

THE PENNSYLVANIA STATE UNIVERSITY
SCHREYER HONORS COLLEGE

SCHOOL OF THEATRE

THESIS AND THE MINOTAUR
or
NO BITCHES AT MY FUNERAL:

APPLICATIONS IN COMEDIC REVUE

BRADLEY EINSTEIN
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A thesis
submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements
for a baccalaureate degree
in Theatre
with honors in Theatre

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Abstract

The following revue, *Thesis and The Minotaur, or No Bitches at My Funeral*, is the script that I have written and developed for my senior thesis, the performance of which was on the 1st of April, 2010. Following the script is a brief analysis of developing the piece onstage, notes on process, and my conclusions for the next show I am creating, which will be seen in the Chicago Fringe Festival come September. The actual show is much funnier than the following.

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Thesis and the Minotaur,
or
No Bitches at My Funeral

A Comedic Revue in One Act

Conceived and directed by Bradley Einstein

Assistant directed by Timothy Hartman

Featuring:
Sarah Burton
Mark McColey
Dennis McNamara
Chris Sterbank

"Nancy Drew"

Jonathan: early 40's, the boss
Jerry: 30's, second-in-command
Norah: late 20's
Patricia: 40's
Phil: 50's

(A CONFERENCE ROOM)

JONATHAN

Alright, everybody, I'm really sorry that we have to stay this late the night before Thanksgiving, but this quarter's been really rough and corporate needs a new Nancy Drew title for the new year.

JERRY

I think I can speak for everybody in saying we're behind you, Jonathan.

JONATHAN

Thank you, Jerry, and just Jon's fine.

JERRY

You got it, Johnny!

JONATHAN

Just Jon's fine. Well, Let's see- any ideas for a good story? Yes- Norah.

NORAH

Ok, what if Nancy goes into the woods after her dog Rowdy, but then he finds a the back of a train in the middle of the forest, and the train's been turned into a house, and on the inside is a family of kids, but they're all dead.

JONATHAN

You want Nancy Drew to solve the murder of the box car children?

NORAH

In as many words, yes.

JONATHAN

(After a pause)

Well, it's a start. I don't know if we can get away with brutalizing cherished literary characters, but it's still good thinking, let's keep it going with that synergy.

JERRY

You heard him people, let's have more energy and sin!

JONATHAN

That's not what I meant at all, Jerry- yes, Patricia?

PATRICIA

What if Nancy discovers that she doesn't want to solve mysteries anymore?

JONATHAN

But that's what Nancy Drew does, she solves mysteries.

JERRY

Solves 'em all!

PATRICIA

Well, MAYBE she feels forced to solve mysteries because every other little girl is solving mysteries, when really all she wants to do is teach english lit at Bryn Mawr University.

JONATHAN

Well, I think that's a wonderful goal for any young woman-

PATRICIA

-What, are you saying only young women can have dreams?

NORAH

Who says anyone can have dreams?

JERRY

Maybe he did say that, Patricia, what of it?

JONATHAN

But I didn't say that, at all, whatsoever- anyone can dream whatever they want.

NORAH

Or no one can dream anything ever.

(Jonathan writes it on the board)

PHIL

Yeah, I think I've got one.

JONATHAN

Phil! Let 'er rip.

PHIL

How about she gets a letter, then goes to this guy's house, and then solves the mystery of why his wife won't touch him anymore?

JONATHAN

I don't know how appropriate that would be for a Nancy Drew Novel...

PATRICIA

Maybe she'd touch him if he hadn't boxed her into her kitchen and guilted her into making mashed potatoes for a family she didn't want?

JERRY

Patricia, so help me God if you interrupt J-than one more time I will break you!

PATRICIA

Try it Jerry, I WAS ALL-STATE VOLLEYBALL. -Lacrosse?

NORAH

I played volleyball in bereavement camp.

JONATHAN

Hey! Hey everybody! let's just calm down, alright? Phil, maybe we can talk a little later-

PHIL

-Yeah, I'd like that.

JONATHAN

But in the meantime, let's hammer this out- if we're having premise troubles, why don't we start with possible titles- anyone?

JERRY

Vice-president of creative!

JONATHAN

What?

JERRY

That should be your title. Because youuuu are creative as well as handsome.

JONATHAN

I was thinking more about what the book should be called, Jerry.

JERRY

Ohhhkay well Your tie is great.

JONATHAN

-Okay. How about we just shout them out? Anyone?

PATRICIA

"Nancy Drew and the Curse of the Male Erotic Gaze."

PHIL

"Nancy Drew and the Mystery of a Table Set for One."

NORAH

"Are You There God, it's Me, the kid who was kidnapped last month and the police stopped looking for me but I'm still alive and locked in a cell in my neighbor's basement, and also my name's Margaret?"

JONATHAN

ALRIGHT! All I'm getting from all of you is Nancy Drew comes out of the closet, saves her parents' marriage, and then finds out who killed Charles Wallace from a Wrinkle in Time!

JERRY

That's how the Johnboy's Chicken gets it done.

JERRY karate chops a bottle.

JONATHAN

JUST JON IS FINE! JERRY!

(Moment of silence)

JONATHAN

Look, everyone- We just need a pitch, and it's the night before Thanksgiving. Don't any of you just want to go home?

PHIL

Well, I mean, Shelly's at her sister's.

PATRICIA

Mother's paid me a surprise holiday visit.

NORAH

I'm... Kind of between houses at the moment.

(Pause)

JONATHAN

How about you, Jerry?

JERRY

(Increasingly awkward)

What? Oh, I wanna leave. I am ready. To go. I am just... waiting For this guy! And everyone! Cause we're like... marines. No child left behind...

JONATHAN

Ok. I'm sorry I snapped. What y'say if we all work on this for fifteen more minutes and then we can all go get a beer before the long weekend?

(Everyone says OK)

JONATHAN

Ok, let's try this again. How should the book open?

JERRY

Nancy finds out she's in love with her boss?

"METHADONE"

Stacy: 30's, a receptionist
Fredrico: 30's, a drug addict.

(A METHADONE CLINIC)

STACY

Fredrico I told you, you can't keep coming back here!

FREDRICO

Stacy, my darling, why must you taunt me in such a way as this?

STACY

No, Fredrico, you know the schedule. The methadone clinic IS CLOSED.

FREDRICO

Stacy, come now, you know Fredrico can do little to control his passions.

STACY

We're used to calling that an addiction.

FREDRICO

I'm used to calling it la Vida Loca. Have you heard of this term? La Vida Loca?

STACY

Yes, I have heard of it.

FREDRICO

It means "The Crazy Life".

STACY

I am well aware, Fredrico.

FREDRICO

Have you ever wanted to get a little... crazy?

STACY

You know I have.

(Fredrico starts inching his way to the desk, eventually making a grab for the methadone)

FREDRICO

Haven't you ever wanted to walk down by the docks, and see the spray painted barges that say things like "King's forever" and walk past the rusty metal and corpses of gulls and then bathe ourselves in the evening twilight as we ingested drugs?

STACY

(after being momentarily
seduced)

No Fredrico! This medication is for rehabilitation use only.

FREDRICO

Your words are far too long for me to understand. Let us instead speak with our hips. Or with this light bulb I turned into a pipe.

STACY

Fredrico.... When was the last time you picked up a prescription?

FREDRICO

Monday

STACY

And when was the last time you tried to seduce me for more?

FREDRICO

Later that Monday.

STACY

And what did I say then?

FREDRICO

You said you would let your pepper spray speak for you. And then your pepper spray said "Shhhhhhhh". All over my face.

STACY

(brandishing pepper spray)

And let me tell you- he has much more to say.

FREDRICO

Really? Is it, "I love you, Fredrico?"

(They almost kiss for a number of seconds, their lips almost touching. Stacy then sprays him. Fredrico retreats with a yell)

STACY

Fredrico, your eyes are watering

FREDRICO
They do well to hide the tears. You tell me this, Stacy.
What's more important. Me? Or you yob?

STACY
Job?

FREDRICO
Chob

STACY
Job.

FREDRICO
Chocob.

STACY
It doesn't matter! You tell me this Fredrico, what's more
important? Me, or my methadone?

FREDRICO
My darling, do you even have to ask?

STACY
Oh, Fredrico!

(They embrace. Behind Stacy's back,
Fredrico grabs the methadone)

STACY
I love you!

FREDRICO
(to methadone)
And I love you

STACY
Promise you'll never leave me.

FREDRICO
I am leaving right now.

"EPIPEN"

Clown: A clown.

(AN EMPTY STAGE)

(Clown walks onto the stage. After acknowledging the audience, he notices a bee in the room. He shoos it away at it first, but it lands on him and stings him. He starts having an allergic reaction. He scrambles for his epipen, but once retrieving it, discovers he does not know how to use it correctly. After many attempts and some help from the audience, he succumbs to his anaphylaxis, and dies.)

"BROKEBACK"

Guitarist: A guitarist.

(A STAGE)

(Guitarist plays the theme of
"Brokeback Mountain" on his guitar. At
the end of the first few measures,
LIGHTS UP on a teddy bear in a chair.
Guitarist looks over at the teddy bear,
and strums one final chord.)

"SWEET FUNERAL 1"

Meeghan- 15, incredibly selfish

Valerie- 15, incredibly selfish

Amanda- 15, nice young woman

Lindsay- 35, overly perky.

(SPOTLIGHT)

MEEGHAN

Hi. My name's Meeghan. I'm fifteen and a half years old, and I have Diva written all over me. I live in Greenwich Connecticut, which is pretty much like Monaco, but in Connecticut, and I'm totally ready for my sweet sixteen. The only problem is I've been tanning since I could walk, and now my doctor says I have malignant melanoma. Price of Beauty, right? Anyways, I've got six months to live, and that's just enough time to plan my super sweet funeral.

('Sweet Funeral' music plays)

MEEGHAN (CONT'D)

Today's the big day- I finally get to meet with the party planner to plan the big day. I brought my two best friends, Valerie and Amanda. They're great, I love them- except for Amanda 'cause she's a bitch, but whatever.

(LIGHTS UP on MEETING ROOM)

AMANDA

I didn't think that last planner was that bad

MEEGHAN

Shut up Amanda, that last planner was piss.

VALERIE

Total piss.

AMANDA

I don't know-

MEEGHAN

No. I'm not some twatty make-a-wish kid.

VALERIE

More like fake-a-wish.

(girls laugh; Lindsay enters)

LINDSAY

Hi, you must be Meeghan.

(Characters freeze)

MEEGHAN

(to audience)

That's Lindsay Hailey. She totally did flowers for Princess Diana's thing when she died.

LINDSAY

Alright girls, who's ready to plan a wake?

MEEGHAN AND VALERIE

We are.

AMANDA

We are!

LINDSAY

Alright, well we have a number of exciting packages we'd be happy to offer you; One of our most popular is the Disney Princess Package- it's gives you all of the glamour with a sprinkle of Disney Magic

AMANDA

Oh, you love Ariel from The Little Mermaid.

MEEGHAN

Yeah, maybe if I was fourteen.

VALERIE

And Ariel doesn't even have legs.

LINDSAY

Alright, well, if that isn't up your alley, we also have the Mother Theresa package, if you want to highlight your more spiritual side.

AMANDA

That might be a nice sentiment for your loved ones.

MEEGHAN

It might be a nice sentiment for poor people.

VALERIE

Remember that time that my mom's boyfriend took us to church and made us eat those weird crackers?

AMANDA

Wait, you guys went to church without me?

MEEGHAN

Not everything's about you Amanda.

VALERIE
Yeah, you would've just gotten in line for seconds.

LINDSAY
Well, alright, you seem like just the kind of girl who would like our Cleopatra collection- We've got the cats, the gold, the eye-liner.

AMANDA
Oh, you like cats.

MEEGHAN
I like gold

VALERIE
Eye-liner's fine when used sparingly.

LINDSAY
Wonderful, You'll just love it- it'll be even better than when we did it for Aaliyah.

MEEGHAN
Wait, you did this for Aaliyah?

VALERIE
She died like Lynard Skynard, and they were old.

LINDSAY
Well, we don't have to do anything you're not comfortable with-

VALERIE
We already have a plan.

VALERIE throws a binder at LINDSAY

MEEGHAN AND VALERIE
Diamonds are forever.

AMANDA
(rushed)
Diamonds are forever!

LINDSAY
Well, You seem to have this all figured out.

MEEGHAN
Yeah. Picture this. Ten boys-

VALERIE
-Shirtless-

MEEGHAN

Roll my diamond-studded funeral box down the aisle as 'Halo' by Beyonce is playing.

VALERIE

Because Beyonce is there singing it.

LINDSAY

Of course, of course- Do you have any plans for your remains?

MEEGHAN

I want them to burn up my body and turn me into a gem.

VALERIE

Which will be worn by Taylor Swift when she accepts her Teen Choice Awards.

LINDSAY

Ok, ok, Tay'll love that. And I see you have your seating arrangements.

MEEGHAN

Definitely. Uggo's and disableds in the back, with the exception of Amanda, who is front and center.

VALERIE

Whoah, hold the phone. I wasn't there for that discussion

MEEGHAN

What?

VALERIE

I just assumed I would be the one- why would you pick Amanda?

AMANDA

Wow Meeghan, I can't tell you how honored I am-

MEEGHAN

Ok shutup. Of course she's in the front row: She weeps better than you.

AMANDA

Why would you say that?

MEEGHAN

Remember that time you were somehow making out with Justin Ludoff and then you straddled and then you got your period? That happened.

(Amanda starts crying.)

MEEGHAN

See?

VALERIE

His mom threw away those pants.

LINDSAY

Well, I guess we've figured everything out

AMANDA

I thought Justin Ludoff really liked me!

VALERIE

Oh my God, we're past that! I'm sorry, what were you saying? Before she so rudely interrupted you? Like a time-bandit bitch?

MEEGHAN

I've have only got six months to live and I am wasting them on you.

VALERIE

Time is tick-tick-ticking away.

MEEGHAN

Don't remind me- can we please get mannies after this?

AMANDA

Why do you need Mayonnaise?

VALERIE

Not Mayonnaise- Mannies! Like Manicures. Why is everything food with you?

AMANDA

I thought you said Mayonnaise!

MEEGHAN

Can we please just shut up and plan my funeral?

Silence, save for AMANDA crying.

LINDSAY

...Don't worry ladies! We're going to figure this out- we have a lot of work to do, and not a lot of time, so I'm going to take this with me and we're going to make this the best funeral ever!

(Lindsay leaves; the 'Sweet Funeral' music plays. Amanda continues to sob in the silence.)

"Cary Grant"
By Brad Einstein
Version 2 (3/1/10)

Troubadour: any age, a bard.
Cary Grant: Cary Grant.
Lady: A buxom young lass
Jimmy Stewart: Jimmy Stewart.

(LIGHTS UP on Troubadour and Cary Grant)

TROUBADOUR
His name's Cary Grant/ And he can what you can't/ Failure is never in his schedule

(Cary Grant mugs to the audience)

TROUBADOUR
His name's Cary Grant/He's a God among ants/here's how he guarantees he'll bed you.

(Lady walks out and is greeted by Cary)

CARY GRANT
Hello, darling. I dipped my Johnson in rum so you won't get pregnant.

Cary grant starts running in place.

TROUBADOUR
His name's Cary Grant/ and he strides through the land/ he makes every man stand at attention./ His name's Cary Grant/ He's the ultimate man/ but he has opinions we don't like to mention.

CARY GRANT
I never walk into a home that doesn't have a Chinaman to get my coat.

(Cary Grant throws his coat on an audience member).

TROUBADOUR
His name's Cary Grant/ Please forgive the rant/ You must understand where he comes from./ His name's Cary Grant/ More racist than I planned/ But I'm sure he knows minorities and loves them.

CARY GRANT
I didn't go to Rock Hudson's funeral because he had the gay disease

TROUBADOUR

Are You serious!? I am so sorry, I didn't- I had no idea that Cary Grant's a dickhead/ His name's Cary Grant/ He's a horrible man/ I should've gone with Jimmy Stewart instead.

(Jimmy Stewart steps out)

JIMMY STEWART

I dip my Johnson in gin.

"STROKE DAD"

Carl: 40's, soft-spoken and passive

Kathy: 40's, eager

Brian: 50's, uninterested, matter-of-fact

McCall: 40's, a doctor/gameshow host.

Dad: 70's, just had a stroke

(A HOSPITAL)

(Carl sits, Kathy and Brian run in)

KATHY

Oh my gosh, I'm sorry we're late

BRIAN

Have you heard anything?

CARL

No, I've been here an hour-

(McCall enters)

MCCALL

Excuse me, are you Franklin Holmes' children?

KATHY

Yes?

MCCALL

Hello, I'm Dr. McCall. I want you to know that your father is in critical but stable condition, and we're hopeful he'll pull through. That said, there has been significant hemorrhaging to the brain, most of it irrevocable, and I just want you to prepare for what happens next.

BRIAN

Why, what happens next?

(Gameshow music kicks in; McCall changes tone)

MCCALL

You get to play "Who's Gonna Take Care of Dad After His Stroke?", the game of avoiding familial responsibility. Why don't we start with all your names, and a brief description of why you're just too busy to take care of your own father.

CARL

Well, I'm Carl, named after great-grandad, and I don't think any one of us should take care of dad. He's done so much for us, and we should work together to help him in his time of need.

(Buzzer goes off)

MCCALL

Oh, the audience did not like that-

CARL

- Wait, that was judged-

MCCALL

-And how about you Madam?

KATHY

I'm Kathy, and I am helping dad by raising his grandchildren. I've provided him with progeny, making sure that his family line is carried on after he's gone. It's a full time job.

(Bell dings)

MCCALL

Wonderful Kathy, wonderful! And you sir?

BRIAN

Name's Brian. Let me tell you a story. It was April, and Dad's trying watch the Pirates game, but he can't get the TV to work, so I say "Dad, you've got to turn on the cable box". And he did. I think I've done my part.

(Pause. Bell dings)

MCCALL

Great! Terrific. Well everyone, it's time for round one. As we all know, crying is just the outward sign of feeble and bendable isides. So, we're going play you some music, and whoever cries last doesn't have to take care of dad after his stroke. Alright, hit it Johnny!

("Cat's in the Cradle" by Harry Chapin plays. Carl is shocked and starts crying; Kathy holds out for a little bit but starts crying as well; Brian checks his phone throughout. Bell dings)

MCCALL

Oh! It seems that Brian is our winner! Congratulations, you do not have to take care of Dad after his stroke.

(Brian walks off, still reading his phone)

MCCALL (CONT'D)

Ok, you two. We're now on our final round. As we all know, empathy is a sign of weakness, and the weak will take care of the infirmed. Now we're going to get your dad on the line, and the one who can show the least amount of empathy and get off the phone fastest, won't have to take care of their dad during the long, tortuous years ahead. Carl, we'll start with you.

(Phone ringing is heard)

DAD
(From offstage)

Hello?

CARL

Hi dad!

DAD
Is this Milton Bradley? You son of a bitch-

CARL
-No dad, it's me, Carl-

DAD
-I should kill you! I should kill you where you stand! Like the Japs-

CARL
-No dad, I just-

DAD
-They're outside my window! Where are the wagons?-

CARL
-OK, I love you dad-

DAD
-God Damn you Milton Bradley!

CARL
-Bye!

(buzzer goes off)

MCCALL
Oh! Carl, that was a solid 28 seconds. Let's see what you've got, Kathy.

(Phone rings)

KATHY

Hello?

DAD
I miss all of the days.

KATHY
Goodbye dad.

(Bell dings)

MCCALL
Oh! Kathy! Incredible, you are our winner! Congratulations!
Can we bring him out Johnny?

(Dad is pushed in a wheelchair from
backstage, Kathy tries to help)

MCCALL
Whoops, Kathy- he's not your problem anymore, you get out of
here!

(Kathy leaves)

CARL
Wait, what-

MCCALL
There you are Carl, you DO get to take Dad after his stroke!
And if I can speak for all of us-

(McCall's demeanor changes back to that
of a doctor)

MCCALL (CONT'D)
We're so sorry for your loss.

(McCall exits)

CARL
Well, I guess it's you and me dad. Wanna go to Arby's?

DAD
I hate you, Milton Bradley.

"INTERMISSION"

Dennis: Dennis McNamara

(AN EMPTY STAGE)

DENNIS

Ladies and gentlemen, thank you so much, and I hope you're enjoying the show. We will now be taking a brief, two second intermission in which I will portray the inner monologue of a captive sea lion.

(SPOT on Dennis)

DENNIS (CONT'D)

(as a sea lion)

Boy, I sure like fish!

(LIGHTS UP to normal)

DENNIS (CONT'D)

Thank you.

"DONGA FISH"

Rice Cooker: 30's, a Reggae DJ
Donga Fish: 30's, Reggae DJ, sings his lines
Caller: 20's, a very white fan of Reggae
Voice 1: radio commercial voice
Voice 2: radio Commercial voice

(A RADIO STATION)

RICE COOKER

Ah, put down the boom bye-bye and pick up the radio!

DONGA FISH

- Pick it up, Pick it up!

RICE COOKER

Because it's Eleven forty five in the AM and it's time for
the best Reggae in all the suburbs of Northwest Philadelphia!

DONGA FISH

Northwest Philly be dancin' and singin'!

RICE COOKER

Here I be Rice Cooker serving up the boiling hot beats

DONGA FISH

Serving up the beats with the boiling hot jam!

RICE COOKER

And as always accompanied by cohost and closest of friends,
The Donga Fish!

DONGA FISH

Well I would say we are more than just friends.

(Silence.)

RICE COOKER

Before we start, we should take time to thank our new
sponsor: Strawberry Milk!

DONGA FISH

Strawberry Milk!

RICE COOKER

All the flavor of Milk now comes with an equal amount of
Strawberry taste!

DONGA FISH

Straight from the cow and then add the berries!

RICE COOKER
Your taste buds'll tingle for brand new Strawberry Milk!

DONGA FISH
He's so cute when he drinks it in the morning.

RICE COOKER
Oooooook that is not entirely accurate with the context in the manner- why don't we hear this new song by Sean Paul!?

(Rice Cooker hits a button; a Sean Paul song plays)

RICE COOKER (CONT'D)
(To Donga)
We have much to discuss, my Donga.

DONGA FISH
Too bad this Sean Paul song's just 15 seconds.

(Sean Paul song abruptly stops. Rice Cooker scrambles to bring them back onto the air)

RICE COOKER
-And we're back. That is a very short song, good for the ringtones. Or the very quick dancing we... be... doing ... in the clubs.

DONGA FISH
Too bad he won't dance with me in the public.

RICE COOKER
Well, that's not quite... the way, that we address these things...

DONGA FISH
His machismo keeps him from showing me his mother.

RICE COOKER
OK we have a caller.

(Rice Cooker presses the call button)

CALLER
Hi, Rice Cooker, Donga- I love the show.

RICE COOKER
Well thank you so much, we're grateful for your listening.

DONGA FISH
If only everyone was that good a listener

(Rice Cooker looks at Donga fiercely)

RICE COOKER
Anyways caller, what's up?

CALLER
Well, I was hoping to pick up some new records...

RICE COOKER
Perfect, perfect..

CALLER
And I was wondering if you knew when the new Junior Gong album is coming out.

RICE COOKER
Wonderful! You can expect that on October 15th.

CALLER
Thanks! I love Junior Gong.

RICE COOKER
Don't we all love the Junior Gong.

DONGA FISH
look who's not scared to say that he loves someone.

RICE COOKER
(whispering)
Will you stop it?

CALLER
Hey, can I say something?

RICE COOKER
Sure, caller, what?

CALLER
Well, from the sounds of it, you're having trouble admitting that you're gay. With the Donga Fish.

RICE COOKER
That is not what's happening.

DONGA FISH
That is exactly what is happening.

RICE COOKER
Stop it.

CALLER

I know this might not be my place, but this is mainline Philadelphia. No one really cares. We have pottery barns. And Apple Stores.

RICE COOKER

(Trying to regain composure)

Well, I wonder if those apple stores have *Strawberry* milk! Commercial!

(Rice Cooker switches from a caller to a commercial)

VOICE 1

Hey, Dianna, do you ever get bored with the same morning drink routine?

VOICE 2

Do I ever!

(Voices fade out)

RICE COOKER

What are you doing!?

DONGA FISH

I'm Just expressing what I know is true.

RICE COOKER

But why now? Why on the radio!?

DONGA FISH

If you don't know then I cannot tell you.

(Pause)

RICE COOKER

It's your sister's birthday.

DONGA FISH

No.

RICE COOKER

I ate all your kumquats.

DONGA FISH

Yes you did but that's not why I'm angry.

RICE COOKER

...You cut your dreads?

DONGA FISH

Two years ago we bought our second floor walk up!

RICE COOKER

Sweet Zion, again with this?

DONGA FISH

I think that it's an important milestone.

RICE COOKER

You're right, fine, I'll make plantains tonight- but you don't have to be ruining our personas on the radio! It's rice cooker and the Donga Fish- serving up the beats with the boiling hot jam! Not Rice Cooker and the Donga Fish- committed life-mates!

DONGA FISH

Maybe the Donga Fish hates living a lie.

RICE COOKER

Well then how would you have it Donga? What would you have me do?

(SPOTLIGHT on Donga, who rises up, and starts singing now in an operatic tenor.)

DONGA FISH

I have a dream where we could walk together/ Hand in hand with through the world where we live forever.

(LIGHTS UP; things return to normal)

RICE COOKER

Oh. Oh my Donga. I had no idea.

DONGA FISH

Donga would now like some strawberry milk.

Sweet Funeral #2

Meeghan: 15, bitchy young lady

Valerie: 15, bitchy young lady

Amanda: 15, nice young lady

Actor 1: various Characters

Actor 2: various characters.

(‘Sweet funeral’ song plays; Meeghan enters in Wheelchair, Amanda pushing and apologizing)

MEEGHAN

What the fuck do you think you’re doing? Into the light. Thank you. Don’t talk. It’s my voiceover. SO. Today’s invitation day at school and everybody’s talking- it’s going to be the funeral of the century. Or at least the teens. Is this the teens? Because it’s Oh ten, but-

AMANDA

-Yes it’s the teens

MEEGHAN

Shutup. So yeah.

(‘Sweet funeral’ music)

(Valerie rolls up on a scooter)

VALERIE

Hey bitches.

AMANDA

That’s a really cool scooter, Valerie.

VALERIE

Yeah, I know. Your face looks tired.

MEEGHAN

Ok ladies, go at it, but just remember:

VALERIE AND MEEGHAN

No bitches at the funeral.

AMANDA

-itches at the funeral.

(Girls freeze. LIGHTS UP on Actor 1. Spot goes down after line and onto Actor 2, and vice versa)

ACTOR 1

Ohmygoshohmygoahgmymgosh I have made it at this school. I HAVE MADE IT AT THIS SCHOOL.

ACTOR 2

Uhh..... I guess it's pretty cool. I dunno man, They'll have to beat Reggie Peters funeral last year- he had a chocolate fondue SLIDE.

ACTOR 1

Yeah, I didn't get an invitation or whatever. But I don't care. I don't care...

ACTOR 2

Wow, this is such a shock. We were like, best friends in second grade, but we haven't really talked since, but it really means so much to me, ever since my dad got called up-

(Valerie cuts through the freeze and interrupts)

VALERIE

-Whoops, sorry, that's not for you, crazy mix up like a Kate Hudson movie, ok bye!

(Valerie walks over to the girls.)

VALERIE

Close call. Gross.

MEEGHAN

Yeah, seriously it's a funeral not a soup kitchen.

AMANDA

C'mon guys, maybe we should-

VALERIE

Oh look there's justin ludoff

AMANDA

Where!?!?

VALERIE

Ahhahahahah

MEEGHAN

Hahahah. Thanks Val. This is going to be the best funeral....

(she starts to cry)

MEEGHAN

...ever.

(silence)

VALERIE

Oh, look, a raffle...

(Val walks away).

AMANDA

Meeghan? Are you ok? I know this must be so scary right now, but I promise that I'm here for you. Do you need to talk? Are you afraid? Of dying?

MEEGHAN

No, don't touch me with your noodle fingers! I'm not upset about that- I'm upset about these cards! They were supposed to say Meeghan: A diamond is forever and they clearly said MEGHAN a diamond is forever

VALERIE

Oh, yeah, I noticed that

MEEGHAN

Where were you?

VALERIE

There was a raffle.

MEEGHAN

Well, everything's ruined.

AMANDA

Everything's not ruined.

MEEGHAN

EVERYTHING is ruined forever!

VALERIE

Well, really everything's just ruined for the next four months and then it's just black.

AMANDA

No, you'll see, it's going to be ok!

MEEGHAN

Oh my gosh Amanda- will you stop being so peppy?! You're worse than that college kid who tried to help me.

(LIGHTS UP on Actor 1, wearing a THON shirt)

ACTOR 1

I have so many problems with this.

(LIGHTS DOWN on Actor 1)

VALERIE

She had great legs though.

MEEGHAN

It's ruined! It's all ruined! Cancel it. Just turn me into glass and give me to Selena Gomez.

VALERIE

Ok, You never say that.

AMANDA

She's right, we're going to make you-

VALERIE

Shut up cadberry cream egg- No Meeghan. Sweetie When you're gone, I'm going to be queen bee-

MEEGHAN

-Well, I dunno about that-

VALERIE

-But I will be-

MEEGHAN

-Except for my ghost which will be more popular-

VALERIE

-Except there are no popular ghosts-

-Casper the friendly ghost- MEEGHAN

-Except he's not real- VALERIE

-Patrick Swayze in *Ghost*- MEEGHAN

-Yeah but he's dead- VALERIE

-Well now he's two ghosts- MEEGHAN

- Look. The point is, This is my coming out as much as it is your coming out. So we're going to make this work ok? VALERIE

MEEGHAN

(Regaining composure)

You're right. Thanks Val. And thanks Rebecca.

AMANDA

Amanda.

MEEGHAN

Whatever. Who cares about these Fugly cards? This is going to be-

VALERIE AND MEEGHAN

-The Best funeral Ever!

AMANDA

...Best Funeral ever!

('Sweet funeral' music)

"ICE CREAM"

Man: A man

Monks: 3 Gregorian monks

(AN EMPTY STAGE)

(SPOT on a man eating an ice cream cone and a somber dirge plays in the background. LIGHTS DOWN. SPOT back on the man, but now there are three hooded monks behind him)

MONKS

(Chanting)

Ice cream/ How great is ice cream?/ How great is ice cream?/
How great is i-ice cream?

(BLACKOUT)

"WONKA"

Wonka: 30's, Full of child-like wonder.

FDA: 40's, straight to the point FDA officer.

St. John: An oompa loompa

(WILLY WONKA'S OFFICE OVERLOOKING THE
GRAND CANDY ROOM)

(FDA enters)

FDA

Mr. Wonka, I'm you're three o'clock apointment.

(Piano cues song. LIGHT CHANGE)

WONKA

Please! Take a seat/ and we'll greet-

(LIGHT CHANGE back)

FDA

Mr. Wonka, I'm Steffen Wilkes with the FDA. We have a few
questions.

WONKA

Yes, please, sit down! Would you like a candy bar?

FDA

Yes, actually.

(FDA takes out a plastic baggie, puts
the candy bar in it as evidence.)

WONKA

Oh! You brought your own bag!

FDA

Mr. Wonka, we've been given an anonymous tip calling into
question the cleanliness of your facilities.

WONKA

Oh, there may be little surprises around every corner, but
nothing dangerous.

FDA

To put it kindly Mr. Wonka, these reports make Upton Sinclair
sound like Julia Child.

WONKA

It should smell like berries.

(Wonka claps twice; febreze is sprayed from backstage)

FDA

This is exactly the type of impulsive-

WONKA

- What, are you not enjoying yourself in Wonka's magical factory? St. John!

(St. John enters)

ST. JOHN

Yes, master Wonka?

FDA

Dear Lord, Mr. Wonka, are you employing a child?!

WONKA

Don't be ridiculous, that's not a child; that's a fully grown dwarf I had shipped in a crate from South America.

FDA

Am I to understand that you're employing illegal immigrants in this factory?

WONKA

I never said they were illegal!

FDA

Does he have a green card?

WONKA

He has green hair.

FDA

That has nothing to do with legal documentation-

WONKA

Pish-Posh! St. John, my friend here-

FDA

-We are not friends-

WONKA

My soon-to-be friend here isn't enjoying himself in Wonka's Magical Factory.

ST. JOHN

Would he like to add some of his gob to the gobstoppers?

FDA

-What does that mean-

WONKA

Ah, yes. That would be wonderful. Thank you St. John!

(St. John leaves)

FDA

Where is that little person going?

WONKA

Here!

(Wonka beckons to the windows. Piano cue plays as LIGHTS CHANGE)

WONKA (CONT'D)

The Grand Candy Room! Where the sweetest of sweets and the most chocolatey of chocolates stretch as far as the eye can see.

FDA

Mr. Wonka, are those peppermint sticks load-bearing?

Lights change back

WONKA

Well, of course, they hold up the whole factory! I'm not a fool.

FDA

I am going to need a blueprint right now.

WONKA

Well, of course, we'll have ST. JOHN print out a fruit roll up.

FDA

As long as it is portable clearly read- what am I saying, no!! Mr. Wonka, we're meant to keep this anonymous, but our reports come from four families whose Children are either horribly disfigured or flat out missing.

(Pause. Wonka claps; feebreeze is set off offstage)

FDA

I have agents going through your pipes right now looking for a German boy's bones!

WONKA

Well, that's because he drank my chocolate without asking! One can't just do that!

FDA

A one Mrs. Salt hasn't heard from her daughter or husband since they entered your "Goose Room".

WONKA

They were bad eggs! My machines were simply doing their job!

FDA

You shrunk a boy down to the size of mouse!

WONKA

Yes, but we pulled him back to normal in the taffy room.

FDA

So you stretched him out on a modern-day torture rack!

WONKA

No, we stretched him out on a modern day taffy rack!

FDA

You juiced a girl!

WONKA

That's on me.

FDA

Mr. Wonka, You think that just because you work with sugars and sweets that you can get away with anything!

WONKA

Of course! Yes I do- because joy has a price! Be it missing children, or migrant workers, or a man forced to stay in his factory wearing a multicolored woman's waiscoat- every peanut has its brittle. And Every chocolate bar has a tiny piece of german boys' bones.

(Pause; play piano cue)

FDA

Mr. Wonka, I sympathize. We're going to put you in jail now, probably send all those dwaves back to wherever you found them, break down your factory and sell it to Hershey. But I'll give you a second to pack up your snozzberries and say goodbye,. I'll be waiting outside the door.

WONKA

Might you perhaps try the candybar?

FDA

Not a chance.

(As he exits, FDA claps. Febreeze goes off from offstage)

WONKA

Don't forget what happened to the man who suddenly got everything he he always wanted. He lived happily ever after.

(St. John enters with caulking gun)

ST. JOHN

One last gob extraction for the road, Mr. Wonka?

WONKA

I'd like that.

(Looking out wistfully, Wonka unzips his pants)

MARJORIE
Really? Where did you go? Le Beck Fin?

DECLAN
They have a lovely tasting menu.

JASON
Heh, no, we just got some shakes at the sonic.

MARJORIE
Did you at least get some mix-ins?

JASON
Not really.

DECLAN
What of the park? In what region did you stroll?

MARJORIE
I hope it was by the willow trees. They're perfect for private moments.

DECLAN
And secret kisses.

MARJORIE
And heavy petting.

JASON
Guys, That's disgusting! We're just lab partners- Can't you leave it be?

DECLAN
What, Jason- would you rather us be like the other parents, caring little for what you do, letting you live your silent life, never inquiring about the soft laughter of ladies you court?

MARJORIE
or the curve of their blouses?

DECLAN
or the smell of their sweat?

JASON
Yes! I would! It would be a lot easier if you both just left me alone!

MARJORIE
Oh I see it now. He's ashamed of our air-tight family bond.

DECLAN
Ashamed of our air-tight family bond?

JASON
(Sighing)
I'm not ashamed of our airtight family bond.

MARJORIE
Jason, we try-

DECLAN
-We Strive-

MARJORIE
We LABOR to make this household one of openness and honesty.
Is that so much to ask for?

DECLAN
"Could you spare a cup of water," said the Desert. To the
Lake.

JASON
What are you talking about, I am an honors student! I'm in
the business club, I am a good kid. What more could you
want?

DECLAN
You're boring.

MARJORIE
So boring.

JASON
Great, well, I'm sorry.

MARJORIE
Do you know what it's like? Do you have any idea? I went to
Jai lai on Tuesday and Janelle Robinson told me her son had a
cocaine addiction. Do you know what that's like?

JASON
No! I can't! That would be awful.

DECLAN
I would kill for a son with a cocaine addiction.

JASON
Well I'm sorry I-

DECLAN
I'm sorry that I have to go to biatholon practice with Arkins
and here about how his son is in jail for embezzlement!

JASON
I'm sorry, but I just don't have it in me?

MARJORIE
Don't have it in you? Don't have it in you?

DECLAN
Do you know where your mother and I met? Do you know where we met?

JASON
I-

DECLAN
The orient.

MARJORIE
The orient!

DECLAN
And Why were we there?

MARJORIE
We were spies.

DECLAN
In the opium wars.

MARJORIE
In wars over opium.

JASON
That was a hundred and fifty years ago.

DECLAN
Oh, just because Katie Couric says it's over, you just assume it is.

MARJORIE
Of course he does.

JASON
Well it doesn't matter, what does that have to do with me?

DECLAN
Your mother gave birth to you on the riverboat that we rented from some locals, on the Yangtze-Kayan.

MARJORIE
They were lovely

DECLAN
But we still had to kill them because they knew too much.

JASON
That's terrible!

DECLAN
THAT IS THE CIRCUMSTANCE UNDER WHICH YOU WERE BORN

MARJORIE
We hid you in baskets.

DECLAN
like moses.

MARJORIE
Or Nicholas Cage!

JASON
Well, I'm sorry I'm not a prophet or the star of *The Rock*.

DECLAN
There are so many things you aren't!

MARJORIE
You know what you're not doing?

DECLAN
You're not hiring mercenaries.

MARJORIE
You're not riding with Mujahideen warriors.

DECLAN
You're not poaching endangered primates and selling them for their medicinal and sexual properties.

JASON
Well, it's pretty hard to do any of that when you live in Bellefonte.

DECLAN
What's it going to take, Jason? To have you rummaging through corpses looking for amulets?

MARJORIE
Or running with mexican smugglers?

DECLAN
Or knocking the noses off sarcophagi?

JASON
A drastic change of my initial plans of being pre-med.

DECLAN
Oh he wants to HEAL people.

MARJORIE
Doctors without borders

DECLAN
Medecins sans frontiers. Did you know I speak French?

JASON
No-

DECLAN
- And that I also speak Russian, Bulgarian, and Sanskrit?

JASON
No I don't. When I'm at the dinner table I don't think about
'oh, how many passports do mom and dad have?"

DECLAN
Seven!

MARJORIE
Because you don't care about our air-tight family bond!!

JASON
When did we decide on this air-tight family bond?

DECLAN
Jason, what did you get your mother for her last birthday?

JASON
A collage box.

DECLAN
Yes, yes, pictures of Christmases. Do you know what I got
her? A sword. From a Japanese General. It was encrusted in
rubies. And his blood.

MARJORIE
It's such a lovely accent.

JASON
Well, I'm sorry that I apparently fit so poorly into this
family.

DECLAN
Which is precisely why we're sending you to space camp.

JASON

What?

MARJORIE

It'll expand your horizons.

JASON

But I'm fifteen!

DECLAN

And have so much to learn. Here's one of your mother's decorative hats, there's a car waiting for you in the driveway.

JASON

Why- are you- How are you doing this?

MARJORIE

He pulled some strings with the vice-president.

JASON

What does the vice-president have to do with space camp?

DECLAN

Maybe you should have paid more attention in your Social Studies class!

"SWEET FUNERAL #3"

Valerie: 15, a bitchy young woman

(AN EMPTY STAGE)

(Valerie unscrews a can, dumping ashes
into an open bucket at her feet.
"Sweet Funeral" music plays)

"UTTERLY FUCKED"

Brad: Brad Einstein

Sarah: Sarah Burton

Mark: Mark McColey

Dennis: Dennis McNamara

Chris: Chris Sterbank, as Cary Grant

(A GRADUATION)

(Brad, Mark, and Sarah are in robes, as if they are deans)

BRAD

Ladies and gentlemen of the class of 2010, congratulations. You have made it through four years of studies and we cannot wait to see what you achieve next; we are proud to call you alumni and peers. And if we can leave you with just one more thing before you go, let it be these words:

(Brad starts singing)

BRAD (CONT'D)

You're utterly fucked/ you're utterly fucked/ As soon as you walk through those doors, your potential starts disappearing/ You're utterly fucked/ You're utterly fucked/ We said we'd help your dreams come true, but we assumed those dreams were engineering/ You're utterly fucked.

MARK

Thanks for your tuition/ We spent it years ago/ To guarantee our football team would go twelve and oh- They don't!

SARAH

Be Proud of your traditions/ Take them with you as you go/ Like fuzzy definitions of date rape.

(No one speaks for two measures until Dennis Bursts in, also in a robe)

DENNIS

You're utterly fucked/ You're utterly fucked/ The world is gonna beat you like you're a Nazi and it's Charles Bronson/ You're utterly fucked/ You're utterly fucked/ The only place that hires from here is Kohl's or Johnson and Johnson/ You're utterly fucked!

(Dennis exits. Slight pause)

CHRIS

I dip my Johnson in rum!

MARK

So thank you for your trust/ Though we don't know why/ You thought that we'd prepare you any better than Devry.

SARAH

But strive on nonetheless/ Keep reaching for the sky/ Though you'll end up at home feeling far too numb to cry.

BRAD

You're utterly fucked/ You're utterly fucked/ You bought our lack of practicum because we labeled it conceptual/ You're utterly fucked/ You're utterly fucked/ From a school whose crazy preachers the most recognizable intellectual.

(Dennis enters, dressed as the Willard Preacher- the other three start gospel-riffing)

MARK AND SARAH

But he's very well read!

BRAD

He's very well read.

MARK

He's so well read.

SARAH

Crazy but well read

BRAD

What bible's he use?

MARK

Probably all of them

SARAH

Red like his sweatshirt! That sweatshirt oh!

MARK

It's quality screen-printing

SARAH

And it looks so soft

BRAD

And I bet that the thread count is out of this world!

MARK, SARAH, AND BRAD

He's very well read!

DENNIS

Stop having sex.

MARK, SARAH, AND BRAD

Very well read!

DENNIS

When you go out on dates

MARK, SARAH, AND BRAD

Very well read

DENNIS

St. Peter will judge you

MARK, SARAH, AND BRAD

Well read.

DENNIS

At the pearly Gates/ Because you're utterly fucked.

(Brad steps forward as the rest softly
sing "fucked" behind him)

BRAD

Hi, I'm Brad Einstein, and I'm not a real dean. Heck, I'm not even a real adult. We had some fun today with this song, and the show, but it's not entirely accurate. I mean, look at us! Sarah is getting a master's degree in four and a half years, Mark is going to Law School, Chris is getting his second degree as we speak, and even Dennis is honestly learning Portuguese.

(Dennis makes a face)

BRAD (CONT'D)

So yes, for every four of us there's one person who thinks it's a good idea to do a sketch show as a senior thesis. But that's not the point. The point is we're trying. So maybe, before we go to bed tonight, and kiss our picture of Barack Obama and say, "What are you doing?", We can tell ourselves:

(Brad starts singing again)

BRAD (CONT'D)

I'm not utterly fucked.

MARK

(As Valerie)

I'm queen bee!

BRAD

I'm not utterly fucked.

DENNIS
(as Declan)
My son killed a boy at space camp!

BRAD
It could be next week just might not be/ A complacent,
disinterested hell.

SARAH
(as Patricia)
"Nancy Drew and the Maudlin Carnival"

(Everyone cheers, SPOT slowly up on
Brad)

BRAD
I'm not utterly fucked/ I'm not utterly fucked/ But if I am
that's fine/ cause in no time/ We're gonna die in Twenty-
twelve.

ANALYSIS

Director's Notes

This show is riddled with failure, and I couldn't be more pleased. When studying in Chicago, I was struck by the emphasis my professor put on the fact that "the show you want to create is never the show that you end up making", a sentiment particularly prevalent in creating sketch revue. It is incredibly dependent on both the collaboration and individual skills of the actors involved. It is a process of creation far more dependent on the purpose characters within the scenes are serving than on the specific words that are being said. Because of this, my show is nothing like I initially expected, which is something I celebrate.

The themes this show evokes are also that of failure. It is about the struggle and failure to prevail, to even subsist, in a world you thought you knew; it's about the gleeful destruction of childhood archetypes, as well as the way we process painful realities. I loved being able to toy with some very dark subject matter- addiction, illness, and so, so many dead children- in a way that makes it both tolerable and enjoyably relevant to an audience.

In the past year, I've tried to incorporate all the best traits of the organizations where I've had the opportunity to study and work- the tight game structure of Upright Citizen's Brigade, the relentless honesty of the Onion News Network, the constant need to seem relevant from College Humor, the character commitment of the Annoyance, the group support of I.O., and the exact structure, timing, and scenework of Second City. Now, I know I have only begun to process these traits into a comedic voice, but I think that *Thesis* was a solid start, with an even more solid statement.

This show was a very interesting process for me, particularly in learning how to act and direct at the same time. After being in Chicago, I saw that anyone who wrote a sketch show or revue was also a featured character in it; though a perfectly logical practice, it is very difficult sometimes to have an objective gaze at a piece in which one plays a part. I found that having an assistant director that I could trust was a very useful point of view in this process. While I know that for future projects I will not have the luxury of Tim Hartman, I think that having a different eye throughout the process, if only for a few rehearsals throughout, will be integral for anything I do once I graduate.

Finally, I think that *Thesis and the Minotaur* was an effective palate cleanser in my final semester- it allowed me to work on pieces I'd written throughout college, process many of the ways in which I view the world and my place in it, and complete my school work with a project about which I was passionate. I am so proud of how *Thesis* ended up, and I look forward to my future endeavors.

Scene Analysis

1. “Nancy Drew”

I knew that “Nancy Drew” would be our opener from the very first day; it had everything that I needed to convey at the top of the show, both structurally and thematically. My instructor at Second City, Anne Libera, always stressed that it’s important to introduce the entire cast to the audience as quickly as possible, so that the audience is comfortable with everyone on stage, regardless of the scenarios in which they find them. “Nancy Drew” was one of the only scenes that we workshoped that featured all five actors in roles that showcased their comedic abilities in both individual moments and group interactions, making it structurally ideal. It is also a great example of a type of sketch called “Center and Eccentrics”, where the main character is the normative fulcrum of an unstable world- a current example of this would be *30 Rock* on NBC.

Thematically, it also provided a definitive thesis statement for the piece as a whole. Not only are we set in an office purgatory, where the simplest of tasks seem utterly unachievable and even the lowest common denominator is out of reach, but we also see the contamination of a traditionally wholesome topic- the kid detective. The uniquely damaged characters within the scene transmit their personal problems on an innocuous literary archetype, an action the likes of which we see occurring within the writing of many of my scenes (“Sweet Funeral”, “Stroke Dad”, “Wonka”, etc.).

I thought initially of trying to write a piece framing the entire show as an investigation of kid detectives, after being inspired by Joe Meno’s *The Boy Detective Fails*. Unfortunately, what with Derrick Comedy’s *Mystery Team*, a film concerning the

same conceit, having just made rounds on the independent film festival circuit, I decided it would be best to put my attention towards other endeavors.

Developing this scene was quite easy. I wrote “Nancy Drew” during my time in Chicago, and while I think that it has a rather weak midpoint, the characters are strong, and the pace is quick when the lines are delivered smoothly. When working on it, the only thing we expanded upon was a few lines for Norah, the friendly contaminator of all children’s literature, to give her a more interesting back story- bereavement camp, houseboats, etc., to guarantee that she would always throw the audience off kilter.

2. “Methadone”

“Methadone” started as an exercise in a writing class, where I was given a character (a classmate had written a monologue of the traditional latin lover), and was told I had to write a scene with him. A man being sensuous in order to get laid is very boring to me, so I decided to skew a loving passion for women into a seductive drug addiction. As sexual manipulation is rather universal exercise, I thought it worked quite well. Putting the scene in a methadone clinic, rather than a back alley drug deal, allows for a more interesting tug-o-war, as the specters of legality, dosage allotments, and rehabilitation are constantly in the air. The game of the scene (a phrase defined by Del Close in *Truth in Comedy* and is essentially a piece’s roadmap), is well defined, though it would have been nice to expand upon it further- having Fredrico recite Stacy a drug infused-sonnet, a son singing telegram saying “give me your methadone,” etc.

My scene partner and I re-improvised “Methadone” continuously throughout the process. By doing so, we discovered better ways to heighten the already ridiculous,

telenovela-esque dramatics as well as better ways to interact in the moment; my one regret, however, was that we occasionally became too bogged down in the parody. We developed a tendency of being too comical with our physical gestures, that we took away truth from the characters, and thus removing a number of their comedic elements. This is something I hope to remedy in my future shows.

3. “Epipen”

By far the most personally nerve-wracking piece of the show, “Epipen” is my ‘skill slot,’ an area in the show that changes the structural texture and adds a touch of variety. I was hoping to explore a number of aspects of comedy during *Minotaur* (for a while there was also an improv game on the running order, but it was cut in favor of a faster run time), and I thought a clowning piece would be an interesting change of pace. While studying at Second City, we went over physical comedy in great detail, with clowning being a major focus. I know that I have a problem sometimes when I am performing, particularly when improvising, with being continually high status, and needing to be in control. I really appreciated clowning because it took away many of my intellectual hang-ups and forced me to simply share a genuine experience with an audience, simply by looking at them. Clowning celebrates the fools and the failures and lauds the honesty with which they greet the world. A common exercise seen frequently in clowning is the inability to use a simple object. Here, I wanted to raise the stakes by having a clown go into anaphylactic shock after being stung by a bee, and then not be able to use the only instrument that could save his life- an epipen.

In the execution of the piece, I had a number of issues that I wish I had addressed. Clowning, like any craft, can easily rust away, and despite my practicing, it was difficult to do my most honest work simply working with myself. I think in preparation it is integral to have someone else observing and noting what is occurring, and in the future I will use more direction. During the performances themselves, however, particularly the second, I benefited greatly from being in front of an actual audience. Since clowning is best done when the broad objective is clear (set off the epiphenomenon), but tactics are discovered as clown continues to fail, having an audience made for a much richer and more desperate performance. The use of an audience member, who in turn failed in the task just as the clown did, was intriguing as well, as their unexpected participation caused genuine reactions.

One last important detail I learned at Second City was, as my instructor Jet Eveleth put it, “sometimes you need to just die.” It happens. With a scene like this, the clown couldn’t exit; he had no choice but to succumb to the anaphylaxis. It’s important to chase the honesty in the moment- Jet also would tell us that if we chased what she called the god of Comedy, she’d be fickle and uninterested, but if we chased the god of beauty and truth, Comedy would get jealous and chase after us. Kind of new-agey, but an excellent point, and one I hope to achieve. With this in mind, I had the scene end on a tragic note, but one that is truthful enough to stand on its own and warrant no apology.

Rather than end on a joke, I opted to use an overly dramatic slow motion transition accentuated by the same music as the scene to bring the audience back to a comedic state of mind.

4. “Brokeback”

There isn’t much to say about “Brokeback”, save that I have been fascinated with Ernie Koufax for the past few months, and have been blown away by the revolutionary, non sequitor comedic shorts he was making all the way back in the fifties. Granted, this piece makes a little more sense than many of his, as the guitarist is clearly longing for something (whether or not it’s the teddy bear is the audience’s choice), but it refuses to offer an excess of logic or an explanation of any sort, a quality of Koufax that I greatly admire.

5. “Sweet Funeral 1”

Sweet Funeral is the closest *Minotaur* has to a narrative, as well as one of the most ensemble-influenced pieces in the show. It started as an exercise in developing a “Clash of Contexts” scene- where the rules of one world are juxtaposed onto another- but it developed into an interesting piece of satire and parody. One of the actors, Mark McColey, brought in the idea to parody MTV’s “Sweet Sixteen” with the planning of a funeral, but didn’t know how to make it ok for a young lady to be dying- once we established tanning-induced malignant melanoma, we were off and running. After a number of brain-storming sessions, I took the cast’s ideas and wrote three scenes.

This scene is very pattern-heavy, which I think does well in the context- the two-headed monster of Meeghan and Valerie rears up frequently, but there is also a great ratcheting of triplet jokes as well when they and Amanda discuss funeral options. The

midpoint, in which they bring up their plan for the funeral is clearly defined, and though it gets a little too muddy in the end with the girls arguing, I think the scene as a whole and the games within it were rather successful.

I also enjoy the content of the scene. Again we see the tainting of a bubblegum premise, and I'll say it was fascinating trying to play with how to make the imminent death of a fifteen-year-old girl something entertaining. Playing with audience empathy was paramount, as we could never make Meeghan so real and likeable that they would feel bad for her lot in life. Because of this, I tried to make Amanda the most grounded and sympathetic of characters, so the audience could see themselves in her, and feel more for her poor treatment than Meeghan's imminent demise. Furthermore, satirizing the desperation youth has for having a spotlight shone upon them, regardless of the cause, while woefully overt, is still an enjoyable premise.

During the performances, I think that I should have personally worked harder at playing a woman- in Improv particularly, too often we see men playing parodies of women rather than playing actual females (for instance, *SNL*'s "Gap Girls" vs. anything by Monty Python or Kids in the Hall). That said, Meeghan and Valerie needed to be caricatures to avoid sympathy, and I think that Dennis McNamara's more honest portrayal of Amanda grounded them quite well.

6. "Cary Grant"

Peoples likes music! It's important to vary presentational styles throughout a show, and songwriting is perhaps my favorite alternative comedic medium. One of the actors, Chris Sterbank, had been watching a number of Cary Grant movies, and one day

just said in an old-timey voice, “Don’t worry Darling, I dipped my penis in rum so I won’t get you pregnant.” I thought it fit perfectly in the show- filtering Cary Grant, classic old Hollywood royalty, through a pessimistic lens of modern morality, all within the context of a song. We workshopped it for two rehearsals, increasing Cary’s lack of tack with every verse, and by the end of the second session, we had a complete piece.

The actual performance went very well, with Chris’ choreographical tribute to *North By Northwest* being one of my favorite moments in the show.

7. “Stroke Dad”

“Stroke Dad” is one of the more personal pieces within the show. Originally conceived during an improvisation exercise at Second City, the gameshow of “Who’s Going to Take Care of Dad After His Stroke?” is a fairly accurate summation of my mother’s experience with her siblings after my grandfather had a stroke, except hopefully funnier. The dichotomy between Carl, who wants to work together to care for his father, and his siblings, who both conform to the conceit of the gameshow and are justified by its objective judgments of their character, is not only decidedly dismal but also very relatable. I translate most things into a humorous setting when I can, so rather than having a one-act play of three siblings arguing over what should happen to their father, I chose to boil them down and let selfish actions within a rosy context speak for themselves. The immediate switches into and out of the fantasy world of the piece allowed for moments that didn’t go for laughs, but rather tried to represent the reality of the hospital as accurately as possible. This allowed for not only moments of genuine

vulnerability, but also a great satirical payoff when juxtaposed with the Doctor's gameshow.

In the performance, I thought the multiple sound cues were executed very effectively, though I needed to better clarify the rules of the actual game within the Doctor's lines. I also should have worked more during the crying section to make sure the character of Carl was reacting in a more truthful manner, questioning the reasoning behind it, etc. That said, I still thought it was one of the more powerful pieces in the show.

8. "Intermission"

When developing material with a cast, especially a cast that isn't used to re-improvisation or sketch, it's vital to keep them engaged in the creative process. The creation of the show is a whirlwind of workshopping and cuts, with anything that isn't working or that's become stillborn being easily left at the wayside. One of the actors had a tendency of having initial ideas that excited him, as well as others in the cast, but he never went anywhere past his first thought. I could tell he was getting frustrated, with his ideas not being included in the show, so I worked with him to take one of his ideas and turn it into a blackout. Hence, the inner monologue of a captive sea lion. Not the most revolutionary of ideas, but the combination of lighting and rapid character changes made it a fun little piece.

9. “Donga Fish”

During a vocal workshop at the Second City, my instructor Jet Eveleth taught us that the easiest way to drop into an accent was latch into a word or phrase that emphasizes an accents idiosyncrasies- “Nasal cavities” or “Laserdisc” is perfect for Australian, while “Nicaraguan homosexual” is spot on for uppercrusty British. For Jamaican, “Philadelphia” is my go-to word. My mother’s side of my family is for a large part French-Jamaican, so let’s use that as the reason that I recently became obsessed with that particular accent. One of the actors, Chris Sterbank, started singing behind me whenever I used the accent, and as we experimented, Rice Cooker and the Donga Fish were born.

The structure of this sketch, as well as the content, was all over the place during our process. We had two hilarious characters, we had strawberry milk, but they were lacking in any actual human needs. We experimented with them as a blackout, as a two-headed monster, as transitional figures between sounds, but in the end we went with a script in which they were homosexuals and one was reluctant to come out. I would like to say that this is due to the horribly oppressive circumstances under which LGBT Jamaicans live, under some of the most constraining set of laws in the Caribbean. In reality, unrequited love is a quick fix we implemented for a deadline, and while it helped us highlight the fun of the two characters, it also held us back in a number of ways.

Firstly, I think the piece lacks a strong midpoint, and relies too heavily on the games involving both Donga’s singing and strawberry milk. Furthermore, Rice Cooker lacks a concrete reason why he wants to keep his relationship with Donga in the dark. It

has a clear momentum, but when performing, beat changes were rather jagged and noticeable; luckily, that is something that can be remedied with a few more rewrites.

10. “Sweet Funeral 2”

With “Sweet Funeral 2,” I was hoping to see how effectively we could lure the audience into reveling in schaudenfraude. We upped the ante in every way- putting Meeghan in a wheelchair, having her breakdown, and even throwing in a THON reference, which, while not universally recognizable, certainly packs a punch on campus.

While some people might interpret the THON reference as crass, I included it to specifically take care of the audience, and make them feel safer within the context of the scene itself. On Main Campus, it’s impossible to talk about a young person dying of cancer without some sort of reference to the Four Diamonds Fund; because of this, I was concerned that as we delved deeper into the subject, that members of the audience would become increasingly uncomfortable. By bringing on a THON moraler, we acknowledged the potential elephant in the room. Furthermore, by having her denounce the actions onstage, we allowed the audience to enjoy the goings-on by assuring them that there’s someone out there who condemns this somewhat macabre revelry, so that they don’t have to. Her castigation implies a condoning of the audience’s enjoyment.

The performances went well, though I think that I could have made the transition into the interviews with invitation recipients a little smoother- the “Sweet Funerals” become more abstract with each iteration, and with so many additional characters, I think that there is great opportunity to make the scene’s focus far more fluid than I did initially. I also had an issue with one of my actors going a bit rogue during this scene- improvising

within scenes allows for continuous development of material, but is only successful when everyone knows not only his or her part but also his or her place in the scene. That is something I will be sure to note for further shows.

11. “Ice Cream”

Another Koufax-inspired piece, “Ice Cream” had an important role it needed to fulfill. Throughout the show, we have innocuous and/or cheerful paradigms being seen through a fatalistic lens; because of this, I needed a more morose scenario to be given a cheerful point of view. Gregorian monks aren’t known for their joyful sensibilities; a trio of robed figures chanting about the greatness of ice cream is therefore an appropriate palate cleanser.

I thought the performance of the piece went very well, save for a visual issue that I overlooked completely during rehearsals- one of the actors was wearing a red hood, which made her seem too divergent that the other two, as though she would play a significant part in the piece. If I recycle this bit (which I most certainly will), I will be sure to make everyone’s apparel appropriately colored.

12. “Wonka”

“Wonka” is another example of failure against insurmountable odds. Here we see Willy Wonka, in this iteration an ever joyful man-child, forced to pay the piper when the FDA comes to call.

Structurally, I think “Wonka” has a solid midpoint (addressing the fates of the children in the factory), extensive exploration of the game and world of the scene

(Oompa Loompas, the Grand Candy Room, the kids), and most of all, strong character objectives. Wonka is compelled to delight his guest until he has no choice but to admit culpability for his actions. The FDA agent presses for an admission of guilt, and it isn't until he gets it that he will give Wonka's idiosyncrasies any consideration. Even St. John is in need of approval, no matter how small his actions are.

I enjoyed the process this show went through. It was originally the brainchild of Assistant Director Tim Hartman, and with writing by me and workshopping by the cast, we had a practically finished scene within three rehearsals. That said, we lost sight of objectives for a week or two, and had a lot of difficulty discovering an effective final turning point. I wish I could say that through careful script analysis, I determined an effective course, but to be quite honest, I woke up from a dream, scribbled notes on a piece of paper, and wrote it out in the morning. *Then* I used careful script analysis to determine its efficacy.

The development on the stage had a similar stop-and-go development. In early rehearsals, it was smooth, but choices we made clearly deteriorated somewhat- Wonka became a caricature, more aware of his transgressions and thus far more sinister. With something to hide, Wonka became predictable and unentertaining. With help from my advisor, we brought Wonka back to a greater level of naiveté. Unfortunately, I don't think we gave the same treatment to the FDA official. Though he's a classic straight man, we should have worked more on his level of surprise. "Wonka" is basically a "fish-out-of-water" scene, where someone enters a world with which they aren't familiar. That said, the FDA official, in certain moments in the performances, seemed like the center in

a center-and-eccentrics scene, as though he expected everything he encountered. Though it was a very funny scene, I would have liked to have continued working on this.

13. “Spy Parents”

“Spy Parents” has a very interesting development, one that most closely resembles the process taught by Second City. The scene started as an assignment for a sketch-writing class in Chicago, to write a “two-headed monster” scene, in which two of the characters were essentially the same person. Originally, the piece was called “Libertine Parents”; Declan and Margerie were only interested in their son becoming a standard troubled teen, and too closely resembled the “Lovers” made popular by Will Ferrell and Rachael Dratch during their time on Saturday Night Live.

As we worked on the piece however, Dennis McNamara and Sarah Burton took a strong hold of their characters- we at first kept the initial three pages and went off their newly discovered midpoint of the parents telling their child that he’s boring. Using their own brilliant references (Dennis McNamara was studying South American revolutionaries during the time) and my refinement, we came up with a solid structure that had great comedic structure as well as very strong characters- they discovered the perfect second turning point- where the parents tell their son they are sending him to space camp- when I gave them the exercise of improvising the scene but not revealing to them that I wouldn’t stop them until they discovered an ending on their own, and once we had the ending, it was very easy to edit out much of the beginning that was bogging the scene down.

In the performance, I thought the actors had strong deliveries, though I don't think I gave them enough notes on blocking, and thus t times it seemed a little too stagey as a result. I also regret not having Declan brandish a sword when he references it towards the end of the piece- they're such exciting characters that I regret that I kept them so sedentary. Furthermore, I think that I made the character of Jason far too weak in the sketch- he either needed to stand up for himself or try harder to understand his parents, thus making his pitiable attempts more humorous; "Spy Parents" may be a vehicle for Declan and Marjorie, but that doesn't mean that Jason doesn't deserve more punch.

14. "Sweet Funeral 3"

The last in my scenic trio, "Sweet Funeral 3" is a simple blackout in which the audience discovers the end result of Meeghan's funeral planning. The transition into this piece was one of my favorites, with four people flanking the door entrance as organ music plays, implying a sense of gravity that is immediately turned upside down by the seemingly nonsensical pouring of sediment into a bucket. After setting the scene as though it was another independent one-off joke, we used the cue music to hit home the futility of all of Meeghan's plans, showing that these characters cannot succeed, even in death.

This piece was originally supposed to be me rolled up in a carpet being thrown into an implied reservoir. Fortunately, I am too large a human for my actors to throw, and so creative reworking was needed in the eleventh hour. The use of ashes not only hit the same point as would have the original concept, but I think it did it far more smoothly.

I was very happy with it; the only thing I would change if I could was to switch the live playing of the “Sweet Funeral” hook into a recorded riff.

15. “Utterly Fucked”

“Utterly Fucked” is, by far, my favorite part of this show. I think it sums up the themes of *Minotaur* very well, is a strong ending point, and is the most honest and direct portion of the evening. I’ve been wrestling a lot lately about the choices I’ve made in college, lamenting wasted time, hitting myself for trusting anyone else with my own education, and fending off panic attacks about the cold, heartless future that awaits me., and (hopefully), others. The piece lambastes all Universities, albeit by pointing out my biggest problems with our University in particular, while at the same time acknowledging- in an apologetic, Jonsonian manner- the subjectivity and jest through which this critique is being filtered.

The process of creating this song was fairly painless- we had one completely musical, where we developed “Ice Cream”, and an idea that had been floating in my head for a while solidified into a chorus, after some line-tweaking in my personal time, I brought “Utterly Fucked” back to the cast, and after being warned about a song in *Spring Awakening* and determining that it wasn’t plagiarizing its “Totally Fucked”, we went forward. I played with a number of detailed choreographies (impersonating Nazis, etc.), but then cut them on the advice of my advisor in order to let the words speak for themselves. On the actual night of the performance, the 9:00 showing was a little off, but the 11:00 was perfect.

“Utterly Fucked” had some of my favorite moments in it. By revealing a doppelganger of the Willard Preacher without explicitly saying who he was until later allowed us to prove the point that he’s our school’s most recognizable intellectual in an enjoyable fashion. The stall on “fuzzy definitions of date rape” allowed us to revel in the uncomfortably of a topic that most of us wish to avoid. Finally, the ending monologue allowed for a rather vulnerable palate cleanser before the very last ‘gotcha’. Recognizing my peers’ accomplishments while depreciating my own delved further into our theme of failure, while the final chorus brought us full circle, where we, in some blatantly existential malaise, continue to try, despite the bleakness of our surroundings, finding joy in the smallest of victories. We brought back characters from the show to express tiny pieces of success- Valerie becoming Queen Bee, Declan expressing joy over his son’s act of adventure, Patricia shouting out an honestly good Nancy Drew title- to give the audience a salve to the pessimism we’ve been feeding them all night, a couple of (relatively) bright spots to finish off the show. That being true, I recently read a Camus quote (forgive my pretension) stating, “He who despairs of the human condition is a coward, but he who has hope for it is a fool.” I know I can never hope to be neither, so at the end of the show I’ll strived to be both. Thusly, I ended our hopeful tone on the nihilistic supposition that the world will end in two years, and wished our audience goodnight. Hopefully they had as much fun as I did.

Final Notes

Thesis and the Minotaur, or No Bitches at My Funeral was a great show, but it is far from a masterpiece. In fact, it is a pretty nice starting point. I am pleased with how it turned out, but there is so much more I hope to discover and explore with comedic revue. Though I am sad I cannot do so with my very talented peers at Penn State, I am excited about the collaborations to come.

This fall, I will be presenting my first professional show, *Weber and Einstein present: Please Love Me, High School Boyfriend*, in the Chicago Fringe Festival. While the show will focus mainly on two-person interactions throughout a series of woven narratives, I hope to bring with me a number of thematic elements (as well as scenes) from this show into this next piece. I am utterly determined, for example, to continue experimenting with olfactory jokes, as I did with the febreze in “Wonka”. I also hope to explore the character of Norah, from “Nancy Drew” and see why, exactly, she is “in between houseboats at the moment”. Finally, I hope to find a few more moments of peace within the failure-centric worldview that I put forth in so many of my scenes.

Many aspects of *Thesis and the Minotaur* have to stay at Penn State- no other audience can appreciate THON and Willard Preacher jokes, and so few actually care what a “student” has to say (at least that’s been my experience). That said, I am proud of what I have said here, and can’t wait to hear what I say next- I’ll call you if it’s something good.

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Fall 2009

Editorial Intern for The Onion News Network (video portion of satire magazine
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Supervisor: Karen Kolb

Summer 2009

Production Intern/Associate Producer for Baby Wants Candy (Musical Improv
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Supervisor: Emily Dorezas

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Editorial Intern for Collegehumor.com

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Summer 2009

Performer in *Weber and Einstein Present: Have You Seen This Child?*, a run of
Improv performances at Studio BE in Chicago Illinois.

Member of the Full Ammo Improv Troupe, Penn State's premiere comedy group.

Awards:

National Honors Society

Recipient of a number of medals he makes for himself

Presentations/Activities:

Full Ammo Improv Troupe
Performer/Director/Coordinator

University Park, PA
Fall '06- Present

- Coordinate media, online marketing, and social networking for Pennsylvania based improv team.
- Organized acceptance into and budgeting for a variety of festivals around the East Coast, including:
 - The Del Close Marathon, *Official Selection*
 - The Baltimore Improv Festival, *Official Selection*
 - Philly Improv Theatre Presents Improv Phd, *Invitational*
 - The Delaware Improv and Sketch Comedy O'Festival, *Invitational*
 - Slate: The World College Comedy Festival, *Invitational*

Rawr: The Penn State Improv Festival
 Creator/Producer

University Park, PA
 Fall '09

- Coordinated Penn State University's first Improvisational Comedy Festival
- Organized the booking of local venues and performers from throughout the east coast.
- Negotiated budgeting and expenditure for the event, which ran upwards of \$13,000