

Another Tale in the Depot District: The Development Process for *Shame on Me*

by

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CHAPTER I

ORIGIN AND THEMES

Shame on Me is a full-length play about an aspiring writer who works as a barback in Lubbock's Depot District. His less-than-ideal job not only fuels his insecurities, but, ultimately, leads him to confuse fiction with reality. When the characters in his stories come to life, they challenge the author's naïve idealism, making him question whether he can accept people for who they are -- even if they aren't real. The play touches upon themes of coming of age and regret. The author attempts to create characters who are perfect in his image. For this written thesis, I will discuss the play's origins, development process, and a self-reflection about the experience. *Shame on Me* reminds audience members that everyone has a story to tell. Sometimes, however, they are afraid to live and tell it. Ryan is afraid to live his story and the fictional characters of the Lost Pick know that.

I do not come from a theatre background let alone an educational one. My mother dropped out of high school when she was sixteen, and my father was the first person in the family to receive a high school education. Despite coming from a poor educational background, my parents instilled in me the importance of hard work and dedication when it came to obtaining a goal. My father is not afraid to put in the work when providing for his children. I owe my accomplishments to him because of his willingness to sacrifice his own needs to raise me as a single father. I lacked talent with anything I did: football, wrestling, boxing, and academics. Nevertheless, I always entered with a mentality that

“nobody will out work me.” I love watching a success story, where someone has started from nothing and through hard work and dedication achieves greatness.

Lubbock is home to Buddy Holly, Mac Davis, and Richie McDonald, who all began their careers in seedy bars and skating rinks, before disappearing on Lubbock’s West Texas wind. Many Lubbock natives (including myself) quote the lyrics “Happiness is Lubbock, TX, in my rear-view mirror,” (Davis) from Mac Davis’s “Texas in my rear-view mirror,” (1980) as we daydream about leaving our dusty town someday. Instead of blaming ourselves for our misfortunes, we aim it at the “undeveloped” town we call home. Now, people will always leave their hometowns and never come back. It’s a huge moment in one’s own life. Because once you leave somehow you will not find it how you left it when you return. Friends have come and gone. Restaurants and bars have gone out of business. Your parents have aged, and you question what you have done with your life. It’s a normal feeling to have. I have witnessed those events from patrons who have visited and became astonished by the changes made to their desolate town.

Growing up in a conservative town like Lubbock, TX, I believed participating in theatre or any variations of art was less acceptable than participating in sports. When you grow up in a town that focuses on its accomplishments in sports, it becomes difficult to not believe it will cure depression and insecurity issues. Our town is known for our college football team and the famous upset they pulled in 2008 against the University of Texas who were ranked number one at the time. Like many do in small towns, the best thing to do was be part of an athletic team. The only solace I found was on the wrestling team or in writing short stories. At Texas A&M, I majored in English literature, because

in high school, I was passionate about short stories and having discussions in class. It was the only time where I could be vulnerable.

I got into playwriting from a high school theatre class. The course touched upon the basics such as acting, improv, and designing. I did not excel in any of those areas but enjoyed the writing aspect. At one point during the school year, I was assigned to write a monologue about a moment that changed my life. Like any teenager, I wrote about my first heartbreak but, quickly discarded it because of my fear of being humiliated by classmates. However, the instructor insisted that I present it and to my surprise, the class enjoyed the monologue.

My Lubbock background brought me specific challenges to becoming a playwright. I did not fully get into writing until my junior year of college. I majored in English Literature with a minor in theatre; so, I spent little time in the theatre department. At the beginning, I wrote plays with a prose style that appeared poetic like Eugene O'Neill's works. Texas A&M University did not have a playwriting program, so I taught myself by reading plays by O'Neill, Sam Shepard, and Tennessee Williams. I would also listen to the audiotape version of O'Neill's *Long Day's Journey into Night* while working a night shift at United Supermarkets. I do not share the same experience of playwriting and theatre as most of my colleagues. However, I do believe that not coming from a theatre background had its perks. For example, I bring stories from my own personal experiences that may not have been seen on the stage before. At first, I wrote plays in a prose format that seemed like documentary plays that focused on different sets of people, instead of focusing on one story.

My stories are true because I know they are true. In Marc Abraham's 2015 biopic of Hank Williams's *I Saw the Light*, Tom Hiddleston as Hank Williams said it best: "A man sings a sad song, he knows it's sad" (*I Saw the Light*). The stories are from people I met doing odd jobs in Lubbock and at Texas A&M University (pool cleaning, stocking beef, and dock duty). My intentions have been to paint a picture of people who attempts to get by on a \$7.25-hour job; while searching for happiness in cheap by meaningful ways. The inspirations came from being around a working-class environment and selfless people. Theatre is a communication tool for introverts who have trouble expressing themselves. Playwriting introduces audience members to another world: whether it be the working class, culture, or movement.

Shame on Me tells the story of Ryan, an aspiring writer who works as a barback at the Lost Pick bar in the Depot District of Lubbock, TX. Ryan has trouble dealing with his insecurities. He does not find encouragement at school where his professor declares his writing mediocre. At work he's afraid to ask Monica, a local patron, on a date. Ryan also has trouble being assertive with the manager Cash and fellow employee Bleach. After receiving critical feedback from his professor, Ryan attempts to write another story. The problem is that he does not know where to start until he discovers Kim, a former Lubbock native, will be visiting shortly from Austin. After encountering Kim and hearing about her aspirations of becoming a writer, Ryan becomes inspired to write a story based on his perceptions of her. He attempts to create a romantic comedy centered around her and Bleach. However, their fictional selves ridicule the storyline Ryan imagines: where they met, their first kiss, and their first fight.

While working on his story, Ryan learns from Cash, the general manager of the Lost Pick, that Monica and Kim were friends at one point; but now refuse to be around each other. One night while Ryan is cleaning dishes Monica stops by to invite him for some drinks. However, he chickens out and stays behind. After learning that Bleach has contracted chlamydia, Ryan suspects he caught it from Kim and writes a story about the issue. However, Ryan's imagined versions of Kim and Bleach challenge Ryan to write his own story, instead of latching onto theirs. Ryan admits that he worries that he does not have a story tell and is afraid to write something personal, instead of his idealism on love. He is brought into reality when the real Kim admits she never wanted to be writer; it was only a maneuver to gain favor with him. Ryan, feeling ashamed, tosses his journal into the trash can.

A week later, Monica visits Ryan at work and reveals that her dog died. Monica confesses that she was married to Kim's ex-boyfriend (whom Monica slept with while he and Kim were dating). She tearfully admits that Kim had an affair with him, months after they got married. Ryan then learns the truth that Monica's husband committed suicide after Kim ended their affair. Monica encourages Ryan to continue writing. Kim reconciles with him and reads him a poem about her relationship with Monica's husband, before they broke up. Before leaving, Kim hands Ryan a Dollar General coupon, and encourages him to buy another journal. Ryan becomes inspired to write another story with a darker tone. Weeks later Ryan tells Monica that his professor gave him a B- for the story. This inspires him to write a play instead and to ask to Monica out on a date. After Ryan exits into Cash's office, Monica reads his journal. A dream version of Ryan enters

and tells Monica that he wants to live his life while continuing to write stories. The play ends with real Ryan and Monica sharing a kiss as they dance.

The Lost Pick's seedy but friendly atmosphere of cheap neon lights, rude bartenders, and, needy patrons was inspired by a scene from Rob Reiner's *Sure Thing* (1985). The film's plot was not an attention grabber: guy travels across the country in hopes of hooking-up with a girl he does not know. However, the bar scene where Gib (John Cusack), the protagonist, sings Nat King Cole's "The Christmas Song" with drunken patrons inspired the setting for the Lost Pick bar. The scene only lasted for two minutes, but the seedy atmosphere and chain-smoking patrons inspired me to write something that takes place in a bar. Gradually over the years, I have reimagined the seedy bar imagery as inspired by shows like *It's Always Sunny in Philadelphia* (2005-present) and *Shameless* (2011-present). I wanted to create an atmosphere that would capture the attention of a generation raised on theatre and sitcoms; that created witty dialogue and a comfortable environment for outsiders.

The play's process began spring 2017 in a playwriting course with Dr. Bert. The exercise was to create a five-minute scene inspired by a conversation I heard at Louie Louie's Dueling Piano Bar. The discussion was two regulars gossiping about a bar fly who roamed the depot. I met this person and was astonished by her charm and attitude. The encounter encouraged me to write a ten-minute play about a bouncer witnessing an argument between the general manager and his alcoholic sister. The altercation was about the brother scolding his sister for selling their father's truck for drug money, after his passing. The story came across rough and gritty, which is what I wanted. I did not want

the bouncer, Kim, and the manager to be considered stock characters. Meaning, I did not want the employee to be labeled as “the hero” or Kim as “the villain.” Everyone in this play has made a bad decision and that’s what makes a good story. Well-written characters are ones who do not just wear the “black hat,” but can become the hero of the story at one point. Plays and shows like Shepard’s *Eyes for Consuela* (1998) and Vince Gillian’s *Breaking Bad* (2008-2013) and *Better Call Saul* (2015-present) have characters that are not labeled as “good” or “bad.” When Ryan asks if Kim is a bad person, Cash responds, “Who isn’t?” (79) reminding audience members that people are not always the hero of their own story.

The piece got a positive response from the class that convinced me to write a full-length version, which was good because I did not know what my thesis would be going into the fall 2017. In the past colleagues have written historical plays for their theses; however, I wanted to write something for the friends with whom I worked in the Depot District. The problem was convincing others that a well-written story set in Lubbock would be treated with respect. Would audience members accept it?

The two themes the play focuses on are the loss of innocence and facing one’s regrets. One of my favorite quotations about the loss of innocence comes from Rob Reiner’s 1984 film *Stand by Me*, which was adapted from Stephen King’s 1982 novella “The Body”: “In all of our lives there is a fall from innocence. A time after which we are never the same” (*Stand by Me*). Everyone has encountered a moment where their innocence was shattered by an event: the death of a friend, loss of virginity, or something that changed their perspective on life. Stories that focus on the loss of innocence have

grabbed my attention for years. Ryan loses his innocence while writing a story. At first, he attempts to write a romantic comedy: everything goes accordingly to plan. No matter what, a *deus ex machina* will bring the lovers together. However, Ryan realizes some stories do not end with a happy ending. After the real version of Kim tells him that his stories appear juvenile, Ryan realizes that he needs to write something real. So, he writes Kim and Bleach as parents with a drug problem. The theme of regret applies to the characters of *Shame on Me*. Ryan regrets being gullible to Kim's advances. Kim and Monica regret the death of their shared lover; and believe they each played a part in his death.

As a writer and spectator, I love stories where I can relate to the characters through dialogue. It helps make the story enjoyable. I want the employees and patrons of the Lost Pick to be carefree and stand out in a crowd, basically West-Texas bohemians. The ones who wore the same shirt three days straight because they can't use their sink to wash anything because they forgot to pay the water bill. I am writing about people who slave for the week, live for Friday and Saturday nights, but fear for Sunday mornings, the ones who complain about not having money after spending it all the night before at the bar. Jack Kerouac said it best from *On the Road*, "The only people for me are the mad ones, the ones who are mad to live, mad to talk, mad to be saved" (5-6). Like Kerouac I want to introduce characters who do not think about tomorrow but instead live for what's occurring now, the ones who do not have goals but believe that something good will come along. These characters were inspired by the people I worked with and encountered at Louie Louie's Piano Bar in downtown Lubbock.

CHAPTER II

CONTEXT AND CREATION

The inspiration for this play came from different works of art -- not only from playwrights but also novelists and musician -- along with personal experiences. This chapter looks at the different sources that inspired the characters and setting for *Shame on Me*. I will also discuss how far the play has come from fall 2017 to the workshops at WildWind to this past summer with director Shane Strawbridge.

The first playwright that inspired the writing of this play was Lin-Manuel Miranda. His musical *In the Heights* (2005) influenced me to write a story set in the Depot District. I appreciate plays that take place in areas that are historically overlooked in theatre. *In the Heights* told a beautiful story about a working-class neighborhood of Washington Heights, Manhattan, and I wanted to do the same with Lubbock's Depot District. Every town has its own story, even in geographically isolated and possibly unappealing places like Lubbock, TX. However, like the characters of *In the Heights*, Lubbock natives have a fair share of stories they can tell the public.

A line from Chaz Palminteri's *A Bronx Tale* (1993) helped shape my vision of Ryan's narration for audience members. Like *In the Heights*, the film is also based on an underappreciated area: the Bronx, New York. "Another Tale from the Depot District" came from the film's closing line: "I learned the greatest gift of all. The saddest thing in life is wasted talent, and the choices that you make will shape your life forever. But you can ask anybody from my neighborhood, and they'll just tell you this is just another Bronx tale" (*A Bronx Tale*). The line inspired me to imagine the Depot District was its

own neighborhood, its own world. Spectacles such as fights, alcohol poisoning, and college nights that happen after the sun goes down are normal routine for bars in the Depot District. *Shame on Me* gives a glimpse of the spectacles encountered in the working-class stories of the employees, patrons, and homeless who walk the District's streets. The stories came from slow Wednesday and Sunday nights when I would check IDs, clean dishes, and serve beer. Patrons came in searching for an open ear to hear their troubles and I would listen and write them down.

Another source of inspiration came from three musicians of the 1970s who were known as gritty song writers: Jim Croce, Harry Chapin, and, Mac Davis. Jim Croce wrote songs like "Operator" (1972) and "Bad Leroy Brown" (1973) that centered on blue-collar workers. Harry Chapin was known for creating ballads like "Taxi" (1972) that told a story from a narrator's point of view. I admire these songs for their honesty, grit, and, inspiration. I also enjoy the song "Texas in the My Rear-view Mirror" (1980) by Lubbock native Mac Davis. Like him, I want to write a story set in my hometown. I want to capture the feeling this music gives me in a seedy bar from Lubbock's own back yard.

The third inspiration came from Rapper, J. Cole's 2014 album *2014 Forest Hills Drive*. Cole's hit, "No Role Modelz" inspired the play's title from Cole's rhyming: "fool me one-time shame on you. Fool me twice can't put the blame on you" (Cole). The lyrics signify the reality of people not blaming themselves for making the same mistake. We have instincts to make us feel suspicious about someone or something, but when we ignore them, we curse ourselves after that person or situation burns us. That is why the

play has been called *Shame on Me* because the first blame should have been directed at ourselves, because we are smarter...we just do not see it.

Sam Shepard has been my major influence as a playwright. I admire that he wrote gritty stories that occurred in the west—sometimes precisely in desolate towns like Lubbock, TX. Plays like *The Curse of the Starving Class* (1977) and *True West* (1980). provide stories located in overlooked geographies along with naturalistic characters. Shepard has been a resource I have used throughout my career as inspiration for new works regarding characters with gutsy dialogue. The playwright's use of character development, settings, and naturalism that felt tough, spirited, and spare reminded me that you could wear cowboy boots and still be a theatre artist.

Shepard did not attempt to search for the American dream. If anything, he did the complete opposite and revealed the dark side of it. He created characters who were left behind, less communicative outsiders who were chastised for not following social norms. It is not that the playwright is attempting to convince audience members to sympathize with this culture but instead understand its origins.

The first development that *Shame on Me* went through was at the WildWind Playwrights Lab Summer Program. The play went through many revisions along with an addition of another character. I began with 150 pages and shortened it to 126. The reading was a flop as audience members could not grasp whose story was being told between Ryan and Kim, the barfly. However, the only scene audience members responded to was Ryan's narrative dream sequence. The crowd laughed as Ryan's characters questioned his mediocre writing and created scenarios for themselves. The

failure opened a new route for my revisions. Two weeks after *WildWind* ended I wrote a scene at work with Ryan daydreaming about Kim. The moment was silly but encouraged me to write more scenes like it. Instead of writing another episode of *Cheers*, I wanted to write a play that used meta theatre, where the characters could confront their writer. It was a therapeutic for me as a playwright to not take everything seriously.

The second development occurred fall 2018. I met with Jesse Jou once a week in September to discuss the script. The first problem we found was that I had written two stories: Ryan's and Kim's. Ryan was the narrator who watched from the sidelines. I did not want the story to revolve around him. My fear was that I was writing another Holden Caulfield-, Ponyboy Curtis-, or Charlie Kelmeckis-type character. I wanted Ryan to be the Nick Caraway who tells a story from his own point of view. Kim was supposed to be a mixture of Jay Gatsby and Daisy Buchanan in the play, the character who is the center of everything but not quite. However, the idea drifted away because I wrote a couple of scenes that focused on Ryan's insecurities. I realized, like Ryan, I was afraid to write my own story. Jesse gave me tasks and encouragement to send new scenes that revolved around Ryan's story. I would send him a new scene every other week to read. The following week, we would discuss the piece and what could be developed. This occurred until I had to turn in a final draft for the season selection committee in early October.

The third development happened summer 2019. After *Shame on Me* was considered for a place in the 2019-2020 season, Shane Strawbridge, the director, asked if I would like to continue developing the script before auditions in August. From his application he believed the script had potential but needed more development, such as

figuring out whose story was being told. I believed in Shane based on his experiences, past collaborations, and willingness to provide playwriting techniques for students at The Burkhart Center for Autism Education & Research. Before going into the summer Shane warned me that the workload would be intense. However, I was motivated to get *Shame on Me* ready for the fall semester.

The first half of the workshop consisted of homework assignments along with revisions for the staged readings. Once the readings ended, the cast gave me their initial thoughts and would leave for Shane to give me feedback. Instead of feeling attacked by criticism, I was thrilled to have the opportunity to develop my script before our first show October 31st. Some of my playwriting colleagues in the past have had such a problem with criticism that they refused to change anything. Now, I am not saying that I do not have a problem with criticism, but I have developed a method of my own to deal with criticism that I have since taught a student on the autism spectrum called “captain of your own ship.” The play is your ship; the crew and cargo are the types of feedback that will keep the piece afloat. The playwright as the captain decides if the “cargo/crew members” comments are keeping the ship sturdy. If it seems the feedback is meaningful, then keep everyone on board. If not, make them walk the plank.

The homework assignments were useful for the development process. The first was coming up with a “dream cast,” that would star in my play. This was helpful because it gave me an image of what person I was thinking about while writing Kim’s, Bleach’s, or Ryan’s dialogue. The assignment also helped Shane determine the cast member I saw fit for these roles along with personalities. The dream cast I chose was diverse: Justice

Smith (Ryan), Brittany Murphy (Kim), Zendaya Maree Stoermer Coleman (Monica), Garret Hedlund (Bleach), and Joe Rogan (Cash).

The assignment inspired me to be open minded with casting choices. I did not want to base my choice on race but what does the actor bring to the character? For my dream cast, Justice Smith brings an adorable awkwardness to his roles such as in Baz Luhrmann and Stephen Adly Guirgis's *The Get Down* (2016-2017) and Rob Letterman's *Detective Pickachu* (2019). Brittany Murphy has a way of creating a complex but relatable character. The kind that asks to be saved but will not doing anything to change. Her works that come to mind are Gary Fleder's *Don't Say a Word* (2001), Curtis Hanson's *8 mile* (2002) and Frank Miller's, Robert Rodriguez's and Quentin Tarantino's *Sin City* (2005). Garret Hedlund's brings a mixture of a bad boy image that is recognizable in the Depot District. You cannot miss someone wearing a tight shirt with the sleeves rolled up. I also loved his portrayal of Dean Moriarty in Walter Salles's *On the Road* (2012). Joe Rogan is a standup comedian, podcaster, and commentator for the UFC that fits the cliché bartender searching to recapture his youth. I based Monica on Zendaya because she brings compassion and attitude to every role, as she has done in such films as Jon Watts' *Spiderman* franchise (2017, 2019), Michael Gracey's *The Greatest Showman* (2017), and Sam Levinson's *Euphoria* (2019-present). Monica is compassionate but will become ferocious at a drop of a hat if anyone attempts to get close. I wanted that type of actor and Shane did as well.

The second assignment was choosing a song that would play for the preshow. I considered William Clark Green's "Ringling Road" (2015) and the Rolling Stones'

“Gimme Shelter” (1969) because they reminded me of the chaos that echoes in a bar on college nights. However, they also suggest Ryan’s struggle with creativity inside his own head. I also got to thinking about the play and its characters. Yes, the plot focused on a writer’s development, but it also provides audience members a glimpse of the patrons’ and employees’ lives. I am interested in the unexpected places one finds lost souls. I chose Billy Joel’s “Piano Man” (1973). It was a tough choice to make because I feared that I was being cliché with the song. Shane, nevertheless, agreed with the choice and for the same reasons believed the play focuses on other people’s lives. For years, I have wanted to portray Joel’s lyric “They’re sharing a drink they call loneliness, but it’s better than drinking alone” (Joel) onstage. I want to create a play that would resonate with my millennial generation but honored the classics.

The total number of staged readings *Shame on Me* had was five. I have had trouble with staged readings in the past where I focused on audience’s response rather than the text itself. Jesse and Shane explained the purpose of a reading is for the playwright to see what did and did not work. I was determined to get the script to its full potential by the end of the summer. I needed to shift my focus on transitions and asking myself if the characters had clearly defined objectives. The readings took place in the conference room located in the new building. Casting came from available actors who were in town at the time. I read along in the script while writing side notes in my journal.

The first challenge I found was the lack of action in scene I. According to Shane and the readers, the first scene appeared more as straight exposition. The first ten minutes of a play should let audience members know what is in store for them. The first draft did

not illustrate my interest in meta theatre. I revised the play to open the first scene with Ryan addressing the stakes of his writing a story for his class. Audience members are introduced to the fictional versions of the Lost Pick characters while also meeting the real versions.

The characters' relationships were other challenges I worked on during the development process. The readers, along with Shane, were intrigued by the suggestion of a love triangle between Monica, Ryan, and, Kim. I did not intend for Ryan and Kim to be considered a love story, but rather a relationship between mentee and mentor. Kim embodied the patrons and past employees I met at Louie Louie's. One way or another, they served as mentors to me by giving advice or becoming an example of how not to act. I revised the script to make sure there was no sexual tension between them. Rather, Ryan is inspired by Kim's personality to create a character he has not written before, while she is intrigued by his innocence.

Monica and Ryan's relationship was another gap I needed to fill. Shane insisted I focus my attention on Monica's relationship with Ryan. I did not intend to write the cliché story of boy meets girl. Rather, I wanted to focus on both overcoming obstacles. Monica is grounded but carries baggage that prevents her from moving forward. Ryan is afraid of making the first move and would rather concentrate his vulnerability in his work. What happens to them when their flaws are revealed? They are forced to address the roots that bind them to their insecurities.

Ryan's story was difficult to understand through this process. The new revision centered on Monica's and Kim's relationship. Ryan found himself stuck in the middle

while trying to write something new. After our last reading, Shane asked me what's at stake for Ryan? What happens if he fails? Because the story seemed to drift away from him and centered on Kim again. Nevertheless, I found a solution with the first scene by having Ryan reading his professor's prompt. Throughout the play he receives criticism of his work and his proposal for the class final.

The development process for *Shame on Me* was educational, because I learned playwriting activities that I can use with students at the Burkhart Center. I found it educational for myself by forcing me to focus on learning patience. I had a hard time with the summer readings, but after the summer workshop, I came to understand their value. The assignments that others gave me helped with the development of the scenes that lacked conflict. The plays, films, TV shows, musicals, and songs that inspired me helped paint the image of *Shame on Me* that I wanted before the rehearsal process.

CHAPTER III

EVALUATION OF PROCESS AND EXPERIENCE

The production process of *Shame on Me* is the conclusion of the play's developmental work. From the first table read to blocking and character work, the script has provided opportunities for cast members, the dramaturg, and director to propose deeper questions. Even the call backs provided me with a different look of the characters' relationship with Ryan and each other. With the production occurring on October 31st - November 3rd, I hope audience members will experience an intimately told story in a limited space. This chapter looks at *Shame on Me's* journey through the production process, including pre-production meetings, rehearsals, performance, and my own self-reflection as a playwright.

The pre-production process of *Shame on Me* for me was finalizing sides for callbacks. The production meetings were for the director, designers, assistant directors, the dramaturg, and stage manager to talk amongst themselves on the best ways to capture the scripts essence in an alley stage configuration. Dramaturg Bryce Real provided information about Dante Gabriel Rossetti's muse Elizabeth Siddal. In the scene "Too Classy for Rossetti and Tinder," Ryan compares to the fictional version of Kim to Rossetti's poem "Jenny." Like Ryan perceives Kim, Rossetti had a muse named Elizabeth Siddal that inspired his paintings and poetry. Rossetti, also like Ryan, did not have sexual feelings for his muse but was enchanted by her demeanor. I found the information insightful and valuable that Ryan and Rossetti had this connection. I found it interesting to discover the designers' and director's visions for where this play could go.

It can be nerve-wracking watching your work be displayed and analyzed. Some playwrights might get offended if their team saw their play in another way. However, I was interested in what everybody's different thoughts were on the world of the play. Tom Laney, the sound designer, proposed making a recording of patrons at Louie Louie's Piano Bar. The production meetings were smooth, surprisingly without any conflicts. However, our meetings would last for only thirty minutes, because not much production support could be applied to this production.

The casting process went more smoothly than I had expected. Auditions were great as I got to be on the other side of the table. I tried not to pre-pick people for the roles because there might be something actor "C" might have that would surprise me more than actor "A." So, I would put a star on an application, if the actor caught my attention or showed potential for any of the characters. The callbacks gave life to my script before rehearsals began. During the summer, I had trouble seeing my play come alive in the staged readings. I would find one or two actors playing the role the way I wrote it; while the others did not. I was impressed how the actors took on the role of Kim. I appreciate that Shane and the assistant directors included me on their choice of actors. Shane would let me voice my opinion on why a specific actor was or was not chosen. As a playwright I gained confidence with the response given by the actors watching others perform in a scene. Particularly it was Kim confronting Monica about her neglect of the unattended grave of their deceased lover. The actors were wonderful portraying individuals who were angry and heartbroken. The casting selections went in our favor. We lost two of our first picks; however, our backups were still strong as well. Before

going into the selection process, we had already prepared that we would not get the cast we desired.

For documentation, I wrote in a journal during rehearsals. However, it was only for our first read through and some table work. Sometimes I would write down questions that had not yet been answered. For the journal entries, I documented scenes the actors had trouble reading. Now, there were times when I would make quick notes on my laptop or a sticky note. For the rest of the rehearsals, I tried not to focus too much on the computer and instead watched the rehearsal process.

I found it interesting to see a character that took me nearly three years to create be portrayed by a stranger within seconds. The best comparison I could think of was crafting a costume and seeing someone else wear it in another fashion. The actors were portraying people I have encountered in my life. So, it was exciting but tense watching them create these characters in a new way. One of my concerns was that they would portray the employees and patrons of the Depot as stereotypes. For example, I was concerned that Alexa Teleki would portray Kim as a mean girl. I found the rehearsal process was a learning experience for me as a playwright, dramaturg, and educator. Shane was not only the director but also my mentor for new play development. He controlled the room and made the experience enjoyable for everyone.

I was impressed with how Shane handled the text as a director. There were multiple methods of his that I found impressive. The first thing was having the actors apply Viewpoints to their character's movement. I have experienced this exercise before with a couple of shows and know that it demands physical attention. Shane wanted the

movement to represent the fantasy world of Ryan's. I was skeptical about the choice because I did not see this play as a dance piece. However, being optimistic about the proposition, I decided to let Shane include a movement piece that would represent the fantasy world.

During the rehearsal process, I mostly did not have a problem with Shane's direction. If there were times where I had a question or disagreed with a direction, I would talk to him about it after rehearsals were over. One in particular was where he had Bleach steal money from the register as he went next door to drink. I disagreed with that blocking because it's a sin among bartenders to steal from the bar. Even if you came in high and drunk, you would still have a job. However, if you got caught stealing money or product, not only were you fired, but you were considered a rat. I did not want Bleach to be looked upon as a villain, by that act. Shane understood what I meant and changed it.

I found a couple of moments where Shane and the cast showed me something about the play that was unexpected. The first was Kim and Monica's conflict. I wrote Kim to be the one who's seeking forgiveness for causing Monica's husband suicide. However, Alexa showed me a different side of the story. It is revealed earlier in the script that Kim and Monica's husband dated before they were married; however, he cheated on her with Monica. So, Kim should still feel that resentment instead of acting like a scared puppy. So, Alexa's character on Kim, is that she's should not feel guilty because he was with her first.

The second would be Shane's blocking at the end of scene eight. After Ryan exits into Cash's office, Monica reads his journal. The ensemble reads out loud for her thus

creating a dream sequence in Ryan's head. The blocking reminded me of the ending to Bert Royal's *Dog Sees God: Confessions of a Teenage Blockhead* (2004), where the ensemble reads a letter from CB's pen pal, a stand-in for *Peanuts* creator Charles M. Schulz. The ensemble work for scene eight took my breath away. At one moment everyone was saying what Ryan wrote in his journal. It was beautiful. The action showed me how Ryan's journey has come to an end. It was what I have been trying to find during the different drafts of this piece.

I find it difficult determining what the outcome of *Shame on Me* will be because performance date is still weeks away. However, seeing what has been going on in rehearsals, I see that spectators will have an intimate experience with the cast. The floor plan for the stage is set as an alley, where the actors will be walking up and down. I see audience members being confused at the beginning when Ryan is introducing his characters. The first scene has been a challenge for me to write over the summer, because it is where I distinguish the line between reality and fiction. However, I want the audience to guess which moments are fiction and which ones are not. I see that there will be moments where the audience will have to decide who is right and wrong. Nevertheless, I want audience members to understand that there is no such thing as good/bad characters in the world of this play.

As a playwright, I found that my strengths are being able to withstand adversity and stay motivated. I understand that opportunities like this do not come around often. So, when I remember the times when I was not doing well as a playwright or I think about the times when I worked at Louie Louie's and stressed about class, bills, and not

having a social life, I use those memories as a reminder to live in the moment and learn from it. I want to share my experience with *Shame on Me* as inspiration for authors on the spectrum.

I had trouble “killing my darlings,” during the development and pre-production process. It’s hard giving up on something you have been working on for a long time. There were moments when I had to decide if a scene pertained to the story or not. I learned that my original ideas about some moments would not be the same after several revisions. One was “killing” a monologue by Monica in scene six. The problems I have run across with writing monologues are in identifying the “whys” behind them. “Why” is the character making a speech at this moment? “Why” are they talking to this person? I did not have an answer and thus had to cut it from the script. It was hard because I loved that monologue, but I could not find any place for it. For the lessons I learned from these challenges, I want to use them for future projects and for teaching aspiring playwrights. I want to let them know about my own experiences so they can use them for their own writing.

Patience and trust need to be applied for a production like *Shame on Me*. The process was rewarding, grueling, and, frustrating. There were times when I felt the piece was at a dead end. The staged readings brought more questions for me than answers. However, the callbacks and rehearsals brought life to the text. The actors provided a different look for the piece, in particular in the confrontation between characters. For this thesis, I want aspiring playwrights to not worry so much about their work. Embrace the development process. Know that they are not going to get it in the first reading...maybe

not even in the fifth one. Show patience with the director and cast. Trust their creativity. Do not be angry. Be thankful. Live in the moment. Appreciate the dedication and overcoming of adversity of the aspiring playwright who wanted to tell a story about his friends and family in a town called Lubbock, TX

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APPENDIX

A. SHAME ON ME

Shame on Me
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Cast

(Unless otherwise specified, all characters may be cast with open ethnicity)

RYAN-Male. Early-to-mid-twenties. A barback at the Lost Pick bar in the Depot District. An aspiring writer.

KIM-Female. Mid-to-late twenties. A barfly from Austin who visits Lubbock every now and then. Comes across as a hipster and aspiring poet. Forms a bond with Ryan.

BLEACH-Male. Mid-to-late- twenties. A seasoned bartender at the Lost Pick who has seen *Road House* and *Johnny Bravo* too many times.

CASH-Male. Late twenties. A seasoned bartender and owner of the Lost Pick; he tries to find ways to be neutral with his employees.

MONICA-Female. Mid-Twenties. A regular of the bar who struggles with her own personal demons.

*The Patrons ONE and TWO can be voiced over by the cast or however the director sees it to be.

*Actors should write the title of the occurring scene on the chalk board; and then erase it once it's over and so on.

Setting

The Lost Pick bar located in the Depot District of Lubbock, TX.

Time

Present day. During the month of December.

Scene One: Foreplay... a big waste of time.

Lights up on a stage with tables and chairs that would take place in a seedy bar. In all honesty think of the bar, Maggie from *The Ranch* on Netflix. The one where almost all the cast from *That 70s Show* has made a guest appearance...except for Topher Grace. Always thinking you are the smart one. Not smart now are you 2007's *Venom*? Anyway, one of the tables has a journal on it. RYAN enters with his backpack full of doubt but intends to be optimistic about the situations that approach him. He pulls out an assignment for his creative writing class.

RYAN

(He reads and imitates a façade found in a Julliard School.) “Attention starving artists” (Scoffs) Oh, please. “This has been an exhilarating semester for all of us. As we escape from the classroom, and search for Jane Austen’s wit and Stephen King’s darkness, I ask for you to write a piece on—” Jesus, you sure did put a lot of thought into this prompt. “Suffering. How do we cure it? Especially you as millennials?” We tweet about it. “Be sufficient. Be relevant. Be true.”

He grabs his journal and roams around the space. It appears that he’s already struggling with the assignment. He addresses the audience as if they were the blank pages of his unfinished manuscript.

Telling stories is like having sex. Like foreplay, your intro will need to get the reader into the right mood.

Stares out into the audience.
Perhaps he'll believe they are
drifting away. BLEACH calls out
from a table he's sitting at.

BLEACH

This intro sucks. (Points to the audience) Your "readers" are dozing *off*.

RYAN

And right on time.... the asshole of this story appears.

BLEACH

Do I have a backstory?

RYAN

You're the antagonist.

BLEACH

Clearly you haven't seen a marvel film.

RYAN

(Impatient) Fine. You were in a fraternity.

BLEACH

At Tech?

RYAN

(Scoffs) Get serious. South Plains College.

BLEACH

Do I have a name?

RYAN

Bleach.

BLEACH

“Bleach?”

RYAN nods his head.

(Sighs) Can I ask why?

RYAN

You wanted to look like the early 2000s Eminem.

BLEACH

Pulls out his phone and perhaps plays the intro to “The Real Slim Shady” without the lyrics

The real slim shady is standing up people. I repeat the real slim shady is standing up.

Audience members perhaps are not amused by the joke. BLEACH gets up from his seat.

RYAN

That joke is lame.

BLEACH

Do you know where this story takes this place?

RYAN

I’m working on that as we speak. (Pause) A fair?

CASH

CASH enters with a pad and paper. It appears he’s taking inventory for something.

This space is too small for a fair.

BLEACH

Then what do you suggest?

RYAN

How about a hospital?

BLEACH

MOFO. Do we look like surgeons to you?

CASH

This sounds like the last story you wrote.

BLEACH

Which one?

CASH

Boy meets girl at a hospital. Both are patients. One is pregnant.

BLEACH

One is dying.

CASH

They fall love and blah, blah, blah.

BLEACH

Same song and dance.

CASH

Same red markings from you professor that tells you to write something better.

BLEACH

Same boring ass material.

CASH

For real.

BLEACH

Write some *Breaking Bad* type shit.

RYAN

(Sighs) I'll work on it. Fuck. (Pause) Let's place it in a bar.

CASH and BLEACH stare at him
sarcastically.

What?

BLEACH
That's where this story takes place.

CASH
I'm playing your boss. The wise guru who has a towel over his shoulder.

BLEACH
I'm playing the bartender on Broadway every girl with Daddy issues wants to
sleep with. (Looks at some of the ladies in the audience) Don't lie.

MONICA gets up from a seat.

MONICA
I'm the love interest. (Notices the audience) Does anything happen? That's up
to him and me. Oh shit...spoilers.

RYAN
Please don't do that.

MONICA
I'm trying to be meta for everyone.

BLEACH
What the hell is that?

MONICA
(Sighs) A story that is occurring in a story.

RYAN
(Begins fidgeting) We need to get this *story* running.

MONICA

Takes RYAN's hand.

Relax. You got plenty of time.

RYAN

How do you know?

BLEACH

We don't. You made us up remember?

RYAN

You were all based on characters from the employees I work with at the Lost Pick bar in the Depot District.

CASH

What the hell is the Depot District?

RYAN

Place were none of the college kids from Tech go to.

CASH

It's too far.

RYAN

No, it's too sketchy.

MONICA

(Interrupts) I'm sorry but, am I a part of this?

RYAN

(Contemplates) I don't believe so.

MONICA

Well, I'll exit for a bit.

RYAN

I'll have you come in twenty pages later.

MONICA

(Seductively) Oh, I'll see you around 2:30 am when you are looking at my picture on Instagram.

BLEACH

Motions like he's masturbating.

You nasty.

CASH

But keeping it classy.

MONICA exits.

RYAN

(Awkwardly) Ok. So, this story is on a cold night...like this one. It's semi-busy. College kids are spending whatever's they got out of donating plasma.

CASH

Been there.

BLEACH

Still doing it.

BLEACH goes behind the bar and shows off by throwing his shaker up and down. He'll wink at some people just to let 'em know, who to add on snapchat around last call.

RYAN

Ok, so the night is going. (Pause) Going. Going. C-cash. Let's put you in the middle, playing with your bar key.

CASH walks to the middle of the space.

CASH

This is not working for me. (He plays with his bar key) What's the significance of this bar key?

RYAN

You like playing with it.

BLEACH

"Playing with *it*," he says.

RYAN

Grow up.

CASH

Every character has a motive, Ryan.

RYAN

(Sarcastically) Your father was a skilled bartender, who joined the Halo Wars. Fought bravely. But he died due to a pissed off player in campaign mode with an energy sword. Now you carry on his memory by wielding a magic bar key.

CASH

Wise ass.

RYAN

Also.

Pulls out a straw cowboy hat from behind the counter.

You'll need this.

CASH

Come on, dude.

RYAN

It's Texas. Everyone wears a cowboy hat. (Pause) Shit, even Kayne wore a Cowboy hat.

CASH

He wears many hats.

RYAN

True dat. Alright, let's get started. You are a blue-collar worker...a cowboy in fact. Working in the isolated but exotic town of Lubbock, TX.

CASH

Who are you kidding?

RYAN

You also need an accent.

CASH

Accent?

RYAN

Like the characters from *The Ranch* on Netflix.

CASH

Isn't that being stereotypical?

RYAN

You are not from around here. Everyone expects a Texan to have an accent.

CASH

(Texan twang) Well, shit fire. This cold weather is killing me. Reminds me of the old days, back at Mommas when we used to cook possum, and listen to Loretta Lynn—

RYAN

(Interrupts) Too far! Take it back a little.

CASH

If you were lucky, you got to include Tobasco sauce into the fun, and I'm not talking about the possum. (Laughs loud enough to let everyone know that he's there)

RYAN

Perfect.

Spotlight on BLEACH

BLEACH

Ryan! Need more cherries.

RYAN

What?

BLEACH

Cherries! We're pretty low.

CASH removes his hat and goes behind the counter with BLEACH. It appears that both are the real versions of the employees of the Lost Pick. RYAN grabs his journal and begins to leave but stops to address the audience.

RYAN

The intro has ended. Are you satisfied?

Assumes the audience doesn't and like many men who climax early, shamefully exits. BLEACH and CASH continue to work profusely as they make mix drinks, opening beer bottles tops, and keeping a conversation with the patrons. BLEACH will try to show off by throwing his shaker up and down while looking at the girls. These moments become hectic as one thing leads to another.

BLEACH

Dishes are getting pretty high.

CASH

Someone dropped a glass.

BLEACH

Line is starting to get long outside.

CASH

Where the hell is the door guy?

BLEACH

Walked out.

CASH

I need more change. (Looks into the audience) I think the birthday girl just puked.

BLEACH

Nah, that was the bachelorette. She's already had five lemon drops. (Looks out the in the audience) Hey! No smoking allowed. Yes, that includes vapes.

Suddenly he checks his phone and runs off stage.

CASH

(Calls from the counter.) Ryan! Ryan!

RYAN

Enters.

What's up?

CASH

We're low on Coors Light.

RYAN

I just filled that twenty minutes ago.

CASH

That was Bud Light.

Looks down into the cooler.

And we're also getting low on Chilton lemons.

RYAN

You serious?

CASH

It's parents' weekend.

RYAN

Sonuvabitch.

CASH

And hurry up. Ice is starting to get low too.

RYAN exits off stage and quickly
comes back with cases of beer.
BLEACH returns.

BLEACH

(To the audience) He'll be right along.

PATRON VOICE TWO

This wouldn't happen next door.

BLEACH

(RYAN goes behind the counter and starts stocking beer.) Give me one.
(RYAN quickly hands him a beer) Took you long enough. (Slides the beer
across the counter) Here ya go sweetie.

PATRON VOICE TWO

I used to work at a bar.

BLEACH

Yes, I remember my first job at Applebees.

CASH

Joins behind the counter and
notices that there's no more fruit.

Ryan! I'm low on fruit.

RYAN

Right.

BLEACH

And make sure you yell "back," whenever you're walking behind us.

RYAN

Alright (Walks behind BLEACH, and CASH) Back. Back. Back.

Begins to exit offstage until
BLEACH calls after him

BLEACH

Hey! Come back here.

RYAN

What's up?

BLEACH

I need you to check ID's.

RYAN

I need to get more fruit—

BLEACH

Now.

RYAN

Walks out into the audience and checks their ID's.

ID's out...please. (Pause.) You grew a beard. Congratulations. Next. (Pause)

RYAN

ID's out...please. (Pause.) You grew a beard. Congratulations. Next. (Pause) ID's please. (Looks them over) Yeah, this won't work. (Pause) Brother, this looks exactly like the one your friend used. (Pause) I'm sure Main Event is open.

MONICA enters the bar. RYAN doesn't recognize her.

-RYAN CONTINUED-

ID's (Looks up) Oh, shit...hi Monica.

MONICA

She notices RYAN's headphones

What are you listening to?

RYAN

The new Cardi B album.

MONICA grabs a headphone and places it near her ear.

Hey!

MONICA

“Foldin Clothes” by J. Cole.

RYAN

(Surprised) Yeah.

MONICA

Good taste. (Pause) What happened to that girl you were talking to?

RYAN

Ghosted me.

MONICA

Ouch.

MONICA

Do you know why?

RYAN

Might’ve texted her too much.

MONICA

You didn’t do the ten-minute wait?

RYAN

What’s that?

MONICA

When you text someone ten minutes after receiving their text.

RYAN

Noooo...I might have answered seconds after.

MONICA

That’s so adorable and creepy.

RYAN

Oh my god I knew it. (MONICA chuckles)

MONICA

I'm kidding. (Looks him up and down) So is that why you were on Tinder last week?

RYAN

No (tries to play it cool) I don't do dating apps.

MONICA smiles and taps RYAN on the head.

MONICA

Give it a try. How did the hospital story go?

RYAN

Bad. Like she stopped writing comments halfway through and just put "SEE ME" at the end.

MONICA

Yikes. Was it the same one you showed me? (RYAN nods his head)

RYAN

There was no conflict or anything for the reader to be concerned about.

MONICA

But you're not good with conflict either.

RYAN

Yes, I am.

MONICA

I've seen you try to tell drunk people to leave. You tap them on shoulder and politely ask them to leave.

RYAN

Yeah, that's probably the problem.

MONICA

(Sighs) Just keep doing you.

RYAN

Thanks.

MONICA

...also swipe right on me.

RYAN gets back to work.
MONICA walks over to
BLEACH and sighs.

Saw your ex's post.

BLEACH

It wasn't my fault this time.

MONICA

How is it that in one week you and Abbie breakup, makeup, and then break up again?

BLEACH

Because she's cray cray but not in a good way.

MONICA

Sexist.

BLEACH

We got drunk one night and she asked if and I quote: "would have a threesome?"

MONICA

That's a trap question.

BLEACH

Yeah, and my other head fell into it. After I said yes, she asked with "who?" And answered with Kaitlyn, her ex-girlfriend and JESUS! She flipped. Can you believe that?

MONICA

Can't imagine. That's not all what happened was it?

BLEACH

I might have liked Kaitlyn's photos on Instagram one night.

MONICA

Have you tried talking to Abbie?

BLEACH

No...but, I wore the elephant trunk thong, I got for our anniversary.

MONICA

(Sighs) You're not sleeping on my couch again.

BLEACH

Please?

MONICA

I'm tired of you crashing at my place because Abbie throws you out.

BLEACH

(Sarcastically) I won't drag you in the middle of it.

MONICA

Abbie and I were best friends before you two started dating. Now it's the other way around. Tell me whose fault is that?

BLEACH

Both of us. Remember at the Christmas party when you and I...

MONICA

Nope. Not talking about that.

BLEACH

BLEACH deliberately changes
the subject.

-BLEACH CONTINUED-

Saw on snapchat that Kim is in town.

MONICA

So, I've heard.

BLEACH

I'm excited.

MONICA

I bet you are.

BLEACH

I'm single and living my best life.

MONICA

You and I have a different definition of that phrase.

BLEACH

True dat. How are you doing right now? I know how—you get around this time.

MONICA

I'm good thank you. Just need to...I'll be fine.

BLEACH

I'm around if you need anything.

MONICA

Worry about trying to win Abbie back.

BLEACH

Do you mind rolling them up for me?

He sticks his arms out to
MONICA.

MONICA does so and pinches his
arm.

MONICA

And you are not bringing the elephant thong.

BLEACH

But it's what I sleep in when I feel lonesome.

BLEACH goes back to bartending. MONICA begins to exit until RYAN stops her.

RYAN

You want this beer?

MONICA

I don't drink Budweiser.

RYAN

Nobody does except for when the horse commercial comes on during the Superbowl.

MONICA

I'm trying not to drink that much.

Her phone vibrates.

What now? (Sarcastically) Oh gee Kimmy, let everyone know where you are. See, this is why *Dateline NBC* is still on the air.

RYAN

Who pissed you off?

MONICA

The person who ignores the phrase: "last call for alcohol." We call them Kim. (She puts her arm around RYAN) You dance?

RYAN

Nope.

MONICA

Too bad.

Exits while perhaps humming to the chorus of “Foldin Clothes” by J. Cole. RYAN watches her leave.

CASH

Ryan! Where’s the fruit?

RYAN

Shit, right!

Blackout.

Scene Two: Too Classy for Rossetti & Tinder

Lights up on RYAN carrying cases of beer from the back. Outside patrons can be heard. Quickly he runs behind the counter to put the beer up and approaches the front of the stage.

RYAN

Sorry.

PATRON VOICE ONE

When does it get lit around here?

RYAN

It’s been slow with finals going on.

PATRON VOICE ONE

Well, how much is it for cover?

RYAN

Three bucks.

PATRON VOICE TWO

Screw that, I’m going to the Roof.

RYAN

(Yells after them) Jokes on you they charge more.

RYAN goes behind the counter to grab his journal and moves about the space. He pulls out a cigarette and attempts to light it. He tries to write something but stops and throws it on the ground.

Fuck.

He goes to pick the paper up notices something written underneath the counter.

“Kim still owes \$100 for a tab here. 6-23-2018.”

His begins writing.

“Kim” is tough. There’s an attraction with her...like... she walks into a bar and asks the bartender for a bloody Mary. Bartender will laugh and say “go to the bathroom.” She asks, “why?” Bartender will say “look in mirror and ask for a bloody Mary three times, and a—”

KIM

(Interrupts) This sounds like a cliché bar joke.

RYAN is baffled by her appearance. She is dressed for a warm summer night. Perhaps a sundress or clothes a true bohemian would notice.

RYAN

Hi.

KIM

What’s wrong? This is the image you created.

RYAN

You remind me of this girl I saw at a county fair.

KIM

She was with a group of friends while he waited in line for the funhouse....
alone.

RYAN

Only because the guy I came with got drunk and passed out in the parking
lot.

KIM

And he didn't want to waste the tickets, so he went alone.

KIM & RYAN

Only in Lubbock.

RYAN

I listened in on a conversation she was having with her friends. I wanted to join
in—

KIM

--but he stood there.

RYAN

Dreamt about her that night. Dreamt that we went through the funhouse
together. Dreamt that we fell asleep on the hood of her car while listening to
the oldies channel. Wish I could relive that over and over.

KIM

Is that why you write?

RYAN

(Pause) So, are you a rebel?

KIM

(Sarcastically) What the hell is that?

RYAN

Oh. Right. Someone who doesn't follow society's *rules*. Think about the
cartoon character Daria.

KIM

Ok, so I'm... (Looks at herself) Whatever this is. What's next for me?

RYAN
You need a story.

KIM
Ok...what is my story?

RYAN
Well...you're in a bar.

KIM
(With a cheeky smile) You don't say?

RYAN
Writes something in his journal.
You're meeting someone here. Sort of like a blind date.

KIM
Fine. But we met at Chimy's. I'm too classy for dating apps.

RYAN
(Scoffs) Girl please.

KIM
Excuse me?

RYAN
Nothing...so you're reading a book before he gets here.

KIM
Do people read in bars?

RYAN
Yes.

KIM
Strange. What book am I reading?

He pulls out Stephen
Chbosky's *Perks of Being a
Wallflower* from his backpack and
sits it on the counter.

This looks worn out.

She skims through it.

This is sacred to you.

RYAN

I got stood up by my high school crush. She went to a bonfire for homecoming and thought that I wouldn't have fun. Would've went just for her.

KIM

So, he went to Hastings like he mostly did Friday nights and found it on the magazine rack.

RYAN

I read the whole thing in one night and many ones after that.

KIM

"We accept the love we think we deserve."

RYAN

I wanted to write something like that.

KIM

Let them know they are not the only one who feels suffocated and afraid.

RYAN nods his head. KIM sits
on her barstool and pretends to
read. She looks back up to
RYAN.

So, where is this mystery guy?

RYAN

He's arriving now.

BLEACH enters dressed like a
present-day cowboy. Felt hat,
pearl snaps, bedazzled jeans from
Buckle, and sunglasses. He moves

about the stage and stops to put
chewing tobacco into his mouth.

KIM

Yeah, I don't think so.

RYAN

What now?

KIM

He's wearing sunglasses in a bar.

Notices that he's wearing Nike
shoes.

The guy is wearing Nike shoes instead of cowboy boots.

RYAN

He'll take the sunglasses off.

KIM

Thank you.

BLEACH approaches the counter
and grabs a plastic cup. He sees
KIM.

BLEACH

He spits his dip into the cup.

Say honey, why are you reading?

KIM

(Points to RYAN) Because he told me to.

RYAN

That's it. This isn't working.

BLEACH exits.

Maybe Kim was an outcast like Julia Stiles from *Ten Things I Hate about You*.

KIM perhaps removes her dress
to reveal her grunge clothing. She

pulls out a CD player and plays songs perhaps from Rob Zombie, Korn, Blink 182, and Nirvana. She also pulls out a journal and begins writing in it.

RYAN

You are someone who loves poetry.

KIM

Maybe.

RYAN

Wordsworth?

KIM

Nah.

RYAN

Rossetti?

KIM

I don't know who that is.

RYAN

He wrote a poem about a prostitute.

KIM

(Gasps) I am not a prostitute.

RYAN

You could be.

KIM

So, what's the poem about?

RYAN

It's about a man who watches a prostitute fall asleep on his lap.

KIM

Why this poem?

RYAN

It reminds me of the people I see strolling in here.

KIM

Are they prostitutes?

RYAN

They don't have to be.

Begins writing something in his
journal

There was a girl who was in my driver's ed class. Loved painting her toe nails a different color every week. She always planted her feet on the desk next to me and would crash out during the lecture. She joined the army and came back with a wife and no painted toenails. She comes in here once and awhile to say hi. Surprised she still remembers me.

KIM

Can you recite the poem?

RYAN

Nods his head

Fair Jenny mine, the thoughtless queen
Of kisses which the blush between
Could hardly make much dainter;
Whose-- I forgot the rest.

KIM

Wow.

RYAN

(Pause) Why are you here?

KIM

(Pause) How do you think I will seem to you?

She exits. RYAN goes
back to writing in his

journal. Spotlight on the PATRON's. A homeless man appears.

PATRON VOICE ONE

Hey! Brother! Brother. You need someone to watch your vehicle? It's a nice-looking car man. You don't want people messing it up. I'll watch it for five dollars. Come on man. Help me out.

PATRONS outside

complaining:

PATRON VOICE TWO

That's bullshit. My ID was valid.

PATRON VOICE ONE

Babe, it expired months ago.

PATRON VOICE ONE

So? Screw em. That place didn't even have Whiteclaws.

BLEACH suddenly enters from the bathroom.

BLEACH

Ryan! The toilet is clogged again.

RYAN

Grabs a plunger

Fuck me.

BLEACH

If anyone asks, I'm next door.

He walks by and see's RYAN'S journal.

What do you write in that thing?

RYAN

Nothing exciting. How's the dating thing going?

BLEACH

Ever had sex in a bathroom before? Like shitty poor excuse club bathrooms?

RYAN painfully puts a smile on his face.

We decided to do a few bumps in the bathroom stall; and then one thing led to another. Imagine being outside and hearing the sounds of Paris Hilton's sex tape...except it lasting longer. (Emphasizes) *Dude!* We had a line of people waiting outside the bathroom. Should've seen their faces when we walked out.

RYAN

Congrats.

BLEACH

Hey on the side note, I do love your choice of music. And so, does Monica.

RYAN

So?

BLEACH

Dude, stop. Nothing escapes the 1700 block in the big 806—except for incoming football recruits. (Pours himself a shot) To Mahomes...bastard left us too early. (Takes it) Besides, everyone from the Depot knows you're catching feelings for her.

RYAN

Yeah, but she's not ready to date.

BLEACH

Aww.

RYAN

Stop.

BLEACH

So, you do have a crush on her? (RYAN nods his head.) Fucking knew it.

RYAN

Like I said, she's not ready to date.

BLEACH

How do you know that?

RYAN

I saw her facebook post days ago.

BLEACH

Stop being a chicken shit.

RYAN

Thanks coach.

BLEACH

No, really. Just play that feely J. Cole bullshit.

RYAN

How do you know?

BLEACH

She used to play the *2014 Forest Hill's Drive* album, when we would get stoned. (Notices RYAN is hurt) Don't worry. We only dated for a week. (Pause) We also didn't fuck. She's too romantic for me. I need a Beyoncé to handle my Jay Z bullshit.

RYAN

Why do you care?

BLEACH

Because you work too much. Have fun. You'll write your best seller and date Anna Kendrick.

RYAN

She's too perky for me.

BLEACH

Bitch please. I heard you singing that stupid cup song from *Pitch Perfect*.

RYAN

Hold up a minute. You've seen *Pitch Perfect*?

BLEACH

Maybe. Maybe I know all of the songs too. (Pause) Try not to let the place burn down.

Exits. RYAN makes his way into the bathroom. Around this time KIM enters and appears lost. RYAN quickly comes back.

RYAN.

Notices KIM and is astonished by her appearance. He doesn't know if she's another made up version.

Can I help you with something mam?

KIM

I'm good. (Notices Ryan) You ok?

RYAN

Haven't I seen you before?

KIM

Possibly at Taco Bell around midnight.

RYAN

What's your name?

KIM

Can I get a water?

RYAN

(Playfully) Water!!!

Grabs the nozzle and points it at

her.

Haven't you seen *Coyote Ugly*?

KIM

I worked at Coyote Ugly in Austin and unless you want your dick cut off don't even think about it.

Looks around the bar.

This place is dead.

RYAN

It's called "the night of the living dead."

KIM

Why?

RYAN

Because it's when the homeless and regulars roam the Depot.

KIM

That's a cruel thing to say.

RYAN

It is what it is.

Takes his journal out and walks around the stage.

There's this man who wears a Donald Duck sweater and asks for a cup of ice. Part of me wants to know where he goes to for the rest of the night. Does he fall asleep in his car, behind a trashcan or at the salvation army? I'd like to hope that he will get clean. Goes back to school, meet someone, and have a family of his own. Maybe he'll live in a loft near the depot.

KIM

Why do that?

RYAN

What?

KIM

Hope for a happy ending.

RYAN

I'm a Pisces.

PATRON VOICE ONE

Hey!

RYAN

Turns around and runs to the front of the stage.

Yes...uh ID's please.

Checks them.

Ok...thank—

KIM

(Interrupts) Hold on a sec.

Walks to the front of the stage. She takes the ID and looks out into the audience.

Sweetie, you got two options. One: I keep this, and you leave. Two: I'll call the cops.

-KIM CONTINUED-

(Pause) That's what I thought. Next time try the bars on Broadway. They'll take your student ID let alone a fake.

Turns over to RYAN.

I know who you're talking about. He used to come into Whataburger on 19th.

RYAN

It's still standing if you can believe it.

KIM

(Chuckles) True fact: two of my friends met their husbands there.

RYAN

No shit?

He takes his journal out and writes in it.

What are you doing?

RYAN

Writing that down.

KIM

Why?

RYAN

Because I'll forget it.

KIM

But why?

RYAN

I'm taking a creative writing class this semester.

KIM

Well that's awesome...and exotic. Tell me...have you ever ran across someone like me?

RYAN

I would lie if I said I did.

KIM

What's your story about?

RYAN

Girl finds her boyfriend banging her cousin in the backseat of her own car.

KIM

You want to hear a better one?

Picks up her glass.

RYAN nods his head. She drinks her glass of water delicately and walks about the stage. RYAN begins writing in his journal while drinking a bottle of water. Spotlight shines on both of them.

Don't ever send a dick pic to a girl.

RYAN

I can't even look at myself naked. I close my eyes whenever I get out of the shower, so I don't see myself in the mirror.

KIM

Relax. I have seen and been with worse looking guys.

RYAN

(Pause) So, did someone...send you one?

KIM

(Playfully) A what?

RYAN

Dick pic?

KIM

You sir need to wash your mouth. (Chuckles) It looked like the hotdog from the Wienerschnitzel commercial.

RYAN

Ok, I didn't need the details.

KIM

It looked like a shriveled-up pickle...baby one I may add. And he didn't have the courtesy to shave. Looked like the grown-up version of Simba's head.

RYAN

(Interrupts) OK! So, what does this have to do with your story?

KIM

One of the guys who sent me a pic was talking to my roommate.

RYAN

(Raises his hand) How did you know it was him?

KIM

The guy sent a pic to my roommate.

RYAN

Of course, he did.

KIM

I'm not even to the good part.

RYAN

There's more?

KIM

...he cheated on her with a Sunday school teacher.

RYAN

Hmm.

KIM

We used to date.

RYAN

Who?

KIM

The Sunday school teacher and I. (Pause) Does that turn you on?

RYAN

Extremely but continue.

KIM

(Sighs) He sent my roommate a text saying "thank you for the memories. But I think we should see other people." What a crock of shit.

She grabs a stack of paper on the counter and starts tossing them in the air.

So, I printed out copies of the pics he sent me before and posted them all over the men and ladies' bathroom at Coyote Ugly, with his name on it. I even created a blog that was dedicated to his penis pics.

RYAN

Nice.

KIM

Why thank you. (Pause) I also worked in a strip club...but as a bartender so don't get excited

RYAN

Very interesting.

KIM

You want to hear a secret?

RYAN

Sure.

KIM

Come closer.

Leans his head over the bar and
whispers.

I write too.

RYAN

Really?

KIM

Shushh!! You don't want the whole bar to know.

RYAN

Sorry I—

KIM

Kidding. No one really cares.

Steps toward the stage and yells.

I love to write!

PATRON ONE

Who gives a shit?

PATRON TWO

Show us your boobs!

KIM

See? You can do it too and nobody would care. Go ahead try it.

RYAN

Steps toward the stage and yells

I love to write.

PATRON ONE

Who gives a shit?

PATRON TWO

Show us your boobs!

KIM

Now (Leans over the counter and strokes RYAN'S hair) Why do *you* write?

RYAN

.... for fun.

KIM

I don't believe you.

RYAN

That's your opinion. Not mine.

KIM

I believe you don't want to admit your "why."

RYAN

Grabs a towel.

Don't know what to tell you.

KIM

Grabs the towel from him

Don't think we're done with this conversation. So, I started writing a week ago.

RYAN

Why?

KIM

I went to a poetry reading in Austin. I feel guilty now that I didn't go to one when I lived here.

RYAN

What brings you back?

KIM

Visiting a friend's grave.

RYAN

I'm sorry.

KIM

Anyway, readings are romantic. I liked it because for forty-five minutes I didn't feel alone. I didn't feel stressed. I just felt...well... comfortable.

She grabs one of the papers from the floor and pretends to write on it.

After the reading, I went home.... well my friend's apartment and wrote something. I was even going to present it at the next reading...but I didn't.

RYAN

Because you were scared?

KIM

No, because the place burned down.

RYAN

What happened?

KIM

I threw a lit joint into a trash can.

RYAN

Can I read your work?

KIM

Why?

RYAN

Because I like to read

KIM

(Sighs) Can I read one of your stories?

RYAN

I'm working on one right now for that class I was telling you about.

KIM

Write about me.

RYAN

You're a little conceited.

KIM

And cute.

Takes a cherry from the fruit tray.

You should write me as an aspiring musician, who falls for someone.

RYAN

Happens too much.

KIM

Write that I work at a podcast.

RYAN

Why would you want to do that?

KIM

Because podcasts are fun to listen to when you're stoned.

RYAN

I'll try to do my best.... Umm.

KIM

Kim.

RYAN

Oh, you're Kim. (Pause) Ryan. My name is...

KIM

(Interrupts) Figured as much when it was the first name that came out of your mouth.

MONICA enters and notices
KIM. KIM tries to ease the
tension.

And that is my cue to leave. Thanks for the conversation.

RYAN

Anytime.

KIM

Later.

She exits, while MONICA stares
her down. Seconds later
BLEACH enters with a
Whataburger bag.

BLEACH

Did you take care of that clog?

RYAN

Shit.

He exits.

Blackout

Scene Three: The Debate on Cigarettes and Vapes

Lights up on CASH eating a pizza
behind the counter while RYAN
reads something from his
computer. He appears stressed
and CASH notices.

CASH

What's wrong?

RYAN

My professor didn't accept my proposal.

CASH

Your what?

RYAN

My short story proposal. It's already late and she's going to take off more points because it's not complete. Perfect. What's wrong with a story occurring in a bar?

CASH

Are you asking or is that a rhetorical question? (RYAN is surprised) Don't look at me like that dude. I went to college too...for a little while.

RYAN

What's wrong with a story taking place in a bar?

CASH

Been done.

RYAN

So has everything.

CASH

Just keep writing man. Or don't. I couldn't care less.

RYAN goes back to sweeping.
His headphones blare perhaps
"Old Town Road," by Little Nas
X & Billy Ray Cyrus.

For god sakes no.

Throws a straw at him.

Change it.

RYAN

Fine.

His headphones perhaps blare out
music that ranges between
country, hip-hop or show tunes.
Soon he begins dancing...badly.
CASH watches on in amusement
until MONICA enters. CASH
throws another straw at RYAN

RYAN

What?

Turns around.

Damn it.

MONICA

No, please keep going.

RYAN

Thanks.

CASH

Points to the straws

Be sure to clean that up.

RYAN

Right.

MONICA

What did you think of Kimmy?

RYAN

She wasn't...well not that bad. I mean "tough," yes. But—

CASH

Tough?

RYAN

It's used in a book called *The Outsiders*.

CASH

(Chuckles) Bookworm.

RYAN

(Effortlessly)Ha.ha.

MONICA

Well, I'm rooting for you.

RYAN

I'm not interested in her like that.

MONICA

Neither does anyone else.

She lights herself a cigarette.

CASH

Monica really?

Points to the no smoking sign
with an "X" over it

MONICA

What?

CASH

You quit almost a year ago after—

MONICA

-- and I'll quit again.

CASH

You going by to see—

MONICA

--nope.

CASH

Well you should.

He exits.

RYAN

Is everything alright?

MONICA

Yes.

RYAN

I will listen... I am a barte—

MONICA

--back. You're a barback.

RYAN

I'm a bartender in *training*.

MONICA

Yes, pouring a drink is a great trade to have.

RYAN

It is when you're working in Vegas.

MONICA

Somehow, I do not picture a bowtie dude as yourself working in the devil's playground.

RYAN

Attempts to be suave but it doesn't go well.

Believe it or not I can also live on the wild side.

MONICA

Starts moving in closer to RYAN

What is the wildest thing you've ever done?

RYAN

Well, I did drink alcohol in front of a teacher in high school.

MONICA

Oh really?

RYAN

It was in a Whataburger to go cup.

MONICA

Well that's not dangerous.

RYAN

It is when you mixed it with Pedialyte.

MONICA

That explains so much about you.

RYAN

Ha.

MONICA

Anything else?

RYAN

Almost had sex in the bed of my brothers' truck...while he was standing beside it.

MONICA

What stopped it?

RYAN

My brother crying.

MONICA

Yikes.

RYAN

His girlfriend broke up with him on snapchat.

CASH returns while smoking a
vape.

CASH

Smoking is a disgusting habit.

MONICA

(Scoffs) You don't say?

CASH

I vape thank you.

RYAN

You look like the caterpillar from *Alice and Wonderland*.

CASH

How's ole Peanut been, Monica?

MONICA

I chased him around the house after he got out. He's not feeling too good though. So, I left a movie on for him when I left.

RYAN

What film?

MONICA

Homeward Bound.

RYAN

You miss, are a saint.

CASH

(Uncomfortably) Hey Monica. I talked to Kim. She's only here to see *him*. (Takes a deep breath) I'm letting you know this in case you walk in and see her.

MONICA

I already saw her. So, you won't get any trouble out of me.

Walks around the bar and see's RYAN'S journal. She suddenly grabs it.

What have you been writing about lately?

RYAN

Monica!

MONICA

She runs around the space and reads from it.

"Dear diary. The sky is orange like Face from Nick Jr. Dear diary, my biggest regret was not dating the Mowry sisters from *Sister Sister*. Dear diary, I hope to lose my virginity while getting down in a Burger King bathroom like Humpty Hump."

RYAN

That is not what I put.

MONICA

I'm not sure.

RYAN

Come on.

MONICA

Hmm. A section about "fearless characters." (Sarcastically) "How poetic?"

Reads through them.

RYAN

Hey!

MONICA

Stops. She looks at RYAN and smiles.

Someone has a muse. The wrong one.

CASH

Sounds like someone is jealous.

MONICA pinches CASH'S arm. She then walks over and hands RYAN back the journal.

Damn it!

MONICA

Like I said beware kid.

She exits. BLEACH enters while looking at his phone. By the way his thumb is working it's safe to say he's swiping right on everyone. RYAN walks behind the counter to get himself a glass of water. CASH perhaps plays the song "Closing time," by

Semisonic to inform any surviving patrons that it's time to leave. BLEACH counts his tips and looks out into the audience.

BLEACH

Let's go people. We are closed. Get out unless you work here or fucking someone that works here.

CASH

Well put.

BLEACH

Why thank you.

CASH

How many people did we get tonight?

RYAN

You can't be serious? Like four.

CASH

(Chuckles) I say thirty...at least.

BLEACH

Hey someone dropped some glasses over by the men's bathroom.

RYAN goes to grab the broom.

Get the glass magnet.

RYAN

The glass magnet?

CASH

Yeah, we don't use it very much.

RYAN

What is it?

CASH

It picks up glass like the bottle cap magnet does.

BLEACH

We loaned it to the guys next door.

CASH

That's right. See if they still have it.

BLEACH

I'm sure they do.

RYAN

You guys aren't fucking with me, are you?

BLEACH

I'm serious. Go next door.

RYAN slowly exits. BLEACH
and CASH start cracking up.

Oh my god.

BLEACH

Looks at his phone.

I'm going to head out already. Tips are counted along with my drawers.

CASH

Where are you headed?

BLEACH

Pulls out his phone.

Just got a match for tonight AND I also a date next week with Kim.

CASH

Already huh?

BLEACH

Yes sir.

He exits. A few seconds RYAN appears embarrassed.

RYAN
You. Dick.

CASH
What? Did they lose our glass magnet?

RYAN
I can't believe I fell for that.

CASH
What did they do?

RYAN
They just looked at me and kept telling me to repeat myself as they called the other employees over. And they did the same thing: just looked at me in amazement.

CASH
RYAN grabs a broom.
Here.

Pours RYAN a shot of Jameson.
For being a good sport.

RYAN
I'm not supposed to drink on the clock.

CASH
I'm the boss and I say that it's fine.

RYAN
Why aren't you drinking?

CASH
I don't drink.

RYAN
That's crazy.

CASH

I don't. Now take a shot before TABC strolls by. (RYAN takes the shot) That was a test. You're fired.

RYAN

Fuck off.

CASH

You're getting wiser grasshopper.

RYAN

Still got more to learn master.

He starts sweeping. CASH see's Paul Coelho's *The Alchemist*. He smiles and picks it up.

CASH

My ex read this while I was at Tech.

RYAN

Didn't know you went to Tech.

CASH

Dropped out my junior year.

RYAN

So, you became a bartender?

CASH

It's not a bad profession.

RYAN

Not saying that it is. What got you into it?

CASH

My ex throwing me out.

RYAN

Ouch.

CASH

Kim and Monica let me stay on their couch, while I worked as a door guy for a few months. I moved up to bartender and low and behold became the general manager on slow Sunday nights.

RYAN

I didn't know they used to live together.

CASH

They used to be a lot of things.

RYAN

Is Kim a bad person?

CASH

Who isn't?

Blackout.

Scene Four: Dating Apps...Last Act of Desperation

Lights up on RYAN as he remains sitting on a stool while writing into his journal. KIM enters the bar and notices him.

KIM

Are you writing about me?

RYAN

Continues to write.

Maybe.

KIM

How exciting.

RYAN

Where's your poem?

KIM

It's at my friend's place.

Bring it in next time. RYAN

I will if I remember. KIM

Here. RYAN
Takes her hand and writes on it.

Now you won't forget. KIM
Looks at her hand and reads:
She closely observes RYAN's
head

You're balding. RYAN
Stops writing

And I now I will start crying. KIM

Must be stress. RYAN
Takes his phone out

I'm not really balding, am I? KIM
Yeah...like Homer Simpson balding. You my friend need to get laid.

That's not going to make my hair grow back. KIM

Just get back out there. RYAN

If I had to choose between dating and listening to Milli Vanilli's comeback album...then I'd choose the album. Besides, twenty-first century dating sucks ass.

KIM

No, it doesn't.

Pulls out her phone

It's called dating apps.

RYAN

It's called "last act of desperation."

KIM

I'm not desperate.

RYAN

Everyone has their reasons.

KIM

I have my needs. (Flirtatiously) Try it. Maybe you'll swipe right on me.

RYAN

Notices that she's dressed up for something.

Meeting someone?

KIM

If I said "yes," will you be jealous?

RYAN

Nope.

KIM

Liar.

BLEACH enters from the back and puts his arm around KIM. She appears ashamed that RYAN is seeing her with him.

I'm going to use the restroom.

She exits.

RYAN

RYAN notices BLEACH
scratching himself.

Everything alright down there?

BLEACH

I just got swamp ass in my crotch. Nothing big.

RYAN

You're right. (Chuckles)

BLEACH

Tell her I'll be next door waiting.

RYAN

Try not to itch it anymore. She may get the wrong idea.

BLEACH exits. RYAN starts
cleaning the counter tops but
stops as MONICA enters.

Oh, hey.

MONICA

Why is it I come in you're always cleaning?

RYAN

I'm always cleaning up after people's messes.

MONICA

Maybe one day you won't have to.

RYAN

Yeah, hope so. What are you doing here?

MONICA

I'm an Uber driver for tonight. You written anything lately?

RYAN

I do but it's just an idea right now.

MONICA

It took J.K. Rowling six years to write the first *Harry Potter* book.

RYAN

Mmmhmm.

MONICA

(Beat) How about you take a break and go next door to take a shot with me?

RYAN

Aren't you not supposed to be drinking and driving?

KIM

Take it easy lifetime channel.

RYAN

Besides, I'm on the clock.

MONICA

Then let's take a shot here.

RYAN

No.

MONICA

Some other time, I guess. But hey! I found something for you to listen to when you're writing.

RYAN

I usually don't listen to anything.

MONICA

Well maybe that's the problem.

RYAN

Why do you care if I write or not?

MONICA

(Flustered) Because I'm a giver.

She pulls out J. Cole's 2014
album *2014 Forest Hills Drive*.

RYAN

(Chuckles) That's great except I don't have a record player.

MONICA

Use it as inspiration then.

RYAN

You got something there.

MONICA

Tell me about this new story you are thinking about.

RYAN

It's a story set in a bar. Nothing fancy about it or relevant to modern readers.

MONICA

You mean it won't sell? (RYAN nods his head) They said Cole's lyrics were not relevant.

RYAN

Oh, how they were wrong.

MONICA

(She gets closer to RYAN) Your writing seems to be more well...about us.

RYAN

The ones who slave during the week, live for Friday and Saturdays, and fear Sunday mornings.

MONICA

Like Cole said, "every poet just wants to be loved."

The ball is in RYAN's court now.
He could kiss her but he's afraid.
Around this time KIM enters

from the bathroom. She notices MONICA and wants to escape. However, she can't because MONICA notices her. Both don't want to be near each other.

KIM

You two are the cutest, am I right?

MONICA is silent.

Didn't you also love Kendrick Lamar? (MONICA remains silent) I believe you did. We'd play his album on my phone while walking around campus stoned at night. "Bitch don't kill my vibe. Bitch don't kill my vibe." (Chuckles) Am I right? I mean you're not the "bitch", but the lyrics was good.

MONICA

You done?

KIM

Right.

She exits.

MONICA

That offer about taking a shot is still on the table.

She exits. RYAN grabs his journal and begins writing.

RYAN

I guess Bleach and Kim go well together. "The jock and freak story."

BLEACH enters onstage and appears dressed up in a Varsity letterman jacket. RYAN looks at him.

Makes sense.

BLEACH

Does it?

RYAN

What kind of jock would you be?

BLEACH

There's a kind?

RYAN

Somewhere between *Friday Night Lights* and *Varsity Blues*.

BLEACH

Well...how do we meet?

RYAN

KIM enters the stage and sits on a stool. She has a stack of papers lying by her feet.

In the school parking lot. She's on the hood of her car while smoking a cigarette.

BLEACH

What about me?

RYAN

You're coming out of practice and see her smoking on the hood of her car.

Quickly he writes something in his journal and looks at BLEACH.

Something about her smoking a cigarette turns you on.

BLEACH

Oh, I'm turned on.

RYAN

You wouldn't say it.

Oh. BLEACH

But you will walk up to her. RYAN

Just like that? BLEACH

What do you mean “just like that?” RYAN

Just randomly walk up to her and say “hi?” BLEACH

No, something pulls you to her. RYAN
Writes in his journal.

A paper she wrote for a class blows away in the wind.

(Sarcastically) Oh, how convenient. BLEACH

Shut up and do it. RYAN

I got it. BLEACH
KIM throws her papers in the air.
BLEACH runs over to grab the papers.

Damn it. KIM

I got it. BLEACH

I can't lose them.

KIM

Why?

BLEACH

Because, I'll fail shop class—

KIM

Looks at RYAN

Wait. Why would I need papers for shop?

RYAN

Because they're.... hmmm...your notes?

KIM

Ok.

RYAN

So, Bleach. You pick up the NOTES and give them to her.

BLEACH

Gives them to KIM

Don't worry.

Winks at her

You'll do fine on that EXAM.

KIM

Thanks.

BLEACH

What's your name?

KIM

Looks him up and down

Not interested.

RYAN

This isn't working.

BLEACH and KIM both exit
Maybe it was another way. What about at a party?

BLEACH appears on stage timid
and nervous while KIM shows to
be the life of the party.

Like a small get together. Bleach probably wasn't intentionally invited. More
of a "oh shit Bleach knows, now we got to take him."

BLEACH
Sounds like your story.

RYAN
Shut up. (Pause) Next, Kim shows up to be the life of the party...only in her
mind. No one else enjoys her company except herself. How did she get to the
party? Nobody knows. But she's there. She sits next to Bleach and accidentally
spills her beer on him and—

PATRON VOICE ONE
Can I get another coke and whiskey?

RYAN
Yeah.

Makes the drink and slides it
down the counter.

Here.

PATRON VOICE ONE
Thank you.

RYAN
Ok.

Picks up his journal

Back at the party.

BLEACH and KIM assemble
back into their normal places

Kim accidentally spills her drink on you.

KIM

Without any effort

Oh shit. I'm sorry.

BLEACH

Without any effort either

Jesus. It's ok. Hi, I'm Bleach.

KIM

I'm still not interested.

RYAN

Yeah, this isn't working for me. (Pause) What about a bar?

KIM & BLEACH

(Sarcastically) You don't say?

RYAN

Work with me here people. (Pause) Bleach, you see Kim from across the room. You both are nervous to make the first move. Kim, you have had three beers and two shots of patron that you thought was vodka.

KIM

I know the difference between vodka and patron.

RYAN

Yeah, no you don't. So, you have more courage than Bleach. However, Bleach is filled with adrenaline after watching romantic comedies all day—

BLEACH

Nah.

RYAN

Fine, let's start with Kim standing by the men's bathroom.

KIM

(Sarcastically) Yes, damage my image a little more.

BLEACH

Then don't stand around the men's bathroom.

KIM

Points to RYAN

Tell him that.

BLEACH

Why is she standing by the men's bathroom?

KIM

Not waiting for you.

RYAN

Bleach walks across to use the restroom and see's you.

BLEACH walks across and meets
KIM at the men's restroom.

BLEACH

So, I noticed you standing by the men's bathroom.

KIM

Yeah...it's my thing.

RYAN

This isn't working.

BLEACH

Let me ask you something.

RYAN

What?

Spotlight on the RYAN and
MONICA. KIM and BLEACH
exit.

BLEACH

How is it hard to figure out how we met?

KIM

And I thought my character was supposed to be in New York?

RYAN

When?

BLEACH

Wait one damn minute. I'm traveling all the way to New York just to get turned down by....

Points at KIM

Her?

KIM

Looks at Bleach

Fuck you *Riverdale*.

RYAN

Can we just get back to what the story is asking?

BLEACH

This is your story.

RYAN

No, it's not.

KIM

You want me to look at you like I'm looking at Bleach.

RYAN

I don't want that.

KIM

And why's that?

MONICA enters. KIM notices.

KIM

Oh, I see.

KIM and BLEACH exit.

RYAN

We sure could use some music right now.

RYAN waits for a music cue, but nothing happens.

Damn. This what happens when you get a low budget. And when I mean by low budget I mean “no budget.”

He walks over to his phone and plays a song. He grabs MONICA’s hand. Here RYAN feels confident. There could be a hailstorm going on outside and he would still be tranced

I wanna kiss you.

MONICA

Then do it.

RYAN tries but she stops him.

With the real me.

She exits. Lights up on RYAN. Everyone has exit except him. Around this time Kim enter and appears tipsy.

KIM

Why is there nobody in here?

RYAN

It’s Sunday.

KIM

It’s a good place.

RYAN

It’s Sunday.

KIM

(Shouts outside) Hey sweetie! Drag you boyfriend off the curb and bring him in! (Sees the neon signs) I like the colors. Pretty. Pretty. Neon Colors. They should get more. Like twenty more. It’ll look like Vegas!

Pulls out a marijuana pipe and starts smoking. She sees the non-smoking sign. Sshhhh. Don’t tell Cash.

RYAN

(Smiles) My lips are shut.

KIM

Good. (Walks over and strokes RYAN's head) You're a funny looking dude. Your hair is so...so...so hairy!! (She falls to the ground laughing) I'm so funny. Wait! Why do bars have so many bottles of liquor? (Waits for RYAN) You are supposed to ask "why?"

RYAN

Why?

KIM

So, Kim can drink all of them silly! I'm hilarious mother fuckers.

RYAN

Yes, you are. (Looks out the door). Where's Bleach?

KIM

Passed out in his car from all the (thrusts her hips) by yours truly.

KIM grabs a barstool and sits by the counter. MONICA enters.

RYAN

You picking someone up?

MONICA

Yeah but they're not answering their phone.

KIM

Hey you. Miss. Sweet. Sweet Person

MONICA does not say anything.
KIM gets the hint.

Well, great conversation. I'll head out so you can go back to talking shit about me.

MONICA

What's there to talk about? You're here. That says enough. Your reputation speaks for itself.

KIM

Your hands are not clean sweetheart.

MONICA

Never said they were.

KIM

Well now that I got you talking—why hasn't anyone brought him flowers?

MONICA

(Sarcastically) You went out to see him? How thoughtful of you.

KIM

I mean honestly how hard was it to bring flowers? They don't cost much.

MONICA

Maybe it doesn't need flowers.

KIM

It needs something.

MONICA

Fuck you. Maybe it needs nothing because it's just a grave.

KIM

(Scoffs) Dead leaves and bird shit covering his name. What a wonderful way to keep his memory alive.

MONICA

I have lots of ways of keeping his memory alive. Would you like me to share? I watch *Supernatural* because he watched it every Saturday morning while cooking burnt bacon. I go running because it's what we used to do.

KIM

Ok.

MONICA

I also order Pizza and sit on top of the house with Peanut and hear traffic happening on the loop next to our place. I guess your memories were more colorful than mine.

KIM

And who's fault was that?

MONICA

You ended it.

KIM

Correction. He did. You were just there to be the shoulder to cry on. But you went beyond that didn't you?

MONICA

(Calmly) I'm not doing this with you again. We had this spiel before: The hospital. The funeral. Back and forth on Facebook. I don't want anything to do with you.

KIM

You won't have to. Just let me be. Everyone enjoys having me here. You're the only one who has a problem.

MONICA

Just because they're hushing themselves around you, doesn't mean they're not thinking about *it*.

KIM

Like I said, your hands are not clean, bitch.

MONICA looks at RYAN in

shock.

MONICA

Yep. I'm good. (restrains herself) Someone can find their own ride.

She exits.

KIM

I should wake Bleach up.

She exits. RYAN perhaps plays the *2014 Forest Hills Drive Album* on Spotify.

Blackout.

Scene Five: What about your story?

Next week at the Lost Pick.
RYAN is sweeping up the floor
while BLEACH and CASH are
watching something on their
phones. BLEACH will sometimes
scratch his crotch.

BLEACH

This is a damn good show. The characters are horrible, but the action is what drives the performance! I mean the plot line is well written. Two friends turned mortal enemies. And then their father gets in the middle of it. Then all of a sudden, the friends are actually long-lost twins: one evil and one good.

CASH

Then good brother's girlfriend sleeps with the bad one.

BLEACH

Damn dude that's right. Remember when they fought to do the death in order inherit the father's millions?

CASH

Yeah, and they turned on their father.

BLEACH

What about when their second cousin comes from beyond the grave?

CASH

And summons an army of warriors to conquer the land?

BLEACH

Then fought in a cage.

CASH & BLEACH

(With a sigh) Man.

BLEACH

Nothing like a good performance like.

CASH

Sunday Night Wrestling mother fuckers!

BLEACH

Nothing beats a hangover than seeing Brock Lesnar suplexing someone.

RYAN

(Chuckles) I love you guys.

BLEACH

Excuse me?

RYAN

I never go through a dull moment here.

BLEACH

Well I'm glad we can be your weekend entertainment.

BLEACH'S phone goes off

-BLEACH CONTIUED-

Damn it.

CASH

What?

BLEACH

Kim wants to talk.

CASH

Told you this would happen. But, no. Let your dick make the decisions.

Pays close attention to BLEACH
scratching himself. It finally hits
him.

No fucking way. Motherfucker has caught the raider rash.

BLEACH

That's a myth. (Scratches himself harder) Should have known the bitch wasn't clean.

RYAN

Who Kim?

CASH

Guess you won't be seeing Abbie anytime soon.

BLEACH

She wanted me to come over tonight.

CASH

You're not going over there are you?

BLEACH

Guess not. (Scratches himself again) I'm going to take piss. (He exits)

RYAN

That can't be true right?

CASH

Shit, who knows. (Yells at BLEACH) We got a bathroom here. (Pause) Wait! I wouldn't piss right now, if I were...

BLEACH screams in pain. CASH exits. Ryan takes out his journal and begins writing

RYAN

Maybe she does have it.

Lights go out and spotlight shines on RYAN as BLEACH and KIM enter.

KIM

Looks at BLEACH

What's the point of us staying together now?

BLEACH

This is all her fault.

KIM

Yeah (scoffs) the “slut” did it. You sure it wasn’t those bathroom models on Tinder?

BLEACH

I deleted that app thank you.

KIM

Before or after you slept with me?

RYAN attempts to take hold of
the situation.

RYAN

You’re staying because you care for him.

KIM

Ryan, honey...it was just a one-night stand. (Looks BLEACH up and down)
Besides he’s a fuckboy.

BLEACH

You would know what a fuckboy is would you?

RYAN

Just...just hold each other.

Both BLEACH and KIM hold
each other.

What words could you say that would keep him from walking away Kim?

KIM

Get yourself checked.

BLEACH

Deuces.

Begins to exit

RYAN

Stop acting like kids and be real.

BLEACH

This is real.

KIM

Assholes leave women out to dry all the time. And for the record, I don't have anything.

RYAN

Then prove it.

KIM

Why would *I* have to prove it?

RYAN

I'm just saying in stories—situations like these there needs to be evidence.

KIM

Do you ever feel like you're being slut shamed because you show a little skin? Sleep with different people? Or maybe and hypothetically had a three-way? Because this asshole would be called a legend for that.

RYAN

No.

KIM

You know something? This story is awful.

RYAN

What?

KIM

Let's dive into *your* story, how about that?

RYAN

I don't have one.

BLEACH

You must have something.

RYAN

Not worth telling.

BLEACH

You're afraid to know the truth about yourself...

KIM

...if you expose one little thing that occurred from your life.

RYAN

Can we drop it?

KIM

No can do. You want to investigate my life so now let's look into yours.

RYAN

I can't tell my story.

BLEACH

Why?

RYAN

I don't want to take up the whole space. I rather be the guy in the corner of a dive bar. Let me drink a beer and laugh along with the crowd. Maybe I'll sing along to "Bohemian Rhapsody," when someone sings it on karaoke. (Sighs) People have richer stories of conquering their fears and addiction. I don't have one. People have richer stories of finding love at the wrong time. I'm the one who witnesses it. The moment. The passion. The fear. The resentment. The vulnerability. I witness it through patrons, classmates, and the homeless who roam the Depot. I witness it before they even realize it.

KIM

Go write that.

RYAN

I don't want to write stories about a world that remains filled with fucked up people living in dead end situations.

To KIM and BLEACH

You guys truly don't care about each other?

KIM & BLEACH

We're arguing outside the bar right now.

BLEACH

I'm making a scene.

KIM

I also fell off the wagon.

Spotlights go out. Lights up only on RYAN in the middle of the stage. Offstage BLEACH and KIM are arguing.

BLEACH

(Offstage) You're crazy.

KIM

(Offstage) You fucked me so that makes you crazier.

BLEACH

(Offstage) You still won't take any blame for shadiness.

KIM

(Offstage) Yes, I'm the one who forced you to text me back.

BLEACH

(Offstage) So? You haven't changed.

KIM

(Offstage) Never said I did.

BLEACH

(Offstage) It's the same spiel. "New year. New me." But, there's no new you.

KIM

(Offstage) You seemed to fancy it.

BLEACH

(Offstage) I wouldn't have if I'd known that you had the clap.

KIM

(Offstage)—don't you dare try to blame that on me.

BLEACH

(Offstage) Well it did start after we went out.

KIM

(Offstage) Bullshit.

Pulls out her phone

Your profile on Tinder is still active.

BLEACH

(Offstage) I'm not playing this game with you.

KIM

(Offstage) You started this "game," when you messaged me weeks ago on Facebook less than an hour after Abbie dumped you. I mean come on; I haven't had a conversation with you since the funeral. Face it. You're just mad because you lost the upper hand.

BLEACH

(Offstage) You're so immature.

KIM

(Offstage) Says the guy who still posts selfies of himself shirtless on facebook.

BLEACH

(Offstage) At least I don't try to fuck anything that moves.

KIM

(Offstage) What the hell is that supposed to mean?

BLEACH

(Offstage) You've been on Ryan since you got here.

KIM

(Offstage) And it hasn't gotten anywhere.

She enters and notices RYAN who pretends to be sweeping.

Hey.

RYAN

Hi.

KIM

Yeah.

RYAN tries to defuse the situation by trying to find something to do.

So, I guess you heard what I said. (RYAN doesn't speak) Got anything to say?

RYAN remains silent.

Well hey! Maybe this will be great for your stories. A little confrontation wouldn't kill anyone.

RYAN grabs the broom and tries to sweep. She grabs the broom from him

No, I don't think so. (RYAN remains silent) Say something. You're too much of a bitch to tell people what you really have to say.

RYAN remains silent

Probably one of the reasons you don't get respect with your writing. Instead of writing these soap operas, write something real.

RYAN looks at the floor. He looks for his headphones.

Stop looking at the floor and look at me. (Scoffs) Take your hands away from your ears. So, say something! Call me a bitch, skank, or a cunt. Slut shame me! Show me that you're not just a nice guy.

RYAN

I like being nice.

KIM

That's why Monica will never work out.

RYAN

Excuse me?

KIM

She's only attached to guys who give her a challenge.

RYAN

You mean the same kind of challenge that gives you chlamydia?

KIM

(Scoffs) Touché. Fool me once, shame on you. Fool me twice...well fuck me, right? So, you do believe that I got it?

RYAN

(Shakes his head in disbelief) It's the perks of being a nice guy.

KIM

I never even went to a poetry reading. Just wanted to....

RYAN

.... right. (Pause) Why do you put up a façade? When it's just us, I get to see a side of you that's been hiding for a long time. Probably since high school. I got to see the person who wants to scream in a crowd because it will soothe her anxiety. The person who is afraid that everyone will crush her heart if they find out they can. So, she puts on makeup, smiles, jokes, and believes no one will know that she just wants cry. Shame on me for trying to comfort that person.

KIM

I did write something.

RYAN

I'm going to clean the bathrooms.

KIM

RYAN grabs his journal and tosses it into the trash can. He puts his headphones on and walks into the bathroom.

I really did.

Blackout

Scene Six: One day at a time

The bar a week later. CASH enters from the back with an ice bucket. RYAN follows him while carrying dirty dishes as his headphones blare out music by Taylor Swift. CASH notices and chuckles. He walks over and taps RYAN on the shoulder.

CASH

Hey.

Taps him on the shoulder again.

Hey!

RYAN

What?!

CASH

Take it easy Miss. Swift. (Under his breath) And now you're lying on the cold hard ground.

RYAN

Ah! Ah! (Realized that CASH set him up for that) Not ashamed. Not at all.

CASH

I'm going next door for some ice, since the machine broke last night.

RYAN

I'll hold down the fort.

CASH

Knew that I could count on you.

Exits but comes back.

The song “Tim McGraw” played when I lost my virginity. So, I owe a lot to her.

Exits. RYAN walks around the bar and investigates the trash can. He contemplates about going through it. Suddenly he dumps everything on the ground: bottles, napkins, and a McDonald’s bag. Frantically he goes through it like he’s looking for change in a dryer.

Damn it!
RYAN

He starts crying. About this time MONICA enters and notices what he’s doing.

It’s not there.
MONICA

What!?! (Looks up and notices her) Sorry.
RYAN

Your journal.
MONICA

How did you—
RYAN

Bleach told me.
MONICA

Oh well. (Beat) Where the hell have you been? Haven’t seen you in days.
RYAN

Had a rough week and didn’t feel like going out.
MONICA

Want to talk about it?
RYAN

MONICA
Not really. (Beat) You mad?

RYAN
About?

MONICA
Your muse?

RYAN
I guess.

MONICA
What did you want from her?

RYAN
I don't know.

RYAN starts putting everything
back in the trashcan.

MONICA
(Pause) Has anyone told you why *we* hate each other?

RYAN
(RYAN shakes his head) But what's the point?

MONICA
You don't know the story.

RYAN
Don't need to.

MONICA
Yes, you do.

RYAN
Look, it's been a week for me. (Motions towards the trash) As you can see, I
got trash that needs to be picked up. (He walks over to get the broom)

MONICA
My husband and her dated. (RYAN stops) It was when we all used to hang out.
All of us if you can imagine it.

RYAN

Why are you—

MONICA

I hoped they would break up.

RYAN

Then she cheated on him—

MONICA

(Interrupts)—no he did.

RYAN

Wow.

MONICA

We went on a couple of dates and that's what drove her to Austin. We had our moments. He and I...just have a hard time remembering when she came back. She worked here for a bit and well...I found their text messages. (Chuckles) It was karma. "What goes around, comes around." (Pause) Peanut passed away last week.

RYAN

I'm sorry.

MONICA

Is it bad that I took a week off from work because an animal died?

RYAN

I don't think so.

MONICA

He was the only living thing who ever welcomed me home with a kiss. The minute I would open the door, he'd come a runnin from the bedroom; just barking, while jumping...and whining.

RYAN notices MONICA is getting upset.

RYAN

Look Monica. Lets...

MONICA

It's been a year since my husband took his life. Just went out to a Walmart parking lot and shot himself. I found out later that day that he had been texting Kim again. He did it because she called it off. (Painfully smiles) I wasn't even good enough for sloppy seconds.

RYAN

That's not true.

MONICA

One moment I'm able to walk across the street and the next I don't want to get out of bed. (To RYAN) Taking long walks at night saves me. It's therapy for me. Like writing is for you. I don't want you to stop writing.

RYAN

I don't want to write something that destroys hope.

MONICA

Like it or not I can see that it brings life into you.

RYAN

I feel that it sucks it out of me.

MONICA

Grabs a napkin and pen from the behind the counter, and places it in RYAN's hand

Words can make the difference. Don't forget that.

They both hold hands. MONICA appears guilty.

I can't.

She exits. RYAN looks at the napkins and plays something on his phone.

RYAN

Shit.

Blackout

Scene Seven: Christmas lights make good night lights.

A week later. RYAN leaves his phone out on the counter as it plays Christmas tunes. BLEACH, CASH, and MONICA help decorate the bar with Christmas decorations. BLEACH attempts to cut out snow angels but is not doing a good job. MONICA notices.

MONICA

You're cutting them horribly.

BLEACH

Then how would you want me to do it?

MONICA

Not like that.

BLEACH

You don't know what you're doing.

MONICA

I was the lead snowflake cutter in elementary school.

CASH

Just cut out the snowflakes.

The jingle tunes on RYAN'S phone drives BLEACH insane.

BLEACH

I can't listen to this.

MONICA

Don't change a thing.

BLEACH

You sound like Abbie.

MONICA

When are you moving back in with her?

BLEACH

After Christmas...so I don't have to help her pay rent.

CASH

Have you said anything about your...lovely mistake?

BLEACH

No, but I will tonight at dinner.

MONICA

That is not something you don't talk over dinner.

BLEACH

Relax it will be at McDonalds so, it won't be that shocking.

BLEACH becomes annoyed by
another Christmas tune.

I hate this song.

MONICA

Tough shit.

BLEACH

Must be that time of the month.

MONICA walks over and knees
Bleach in the groin. He falls to the
ground.

Fuck you. I'm already hurting down "there" woman.

CASH

Hey Bleach, while you're down there can you see if Ryan missed a spot.

BLEACH

Ok.

RYAN enters with empty
champagne glasses.

RYAN

Where did Bleach run off to?

BLEACH

I'm down here and you left a bunch of bottle caps underneath the cooler.

RYAN

Ok.... I'm going to get some napkins.

BLEACH

And ice from the back if you don't mind.

RYAN exits. KIM enters the bar
with her purse. She notices
BLEACH on the ground and
walks over to him.

KIM

Are you drunk?

BLEACH

God, I wish I was.

KIM

Looks at MONICA

Was this your doing?

MONICA just glares at her.

KIM

Right. (Sarcastically) Still not talking to me.

CASH

Can we please not do this.

MONICA

Do what?

KIM

It speaks.

MONICA

“It” will break this bottle of Smirnoff across your fucking mouth.

KIM

Monica, don’t you remember? I hate Smirnoff.

CASH

Guys it is Christmas.

Both women stare him down

I’ll go see if RYAN needs any help.

BLEACH

I’ll just hang out down here guys.

KIM

Fine, me and Monica can imitate the noise you make when you climax.

BLEACH

Ok, I’m up.

BLEACH and CASH exit into the
backroom.

MONICA

What do you want?

KIM

I’m just dropping something off before heading back.

MONICA

You’ll be back.

KIM

Not this time.

MONICA

Good.

She begins to exit.

KIM

I put the seventh of *Supernatural* on his grave.

MONICA stops.

I'm sorry. (Pause) I know that doesn't mean shit and probably never will.
But—

MONICA

--but you wanted to say it so you can sleep better at night. (Pause) I don't want to be drained every day hoping that you will choke on a chicken bone. I don't want to keep waking up with the image of him texting you in the middle of the night while lying next to me. Or seeing him depressed throughout the final months of our marriage. Or seeing him leave the house for the last time. I just want to wake up to a blank wall and another man's pants by my bed.

KIM

You can.

Nods at Ryan coming out of the back. MONICA hesitates to say something but stops. She exits. RYAN enters and notices KIM.

RYAN

Oh, hello.

KIM

Hey kid.

RYAN goes behind the counter and puts his headphones on.

Really?

RYAN

Huh?

KIM

I know you can hear me.

RYAN takes off his headphones

I do have that thing I wrote.

She pulls it out and hands it to RYAN. Spotlight on KIM as RYAN is reading.

“Christmas lights make a good night light.” Remember when you said that? It was at the flea market in July. You thought it would look exotic on our bedroom ceiling. (Chuckles) Miss getting stoned with you after eating late night Taco Bell. (Pause) I didn’t like Mac Miller’s *Devine Feminine* album, but I still find myself falling asleep to “Stay.” Missed the way I used your forearm as a pillow. Missed your snoring. I don’t miss you ignoring me after we had a fight. I don’t miss seeing you hold Monica’s hand. I don’t miss others looking at me whenever you guys walked in. I don’t miss you. I’m liar. I hate that I miss you. I miss hearing you whisper, “will you stay just a little while babe? Just a little while,” every morning before I went to work. I love you. Don’t want to but still do.

RYAN

...who’s Mac Miller?

KIM

You can’t be serious?

RYAN

I’m kidding. Are you going to keep writing?

KIM

I can’t promise you that I will.

RYAN

Right.

KIM

I also can’t promise you that I won’t.

RYAN

Well...that's good to know.

KIM

I might turn it into a song

RYAN

Do you know how to play any instruments?

KIM

No. (Chuckles) But I can learn...or have someone do it for me.

RYAN

Oh, boy.

KIM

Thank you.

RYAN nods his head.

Did you ever finish my story?

RYAN

It's going through a rewrite as we speak.

KIM

Well, if you ever get bored...come to Austin...we're always weird.

RYAN

I'll keep that in mind.

KIM

Pulls out a Dollar General coupon and hands it to him.

Buy yourself a new journal. Or a typewriter. I hear those are cheap.

Kisses him on the cheek.

Later.

She exits. RYAN grabs a towel and walks behind the counter to

clean. However, his mind is still fixated on the door. Soon he pulls out a stack of napkins and begins writing. KIM, CASH, MONICA, BLEACH stand around him.

BLEACH

You think this will work?

RYAN

I believe so.

BLEACH

But it has nothing to do with the bar.

RYAN

It doesn't have to.

CASH

But that was your whole setup.

RYAN

And now I have changed it.

BLEACH

It sounds a little lovey dovey to me.

KIM

Nobody reads this stuff anymore.

RYAN

I do and that's all what matters. Just because everyone wants to write the same thing does not mean that I have to.

CASH

Then you won't get any readers.

RYAN

I'll get someone who will.

MONICA

I would read it.

KIM

Kiss ass.

MONICA

I will kick your imaginary ass if you don't watch it.

RYAN

Everyone please. Just stop. I don't care if I won't get a lot of readers. I rather have assholes who believe *The Hangover* is a classic representation of modern art read my work. So, get into your stations.

Everyone exits. A spotlight shines on KIM sitting in the middle of the stage with a typewriter in front of her, along with crumbled up pages scattered around the stage. Her right arm appears to have a bandage around the vein.

KIM

Continues to pound on the keys at a slow pace as BLEACH enters wearing a jacket.

I love this sound.

Pounds on the keys faster

Doesn't that turn you on?

Stops.

Guess not.

BLEACH

What is that?

KIM

It's an old typewriter.

BLEACH

And?

KIM

A lot of writers use it.

BLEACH

To RYAN

-BLEACH CONTIUED-

Ryan, are sure that—

RYAN doesn't acknowledge him
and continues to write.

Right. So, why do you have it?

KIM

Saw it in a pawnshop and decided to buy it.

BLEACH

Notices the bandage

Weren't you supposed to buy groceries with that money?

KIM

Continues to type.

Yep.

BLEACH

But instead you bought—that.

KIM

Correct.

BLEACH

Looks at what she's typing

You're writing, "sorry" over and over again.

KIM

Continues typing

Yes.

BLEACH

Sighs

Why?

KIM

It's the only thing that I can think of.

Grabs her arm

Hey!

Drags her across the stage

BLEACH

I told you, if that I catch you on that shit, I'd throw you out.

KIM

I'm not on it!

BLEACH

Bullshit. You shot up again!

Kicks the papers and typewriter

KIM

What the fuck!?

BLEACH

We needed that money to buy formula for Emma.

KIM

I-I c-can get more money.

BLEACH

No, we can't.

Takes off his jacket to reveal the bandage around the vein in his right arm.

KIM

Why didn't *you* buy baby formula then?

BLEACH

I needed gas money to get to work throughout the week.

KIM

Right.

BLEACH

Fuck you! It was your job to buy formula not some fucking antique.

Kicks the typewriter again

KIM

Stop fucking doing that.

BLEACH

Your daughter is starving right now!

KIM

I-I...

BLEACH

Wow. Just fucking wow.

KIM

I don't understand why we don't apply for foo—

BLEACH

Because, I said so.

KIM

I didn't shoot up! I promise.

BLEACH glares at her

Ok. Fine. I shot up earlier before I came home. But I didn't drive! So, please don't be mad. I walked. I-I might still have some money left over.

Pulls out her purse and dumps everything out on the floor. Only empty pill bottles, loose change, and a Dollar General Coupon comes out.

I-I know this is bad...but we'll be fine baby. You know we will.

BLEACH continues to glare.
KIM notices something off stage.

She's crying again.

Gets up and exits. BLEACH walks over to the typewriter and slowly picks it up, along with the pages, and exits. Lights up on RYAN as he finishes the last line

RYAN

(Sighs) Yeah, that works.

Blackout

Scene Eight: Another Tale from The Depot District

A week later. Ryan is writing on a new note pad as music plays from his phone. MONICA enters.

MONICA

Hey!

RYAN

Hello.

MONICA

RYAN pulls out a manuscript with markings over it.

Didn't do so hot?

RYAN

Got a B-. But at least she gave a positive comment this time.

MONICA

What was it?

RYAN

"I didn't fall asleep on this one."

MONICA

(Chuckles) Sorry. It's not funny.

RYAN

Don't be. I find it funny as well.

MONICA grabs RYAN's hand.

MONICA

Are you going to write a story about *me* too?

RYAN

Can't. You're already living in mine.

MONICA

Is it going well?

RYAN

I'll let you know once we finish the first draft. (Beat) I'm writing a play instead!

MONICA walks over and kisses him on the cheek.

MONICA

Nothing you can handle. What's the play about?

RYAN

A guy working in a bar in the depot district.

MONICA

You think anyone would go see it?

RYAN

They both look out into the audience and smile.

Maybe.

MONICA

Well don't get too high class once you make it big.

RYAN

I'll make sure to come down here every week in my limo.

MONICA

Just to be cruel to me?

RYAN

You're lucky. I am going to hire the Mountain from *Game of Thrones* to kick Bleach's ass for me.

MONICA

You could just hire Abbie to work here.

RYAN

I didn't want to torture him that much. Is he still at your place?

MONICA

Nah, him and Abbie went on a weekend getaway trip to Ruidoso.

RYAN

Does she know about his gonorrhea?

MONICA

It'll be a surprising Christmas gift.

Looks around the bar and back at
RYAN.

Let's get out of here.

RYAN

Your wish is my command. Have you ever danced under the three moons in Lubbock?

MONICA

There's not a full moon let alone three happening tonight.

RYAN

The three moons are the movie screens at the drive-in movie theatre. I always thought it would be romantic to dance under a movie screen while music is playing.

MONICA

(Chuckles) We can stop by the liquor store and pick up a bottle of wine.

RYAN

I'm way ahead of you.

RYAN grabs two empty fountain drink cups and goes behind the bar. He picks up the wine bottle that's broken and fills the cups.

MONICA

Are you sure they'll be alright with you leaving?

RYAN

No, but do you care?

MONICA

I'll be waiting.

Ryan exits into the office. MONICA looks at RYAN's journal. She walks over and slowly opens it. Should be like her hand was the breeze that opened it for her. She begins to read what RYAN has written.

I'm not afraid to fail anymore. I'm going to fail. But I'll fail better. And will continue Until I get that warm smile from you. The kind that will let me know that I am the last number see on your phone before you go to bed with the heart emoji next to it. A character from a sitcom that somehow reminds you of me. You see, that's the perks of being a Pisces, Monica. You fail every day but never stop dreaming. Someone tells you that can't write a poem. So, you write a song instead. You see your crush making out with someone else at a party. So, you listen to "Mean" by Taylor Swift to remind yourself that you'll be in a

better place someday. Guess, that's why I love writing. I get the chance to remind myself and others that one fine day we will get what's coming to us.

A dream version of RYAN walks over and takes MONICA's hand and leads her out to the dance floor.

RYAN

I honestly have no clue if the drive-in screens are called the three moons. But, I'm just gonna go with it. Do you care?

MONICA shakes her head.

Didn't think so. Now, my play begins in a bar in Lubbock. Cliché? I think not. The main character is a struggling author. But, that's the beauty of this story. An aspiring author who struggles to write something new each week while cleaning dishes and vomit. Then he meets you.

MONICA

Me?

RYAN

Someone who reminds him that there is more to life than the neon lights, smell of stale beer, and, crumbled up drafts. You have struggles. Of course, you do. Everyone does. Both of you go on this journey. You are going to have fights. You are going to have passionate sex...I hope. Maybe it will be a seasonal thing and we—you guys will move on. But not a day will not pass by when I won't think of this moment. So, I'm going to start the story with me taking you on an official date. Maybe we'll dance under the screen and I'll finally have the nerve to kiss you. To be more realistic, it will probably be just a side hug at the end of the night. But, I'm fine with that.

He exits. MONICA slowly closes the journal. RYAN enters with a grin on his face.

MONICA

I guess he took it well.

RYAN

He was happy that I finally took the night off.

MONICA

Well, let's get going. It's almost sundown and the movies will probably start.

RYAN

Right. You want to take my car or yours?

MONICA

Yours. I'm almost out of gas.

RYAN

Ok, but you are buying the popcorn.

MONICA

Dido.

They begin to exit but stop at the door.

Wait.

RYAN

What?

MONICA

Forgot something.

MONICA grabs RYAN's hand.

You still owe me a dance.

RYAN

I'm not that good.

MONICA

Does it look like I care?

MONICA positions herself with RYAN. They dance to a song.

Slide your left foot two times to the left and then move your right in the opposite direction. Don't look at your feet. I know it's tempting but you'll look

like you have doubt in yourself and no woman likes that. Try looking into your partner's eyes. If they're into you, they won't stop staring into your eyes.

RYAN raises his head and stares at MONICA. He smiles and looks back down

No sir. Eyes back up.

RYAN

It's hard.

He looks back up

MONICA

There you go. Love your eyes. It's one of your best features.

He kisses her.

Now we can go. Don't forget your journal.

RYAN

Oh, right.

He runs over and grabs his journal. They both exit.

End of Play.