also about a gorilla. He would like to thank his instructor Han Ong and his extremely supportive classmates.