

CB Goodman

Fundamentals of Acting

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## Character Analysis for *Stop Kiss*

**Character (name):** Callie Pax

### **Bibliographic Information:**

**Author-** Diana Son is an American playwright born in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania in 1965. She became interested in theatre while in high school and studied Dramatic Literature at New York University. Her career started in 1987 with a short play called *Wrecked On Brecht*. After that, she spent about 10 years living in Manhattan and producing short plays such as *Stealing fire* (1992), *2000 Miles* (1993), *R.A.W* (1993), *Fishes* (1998), *Siberia* (2003), and many more. Her first full-length play was actually *Stop Kiss* which was published in 1998, where it was produced in the Off-Broadway at The Public Theatre in New York City. The production of this play changed her life forever. In an interview, she stated that after this play she realized she would never have to do any of the "copyediting, proofreading, waitressing, and temping" jobs that she had before in order to make a living. *Stop Kiss* became incredibly famous and while being produced 100 times across the country it was named "Best of 2014." While she was becoming a successful playwright she also started her career in film. Her very first film job was in 2000 with *The West Wing*. Some other notable film productions are *Law & Order* (2004-2008), *Blue Bloods* (2010-2014), *American Crime* (2015-2016), *13 Reasons Why* (2017), one of her most recent works was co-producer of *Dirty John* (2018-2019). She has won several awards throughout her career she Won the Barilla Kerr award for playwriting, the GLAAD Media Award for Best New York Production for *Stop Kiss*, was nominated for the John Gassner Playwriting prize, is a recipient of an NEA/TCG Theatre Residency Grant with the Mark Taper Forum, won the Brooks Atkinson Fellowship at the Royal National Theatre in London and is a member of the Playwrights Unit in Residence at the Joseph Papp Public Theater. Recently she has taught playwriting at both Yale University and New York University. She is definitely made a point to leave her mark in theatre as she is the Playwrighting Program Chair of the Dramatists Guild of America's Fellows Program, a mentorship and support program for playwrights and musical theater writers. She is a member of the Dramatists Guild of America, Women in Theatre, and the Writers Guild of America, East. She is still working today as she lives happily in Brooklyn with her husband and three sons.

**History of Play-** This play was the first full-length play produced by Diana Son in 1998, opening on Off-Broadway at The Public Theatre in New York City. Published by the Dramatic Play Service. It was directed by Jo Bonney, who is an American director who focuses mainly on the development of new plays and playwrights. Other original tech positions were held by stage-management by Buzz Cohen, with set design by Narelle Sissons, costumes by Kaye Voyce, lighting design by James Vermeulen, sound design, and original music by David Van Tieghem. The original cast included Callie played by Jessica Hecht, Sara done by Sandra Oh, George played by Kevin Carroll, Peter by Rick Holmes, Mrs. Winsley/Nurse by Sandra McClain, and Detective Cole by Saul Stein. This play was wildly accepted by the audience and

ended up being extended three times. It has made its way across the country and has been done over a hundred times. Eventually, it won the Gay and Lesbian Alliance Against Defamation (GLAAD) Media Award for Best New York Production which was highly deserved. It has also been titled Winner of an Obie Award and the New York Times Best Of 1999.

**Time Period of Play-** Although the play is a contemporary piece meant to be played in modern times it is very heavily influenced by the gay rights movements that were happening in the 90s. When the play was written and produced. Throughout the play, we follow two women along their journey to fall in love with each other in a time when that life was heavily discriminated against. At this time in the movement, people could lose their job over being outed as a member of the LGBTQ+ community. This is seen as a point of anxiety at several moments throughout the play. A Harvard University article says that the 90s were a pivotal time for the community because although it was still highly discriminated against it had just moved into the forefront of political conversations. In 1993 a policy called "Don't ask, don't tell" was set into place as members of the LGBTQ+ community were allowed to serve in the military but banned any kind of homosexual activities. Although this only increased hate crimes as members of the military were outed and either forcefully discharged or mysteriously murdered by other members of the military. The article goes on to say that "The Defense of Marriage Act (DOMA) was enacted in 1996 and defined marriage, at the federal level, as the union of one man to one woman. DOMA was primarily brought about by a fear that if states granted same-sex couples the right to marry, the federal government and other states would have to honor those marriages." So although it became a more talked about a topic it also became increasingly more controversial. Hate crime was moving towards an all-time high as people began to fear what would happen if gay people were granted rights. In a huge movement for gay rights in the year, 1997 President Bill Clinton nominated James C. Hormel as the first openly gay U.S. ambassador. This however did not go well and people used it against the President in an attempt to get him impeached. In New York specifically, there was small and quite behind-the-scenes action to aid in the change. In 1990, Deborah Glick, who is lesbian, became the first openly LGBT member of the State House of Representatives. Additionally, they began to look for a treatment for AIDS and after being given \$33 million to research the Rivington House was able to make huge progress in 1997 bringing the mortality rate from %50 to %30 to anyone who was treated. All of this began to open to door to all the change that would come in the new generation.

**Synopsis of Play-** Throughout the play, we follow the lives of Callie and Sara in New York. Although they meet as unlikely friends we soon see something deeper start to evolve as the two women begin to fall for each other. After one unfortunate night when the women share their first kiss and are attacked by a man on the street. We see many different characters enter the story such as George, Callie's old fling, and good friend, as well as, Peter, Sara's ex-boyfriend from her hometown. We get to see many different relationship dynamics evolve as we dive into what it truly means to face commitment and love against all odds.

**Given Circumstances:** Callie is in her late 20's to early '30s and she lives alone in New York. She works as a traffic reporter for a local news station, although she doesn't love her job it could be worse and it pays the bills. She is very messy but independent. She has trouble with commitment and found herself in a friends-with-benefits relationship with her college friend George. She is a fun-loving woman who although she is very private loves to have a good time and a good laugh. She often goes out drinking with her college friends. It takes her a bit to get out of her shell and she is very sensitive to what others think of her.

**Relationship to other characters-**

**Sara-** close friend and love interest

**George-** Old trusted friend, sexual partner, marriage fail safe

**Peter-** ex-boyfriend of her love interest

**Mrs. Winsley-** Unlikley supporter, wise old woman

**The Nurse-** caretaker of her love interest

**Detective Cole-** cop trying to solve the attack

**Character's Through-Action** (*this if for the entire play; also known as the **spine**; for help refer to pages 33-38 in A Practical Handbook for the Actor*):

**Literal:** Callie wants to be with the woman she loves without being discriminated against

**Ultimate Goal/Through-Action:** I want to love whoever I want and be happy

**Principal obstacle:** Social standards and fear of discrimination