

ONE WAY UP

A Play in One Act

By Laura Lallone

CHARACTERS

Sofia Boyko Singleton - 59 years old. Gorgeous, flamboyant Russian woman. Ballet dancer, author, artist, spiritual guide. Co-founder of The Hill. Wife of Nick Singleton and aunt of Oliver Boyko.

Nick Singleton - 60 years old. Artist, architect. Born in Texas. Tall, strong, loving. Co-founder of The Hill. Husband of Sofia Boyko Singleton and uncle of Oliver Boyko.

Oliver (Ollie) Boyko - 22 years old. Raised by his Aunt Sofia and Uncle Nick. Plans to be a cinematographer or photojournalist. Kind, responsible. Makes his own rules.

Sarah Metler - 18 years old. Heart of gold. Kind and loving. Nervous. Always afraid of getting in trouble. Plays by the rules. Plans to study business administration. Only child of Stan Metler.

Stan Metler - 56 years old. IT manager for Hollywood movie studio. Widower. Can be overly involved and critical. Overprotective and rigid. Good heart. Father of Sarah Metler.

Chelsea Ross - 17 years old. Beautiful, tough as nails. Bossy, self-centered. Takes over in every situation. Has no idea what she wants to do with her life, but will be certain to go to the best school and get the best job. Daughter of Lucinda Ross.

Lucinda Ross - 44 years old. Snobbish, single working mom. Lawyer. Perfectly manicured. Gets what she wants, always. Mother of two children, eldest is Chelsea Ross.

Peter Capriotti - 17 years old. Brilliant. Odd. A master of computer programming. Twin of Mary Capriotti, only son of Paul Capriotti.

Mary Capriotti - 17 years old. A master with languages. Plans to create her own language. Twin of Peter Capriotti, only daughter of Paul Capriotti.

Paul Capriotti - 42 years old. Owns a very successful car dealership. Father of Peter and Mary Capriotti.

Jerome Bowdry - 16 years old. Skipped 9th grade. Brilliant science mind. Plans to study neurobiology. Oldest of six children. Son of Barbara Bowdry.

Barbara Bowdry - 44 years old. Tough. Extreme and intense. Currently a civil engineer, designing freeways in Los Angeles. Pregnant. Mother of Jerome Bowdry.

Harold Montevideo - 24 years old. Rookie real estate agent. Son of Danny the landscaper at The Hill. Third born of seven kids. The Hill is his second home.

Cinthia B - 47 years old. Commercial real estate developer. Romantic partner of Bethany Hull. Originally from New Jersey.

Bethany Hull - 35 years old. Antique shop owner. Romantic partner of Cinthia B. Native of the mountain town near The Hill. A bit of a hypochondriac with a touch of Obsessive Compulsive tendencies.

Ms. Talbot - 63 years old. Mortgage banking officer, considering retirement next year. Mother to two grown men. Recently became a grandmother.

Ingrid Darling - 32 years old. Sweet and pretty. Mortgage banking representative.

Maisy (Penelope) Cruz - 17 years old. A free spirit. Loves to paint. Parents own and operate a private plane and helicopter business.

SETTING

Kali Hill retreat center. Deep in the mountains, northern California.

(Pronounced “COLLIE” Hill)

TIME

Fourth of July weekend, contemporary time.

SCENES

Scene I: The Arrival

Scene 2: The Girls’ Room

Scene 3: Silent Night and Chores

Scene 4: Saturday Morning Meditation

Scene 5: The Adventurers Return

Scene 6: Good Luck

Scene 7: Ollie’s 24/7

Scene 8: Welcome Baby

Scene 9: Keeping The Hill

ACT I

Scene I: The Arrival

(Meditation gardens. OLLIE center stage. Looking through lens of camera to left.

NICK, MS. TALBOT, INGRID enter stage right.)

NICK

(Holding two meditation pillows.)

Thank you so much for coming, Ms. Talbot and...

INGRID

Ingrid.

NICK

Yes...Ingrid. Now that you've seen Kali Hill, and seen how special it is, I sure do hope you'll be able to give us just two more weeks to sort...

MS. TALBOT

Mr. Singleton, we been through this. There are no more two weeks. While the retreat oasis is lovely, the facts still remain the facts. Let's take a look at the the numbers here...again.

(Snaps to INGRID.)

Ingrid! Turn to page 14. Read the final three entries under the column entitled Mortgage Payments Received.

(INGRID thumbs through a stack of pages.)

INGRID

Yes, here we are. Page 14. Mortgage Payments Received. Last six entries. Zero. Zero. Zero. Zero. Zero...

MS. TALBOT

And...

INGRID

Zero.

MS. TALBOT

Mr. Singleton, your mortgage payments are overdue. Period. If you do not have a buyer - and you are not able to make payment yourself - we're going to need to begin the foreclosure proceedings.

INGRID

(Whispering to MS. TALBOT.)

Ms. Talbot, maybe there's something that we could do. Another week, perhaps.

MS. TALBOT

Ingrid, you're a lovely girl and I am sure one day you'll be a spectacular mortgage officer for our fair bank. But you are here with me to shadow, shadow - not to tell me what my business is. I'm not retired yet. The facts are the facts.

(To NICK.)

Two more days. Thank you for the meditation pillows.

(Takes pillows from NICK.)

They are lovely. This purple one will go perfectly in my sewing room.

(NICK walks MS. TALBOT and INGRID to stage left, exit. MS. TALBOT drops purple pillow, doesn't notice.)

OLLIE

Two days, huh? That's not a lot of time.

NICK

(Sigh.)

I hear the bus. That must be them.

(OLLIE uses camera zoom lens to see the travelers. Sees something/someone of interest.)

OLLIE

Aunt Sofia? Where are you. We could get lucky. One of the guests could be a millionaire.

(SOFIA enters, stage right. Flitting across the stage, with flowing dress.)

SOFIA

Oh, Oliver. You do have a dramatist in you. In life there is no such thing as luck. All is well. It will be as it's meant to be. I don't want to just hand over the keys of my home, my refuge, this spiritual vortex to just anyone.

OLLIE

(Arm around Sofia.)

I know you don't want to just give up the keys. But will you please hire a realtor? Like, today?

SOFIA

I do have a realtor. What do you think Harold is?

OLLIE

I think he's two years older than me and Danny the landscaper's son.

SOFIA

Well, he has his real estate license now. Don't you worry. There will be a sign, keep looking for that sign. For now, let us focus on these five children and why they're here. For a second chance to create the future of their dreams.

NICK

Not sure I'd call them children. Seventeen years old? Eighteen? That's how old you were when I met you. Pretty as a picture strolling down the Champs Elysees, a Russian ballerina. Married at 18 to an American architect. Go figure. Most beautiful woman I ever laid my eyes on. Still are.

(Brakes squeal to a stop.)

SOFIA

Is the garden prepared?

OLLIE

With everything we need.

(OLLIE, SOFIA and NICK go stage right. SOFIA notices purple pillow. Picks it up and puts with the other meditation pillows.)

(SARAH and STAN enter stage left, each with light backpack)

SARAH

(Pointing into the distance, whispering)

Daddy, look at the waterfall. And at the retreat house. I can't believe we're here. Kali Hill. It's all so enchanting, isn't it?

STAN

(Whispering)

Watch your footing, Sarah. Look out for the rocks! There are bound to be snakes off in the grass. We're in the middle of nowhere. Nearest hospital is probably forty miles away. We just need to get you through the weekend.

(Looks at a brochure.)

SARAH

Yes, daddy. But there's just so much to take in. Oh! Look at the little chipmunks...

(Points off stage left.)

(CHELSEA and LUCINDA enter. SARAH nearly hits CHELSEA in the head.

LUCINDA sneers.)

CHELSEA

Ugh, excuse me. Look who you're calling chipmunk? Are you going to stay at the foot of the walkway all weekend? I don't think that counts as "Full Weekend Attendance."

(Points at STAN'S open brochure.)

So unless you're planning to keep that big fat F in whatever subject it is that you got that big fat F, you may want to keep it moving, Saffron.

LUCINDA

(Pulling a light roller bag and carrying a purse. Loudly, talking into the phone)

You're cutting out.

(Looks at her phone, shakes it.)

Samantha, you there? Ugh. I can't believe coming here was my brilliant idea. Pay \$850 to come to a deserted retreat house...run by a Russian witch fairy and her cowboy husband. I swear they must have something over the Board of Education. I have to get my head examined.

CHELSEA

(To herself.)

Ya think?

LUCINDA

(Loudly, yelling at no one in particular)

You'd think that someone would come to take my bags. I know you're at one with nature but would it kill you to hire a bellman?

(OLLIE runs towards LUCINDA, takes bags. Spins around and bumps into SARAH. SARAH stumbles. OLLIE holds her up. OLLIE reaches out to take SARAH'S bag but CHELSEA loads up OLLIE with her own bags.)

(OLLIE, SARAH, CHELSEA, STAN and LUCINDA walk towards SOFIA and NICK.)

(PETER, MARY and PAUL enter, stage left.)

MARY

(Looks up from phone. Nudges PETER, motions to SOFIA and NICK.)

Thaumaturgical.

PETER

(Looks up from phone. Nods and smiles.)

Yeah, wonder workers.

PAUL

(Walks between PETER and MARY, puts arms around them.)

Nice to be spending some time with my twins before you're off into the world. Summer before senior year is a pretty special time.

(Whispers.)

Leave the talking to me. I'll get us outta here within the hour.

PETER and MARY

(Look at each other, in unison in French accent.)

Protecteur.

(PETER, MARY and PAUL walk slowly and gather with SOFIA and NICK and others. JEROME and BARBARA enter, stage left.)

BARBARA

(Holding her very pregnant belly. Wearing a backpack.)

Finally. The great outdoors. Jerome, baby, breathe that in. Just take it in. Let it fill your lungs. It's called air, real air. The only thing you can't buy in LA. Pump your arms and legs. It lets more air in.

JEROME

(Filling up a bag with leaves and other objects found along the path.)

Yes, Barbara. While I am not your baby, as I am the eldest, and clearly there will be yet another offspring which will indeed be your baby, you are correct about the air matter. There is nothing like air. By volume, dry air contains approximately 78 percent nitrogen, 21 percent oxygen, 1 percent argon and .039 percent carbon dioxide.

(OLLIE races back to take BARBARA'S backpack. BARBARA waves him off.)

(BARBARA, JEROME and OLLIE join the others.)

JEROME

(Wistfully.)

Money also cannot buy you love.

PAUL

(Leans in to LUCINDA.)

Yeah, but I hear it can buy you this place. Kali Hill is on the market, selling for next to nothin'. Could flip it in a year and make a killing.

LUCINDA

You don't say.

NICK

Gather around, everyone. Gather around.

(LUCINDA holding her phone, covering mouthpiece. MARY and PETER typing on their phones.)

NICK

Welcome to Kali Hill. We are the Singletons. I'm Nick and this is my wife Sofia and our nephew Ollie. We are proud to be your hosts and guides for what we believe will be the weekend of a lifetime, fully endorsed by the California Board of Education to right any wrongs that blemish your permanent records. Ollie, here...

(OLLIE holds up camera. Gives a wave.)

NICK

He's a photojournalist...He'll be taking some pictures throughout the weekend. So don't be...

(JEROME'S phone rings. JEROME answers.)

NICK

Camera shy.

JEROME

Maisy? Yes, I can hear you, my darling.

(SOFIA takes the phone from his hands. Hands it to OLLIE.)

JEROME

(Reaches out for phone.)

I love you. I love you, Maisy.

(OLLIE collects all electronic devices from students and parents.)

JEROME

Oh to be separated from the one you love.

SOFIA

(Dances about the stage, weaving in and out of the travelers.)

Watch your thoughts; they become words.

Watch your words; they become actions.

Watch your actions; they become habits.

Watch your habits; they become character.

Watch your character; it becomes your destiny.

Of more than 5000 applicants, you have been selected. This is your destiny. Today. Right here.

NICK

Now before we go any farther, just one signature here.

(NICK rolls out a scroll the length of the stage. CHELSEA, LUCINDA, BARBARA, JEROME, MARY, PETER, PAUL, STAN and SARAH gather around to read the scroll.)

BARBARA

Today, Friday, this second day of July, in seeking Independence of mind and spirit, I the undersigned agree to...blah...blah...blah...

PAUL

Intensive weekend at Kali Hill Retreat...“F” into a “B”...attendance by lottery only...not refundable...parental accompaniment...full weekend attendance required.

(CHELSEA, LUCINDA, BARBARA, JEROME, MARY, PETER, PAUL, STAN and SARAH sign the scroll.)

(SOFIA stands with her arms out. Eyes closed. Silent. All realize that they should be silent as well.)

SOFIA

(Chanting.)

Ohm. Ohm. Ohm.

(Motions for all to join.)

EVERYONE

Ohm. Ohm. Ohm.

(Silence.)

SOFIA

Please, everyone, take hands.

(CHELSEA wedges in to hold OLLIE'S hand.)

Now, close your eyes. Feel the life all around you. Let us call upon our ancestors and the divine to create a safe and loving space for us all, filled with kindness.

NICK

Look around and find someone that you didn't know before you got here today. Stand toe to toe with 'em.

(OLLIE turns to partner with SARAH. Pairings: MARY and SOFIA, JEROME and LUCINDA, PETER and BARBARA, CHELSEA and PAUL, NICK and STAN, OLLIE and SARAH.)

OLLIE

Take a deep breath and say one word that describes what you want to get out of this weekend...besides just getting through it and changing your F to a B.

(Murmurs. EVERYONE talking. SARAH and OLLIE staring at each other, silent. Thunderclap.)

SARAH

(Shrieks. Jumps into OLLIE then pulls back. Rants with her face in her hands. EVERYONE stares in silence.)

I cheated on a Spanish test! I actually didn't even cheat. I wrote the conjugations on my desk in pencil because I forgot that we had a test...no matter what I do I can't figure out Spanish...and Sharon is so good at it and always says, "How come you got a B, didn't you study?" ...then we didn't even have a test because Mrs. Baduski changed her mind but I forgot to erase the words from the desk and she saw them after class and called me down to her office and said "is there something you have to tell me" and at first I thought she was kidding. But she wasn't kidding. I totally forgot. I didn't even remember because I didn't actually even cheat. How am I going to get into Harvard and then into Harvard Business school with an F. An F!

(Looks up at OLLIE.)

I am so ashamed.

BARBARA

Oh, yeah. Sarah, way to get this party started. The hell with secrets. Let's get the ugly truth out in the middle of the ground and bury it. Jerome, tell 'em what happened.

JEROME

The administration did not look favorably upon the assistance that I bestowed upon my beloved Maisy for the science fair. The simple chemical reaction of the base and acid to create a baking soda volcano could be accomplished by anyone. That being said, I would do it a thousand times over. One thousand times. No matter the risk. No matter the consequences.

BARBARA

Well, let's not let my alumni board hear you saying that. Okay, baby?

CHELSEA

(Under her breath.)

Oh, brother. I'm sure you and your nerd girlfriend are charming together.

SARAH

I think that's sweet.

CHELSEA

Of course you do, Giselle.

BARBARA

(Sneers at CHELSEA.)

Okay, what's your crime...whatcha in the slammer for?

CHELSEA

Really? Okay...I, like, took over Mr. Reed's trig class a...couple...times. It was a necessity.

Someone had to do it. That man has no style. No sense of flow. No command.

LUCINDA

Her instructional videos did have much more panache. But she's getting that F off her record, if

I have to write a personal check to every member of the board of education. Ungrateful fossil.

MARY and PETER

(In unison, in Spanish accent.)

Falsificación!

PAUL

(Laughing.)

They forged Doctor Bridgeport's signature to get out of PE. Clever little buggers. They've always known what they wanted and knew how to get it. I guess two heads are better than one, eh?

STAN

That doesn't seem...

SOFIA

Now, now. No matter of the past. All the kitty cats are out of their bags even sooner than we planned. This is a very good sign. What a group you are. Everyone to play their part. Deep cleansing breath, everyone.

(EVERYONE inhale, exhale.)

Look around. You have now created a new tribe.

OLLIE

Each of you has a playbook to guide you through the weekend, to get you to Sunday at 3pm. The finish line, right? No two books are alike. Students, you will each find a quest designed specifically for you. For all our guests, your playbook tells you how the weekend will unfold including your house work assignments.

(Hands books to everyone.)

LUCINDA

Oh, thanks, darling. But I'm here for Chelsea. I don't need any school books. And I am not doing any house work.

(Hands book back to OLLIE.)

NICK

What got you here is just circumstances, darling. Welcome to the school called Life.

(Hands LUCINDA back the book.)

SOFIA

You will find your rooms and the grounds accommodating and not nearly as bare as you might have thought...of a Russian witch and her cowboy. You will share rooms in the following configuration:

Chelsea, Mary and Sarah. Jerome and Peter. Stan and Paul. And finally Lucinda and Barbara. Behind these walls lie all you need. We will meet back here at the stroke of 3 for our evening meal. Remember, everything has meaning. Pay attention to the signs. Namaste.

(SARAH, STAN, CHELSEA, LUCINDA, JEROME, BARBARA exit stage right.)

OLLIE

Please follow your guidebook! The rules are there to help you make it through the weekend...

PAUL

(Checking his watch.)

Watch this, kids. We're outta here.

(Pulls out wallet. Motions to NICK.)

How much?

NICK

Oh, okay...fifty.

PAUL

Alright! That's all? Here's a hundred.

(Hands NICK a 100 dollar bill.)

NICK

(Hands bill to SOFIA.)

Mr. Capriotti made a very generous offering. What a pleasure it will be to have him, Peter and Mary this weekend. Very, very generous.

PAUL

It's Paul. I think there was a misunderstanding. What's it gonna take to cut this thing short?

SOFIA

Often in life, Paul, the only way to go around is to go through.

(Motions toward the retreat house.)

MARY

(Dutch accent.)

Verslagen.

PETER

Yeah, roasted.

(PAUL, PETER, MARY, SOFIA exit. NICK pulls OLLIE back.)

NICK

(To OLLIE.)

We have a problem.

OLLIE

What is it?

NICK

Your grandfather...he's not doing well...

(CHELSEA enters stage right. Freezes and hides.)

(INGRID enters stage left. Freezes and hides.)

NICK

Your uncle called this morning from Russia. I haven't told your aunt yet. She's been in such a fragile state about it all...selling The Hill...possible foreclosure. Now this. She just doesn't need this pressure.

OLLIE

When are you going to tell her? She can't keep turning down offers.

NICK

I know. Harold is coming by tonight. He said that he has an investor who may be interested.

OLLIE

Harold? He hasn't gotten you anywhere. You're too soft on him, Uncle Nick.

NICK

I know. I know. We need to find a buyer this weekend. I don't have to tell you that our life savings is tied up here. There's no way we could spend more than a month in Saint Petersburg on the cash I have, let alone move there. I don't know how long your grandfather has but I'll be damned if your Aunt doesn't return to Russia to be with him in his last chapter.

OLLIE

(Patting NICK'S back.)

I thought he didn't want to see her.

NICK

The past is in the past. Running off to America is no reason to cut someone off. 30 years is too many to waste. He's going to see her.

Anyway, you have to get on with your life. You've been tied to this place for too long. You didn't choose this life. We did. You'll finally have the money you need for school.

(NICK and OLLIE walk towards stage left. CHELSEA runs off stage. INGRID watches in hiding.)

Time to say goodbye to The Hill.

OLLIE

Yeah, I guess...

(NICK and OLLIE exit stage left. MS. TALBOT enters stage right.)

MS. TALBOT

Ingrid! I should very well just leave you here. What are you doing, child?

INGRID

Ms. Talbot, I think there's more that we can be doing to help the Singletons. It seems that there's more to the story than we know. Mrs. Singleton's father...

MS. TALBOT

Exactly whose interests do you have in mind, Ingrid?

INGRID

I'm not sure I know what you mean, Ms. Talbot.

MS. TALBOT

I'm beginning to doubt your management potential. Actually I doubted it all along. Whose side are you on?

INGRID

I'm on the side of helping people. These are good people who just need a little more time before they lose something that means the world to them. Why wouldn't we just give them a little more time?

MS. TALBOT

I wish the world were as simple as you make it out to be. But it's not. Either they find a buyer - or a bag of money - in the next two days, or I will begin the foreclosure proceedings. Let's go.