



TURNAROUND

CLEM MARTINI AND CHERYL FOGGO
 Illustrations: James Lorincz

SCENE VIII

MEGAN MEETS WITH AVERY AT HIS OFFICE.

AVERY: That was quite a show.

MEGAN: I said sorry.

AVERY: I've gotta tell you Megan, of all the times I've doubted what we're doing here, and there've been plenty, that's the time I doubted it most.

MEGAN: She makes me act like that.

AVERY: No she doesn't. I have to go in there and ask that judge to give you standing, and he's going to need a better answer than that.

MEGAN: I'm scared, okay? When I even think about going back to her, I wanna drink, I wanna find every drug there is and find it quick. I haven't done nothin since I got in this group home and I won't do it again. Just don't let them send me back.

AVERY SIGHS.

MEGAN: What's standing?

AVERY: That means they'll listen to you and take your petition into account as an

interested party. See, normally you're the object of custody hearings, if you get standing you get some say in what happens. They don't have to give you standing, they might not, and if they do it might be reversed in an appeal at a higher court down the road.

MEGAN: So, I've got to—

AVERY: Just listen. If you do get standing then we have permission to argue this case, which you might win or lose. It's going to take a lot of time, now I got time, because there's a certain cachet to this case from a lawyer's perspective, it's a precedent setter in this part of the world, but it's going to wear on you, and you gotta stay absolutely on top of your game because the thing the judge'll be looking at, from you, is maturity, sincerity, and honesty. If you weaken anywhere, and the judge sniffs it out, the case is finished, kaput, hopeless. We go home with our tail between our legs like a whipped dog. I'm just letting you know.

MEGAN: Okay. Are you finished?

AVERY: No, I'm not finished. I want you to take this seriously, you hear me? Because it is serious, it's the most serious thing that's likely to happen to you, ever, and I want you to consider this. Is this what you really want? You're twelve. It seems like a long wait now, but in six years you're an adult and you can do what you want anyway. Time's going to give you your separation, but without any of this bitterness or rancour, because believe me it will be bitter and there will be rancour, no doubt about it.

MEGAN: Are you telling me you won't do it?

AVERY: I'm telling you to think about it.

MEGAN: I've thought about it.

AVERY: Okay.

SCENE IX - EXAMINATIONS

(THESE SCENES OF EXAMINATIONS SHOULD BE INTERSPERSED WITH EACH OTHER.)

AVERY: Your mother ever hit you?

MEGAN: No.

AVERY: Did your mother ever run off?

MEGAN: You mean, like, abandon me?

AVERY: Yea.

MEGAN: No. She'd disappear for a coupl'a days, three or four days, at a time, sometimes, but she'd come back.

AVERY: She never physically punished you in any way?

MEGAN: No.

AVERY: So? What's the problem?

MEGAN: Ever since I was a baby she's been drunk. She'd drink all the time. Every morning I woke up, I was the first one up. There's lots of time there wasn't any food in the house. Then I'd either go over to a friend's house or I'd go hungry.

AVERY: So, she was out of the house all the time?

MEGAN: No, sometimes she brought the party to the house. There'd be a lotta people I didn't know, drinking. Some people came to do up. Sometimes she turned tricks.

AVERY: That how she made a living?

MEGAN: She had a lot of part time jobs. Anything that didn't make any money.

AVERY: She take any interest in your schooling?

MEGAN: No.

AVERY: You were removed from her care several times. Why?

MEGAN: She'd have someone in and they'd drink all the rest of the night and then they'd get into a fight and the guy'd beat my mother up and the police'd come.

AVERY: And what happened to you?

MEGAN: I was taken away, placed in a foster home.

AVERY: And when your mother was released what happened to you?
 MEGAN: She took me back.
 AVERY: What happened after that?
 MEGAN: Same thing. She started drinking all over again. Same kinda people'd start showing up. Lots of times they'd sleep over.
 AVERY: You were going to school then?
 MEGAN: Ya.
 AVERY: Did she get you ready in the morning for school?
 MEGAN: Noo. I useta wear the same clothes to school cause there was nothin' washed. I'd find the thing that looked cleanest and throw it on. I'd scout around in the morning for donuts or chips that had been brought over by the people who were there. Whatever there was, that'd be breakfast.
 AVERY: How often was somebody there?
 MEGAN: There was always some stranger or another in the house, drinking buddies. Someone sharing a needle.
 AVERY: Was there ever any sexual contact between you and the people that your mother had over?
 MEGAN: Yea.
 AVERY: Unwanted sexual contact?
(ANNE AND LUCY HASTILY CONFER. LUCY IS CLEARLY UPSET BY THIS REVELATION.)
 MEGAN: *(LOOKS AT HIM LIKE HE'S AN IDIOT)* I was eight.
 AVERY: Once or more than once?
 MEGAN: More than once.
 AVERY: And what did you do?
 MEGAN: Slept in the closet for a while. Then I took off.
 LUCY: You never told me. *(THEN TO ANNE)* She never said anything.
 AVERY: Excuse me.
LUCY IS SILENCED BY ANNE.
 And what happened after that?

MEGAN: I was brought back.
 AVERY: Did you tell your mother?
 MEGAN: No.
 AVERY: Why?
 MEGAN: What was I going to tell her? She knew these people. She knew who they were. And besides, when was I going to talk to her, when she was high or when she was hung over?
 AVERY: You ran away again when you were nine.
 MEGAN: A guy tried to steal my nail polish. I wouldn't let him have it and he hit me. I took off.
 AVERY: And what happened when you got caught?
 MEGAN: They took me back to my mom. Same as always.
 AVERY: Your mother says she's changed.
 MEGAN: I've heard that before.
 AVERY: You don't believe that she's changed?
 MEGAN: Social services believes her, I don't. Social services don't have to live with her.
LUCY IS EXAMINED BY AVERY. SHE IS STILL VISIBLY SHAKEN.
 AVERY: So you want Megan to come back?
 LUCY: I'm hoping and praying.
 AVERY: And you think you'll be able to provide a good home?



LUCY: Yes.
 Can I say something?
(AVERY NODS. LUCY LOOKS TOWARD MEGAN. ANNE IS TRYING TO CATCH LUCY'S EYE TO GIVE HER A WARNING SIGNAL, BUT LUCY IGNORES HER.)
 I didn't know. Megan, I honestly didn't know.
 AVERY: Mrs. Kenyon, unfortunately for her, that's something your daughter has already acknowledged.
ANNE RISES.
 ANNE: This isn't a trial Mr. Kostiuk. Can you go a little easy?
AVERY SHRUGS SLIGHTLY, THEN ALLOWS LUCY A FEW MOMENTS TO COLLECT HERSELF.
 AVERY: How many times have you been in jail?
 LUCY: I don't know exactly. I'm not trying to hide anything, I'm just telling you.
 AVERY: More or less than ten times.
 LUCY: Ho! A lot more than ten.
 AVERY: What were the reasons?
 LUCY: Oh. Theft. Assault. A lot of things. Mostly drunkenness and acting up.
 AVERY: And how many times have you been in treatment for drug and alcohol abuse?
 LUCY: Five. Six times.
 AVERY: And you left each time, cured?
 LUCY: No, sir, I didn't.
 AVERY: No.
 LUCY: No, I thought I was cured, but I wasn't. Not really.
 AVERY: You thought you were cured but weren't?
 LUCY: There were a lot of things, a lot of reasons that made me a drunk and I never faced up to any of them.
 AVERY: So how do you know this time?
 LUCY: Well, things are different this time.
 AVERY: How?

LUCY: *(HESITATES)* I'm a Christian now. Which I know some people might take as a negative, like it's just another crutch or I've joined some crazy cult or I'm a fanatic. But I don't care what they say or think, cause for the first time my life has really changed. I'm married. I've got a job. I've joined AA and I meet regularly.
 AVERY: And you hadn't joined AA before?
 LUCY: Yes, I had.
 AVERY: I see. And do any of the members of AA ever backslide?
 LUCY: Yes, they do. That's why we meet, to provide support and encouragement.
 AVERY: But sometimes, they can't cut it anyway.
 LUCY: Yes.
 AVERY: So you might backslide.
 LUCY: I won't.
 AVERY: But you might. Others have. Can you see the kind of time bomb you represent for your daughter, you're always ticking there in the background waiting to come back and go off.
 LUCY: Absolutely I see that, absolutely, but can I just say one more thing? I'm ticking there regardless, I'm in her brain and her past and I'm always there, always messing up, always failing her. And that knowledge that you can't trust anybody and the sneaking suspicion that you aren't worthy of trust is a killer, it will eat you up eventually, and the only way to make sure that doesn't happen to Megan is to allow me to take her back and show her I can be a real mom, show her that something good can come outta this mess. I'm the only thing that can cut that fuse.
 AVERY: Or light it, again. Right?
ANNE EXAMINES LUCY.
 ANNE: How long have you been sober?
 LUCY: Two years.
 ANNE: Two years. And you're only now looking your child up? Why is that?

LUCY: I wanted to be ready. Really ready. I guess I was testing myself in a way, so I'd be sure I wasn't going to mess up again. I wanted to make sure things with me an' Glen were gonna stay... good.

ANNE: Do you have a place for Megan to stay?

LUCY: We bought a half-duplex. Megan has her own room, which is the only room we didn't paint when we moved in, cause we wanted her to pick her own colours.

ANNE: What kind of man is Glen?

LUCY: Nice.

ANNE: Any kind of record? Any history of substance abuse?

LUCY: (SMILES) No, nothin' at all like that.

ANNE: And you two get along?

LUCY: Yes, we do. He brings out the best in me.

ANNE: Sounds almost too good to be true.

LUCY: Well, he's pretty special. I'm not saying he's perfect. He has bum knee, so he's not a very good dancer.

ANNE: And you two have talked about bringing Megan up?

LUCY: Yes.

ANNE: And you're both ready?

LUCY: Yes.

ANNE: So, Mrs. Kenyon. How do you feel now about the way you raised Megan?

LUCY TRIES TO ANSWER, BUT CHOKES AND LOWERS HER HEAD.

ANNE: Okay, that's fine.

ANNE EXAMINES MEGAN.

ANNE: How many others live there with you?

MEGAN: Five.

ANNE: These other kids, do they come from pretty good backgrounds?

MEGAN: Course not.

ANNE: They've had problems haven't they? Two with sniffing glue, one for a sexual assault, one of the girls attacked the

janitor at her school with a knife.

MEGAN: Course they got problems. That's why they're there.

ANNE: Are you kids allowed to smoke there?

MEGAN: If we want. I quit.

ANNE: I see. Now, you say you're doing really well there?

MEGAN: Yes.

ANNE: How long have you been there?

MEGAN: A year.

ANNE: Eight months, isn't it?

MEGAN: Almost a year.

ANNE: And before that you were at a foster home.

MEGAN: Uh huh.

ANNE: How long were you there?

MEGAN: Six months.

ANNE: And before that?

MEGAN: Another foster home.

ANNE: And how long did you last there?

MEGAN: Seven or eight months.

ANNE: Close. Six. That's quite a series of placements.

MEGAN: This time it's different.

ANNE: I'm sure it is. Now this sexual, contact, you allegedly had, that your mother allowed. Did you report it to your mother?

AVERY: She answered that question Anne.

MEGAN: I already said no.

ANNE: Did you report it to the police?

MEGAN: Like they would listen to me.

ANNE: So, no?

MEGAN: No.

ANNE: Teachers? Neighbours? Friends?

MEGAN: No.

ANNE: Did you tell anyone?

MEGAN: No. Till now.



ANNE: Well, exactly. So, Megan, there's no, evidence, beyond your recollection, now, some many years after the fact, of these incidents?

MEGAN: No.

ANNE: Thank you.

SUMMATIONS

MEGAN, THEN LUCY, TO THE JUDGE.

MEGAN: The last time I saw my mother she was thin an' curled up in a ball, eyes rolled back in her head. I called 911 and they took her away, and when the ambulance picked her up the only thing I knew for sure was I was on my way to somewhere else. Again.... She'd been home from detox for about two weeks and she promised things were gonna be different. And at first they were. Different. She came to a parent/teacher interview. We went for a walk one time, down to the river.

And then I walked in the door after school one day and there she was.... And I was afraid to even touch her. I stood in the doorway saying Mommy. I called the ambulance, and it took her and after I was so, angry. At me. I mean, how could I have been so stupid? How could I have fallen for that? I've never lived anywhere. I've always been on my way somewhere else, to the next place. Till now. I been at the same place for a year—almost a year. I've been in trouble in the past, but I'm not causing any trouble now. I'm minding my own business. I'm not on any honour roll at school, but I'm doing better than I ever have. I've spent more time away from my mother than with her. She thinks

I love her but I don't know what that means. I don't even know her anymore. She says give her a chance, but what I want to know is, and what I want someone, someone, to tell me is, how many chances does she get to ruin my life?

LUCY: Can I just say one thing? I am Megan's mother, and I love her and I want what's best for her from the inside out. I was neglected, as a child, I was left to live in institutions, I never had anyone, and I don't want that for her. I am her mother. I may not have been there for her every time she needed me, but I know her better than anybody else. I have never, ever given her up, that's a matter of record, she's been taken from me, but I have never given her up and I am ready, I have my life together, finally, I am ready.

Can anyone tell me who said there were only one, two, three chances, who made up those numbers, who says you get only so many turns? The Lord himself said we should forgive, seventy times seven times. When I first heard that I cried, and I figured out the math, that meant four hundred and ninety times. And I tried to figure out had I used up all my times in God's eyes? Was I over the limit? Then my pastor explained to me, what it really meant was there was no limit. He said God cast everything wrong I ever did into the sea of His forgetfulness, when I asked him to forgive me. And that was the first time I forgave myself. And that was when I started to get better. And now I'm askin' for another chance, from you people and from Megan. I'm not gonna fail her this time.

Turnaround is a collaboration of Governor General Writers' Award nominee Cheryl Foggo (One Thing That's True) and playwright Clem Martini (Conversations with My Neighbour's Pit Bull, The Life History of the African Elephant, Nobody of Consequence, among others). Clem is a ten-time winner of the Alberta Culture Playwriting Award. Turnaround premieres at Lunchbox Theatre in Calgary from March 2 to 19, 1999.