

ROBERT'S BURDEN

ROBERT & EMMA *Act 2*

Camille Pauley
with Chris Corey

Copyright © 2012 by Healing the Culture and Robert J. Spitzer, S.J., Ph.D.

ALL RIGHTS RESERVED

CAUTION: Professionals and amateurs are hereby warned that ROBERT'S BURDEN is subject to a royalty. It is fully protected under the copyright laws of the United States of America, the British Commonwealth, including Canada, and all other countries of the Copyright Union. All rights, including professional, amateur, motion pictures, recitation, lecturing, public reading, radio broadcasting, television, and the rights of translation into foreign languages are strictly reserved. In its present form the play is dedicated to the reading public only.

The amateur live stage performance rights to ROBERT'S BURDEN are controlled exclusively by Healing the Culture, and royalty arrangements and licenses must be secured well in advance of presentation. Please note that amateur royalty fees are set upon application in accordance with your producing circumstances. When applying for a royalty quotation and license, please give us the number of performances intended, dates of production, your seating capacity and admission fee, and indicate whether your production is professional or amateur. Royalties are payable one week before the opening performance of the play to Healing the Culture at P.O. Box 3134, Rapid City, SD 57709.

Royalty of the required amount must be paid whether the play is presented for charity or gain and whether or not admission is charged.

For all other rights than those stipulated above, apply to Healing the Culture.

Copying from this book in whole or in part is strictly forbidden by law, and the right of performance is not transferable.

Whenever the play is produced, the following notice must appear on all programs, printing, and advertising for the play: "Produced by special arrangement with Healing the Culture." Due authorship must be given on all programs, printing, and advertising for the play.

No one shall commit or authorize any act or omission by which the copyright of, or the right to copyright this play may be impaired. No one shall make any changes in this play for the purpose of production. Publication of this play does not imply availability for performance. Both amateurs and professionals considering a production are strongly advised to apply to Healing the Culture for the written permission before starting rehearsals, advertising, or booking a theater. No part of this book may be re-produced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted in any form, by any means, now known or yet to be invented, including mechanical, electronic, photocopying, record-ing, videotaping, or otherwise, without the prior written permission of the publisher.

CAST

ROBERT: smart, not bad looking, wants to appear cool, but takes life seriously, 17–18

EMMA: bright, attractive, strong voice and presence, 17–18

MRS. TAN: energetic, engaging teacher, 30–45

BETHANY: a bit ditzzy, more interested in shopping and social status, 17–18

KAYLEE: bright, outspoken student, 17–18

MAX: a kick-back kind of guy, but decent student, 17–18

MEGHAN: inquisitive student, 17–18

CHRISTOPHER: a bit cynical, pokes at his friends, 17–18

PRINCIPAL: 50–60

ROBERT'S DAD: easy going, but expects good work from his kids, 40–60

TOTAL: 4 to 6 males and 4 to 6 females

This script contains the second act of a four-act play, designed for the high school classroom. The acts are divided into four separate books which correspond with a four-year curriculum entitled *Principles and Choices*®. The play may be produced as a full-length play by putting all four acts together. **To acquire Acts 1, 3, and 4, contact the publisher.**

There is little to no direction for sets, staging, and lighting. This act has no intermission, but if combined with Acts 1, 3, and 4 for a full-length play, an intermission can be placed between the second and third acts.

See copyright page for performance responsibilities and restrictions.

Act 2 ROBERT'S BURDEN

ROBERT & EMMA

SCENE 1

(It's senior year of high school, and Robert and Emma are in the hallway. Students rush by, jostling each other, coming in and out of classrooms, and getting things out of their lockers. Robert pulls a science book out and checks his hair in the mirror on his locker door. The bell for first period is just about to ring...)

ROBERT: Emma, I don't even have Ms. Gunderson for History. Even if I were willing to cheat and do your homework for you, I wouldn't have a clue what she's looking for in the project.

EMMA: I'm not asking you to cheat, Robert. You're better at history than I am. I just hoped you would look it over and tell me what's missing.

ROBERT: Emma, we're Seniors. You should know by now that's cheating.

EMMA: No it isn't.

ROBERT: Yes it is! And cheating is wrong. Your bible says so. Remember?

EMMA: Oh yeah — like you're the expert on ethics around here.

(The bell rings and students scurry for their classrooms. Robert closes his locker.)

ROBERT: *(smiling)* Sorry, Emma. It's time for "Mrs. Science"...!

(They both go into science class together and take their seats.)

MRS. TAN: Okay, yesterday we were talking about genetics, and one of you asked about whether Down Syndrome is genetic. What'd you find out?

BETHANY: So, Kaylee and I talked to Andrew's mom. He goes to school here and has Down Syndrome, right? Anyway, his mom said it was genetic and to look up this guy named Dr. Jerome somebody.

MRS. TAN: Dr. Jerome Lejeune?

BETHANY: Yah.

MRS. TAN: Okay. So did you look him up?

BETHANY: I thought... I don't know. I figured you'd just tell us who he was in class.

(Several students giggle.)

MRS. TAN: Part of being a good scientist Bethany, is doing your own research. Does anybody know who Dr. Jerome Lejeune was?

(Kaylee raises her hand.)

MRS. TAN: Kaylee?

KAYLEE: Wikipedia said he was a French geneticist who found out that Down Syndrome is caused by an extra chromosome.

BETHANY: Look at you, Kaylee! Teacher's pet!

MAX: What's a chromosome?

MRS. TAN: It's a thread-like structure that holds the DNA molecule in the nucleus of a cell. *(to Kaylee)* Is there anything else you learned about him?

KAYLEE: Yeah. He got depressed when people started using his discovery to abort babies with Down Syndrome. He called it, like, "chromosomal racism," or something like that.

MRS. TAN: I did not know that. Good research, Kaylee. (*to the whole class*) Dr. Jerome Lejeune was called to testify in court cases in the early 90s about the personhood of the unborn child. He was able to use a DNA sequencer to show that a single-celled zygote, even before it is implanted in the mother's womb, has a full human genome.

MAX: What's a zygote?

MRS. TAN: That's what you call an unborn baby between fertilization until it's about 4 days old. After that it's called a blastocyst, and then an embryo, and then a fetus. It's all the same being, but the different names refer to different stages of development, like baby, child, adolescent, adult...

MAX: You mean, Dr. Le-what's-his-name proved that it's a human being even when it's only four days after conception?

MRS. TAN: That's correct. He proved that the genetic combination from both the mother and the father made the human zygote a very different being from her parents. In other words, the zygote is not just like a hair cell or a skin cell. She's a unique individual. Dr. Lejeune showed that under normal conditions, the genetic code present in the single-celled zygote is enough to guide the development of that individual into a human adult.

ROBERT: Hold up, Ms. Tan. Are you trying to tell us there's scientific evidence that the fetus *is* a human person?

MRS. TAN: That's right, Robert.

ROBERT: I don't believe that.

MRS. TAN: Okay... Why not?

ROBERT: How do we know the guy wasn't biased and didn't just make up the evidence?

MRS. TAN: That's a fair question. There's a principle that scientists use a lot, called the principle of objective evidence. It says

that if your claim is reasonable, then you should be able to provide evidence that is verifiable by other people. If you don't trust Dr. Lejeune's testimony, you can use your own DNA sequencer, and verify it for yourself. If you did that, you'd end up with the same results he did.

ROBERT: Look, even if it has unique human DNA, it's up to everybody to decide for themselves whether they believe a fetus is a person or not. That's a really personal decision.

MRS. TAN: *(raising her eyebrows)* How many of you would agree with Robert?

(Several students raise their hands, including Robert, Max, and Bethany.)

MRS. TAN: Almost half of you. Okay. In order to have this discussion, we're going to have to combine physical science with logic and reasoning. That's a useful dialogue for scientists. We have to use logic and reason all the time when drawing conclusions about data. So how about if I lay out two more principles to argue that the fetus is a human person, and you guys test it?

(Several students overlap with "Cool," "Go, Mrs. Tan!" and "Oooo, Bobby-Boy. A challenge of the wits.")

MRS. TAN: Alright. The first and most foundational principle of all reason and logic is *(writes on the board)* the principle of non-contradiction. This principle says that contradictions are illogical. So, for example, you cannot have a full-blooded Italian who is also, at the same time, in the same place, and in the same respect, a full-blooded Mexican.

BETHANY: Well, what if he's half-Italian and half-Mexican?

MRS. TAN: Then he wouldn't be full-blooded. He would be half and half. If he's *full-blooded*, he has to be one or the other. He can't be both. That's a contradiction. See?

BETHANY: So, like, what if the Italian guy is ugly and not ugly at the same time? (*students laugh*) No, seriously! I mean, maybe his neighbors think he's ugly, but his wife thinks he's not ugly. Isn't that a contradiction?

MRS. TAN: We're only talking about objective facts here — not subjective opinions. A subjective opinion is based on people's feelings, so it can be true for one person, and not for another. Your dog can be ugly and not ugly at the same time, depending on the opinions of the people looking at it. But it can't be a dog and not be a dog at the same time. That's an objective fact.

MEGHAN: What does this have to do with unborn babies?

MRS. TAN: Robert just suggested that you could have a being that was a person and not a person at the same time, in the same place, in the same respect. That's a contradiction. Something can't be a "person — non-person" at the same time. It either is or it isn't. It can't be both just because two people who are looking at it have different opinions. For example, it's an objective fact that Christopher, here, is a human person.

MAX: You sure about that?

CHRISTOPHER: Shut up.

ROBERT: I don't get what's wrong with contradictions. Why can't I hold a contradiction if I want to?

MRS. TAN: Well, you can. But contradictions are illogical and irrational.

ROBERT: So?

MRS. TAN: So if you contradict yourself, you can't expect other people to respect your position. If making a contradiction is a valid way to make an argument, then everything you say is both true and false at the same time. You won't be able to have a conversation about anything anymore, because nothing will make sense.

MEGHAN: I don't understand.

MRS. TAN: If you accept contradictions, then you would have to agree that the track meet is tomorrow, but not tomorrow. The United States of America includes New York, but it doesn't include New York. See? People can't function anymore when that happens. Society would end up in chaos, because contradictions make it impossible to do anything.

MAX: So you said the fetus has to be either a person or not a person. Well, how do we know which one it is?

MRS. TAN: Good question, Max. There's a third basic principle of reason called the principle of complete explanation. It says that when you're trying to explain what something is, the best explanation is the one that explains the most—the one that doesn't overlook or ignore any data.

ROBERT: Right. So a fetus isn't a human person because it's not complete. It doesn't have any arms or legs, or a brain.

MRS. TAN: Actually, the brain starts functioning at six weeks after fertilization. And the baby has arms and legs by the seventh week. By 30 weeks, the baby retains memories that she can recall after birth.

MAX: So what about before then?

MRS. TAN: Even when the embryo has not yet developed these physical features, she has a real and existing power to grow arms and legs and a brain, all by herself. She's just not ready to start yet. That doesn't mean she's not a person—all the information is already there at conception for her to grow all the human body parts. It just takes time for the embryo to organize all of her cells and parts to start to grow like that.

BETHANY: You're saying it has *potential* arms and legs, so, like, it's just a potential person.

MRS. TAN: No. I'm saying that it has the power to grow like a human being grows. So it's already a real human being. A *full* human being. It doesn't have to have all of its body parts fully organized and developed in order to be a real human person.

MAX: Why not? Why isn't it just a partial human being—depending on how developed it is?

MRS. TAN: Max, your body parts aren't fully organized and developed yet either.

CHRISTOPHER: (*laughing at MAX*) Dude!

MRS. TAN: Neither are yours, Christopher. But you guys aren't *partial* human beings. You're *full* human beings. (*scanning the entire classroom*) None of your brains will be fully developed until you are 22 or 23 years old...

CHRISTOPHER: That explains Max. But what about the rest of us?

MRS. TAN: (*ignoring the comment*) And it's only a few short years after that, that you begin losing brain function again.

MAX: So does that mean we're smarter than you, Mrs. Tan?

MEGHAN: What does the stage of brain development have to do with whether or not you're a human person?

KAYLEE: That's what she's saying. It doesn't.

MRS. TAN: Right. It's not the stage of development of a human brain that makes you a human person. That would be completely arbitrary. Who's going to be the one to decide when you have enough brain function to qualify as a human person? Whatever level of development they pick, someone else could always say that the level they chose was too high or too low. That's subjective. But it's *objectively* true that all human beings have the power to grow a human brain.

KAYLEE: So, you're saying that if you want a complete definition of the human person that includes all the data—then as long as the power to grow a human brain is there, you've got a human person.

MRS. TAN: Sort of. I'm saying that as long as you have the genetic power for unique and individual physical human development, you *are* a unique, individual human being.

BETHANY: But it can't even breathe yet.

MRS. TAN: Bethany, let me challenge you a little. Why do you have to be able to breathe to qualify as a human person?

BETHANY: Uhhh... because, like, everybody breathes, and without it, you'll die, right?

MRS. TAN: Right, but the fetus is exchanging oxygen and carbon dioxide through the placenta. She's not breathing the way you and I are, but she's doing the same thing. So why should you exclude the fetus from personhood just because she breathes differently than you do? That's completely arbitrary. We don't exclude people who use oxygen tanks, or tracheal tubes, or ventilators. Those are just different ways of doing the same thing.

ROBERT: Fine, but at really early stages, it doesn't breathe at all... Like, when it's a 2-week-old blob.

MEGHAN: That's because the embryo doesn't need to breathe to stay alive at that stage, dummy.

MRS. TAN: Meghan, Robert's not dumb. He's asking good questions. But your answer is correct. Why should an embryo be disqualified from human personhood just because she doesn't breathe? She doesn't *need* to breathe yet at this stage of development.

ROBERT: But *none* of their abilities are developed yet.

MRS. TAN: Some are and some aren't. A lot of *your* abilities aren't fully developed yet either, Robert.

ROBERT: Okay, but when it's, like three days old, you can't even see it with your naked eye.

KAYLEE: So? You can't see astronauts on the moon with your naked eye either. What does that have to do with anything?

ROBERT: People don't value embryos as much as they value born human beings.

KAYLEE: Yeah, but shouldn't they?

ROBERT: Not necessarily. A lot of tribes kill their newborn babies because they don't value them.

KAYLEE: That's doesn't make it right. It doesn't mean the baby isn't human.

ROBERT: Look, a lot of babies die before they're born. How can you say that's a full human person?

KAYLEE: Well, hello... a lot of people die *after* they're born, too. So what does that have to do with whether or not you're a person?

ROBERT: Because it's a glob of brainless goo.

KAYLEE: Wow. Maybe you'd feel differently if you were pregnant, Robert.

ROBERT: My mom's five months pregnant, Kaylee. How I feel about it doesn't change reality that it's just a blob of cells until it's born.

KAYLEE: Your mom's five months pregnant, and you think it's just a blob?

MRS. TAN: Okay—hold on a second. Let's stick to science and logic, not feelings.

MAX: So what's your point, Mrs. T?

MRS. TAN: Well, Robert's right. How you feel about something doesn't change the reality of what it is. But according to the principle of most complete explanation, having arms and legs and a brain is not the complete definition of a human person. You're overlooking or ignoring a lot of real data.

MAX: Like what?

MRS. TAN: Like people who don't have arms and legs, and who lack significant portions of their brains, but still have the capacity for love, for human creativity, for compassion, generosity, goodness, faith...

BETHANY: You mean like a soul?

MRS. TAN: Well, yes. You can call it a soul if you want to. But I'm not talking religiously. I mean that there is real evidence that human beings have more than physical powers. We also have transcendental powers.

MAX: Transcen-what?

MRS. TAN: Transcendental powers. They aren't physical—they go beyond physics. That's what transcendental means. The human power to love is real. You can really track it. You can really sense it. You really know when you are being loved and when you are not. Love is not just a feeling. It's a reality, and human beings have the power to engage in it. You can't just exclude those powers from the definition of a human person. They're real.

CHRISTOPHER: But an unborn baby can't love.

MRS. TAN: Maybe not—at least not that we've ever been able to scientifically detect. But that's not the point.

CHRISTOPHER: What's the point?

MEGHAN: It's like the power to grow arms and legs. It doesn't have to *be* loving to be a human person. It just has to have the *power* to love. So the unborn baby is a human person because it has the power to love.

MAX: How do you know? You can't see the power to love in an unborn baby.

MRS. TAN: True. But I can't see it in you, either. We have to assume that every physical human being also has transcendental human powers. Unless you can prove otherwise, if you don't assume this, you risk killing a real, full human person with transcendental powers that are extremely valuable — like the power to bring creativity and love into the world.

MAX: Okay, Mrs. T. I get it.

KAYLEE: This is cool, cause you're bringing up stuff I never heard before. But it doesn't sound like science anymore.

MRS. TAN: Science and philosophy and logic are all pretty closely related. They're all about discovering truth in the world. *(Mrs. Tan looks at the clock)* Okay...we got way off course. Let's get back to yesterday's discussion about genetics. Take out your books and turn to page 80.

(The students open their books as instructed.)

SCENE 2

(Robert and Emma are walking across the softball field, eating cafeteria hamburgers. We catch them in mid-conversation.)

ROBERT: Why didn't you say anything during class?

EMMA: You were totally mad at me for weeks after our debate on abortion two years ago.

ROBERT: Okay, so that was two years ago. But didn't you think today's discussion was biased?

EMMA: I thought she made a lot of sense about the personhood thing. I never heard any of that before. And even though she didn't say it, it seemed obvious that if the baby is a human person, abortion is wrong.

ROBERT: She was talking about science. You can prove scientific stuff. You can't prove that things are right or wrong.

EMMA: Why not?

ROBERT: Because that's opinion, not objective fact. Morality all depends on how you grew up and what you believe. Certain cultures believe certain things are wrong, and others don't.

EMMA: So right and wrong just depend on how you grew up?

(Robert shrugs.)

EMMA: So... if you grow up in a culture that believes one way, it's just as good as a culture that believes another way?

ROBERT: Why not?

EMMA: Like, if you grow up in a cannibal culture that teaches you it's okay to kill and eat people, that's okay?

ROBERT: *(scoffs at Emma)* Now you're being weird. That doesn't happen anymore.

EMMA: Yeah, but in certain cultures it was okay. So, according to you, that's fine because of how they were raised. If you happened to walk by at dinner time...

ROBERT: No... Cannibalism is okay for them... not for me. They can do what they want as long as I'm not on the menu.

EMMA: Do you really think they'll care what you think if they're hungry?

ROBERT: Look, it doesn't matter. I don't even believe the fetus is a human being anyway.

EMMA: But I thought you said science...

ROBERT: It doesn't matter what you say, Emma. You can't force people to believe what you believe.

EMMA: I'm not trying to force you to believe anything, Robert. Why are you being so touchy? I told you we shouldn't talk about this anymore.

(Robert is quiet and stares down at his shoes as the school principal rushes toward him. She takes Robert a step aside, but Emma overhears the conversation.)

PRINCIPAL: Robert, your Dad called. Your mother is in the hospital and he needs you to meet him there.

ROBERT: *(cautiously concerned)* What happened?

PRINCIPAL: *(pauses, and then gently)* She had... a miscarriage.

(Robert's face stiffens. He shoots a look at Emma who starts to get up, as if she wants to come with him. He backs away, staring at her in confusion, and then rushes off without her.)

SCENE 3

(Two days later, inside his garage, Robert is exercising vigorously on his weight set. He is pushing his muscles harder than he normally does as his Dad walks in. His Dad watches him exercise for a moment, goes to the small fridge, and pulls out a can of soda. He pops it open.)

DAD: You're making me tired just looking at you.

(Robert keeps working out. He grunts with each bench press rep he completes, each one getting harder.)

DAD: Didn't you work out this morning?

(Robert exhausts his last set, straining to lift the bar off his chest. He manages to extend his arms and sets the bar in the cradle. His arms drop to his side.)

DAD: You know it's not good overwork your muscles like that.

ROBERT: *(polite but without emotion)* I'm almost done.

(Robert's Dad turns to leave, but stops himself as he's heading to the door.)

DAD: Your mother's concerned about you.

ROBERT: I'm okay. I'm just sorry she's upset.

DAD: You hardly said anything at the hospital, and you've hardly said anything since we've been home. I know when you're quiet, something's wrong.

ROBERT: *(trying to sound like he's fine)* I mean, you guys are acting like a family member died. He wasn't born. I don't get it. You didn't even expect to have another baby in the first place.

DAD: Just because your brother took us by surprise...

ROBERT: *(slightly defensive)* He's not my brother!

DAD: Lower your voice, Robert. Your Mom's sleeping, and it would upset her to hear you say that.

ROBERT: But *you're* not upset.

DAD: Where do you get that?

ROBERT: I don't see you grieving. You're going on like nothing happened. Why can't I?

DAD: Now hold on just a minute...

ROBERT: (*cutting him off*) And now you're planning a funeral. I mean, how's that helping Mom? Huh? Why can't we just move on and go back to normal?

DAD: So you're upset that we're having a funeral for your brother?

ROBERT: I don't get the point. I know Mom's upset, but isn't having a funeral just dragging things out?

DAD: Look, your Mom and I *both* wanted to have this funeral.

ROBERT: Why?

DAD: Because we need a chance to say goodbye.

ROBERT: Goodbye to what? It was a fetus. Not a baby.

DAD: I don't understand... you were excited at the *idea* of having a brother...

ROBERT: Yeah. The idea of having a brother. I'm also excited about the idea of making lots of money after I go to college.

DAD: You talked about teaching him to hit a baseball. You talked about... did you just compare your brother to money?

ROBERT: I planned to play baseball when—if—he was born. But he wasn't born and never became my brother. It just didn't work out.

DAD: I don't know what's going on with you, but someday you're probably going to get married and have a baby—hopefully in that order—and when you do, you'll know what it's like to experience the joy of expecting a baby with someone and making plans for your child's future. Maybe you won't understand until then because it isn't real to you right now.

(Robert is taken back by his father's words. He can't look his father in the eyes. He tries to hide his emotions. His dad sits next to him on the bench.)

DAD: What is it, son?

(Robert looks forward. His eyes are welling with tears. He clenches his jaw to hold them back.)

DAD: Robert... What's really going on here?

ROBERT: *(after a long pause)* You remember Jolene?

DAD: Your old girlfriend? She's not messing with your head again, is she?

ROBERT: No... I mean... sort of. It's not her fault.

DAD: You're not getting back together with her, are you? I don't think your mom could handle that right now.

ROBERT: No. Just listen.

DAD: *(cautious)* Okay...

ROBERT: I know you said I could always tell you anything. But I felt like I couldn't.

DAD: Robert, are you in some kind of trouble with her?

ROBERT: No. Not really. Not anymore. *(Robert looks away from his dad. He doesn't know how to proceed)* I made a mistake.

DAD: Whoa. Wait a minute. What kind of mistake?

ROBERT: I was stupid and things got out of control and... next thing I know, she's pregnant.

(Robert's Dad stands up and paces the room. His faces away from Robert for a moment.)

ROBERT: Dad, it was just the one time. I didn't plan on it happening. But we were alone and I let my guard down and next thing I know, we did something we couldn't take back. I felt sick afterwards, Dad. It's not supposed to be like *that*, is it?

(Robert's Dad turns around.)

DAD: No, it's not supposed to be like that.

(Robert's Dad stares at him as if frozen in time. He looks at Robert long and hard. Then closes his eyes and sits down next to Robert.)

DAD: So, you have a kid? Why didn't you tell us? Did she give it up for adoption?

(Robert says nothing. His eyes tell his Dad there's more to the story.)

DAD: Robert, what happened to the baby?

ROBERT: She had an abortion.

DAD: She just went and had an abortion? Just like that? Why didn't you ask me to help you?

ROBERT: Dad, she didn't want the abortion.

DAD: Then why'd she get one?

ROBERT: I don't know... I...

DAD: Did you try to stop her? Why didn't you come to us?

ROBERT: Dad... I...

DAD: You could have come to us...

ROBERT: DAD! It was my idea.

(There is a moment of strained silence as this sinks in. Then Robert delivers his next lines with great difficulty, trying to hold back tears.)

ROBERT: I was scared, okay? We were both scared. I thought we could just get it taken care of and move on with our lives. I rode with her on the bus to the clinic. I held her hand in the waiting room. I thought I was helping her. They never even asked for ID. They just took the money and called her back when they were ready. Like she was donating blood or something. It made me feel like... maybe this isn't so serious. I mean, people do this all the time.

(Robert takes a moment. Trying to think of what to say next. His Dad waits as Robert gathers his thoughts. Robert looks at his Dad, as if for an answer. His Dad doesn't say anything.)

ROBERT: She wasn't the same person when she came out. She didn't say anything on the bus ride home. She didn't let me hold her hand. She just looked out the window. It was like when you drove us back home from the hospital yesterday, and mom just stared out the window.

(Robert's Dad closes his eyes a moment and waits as Robert tries to go on.)

ROBERT: I didn't want to tell you because I didn't want you to... hate me... like Jolene hates me. Like I hated — *hate* — myself for...

DAD: Look at me. *(Robert looks at him)* You are my son. I can't think of a single mistake you can make that I would ever hate you for. We've all done things in life that we wish we could take back or do over. Myself included.

(Robert tries his hardest to choke back a lump in his throat.)

DAD: Son, I'm not perfect. I know I make a lot of mistakes and don't always know the right thing to say. And I really don't know the right thing to say right now. But I know that I love you and your Mom loves you, and whatever you're going through right now, I'm here to help you get through it.

ROBERT: *(quietly)* Yeah.

DAD: The funeral's in an hour. We should probably talk about this more later. You don't have to go if you don't want to.

(Robert's emotions finally break, and he starts to cry quietly.)

ROBERT: I'm sorry, Dad. I'm sorry.

(His Dad pulls him in and holds him. Robert sobs into his shoulder.)

DAD: It's gonna be okay, son.

SCENE 4

(A small service for Robert's unborn brother has just concluded at a very well cared for cemetery. Most of those in attendance have started to walk away. While Emma stands back a few steps from Robert, waiting for him, Robert's Dad notices that Robert is still standing by the headstone. He approaches Robert, puts his hand on Robert's shoulder and gives it a squeeze. He nods at Emma and walks with Robert's mother back to their car. A gentle breeze blows through the trees as Robert stands before the small headstone. He puts his hands in his pockets. Emma steps forward, a little hesitant.)

EMMA: That was a really beautiful service. It was kind of weird-feeling, but... I mean, it wasn't weird, but...

(She trails off. Robert seems very unsure of himself, which makes Emma just as uncomfortable.)

EMMA: If you wanna talk about it... Or if you'd like to be alone, I can wait in my car... you know, when you're ready.

ROBERT: Emma, I have to tell you something, and you're probably gonna hate me when I say it.

EMMA: I doubt it. We've been friends forever. If I don't hate you by now, I probably never will.

(Robert has a hard time proceeding. He continues anyway.)

ROBERT: You do everything perfect, Emma. It's kind of weird that we're best friends, 'cause you're like this... this... you go to church and read the Bible and do everything right. You never seem to screw things up like I do.

EMMA: How long have we been friends? You know this is me, Emma, right?

ROBERT: You're like, all squeaky clean.

EMMA: Because I go to church?

(Robert takes a moment, gathering the courage to proceed.)

ROBERT: You know how after Mrs. Tan's class, you asked me why I was being so touchy?

EMMA: Yeah...

ROBERT: I really hate it when abortion comes up, Emma. I can't stand the whole subject.

EMMA: We don't have to talk about it...

ROBERT: Yeah, we do. That's what I'm... Look. You remember Jolene?

EMMA: You guys aren't getting back together again... are you?

ROBERT: *(frustrated)* No. Emma. Listen to me. I'm trying to tell you... Geez. *(pause)* When we were going out, I got her pregnant, and I talked her into having an abortion.

(Emma is silent.)

ROBERT: I knew you'd hate me.

EMMA: I don't hate you, Robert. Why would think that?

ROBERT: Because Christians hate sinners.

EMMA: Being a Christian isn't about hating people.

ROBERT: I understand if you don't want to be friends anymore, Emma.

EMMA: *(now she's frustrated)* Seriously, Robert? You're always getting all defensive and thinking I'm judging you. Every time we have a conversation about anything serious, you say really messed up things, and then you expect me to look down at you or something. You know what though? I don't judge you and I never have. But *you* judge *me*.

ROBERT: I do not.

EMMA: For real? You act like I'm going to throw a Bible at you because you got Jolene pregnant and talked her into having an abortion. That's judging *me*. And it doesn't make any sense. I never treated you that way. But you think you know what's in my heart when you don't have a clue. I knew about the whole thing, anyway, by the way.

ROBERT: You did? Who told you?

EMMA: Jolene was at our youth group retreat last summer. I don't know how she wound up there, but she was in so much pain, Robert. At prayer group, she let everything out. The whole thing. And there was a lot more than just you and the abortion. But she changed that day. Not like totally, but she's different now. She's healing a lot, because she knows God forgives her. And the baby forgives her. I was totally amazed by the whole thing. And humbled. I don't judge her, and I don't judge you.

ROBERT: I figured you'd never want to speak to me again.

EMMA: That's so lame, Robert. Following Christ is about understanding, and compassion, and forgiveness. Yeah, I think you screwed up. I think what you and Jolene did was about the worst thing you could've done. But I know who you are. You're my best friend. And you're an amazing guy with a ton of talent and so much to offer the world, if only you'd stop judging *yourself*.

(Robert thinks a moment. He looks down at the headstone. He bends down and reaches out to the headstone and runs his fingers across the name.)

ROBERT: Gabriel. His name is Gabriel. Do you think I would have been a good brother?

EMMA: I think you would have been an awesome brother.

ROBERT: *(still staring at the headstone)* Do you think I would have been... a good dad?

EMMA: Yeah, Robert. I do. And maybe some day you will be again. With the right person... I mean...

(Robert stands up and looks at Emma.)

ROBERT: I'm sorry, Emma. About how I treated you. I'm a total jerk.

(Emma elbows him and smiles.)

EMMA: *(playfully joking)* You are a jerk. But only part-time.

(Emma stands close to Robert as they look down at the grave a moment longer. Emma takes Robert's hand and holds it as they walk back to her car as the stage lights go out.)