

THE PENNSYLVANIA STATE UNIVERSITY

SCHREYER HONORS COLLEGE

MILLENNIAL EXISTENCE IS A STREAMING META DRAMEDY

AND THE ONLY COFFEE SHOP IN THE CITY

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Abstract

The preface to my TV-inspired dramedy play *The Only Coffee Shop in the City* – an ode to, study around, and defense of an especially challenged generation – tackles three related topics: how sociopolitical and digital contexts influence viewers, performers, and characters, how episodic television format benefits theatre, and how genre hybridity grants space for women.

The Only Coffee Shop in the City Synopsis:

After a melodramatic post-college breakup, writer Carrie leaves one city for another to navigate the Kubler-Ross Model (“DABDA”), from Denial through Acceptance. She and an ensemble of initial strangers explore maturity, independence, mental health, and commitment both in Real Life and their imaginations – while maintaining pristine social media presence, of course.

Acknowledgements

Thank you, Mom and Dad, for not disowning me despite how frequently I say fuck or reference my sex life onstage, and instead believing in me when I feel like a lost cause. Thank you to my sister Allie, grandparents, and entire extended family, too, for your consistent love, laughter, and support. You are my first and forever audience.

Thank you, cast and crew of *The Only Coffee Shop in the City*, for, with your insight and intuition, transforming simple typed words into pure magic and portraying immature, superficial, narcissistic characters as sincere human beings. You are my close, cherished friends and the affirmation of my art this insecure heart never dreamt possible.

Thank you, Dr. Susan Russell, Dr. Christopher Reed, Dr. Michelle Rodino-Colocino, Dr. Michael Elavsky, Professor Cynthia Mazzant, and every teacher/role model I have been fortunate and cosmically destined to cross paths with at Penn State, for guiding my college journey with expertise, wisdom, and patience (I demand a lot of that). You are the reason I – and many students – love learning and decide to further their educations, horizons, and ambitions.

Finally, thank you, my past lovers, shitty and delightful and morally ambiguous alike, for providing me the motivation to grow and improve and over 100 pages of material. Thank you, as well, to all the recently dumped or rejected, confused, and frustrated individuals who confided in me along the way, because, through realizing the universality in these young adult experiences, I chose to share this story. Being human in this ~day and age~ is hard as hell.

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Hopefully I never win an award and have to write a concise acceptance speech, lol!

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Introduction

| | |
|---|----|
| Abstract | i |
| Acknowledgments | ii |
| Millennial Existence is a Streaming Meta Dramedy: Contextual Genre Hybridity, Episodic Format, and Feminism from Screen to Stage (Preface to <i>The Only Coffee Shop in the City</i>) | 1 |
| References | 13 |

Two-Act Play

| | |
|---|----|
| Director's Notes, Scene, and Soundtrack | ii |
| <i>The Only Coffee Shop in the City</i> | |
| Act I | 1 |
| Act II | 47 |
| Photos and Related Media | 91 |
| Curriculum Vitae | 95 |

Millennial Existence is a Streaming Meta Dramedy:
Contextual Genre Hybridity, Episodic Format, and Feminism from Screen to Stage

(Preface to *The Only Coffee Shop in the City*)

I. Introduction: Shall We Begin with an Epigraph from a Vimeo?

“We [millennials] are all, from the start, ironic. That’s how we were raised.

But we want to be sincere.” (van den Akker 2014)

Patience died with Blockbuster, public socialization with Borders. Attention span is shriveling alongside box office sales and newspaper subscriptions. Accustomed and consequently addicted to always-accessible media, served buffet-ready in “tasty bite-size pieces,” contemporary media consumers prefer withdrawing with their computers into comforter cocoons (Hillier 3). But that’s old news, and for all millennials are blamed for killing with our silly streaming services and self-initiated YouTube series and Snapchat stories, we have also raised quite impressive trends championing new sensitivity, authenticity, and involvement in our surroundings and world. Embodying a challenging innate contrast between what James MacDowell calls “sincerity and irony, enthusiasm and detachment, naïveté and knowingness” the twenty-something snuggled on a futon binging a show best defined as cinematically “quirky” on Netflix or Hulu, is infinitely more engaged, active, and demanding of intellectual stimulation and commentary than they may appear (“Quirky, Tone, and Metamodernism”).

In this preface to my TV-inspired dramedy play *The Only Coffee Shop in the City*, an ode to, study around, and both defense and offense of the psyche driving the generation navigating an especially confusing society, I will explore three related topics: how sociopolitical and digital context influences viewers, performers, and characters, how episodic television format benefits theatre, and how genre hybridity grants space for female-identifying individuals. All support the arc of *The Only Coffee Shop*, specifically a feminist, post-postmodern pursuit of maturity, independence, mental health, and commitment today. And just for the record, you’ll ideally find

the play itself, while also tailored to this smart, capable audience, more entertaining and less pretentious than this introduction. (Here I go, already demonstrating traits signature of the millennial artist, proud and “optimistic” yet “inherently critical of their own processes” [Drayton 174].) *Cue musical number*

II. “Subtle but Pervasive Sadness” and Other Context Clues

“Boom times and relative peace” characterize the average luxury experienced during the 90s (Williams, “Move Over, Millennials, Here Comes Generation Z”). Fast forward to events and conditions including but not limited to: the financial crash and recession, fourth wave terrorism, environmental crisis, neoliberalism, skyrocketing rent in a “gig economy” and “increased university intake” with “lack of graduate opportunities,” and obviously social media in all its glory and detriment, and millennials, after coming of age amidst encouraging prosperity, were suddenly shoved into “an adult world where only rule exists - the certainty of uncertainty” (Williams, Huntley 15.)

Roughening and shortening the ordinary transition from innocence and expectation to mature responsibility and doubt, this instilled a “subtle but pervasive sadness” and “awareness of beauty lost, of potentials that never materialize” shared on an intimate level by me, my intended audience, and certainly the otherwise at first mostly unrelated characters of *The Only Coffee Shop in the City* (Freinacht 6). We are nostalgic, still partially childlike, but traumatized and scared. We are trapped in the Bermuda Triangle of youthful creativity, adolescent angst, and adult burden.

Thus founds the trademark dark yet whimsical, satirical, meta sense of meme humor perhaps originating with South Park, as suggested by Drayton, and now played with by creators

from Wes Anderson to Lena Dunham to Childish Gambino in his music video for “This is America.” Reread the epigraph by Robin van den Akker, who coined the term metamodernism: “We [millennials] are all, from the start, ironic. That’s how we were raised. But we want to be sincere” (“What is Metamodernism?”). I wrote *The Only Coffee Shop in the City* from this standpoint, with black comedy, witticisms, and characters who rely on bits as a coping strategy. They flaunt cynicism and detachment, then reveal in brief, quiet moments a secret desire to give up the act and connect more earnestly, as seen when Cooper responds to Yael’s catchphrase - “You’re kidding!” - with “No, I don’t really feel like I have to do that around you” (II.3). While some characters can handle this behavioral oscillation nearly naturally, others, namely protagonist Carrie, struggle to keep the polarized approaches in check. For her it is “not a balance but a pendulum swinging between various extremes,” a tendency Drayton notes among millennials (174).

Behind this mass anxiety and insecurity may unsurprisingly lurk social media. Bo Burnham, popular writer-director of *Eighth Grade*, personal comedic role model, and among the first stars in the YouTube sky, considers it “a sort of numbness and slight loneliness and haziness” (Logan, “Bo Burnham on Eighth Grade, Anxiety, and Why Social Media is a Curse”). He wonders, “Is it like a dissociative disorder? It’s made everyone have a sense that: *My life is not real. My friends aren’t real.* All of my fears and all of my worries, I have because I am addicted to the Internet.” Moved by *Ingrid Goes West*, another meta film about media -- *Inception*-like, in my opinion -- Anna Silman interviewed the glamorous gals known as Instagram influencers who plug sponsored brands for a living (“8 Instagram Influencers Explain What *Ingrid Goes West* Gets Scarily Right”). Barbara Dunkelman, a.k.a. @bdunkelman, confesses, “It’s just this fake thing of let’s show the world how much fun we’re having and how

much fun our life is, but in reality you're not very happy and not having a good time." She has 246,000 followers, and a net worth of \$400,000 in sponsorships.

I aim to establish this self-aware hypocrisy from the first scene of *The Only Coffee Shop*, in which Yael and Jessa obsesses over Carrie's bright, buoyant travel blog as we simultaneously observe her curled into fetal position, scrapping for cigarettes and week-old jerky, depressed, desperate, bored (I.1). It is a no-filter peek at the truth, behind-the-screens.

III. Now Trending (in TV News)

At long last revealing this millennial attitude, with deliberate genre hybridity and narrative complexity, is the current entertainment powerhouse: television. According to Alberto N. García, Associate Professor of Film and Television Studies at the University of Navarra, Spain, TV shows today exhibit an artistic layering of "density of plot, aesthetics, and even ethics" with a "sophisticated, innovative" voice (2). They feature dynamic, morally ambiguous characters, twist chronology with flashbacks and forwards or even sideways, and blend comedic and dramatic moods to better portray real life -- at its utmost exciting. As Jengi Kohan, writer of the first big-time Netflix dramedy, *Orange is the New Black*, and another of my creative inspirations, attests: "Dramas that are only dramatic are a lie, because life isn't just a drama. If you're reflecting reality, part of it should be humorous" (Havas et. al 7).

Along with realism, juxtaposing light and dark too forms tension, of course, like that unsettling tension upsetting millennials. Often at the core of dramatic-comedic tension is an inquiry on, rather than "capital P" politics" as in the satire genre, "personal identity struggles dominating U.S.-American public discourses. (5)" To capture the importance of identity to my characters, in all its confusion and complexity, and Carrie's outlook change from melodramatic

and adolescent to relatively more grounded yet still curious and hopeful, I borrowed from all the elements above.

Remember the millennial I mentioned in my intro, the one bundled up in blankets eight hours into some just-released streaming series? Sounds lazy and pathetic, right? Well, believe this: that 23-year-old actually manages a highly successful top-earning podcast about physics. Also, they're a woman. A transgender woman. Didn't see that one coming, did ya? Mind blown.

Cliché joke format aside, the idea is that content has to surprise, disturb, or challenge, and in addition boast forward-thinking and believable characters and plots, because their intelligent audience members "not only demand clever stories; they are creating them." With YouTube, blogs, podcasts, and social media all available as platforms, everyone is a producer and a critic, so the entertainment industry must prove itself especially worthy. As evidenced with the cult popularity of *Lost* and the mystery box genre, we want to try solving the riddle and then be shocked when we can't (Garcia 15). We appreciate the artist-audience pact so dearly that we're also suckers for meta material. Rachel Bloom's *Crazy Ex-Girlfriend*, a "rom-com about a woman brainwashed by unrealistic relationship expectations reinforced by rom-coms," is a gleaming sample of self-aware meta-comedy and irony from every angle (Chaney, "When Did TV Get So Meta?"). People have compared my play to Bloom's eccentric creation, even though it definitely, absolutely is not about an ex-boyfriend, since I definitely, absolutely am not a crazy ex-girlfriend. Lol.

To set this tone for *The Only Coffee Shop*, I recommended my actors deliver their lines like the meta-dramedic Netflix stars -- of *The Unbreakable Kimmy Schmidt*, *You're the Worst*, or *Community*, to name a few examples -- performing intermittently for their other characters

onstage, all overcompensating and fighting to appear bigger and better than they feel, and the house. In her final monologue, finally-employed Jessa doubly address her business's social media platform and nudge-nudges the viewers. She says, over a phone call, "Today's audiences are frickin' smart, sincere. They reject competition between companies and can smell bullshit through the Wi-Fi, so we have to be honest" (II.3). These days, with the pace and intensity at which we digest series, I think we all sometimes secretly imagine ourselves inside one. Life, to me, feels like this huge meta act. As David Foster Wallace, infamous king of sad white boys who my arrogant character Cooper probably drools over, wrote, "If Realism called it like it saw it, Meta-fiction simply called it as it saw itself seeing itself see it." Please respect the irony in that transition to the next section.

IV. Fuck the White Male Anti-Hero

A caveat or disclaimer surrounding these patterns is their inaccessibility or lack of minority representation, as will be discussed here. According to Julia Havas of DeMontfort University and Maria Sulimma of Freie Universität Berlin, "part of the trend is the white male anti-hero," a protagonist annoying at least and dangerous at most (6). Look at *Breaking Bad*, *Mad Men*, or *House of Cards*, or even the uber-progressive *BoJack Horseman*, which I admittedly love and forgive following -- spoiler alert? -- Season 5's meta apology for promoting this narrative (and its impact on my dialogue writing is discernible in *The Only Coffee Shop*), which tends to forgive, even romanticize, downright bad behavior in white straight men. We should have buried apathy and recklessness with James Dean. Left off the hook, the character type evolved into, as my character Rowan puts it in a rant that earns significant finger snaps, an "amateur DJ type white boy bitch," whose "defining personality traits" are "cigarettes when

drunk, indie bands like Tame Impala, and owning a record player” (II.1). Cooper does swap his cardigan for a Bender leather jacket in a *Breakfast Club* imagined scenario.

Over guns or knuckle sandwiches, Havas and Sulimma pose cringing as our secret weapon in stopping the bad boy - just not early 2000s cringing. Notoriously recognizable by shows like *The Office* or *Curb Your Enthusiasm*, cringe comedy triggers laughter from discomfort, from the awkward, maybe relatable, or just ridiculous obliviousness of characters who “frequently violate social and physical taboos” and “fail at communication,” and ultimately, while we wince, wind up our iconic favorites (Havas et. al 8). Solid solution, right? Unfortunately, historically almost always male and, though innocent compared to someone dark and broody, the beloved dunce got away with frequent “controversial depictions of violence, profanity, or sexuality” (10). Moreover, with an onscreen “audience” consisting of female characters, this use of cringe in early 2000s sitcoms perpetrated the stereotype that women are supposed to be impressed or disgusted by goofball men. They are written off as prizes, peripherals, and - incapable of humor or cringy mess-ups - perfect.

What we have to do, and are finally doing, is let female-identifying characters play the fool. Havas and Sulimma’s article spotlights three queen-driven TV dramedies: *Fleabag*, *Insecure*, and, which *The Only Coffee Shop in the City* is quite reminiscent of, *Girls*. “Instead of stylized depictions of sexual acts and erotic desirability” these stories are chockfull of flopping and failing, unabashed and uncensored anger, confusion, and rejection, and, in the case of *Insecure* and *The Only Coffee Shop* “daydreams and fantasy scenes, allowing” both protagonists “to live through frustration” (10, 13). The protagonists are not polished, but rather gritty with flaws and cringe-worthy. In other words, they are human. These sorts of shows liberate women

with the freedom to be bad and, more importantly, the power to be redeemed, as men have been treated and viewed forever.

Additional beautiful strength blooms at “the strategically thin line between the author-performer’s ‘enacted’ and ‘real’ self,” which Havas and Salimma stress, in reference to Lena Dunham as Hannah Horvath in *Girls* and Issa Rae as Issa in *Insecure*, seriously “contributes to the text’s meaning-making” (5). I did not play my protagonist slash alter-ego Carrie, but I can attest to the bravery it takes to publicly display your personal narrative. Essentially, you are welcoming viewers into your version of an ideal “realism,” which is also powerful, because that utopia can be super feminist. Not the ole violent, egocentric Man’s World, these created spaces are often more “intimate setting[s]” (Garcia 11). We see this in *Fleabag*, *Insecure*, and *Girls*.

One common critique of *Girls* posits that Dunham overlooks intersectionality in favor of privileged white girl feminism (Havas et. al 10). Having not actually watched the show, I feel unequipped to add to this debate, but I will emphasize *The Only Coffee Shop the City* as totally queer and diverse. Writing well-rounded, never merely “token” roles for people of color and all sexual orientations and gender identifications is a persistent focus of mine. And when I falter, I try hard to prove I’m at least self-aware. After Carrie realizes, for example, that she has overstepped and acted offensively towards potentially queer character Noah, she acknowledges with an “I’m being inappropriate,” before slipping back into similarly sketchy behavior (I.3). Making mistakes and learning and eventually improving, she *is* the antihero and *should* be wrong, but I need to be right. For that reason the work is honestly still in-progress; with the regularly evolving nature of language and dialogue around these hot-button topics, I will return to update whenever necessary.

V. From Screen to Stage to Starbucks

University of East London lecturer Tom Drayton applies all these trends to contemporary millennial-produced theatre with the phrase “Listening Theatre.” In homage to Freinacht’s Listening Society, the Listening Theatre describes recent theatrical pieces and spaces tapping into “empathetic understanding” with “young artists’ paradoxical reactions” to this “climate of chaos” (171). Built on values and showcased in a manner that *so closely resembles* what I did with *The Only Coffee Shop* before even knowing it existed, the Listening Theatre exposes me once again as a poster child-adult-inbetween for millennial artist culture. Drayton explains his Listening Theatre as -- here highlighting the clearest commonalities with my play -- “emancipatory,” “collaborative,” “authentic” “dialogue-based work” demonstrating the grander artistic “shift from naturalistic to expressionist structures” (177). He pretty much sums up my writing hopes and vision better than I could.

Beyond their material itself, Listening Theatre projects also involve creating comfortable physical room conducive to discourse. Likened to a tea party, or, you know, a coffee soiree, they welcome community members into “public spheres” safe for private musings, and the company prompts participants until conversation takes a natural flow. Comfort was surely a goal for *The Only Coffee Shop in the City*, but not until the end. I first had “baristas” (actors in aprons) taking coffee orders and mispronouncing names, and the playbill presented as a phone-accessible website, for a pre-show house full of strangers all reading screens and sipping cups* that dismissed their identities - a heartening choice, right? The intention was to emulate that awkward but familiar Starbucks stiffness, imposed by us, the company, before allowing a collective transition into cozier, local cafe vibes. And it worked! By curtain, audience members understood the nature of putting up guards, dropped their own, and adopted an eagerness to discuss.

The directors, cast, crew, and I partook in deciding the jumping-point question. It became: “What does dependency look like in our modern age?” and over three nights covered social media, contemporary partnerships and abuse, “dating others for experimental purposes,” surviving alone versus thriving independently and codependency, maturity, self-discovery, mental health, and more, all major subjects within *The Only Coffee Shop in the City*. People proposed very honest anecdotes, questions, new directions, and both times they had hurt and been hurt. We cultivated an unofficial therapy session and also intellectual stimulation, around solution seeking and also disclosure of faults -- a Living Theatre, indeed, and the fulfillment audiences crave that cannot be achieved with television or film alone. Online forums and blogs, though supportive communities and an amazing way to debate last episode’s cliffhanger with someone from another continent, who can expand your thinking with their unique cultural and personal frameworks, are simply not as instant or affectionate as face-to-face, same space deliberation.

Emma Mackenzie Hillier, assistant producer at Harbourfront Centre, accomplished the revolutionary merge of television and theatre two years ago with an actually episodic play called *The Numbers Game*. “You don’t have to be a millennial to know where theatre ranks in their hierarchy of mediums,” she permits in her introduction, naturally deprecating herself and our generation (3). “It’s something I’ve always wrestled with as a young creator: how do you engage an audience that grew up with their hands full of screens, an audience that expects a very specific style of storytelling?” To remedy this, Hillier attempted a concept I have contemplated and, if I’d produced *The Only Coffee Shop* after writing this (you know, in sensible order), may have too. Basically, she crafted TV for the stage. She and her writing group together worked out the arc and characters, drafted episodes individually, and then passed finalized scripts along to directors

and an eight-actor ensemble, who “rehearsed and performed a new episode each week,” six in total at forty minutes apiece (6).

Though *The Only Coffee Shop in the City* more subtly imitates television, I plan to further study and experiment with episodic theatre following this procedure, screen media did inspire the whole process for Hillier and myself. To introduce the main characters and quick pace, she opens *The Numbers Game* cut between three scenes, borrowing from what she credits as “standard technique in film and television” (6). *The Only Coffee Shop* rises similarly, albeit with two scenes instead of three, and moves continually back and forth from plot A to B, so to speak; and like in a sitcom, said plotlines are kept separate until ultimately somewhat literally overlapping though mainly figuratively paralleling. Hillier and her production team, and me and mine, embraced as well the level of collaboration present in a television writer’s room. She noted that seemingly small decisions by other members had the power to “impact the entire series, adding character depth [and] structural integrity.”

True, by approaching rehearsals for *The Only Coffee Shop in the City* as team-oriented and non-hierarchical as possible, collaborative over competitive, the final product developed into something so mutually therapeutic, empowering, and, just like we want, sincere.

VI. You are Now Free to Read 100 More Pages

I won’t make this harder than it has to be. Godspeed, my dudettes.

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THE ONLY COFFEE SHOP

IN THE CITY

A Play in Two Acts

by

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CAST OF CHARACTERS

(6-7: 4f, 2m, 1 either. All are mid to late 20s. A diverse cast is strongly encouraged!)

CARRIE: Creative writer and hopeless romantic learning to live alone. Playful, a little spastic, easily influenced. Surface Manic Pixie Dream Girl.

COOPER: “Actor-academic” prone to fits of broody narcissism dispersed with quirky comedic bits. Surface Sad Boi. More enthralling in Carrie’s mind.

Yael: One of Carrie’s two devoted blog readers. Somewhat superficial and oblivious, but kind and well-intended. Jew-ish Long Islander.

JESSA: Yael’s darker, sleeker best gal pal. Quite insightful beneath her equal pettiness and badass bitch front. Probably lives in Bushwick.

NOAH: The Boy Next Door, or two floors down. Happy-go-lucky, agreeable, and desperate to please.

ROWAN: Mostly stable, comparatively self-assured “PR associate/social media analyst/marketing savant” and “Master of the House” (Airbnb host). Young but wise and fierce.

BARISTA/FITNESS INSTRUCTOR/DOG WALKER: Self-explanatory. This can be its own singular role or doubled up among actors.

SYNOPSIS

After a melodramatic post-college breakup, writer Carrie leaves one city for another to navigate the Kubler-Ross Model (“DABDA”), from Denial through Acceptance. She and an ensemble of initial strangers explore maturity, independence, mental health, and commitment both in Real Life and their imaginations – while maintaining pristine social media presence, of course.

SET / SCENE

January through June, 2017. Simultaneously the apartment Carrie is subletting in London, Cooper’s place in Brooklyn, and the cozy, hip Greenwich Village coffee shop they once frequented during their romantic college years at NYU. This last location is a more symbolic “head space,” reserved for flashbacks and imagined meetings where Carrie processes the breakup in a highly exaggerated, fantasized way.

Embrace minimalist aesthetic with a simple desk or armchair Stage Right for Cooper, a couch Stage Left for Carrie, and a small table with two chairs Center. I recommend a “library chic” color scheme for the coffee shop – toasty browns and golds warmed by string lights – and contrasting cooler greens for Cooper and blues in London. Costumes

can be matched to these hues. I also suggest no blackouts, but rather more natural human transitions. These are all simply suggestions, though; do whatever the fuck you want.

RUN TIME

~100 min. without intermission

(A fun idea is to dress up as baristas and take coffee orders – making sure to incorrectly spell and call out names, of course – before the show or during intermission.)

“SOUNDTRACK” SONGS

Because background music is basically always playing, both in our favorite shows and real lives (at the coffee shop, grocery store, gym, etc.), an experimental component to Coffee Shop can be soft nearly nonstop music. The last production featured these specific choices, all artists heavily inspired by or involved with NYC, London, or LA, but of course any can be substituted.

I own no rights to them! In fact, I’m not even sure this is legal.

“Oxford Comma” – Vampire Weekend
“You Don’t Know Me” – Ben Folds, Regina Spektor
“Everywhere” – Fleetwood Mac
“m’Lover” – Kishi Bashi
“Break My Fall” – Doc Robinson
“Polymorphing” – Chairlift
“Everything is Embarrassing” – Sky Ferreira
“Self Control” – Frank Ocean
“Don’t Dream It’s Over” – Crowded House
“Post Break-Up Sex” – The Vaccines
“It Only Hurts Me All the Time” – The Graverobbers
“Little Woman” – Twin Shadow
“Put Your Records On” – Corinne Bailey Rae
“Heart of Glass” – Blondie
“Girls Chase Boys” – Ingrid Michaelson
“London Thumakda” – Amit Trivedi, movie *Queen*
“On Hold” – The xx
“Don’t Delete the Kisses (Remix)” – Wolf Alice, Charli XCX, Post Precious
“Don’t Be So Hard on Yourself” – Jess Glynne
“It’s Too Late” – Carole King

“A World Alone” – Lorde

“Ooh La La” – Faces

Bow Song: “thank u, next” – Ariana Grande

Bonus inspirations: “Love” – Lana Del Rey, “Manhattan” – Sara Bareilles, “Mama Said” – The Shirelles, “I Get Lonely” – Janet Jackson, “Here Comes the Anxiety” – The Wombats, “Track 10” – Charli XCX, “Lonely Cities” – Tigertown, “Crocodile Rock” – Elton John, “I Want to Break Free” – Queen, “It’ll Come, It’ll Come, It’ll Come” – Ashford & Simpson

ACT I

SCENE 1

SETTING: Winter. Lights up on two of our three locales: the cozy Greenwich Village coffee shop and the living room – a couch – of the flat Carrie is renting in London. She has surrounded said couch with piles of books and clothes, scattered records, dirty kitchenware, empty wine bottles and cigarette boxes, a stuffed puppy dog, and other on-brand Carrie litter.

AT RISE: JESSA and YAEL sit across from each other in the coffee shop, sipping hot drinks – a black iced coffee and foamy latte, respectively – and flicking absently through their phones. If we see their screens, JESSA is browsing a job search site, searching for, plainly, “a job.” YAEL is on a dating app, desperately widening her desired age range.

CARRIE is curled up on the ground of her apartment in a blanket knot with her back to the audience.

MUSIC SUGGESTIONS: “Oxford Comma” – Vampire Weekend
“You Don’t Know Me – Ben Folds, Regina Spektor
Silence after song ends for rest of scene

JESSA

(Finally putting down her phone, looking up at her friend with a smile)

It’s cool we could finally find the time to catch up, you know, face to face.

YAEL

Oh, my gosh, Jessa, same. So happy.

(Beat, then THEY both awkwardly return their attention to their screens, flipping through their feeds again for an uncomfortable moment.)

YAEL, CON’T.

Hey, look at this. Do you remember Carrie David? She was roommates with Anne for a while I think? Short. Hair sort of like this.

(Ruffling her own mane to resemble Carrie's messy 'do)

Face sort of like this.

(Contorting her face into a look of spaced-out happiness)

JESSA

Oh, with the pretentiously zany librarian aesthetic? A lot of retro Mod Cloth skirts with woodland creatures on them?

Yael

(A statement of agreement)

I think she looked her most normal on Halloween.

JESSA

Right, she's Cooper's ex. The bearded theatre kid. I subscribe to his Vimeo so if he goes viral I can reap first fan benefits, and when he gives up and transfers to corporate finance, I can exploit the video content for blackmail money.

Yael

Duh.

JESSA

So what about her?

Yael

Oh yeah, so they broke up a few weeks ago, right after the holidays. Christmas or whatever you white sitcom families celebrate.

JESSA

You do know that you're –

Yael

And then she just dashed off to London for this exotic semester abroad.

JESSA

She probably figured, what better way to forget years' worth of intimate experience than to catapult herself into a new, distracting foreign environment?

Yael

(Impressed, maybe snaps)

Queen, right? What happened to him, though, do you know? He was cute, in that gastro pub enthusiast sort of way. Is he still here in the city?

Jessa

Nah, he's playing recluse cowboy out West I think. In Utah or Colorado, or maybe L.A.

Yael

Oy... Dramatic split.

Jessa

Dramatic people.

Yael

(Waking up her phone)

Anyway, Carrie just dropped a new post to her travel blog. It's super inspiring. It's like, born again virginity, but for life. Want to hear it?

Jessa

More than I want to improvise a monologue framing my daily routine of browsing entry-level jobs with a bowl of Cinnamon Toast Crunch in my lap before inevitably dozing off into an afternoon nap and then angrily watching *Queer Eye* until 2 a.m. as an era of healthy personal growth. Or worse – sit painstakingly through *your* rehearsed spiel.

Yael

Oh, I know, right? Super, here goes.

(Reading)

“As famous English writer Virginia Woolf once said, ‘You cannot find peace by avoiding life.’ I am not avoiding life so much as I am overwhelming myself by it, waking every morning to a horizon fresh with inspiration and blinding with potential. I’m thriving out here on my own. Embracing aloneness, a concept entirely different from loneliness.”

(CARRIE rolls over to face the audience, and opens her eyes. They are dead, and she stares darkly off into the distance.)

Jessa

Loneliness, ew. Bitch needs a frickin’ vibrator if you ask me.

Yael

“I don’t think there’s any real way to avoid life, however, for even in the deep, subterranean, manipulative pockets of our noggins we are working to replicate it, albeit with twists and hyperboles.”

(CARRIE slides off the couch and collapses onto the ground, a sad lumpy cocoon. She inches up to a seated position, angrily shakes a few empty boxes of cigarettes, then settles for a nearly empty bottle of wine.)

Jessa

Here, let me see this... Greta Gerwig shit.

(Taking Yael’s phone)

“With no ties to anyone or anything, I am free to stroll the streets in a state of mindful bliss, stop into any bookstore I please, indulge in a cup of hot cocoa or a café breakfast of baked beans and sausage that, thanks to the limited data and spotty Wi-Fi, I’m excused from the burden of having to Snapchat to everyone I know.”

Yael

(Smearing on some lip balm, a habit.)

Baked beans and sausage – cultural.

Jessa

I assumed she was vegan.

(CARRIE rips a bite from a stick of beef jerky. Who knows how long it’s been sitting out.)

Yael

Vegetarian. Because remember that time she showed up wasted to The Killers concert, her overall pockets stuffed with shredded cheese? It was on campus story.

Jessa

(Sarcastic)

How could I forget?

Yael

But I guess drunk diet choices don’t count.

Jessa

And vegetarians can’t eat sausage anyway. It’s like the most sacrilegious meat on the market.

Yael

Definitely not kosher.

Jessa

She's really tossed her morals out the window, hasn't she?

Yael

Keep reading, maybe she'll have sex with a goat.

Jessa

Ooh, or confess that beneath all the thesaurus adjectives she's actually pretty distraught. Alright. "My days are a montage of museums, insight-provoking think tanks, and trips outside the city, to Wales or the grassy rural countryside. My nights are consumed with sloshy pitchers of Guinness toasted under dimly-lit, low stone ceilings, where I can nestle in with friends and strangers alike. Life is genuine, curious, childlike and mature and intellectual like a song."

(CARRIE stand, looks about as if considering moving, then sits back down on the couch, curls up her knees into the fetal position with her stuffed puppy, and checks her phone, presumably the blog post. She mouths or speaks the following sign-off paragraph as JESSA reads aloud.)

"Wherever you're at, in whatever corner of the world you're reading this, I hope you're traveling your universe like a tourist and creating art and friendships. You'll hear from me soon. Love, Carrie."

Yael

Ooh, and check out the darling pictures she posted with it.

(Leaning across the table and pointing at the screen)

Scones!

CARRIE

Dry as hell.

Yael

A Burberry plaid scarf –

CARRIE

It's a knockoff.

Yael

And all the pretty bridges!

Carrie

That you aren't allowed to jump off.

(With this, SHE curls back up and closes her eyes, putting her phone to her side.)

Yael

Ugh, what's the British word for *jealous*?

(Small beat. Yael returns JESSA's phone.)

Jessa

It's good to know she's doing well, if you ask me.

Yael

No, yeah, I'm happy for her.

Jessa

Oh my god, me too. So happy.

Yael

So what should we do now?

Jessa

Uh... Well, a new sushi burrito joint just opened down the street?

Yael

You're kidding!

Jessa

Yeah, bitch! Better than the last one, I heard. What they do is they make, like, a normal sushi burrito, but bigger.

Yael

Oh my god, it's about time.

JESSA

For lunch? Well, yeah, it's around 11. By the time we get there, it'll be like, 11:10.

YAEL

We can stop for coffee on the way?

(THE TWO begin gathering their coats and belongings.)

YAEL, CON'T.

I have a few BuzzFeed quizzes saved for the walk over. Like this one that tells you whether you're a dog or a cat and then what your Starbucks order would be.

JESSA

Your Starbucks order if you were a dog or a cat?

YAEL

Basically genius, right?

JESSA

Brilliant.

(THEY EXIT as CARRIE'S phone rings. She glares at it, like it's an annoying screaming child.)

CARRIE

(To her phone)

Shut up, you. Seriously, shush.

(It stops ringing for a joyful second, then continues seemingly louder.)

CARRIE, CON'T.

Jesus, fine, only if you agree to keep quiet the rest of the day.

(Holding it to her ear and speaking dully)

Hi, mom. No, yeah, I'm fine, I meant

(In a higher, perkier voice)

Hi mom! ... Oh no, you didn't wake me, I've been up for hours. Who needs a rooster when you have debilitating insomnia? ... No yeah, I'm at the library, you know me, your little bookworm. Emphasis on the second part of that compound at the moment, no, nope, I didn't say anything...

(Sitting up, lazily tipping over an empty bottle of wine)

No yeah, things are positively splendid on this side of the shining sea. Yes, writing is - oh, hi Dad. Yes, I can hear you....

(Searching around her room for shoes. She is already wearing jeans and a loose t-shirt, what she slept in.)

Yes, writing is going well still, swell honestly... Seminars are fine... No, I haven't talked to "him" since. You can call him Cooper, he's not god. But no, not for twenty-eight, or twenty-nine days. He won't text me back, but...no I'm fine, I said that.

(SHE has located one shoe, but when she slips her foot into it, finds a pack of cigarettes inside. There is one left, and she punches the air in triumph.)

Hey, listen, I've gotta run. I think I'm going to stop by this coffee shop I drunkenly stumbled I mean brightly jogged by the other day. It looks just like the one from the city, that I used to essentially live at with- that I used to go to a lot.... Okay. Yes. I will... Yep, love you both too.... Yes, I'm fine. Okay, bye.

(SHE hangs up, sits still, then converses with her phone again, maybe biting her fingernails, nervous.)

Ya heard that, compadré? I said I'm fine. Count your lucky emoji stars it doesn't pain you in the slightest to grace my skin so intimately and then be thrown, discarded, into the bottom of this dark void, adding weight to my already heavy baggage. Oh, that I were a phone within that hand, that I might touch that cheek.

(CARRIE drops it into her backpack; a cracking sound is heard. She grabs it back out, and her face falls.)

Bloody hell.

(LIGHTING TRANSITION – no blackouts.)

(As the scene changes, a definition appears in minimal, simple type upon a projection screen:)

“The Kubler-Ross Model, commonly referred to by the acronym DABDA, proposes a series of emotions experienced in five stages, following the death of a close loved one, a diagnosis of a terminal fatal illness, or a melodramatic college breakup.”

(Next slide:)

“January – Denial.”

(END OF SCENE.)

ACT I

SCENE 2

SETTING: The coffee shop, lit differently to symbolize an oncoming flashback.

AT RISE: COOPER is seated at the table engrossed in a thick book, jotting notes, as CARRIE stands nearby, waiting, maybe checking her phone. BARISTA enters with two mugs.

MUSIC SUGGESTIONS: “Everywhere” – Fleetwood Mac
“m’Lover” – Kishi Bashi
“Break My Fall” – Doc Robinson

BARISTA

Cappuccino for Carrie for here. Cappuccino for Cooper for here.

(CARRIE and COOPER step forward, taking their cups with grateful nods to the barista. COOPER sits back down with his book and resumes reading, as CARRIE lingers, watching him with interest. Finally, she makes a move.)

CARRIE

Both of our names start with C.

COOPER

What a... crazy coincidence.

CARRIE

Critically cosmic.

COOPER

Circumstantial.

CARRIE

Consequential.

COOPER

Chance.

CARRIE

(Jabbing a finger in his face smugly)

Course.

(COOPER nods, impressed, but still sizing up his opponent.)

COOPER

Destiny is a pretty heavy accusation; don't you think? Especially since my name is actually spelled with a Q.

CARRIE

Quirky.

COOPER

(Taking a deep breath, preparing to dive in)

An introduction isn't quite necessary, but we could shake hands, for culture's sake?

CARRIE

It is our civic duty to keep interpersonal socially constructed formalities alive.

(THEY shake hands, visceral chemistry between them. COOPER coughs in an effort to block CARRIE'S forward energy. She nods at his book.)

CARRIE

So what're you reading?

COOPER

This? This is the uh, this is the Bible.

CARRIE

Oh, dope. Jesus is cool, cool, cool.

COOPER

Yeah... He's pretty much the grand Messiah and sole truth speaker who will be returning any day now to cleanse our dirty planet and polluted souls. I'm just trying to get ahead of the game and decipher his secret coded messages before the Illuminati.

CARRIE

Wow, yeah, that's – awfully smart. They're some sneaky boys, the Illumi-*naughty*.

COOPER

I'm kidding.

CARRIE

(With a laugh)

Oh, oh my gosh. You, you seriously got me with that.

(COOPER performs jokey finger guns, which she shoots back.)

CARRIE, CON'T.

Dang, good one.

COOPER

Thanks. What I'm really doing is critiquing a couple choice verses for Religious Studies. I go to NYU.

CARRIE

Oh, no way! I'm a student as well.

COOPER

Yeah? Of what?

CARRIE

Of –

(SHE flourishes, sending a few splashes of coffee spilling from her mug.)

The world!

(Beat.)

Guess.

COOPER

You're really going to make me do this?

(CARRIE shrugs. Finally deserting the Bible, COOPER leans back to take in the bizarre, spastic individual before him.)

COOPER CON'T.

Fine. Uh... You're slightly too polished to study art, but not quite enough to be Comm. You're too instantly riveted and wiry for anything related to finance or involving toxic, easily spilled chemicals...

(He moves her drink away from the edge of the table.)

Anthropology, perhaps?

CARRIE

I prefer Free People.

COOPER

Poly Sci, then? Or – oh, Gender Studies! You know, because you're an excessively extroverted female in a Goodwill pea-coat.

CARRIE

These are some seriously evidence-backed stereotypes.

COOPER

I know my oversimplified representations. Now think fast: what's your favorite kind of tree?

CARRIE

Christmas.

COOPER

So not Plant Science.

CARRIE

I believe in magic.

COOPER

Of course you do.

CARRIE

Don't "of course you do" me. You know nothing about me.

COOPER

I know you're an English major.

CARRIE

Wha – how?!

COOPER

You had an abnormal amount of fun with that alliteration riffing earlier.

(Beat.)

CARRIE

Well, what about you, then? What are you passionate about, Mr. Charles Darwin?

COOPER

Was that the question?

CARRIE

It should be! Your passion is your study, if you're doing it right.

COOPER

Alright, fine. I have a double major in Chemistry and Comparative Literature, a minor in Theatre.

CARRIE

Jeez, okay. So what do you *care* about, then? Hydrogen two sulfide four - bi-hydrogen tetra-sulfide, if you will –

COOPER

Sulfuric acid.

CARRIE

Whatever. Or Dionysus and Apollo?

COOPER

You're intelligent.

CARRIE

I'm well-read.

COOPER

And I wear glasses.

CARRIE

So open up those eyes, then, *silly* – what fascinates you? What stirs you awake in the morning and keeps you up at night because it dismisses any point to sleep? What voids you of words while simultaneously filling you with them, like toxic air that you need to breathe? What do you fancy, flirt with, want to grip around the neck and kill but also hold dearly, warmly, for the rest of your days? What will you always, always choose? What will you shake in front of other's faces and just scream, "This matters! This will seriously change your life!"

COOPER

Uh, quite frankly...

(Rubbing his neck, a tick, then suddenly adopting a Mid-Atlantic character and accent, as a 1930's Fred Astaire style riff like the Charleston starts)

Carrie with a C, Queen of Sheba, it ain't a want, it's a who. What I fancy is you.

CARRIE

(Doing the same)

Oh, hooley.

COOPER

No, dame, I'm not bent, I swear! You're a choice piece of calico, though a bit of a bearcat.

CARRIE

And you're a copper-plated dumbbell quick with the lines.

COOPER

Quick with my feet, too.

CARRIE

Don't pull the trigger yet.

(Beat.)

Prove it.

(The music swells and COOPER stands with gusto, presenting a hand to CARRIE, who takes it faux-bashfully. They waltz or swing about with cinematic flare. COOPER attempts to dip CARRIE but fumbles and she falls, halting the music and instantly shifting the tone to a darker one.)

COOPER

Oops.

CARRIE

Get out of my head.

COOPER

I would in a heartbeat, if there were a way out of this fucked-up, cluttered mess of a space you call a brain. It's like eternal Black Friday in here with No Exit. You know No Exit, right?

CARRIE

Sorry?

COOPER

Sartre. Sartre said Hell was other people, people you don't know, but perhaps it's the one you know more than anyone else, or even worse, the one you pretend to know.

CARRIE

What're you suggesting?

COOPER

You know the old proverb: if you love something, let it go.

CARRIE

But I don't love you. I hate you.

COOPER

If you hate something, let it go faster.

CARRIE

That's impossible, unfortunately.

COOPER

And also futile. Now are you going to clamor up off the floor like an agent of free will or just, you know, mope there forever?

CARRIE

I thought you'd help me up.

COOPER

(Striding over to the nearest chair, taking a seat)

That's not my job anymore.

CARRIE

It was.

COOPER

Nuh huh.

CARRIE

Whatever. You can sit there now, acting all composed and mature, but we'll fall back together someday. I know it and you know it too.

COOPER

Sure, pal.

CARRIE

I see our paths like this.

(Tracing two routes on the ground)

So they're together at first, then they detour off to chase new opportunities but above all, progress, not regress, fighting onwards against the vertigo and winds. Then eventually, they cross back, like a braid that slipped apart for a minute but upon being separated out can be pulled tighter and cleaner than ever.

(CARRIE sits back on her heels, proudly admiring her invisible work.)

All will be okay.

COOPER

Stellar artistic work, Care, clearer than the reference map of Middle Earth in "*Lord of the Rings*," but, uh... What if you're facing the wrong way, and that-

(Pointing to her "drawing")

is actually backwards?

CARRIE

Backwards...?

(She glances at the picture, then looks behind her. Her gaze catches on something in the distance – in the “past,” and her face lights up as she turns back to Cooper.)

Oh my gosh, Coop, do you see that dog back there? Bundled up in a little hound’s-tooth sweater? Oh he’s so precious I want to die alone with no one who cares. Hey, remember how we used to name dogs we’d pass on the street after deceased depressed artists?

COOPER

Ha, yeah, that routine certainly does ring a bell. A Pavlovian one.

CARRIE

(Shaking an imaginary bell)

Dinner’s ready, puppos!

(COOPER pants, acting like a dog. He moves closer to his ex-girlfriend, tiptoeing, taking care to avoid “tripping” over her imaginary lines.)

COOPER

Hans Christian Houndersen. Charles Pawdelaire. Edgar Allen Bone.

CARRIE

Vincent Van Go Fetch!

COOPER

That one was all you.

CARRIE

Yeah, it was that Aussie, remember? Because he had one perky ear, and then his other, floppier one folded over like this, so from a distance it looked like –

COOPER

(Crouching to join her near the ground)

- like he had only one ear. That was in that –

CARRIE

- hotel lobby! –

COOPER

- In Philadelphia, yes. With that old drunkard who –

CARRIE

- we convinced we were –

BOTH

Sonny and Cher!

(Laughing together, they fall back, so that they are lying side by side, gazing up into stars and space.)

COOPER

(Impersonating Sonny Bonno)

“They say we’re young and we don’t know. We won’t find out until we’re grown.”

(Beat.)

That’s a quote. From “I Got You, Babe.”

CARRIE

I know. “Love, love is strange. A lot of people take it for a game.” That’s from “Love is Strange.”

(Beat.)

But not for us, Coop, because we really *know* each other, and that is sacred. That’s a quote by me. Do you like it?

(LIGHTING TRANSITION, dim, dark. CARRIE can’t see COOPER in the darkness, and panics.)

CARRIE, CON’T.

Do you? ... Cooper.... Coop?

(The projection screen reads:)

“February – Anger.”

(END OF SCENE.)

ACT I

SCENE 3

SETTING: The coffee shop, lit normally. Also the London apartment.

AT RISE: CARRIE is hastily tidying her space – shoving things under the couch, hiding the stuffed dog in particular – while checking her hair and makeup and ripping shots of espresso and vodka.

JESSA stands behind a seated YAEL, braiding her friend's hair. They have their trademark drinks.

MUSIC SUGGESTIONS: “Polymorphing” – Chairlift
“Everything is Embarrassing” – Sky Ferreira
“Self Control” – Frank Ocean
“Don't Dream It's Over” – Crowded House
“Post Break-Up Sex” – The Vaccines

YAEL

So it starts like this, her first line – “If you're reading this, by any slim chance, know your silence only propels me forward, and I don't mind one bit. Like, whatever. You were as flaky as a croissant, while the boys here stand crisp as biscuits, or baguettes to rip your teeth into. Their dress and manners are as smart as their speech, and they charm like storybook princes.”

(Romantically)

Storybook princes....

JESSA

Do you ever feel pity for your parents, and then crippling shame for feeling that way?

YAEL

“I met one strapping lad at a pub the other day, another American who happens to live in my building. He called me crazy, so I called him the next day, living up to my accusations I suppose. I'm nothing if not entirely unreliable.”

(Examining her reflection in a compact mirror from her purse)

Some of these tangents are just like, oy, self-obsessed much, right?

JESSA

Like my mom, she just forces *vertigo*, if that words makes sense. She tugs my sister and I down into these frickin' repressive places we've, you know, outgrown, and not even aggressively, but instead with these passive condescending and guilt-twisting tactics. She doesn't even want to take care of *us*, necessarily, just like, anyone besides herself?

(Yael reaches for Jessa's iced coffee, and Jessa nods absently, granting permission. Yael slurps.)

For her birthday, which is actually just a week before Mother's Day, I should give her a DS with Nintendogs. Like, put your Dalmatians in obedience tournaments, mom, not your daughters in goddamn beauty pageants.

Yael

(Eyes still fixed on phone)

"I wonder, though, am I filling a hole? What am I missing and what am I trying to gain? I don't know, though. I suppress those doubts." Then there's like, another few paragraphs of subtly disguised anti-Cooper propaganda and ego inflation...

Jessa

And this is when I start fretting about grandchildren! My mom had me when she was young, my dad eleven years her senior, but you probably couldn't tell. He does a lot of Botox. But so, I don't know, she needs time to be on her own, develop, escape like, eternal adolescence.

(Now she goes for Yael's latte, takes a big gulp.)

But on the flip side my dad deserves grandkids while he's still able to roll around the floor with them. It's always felt like a numbers game.

Yael

(Scanning the blog)

Blah, blah... it's pretty long.

Jessa

It's pretty complicated.

Yael

It's just like, doesn't she understand the Internet is supposed to be easy to read?

Jessa

It's just like, I think I can contribute more to the world as an independent than to my family as a parent.

Yael

And it ends with "Fuck you to the moon and back." Ouch.

Jessa

(Finally reentering awareness)

Sorry.

Yael

No, I meant,

(Holding up her phone)

this is harsh.

Jessa

Oh. Yeah.

Yael

But that does sort of hurt, though. I have a/ sensitive skull.

Jessa

/Sensitive skull/ I know.

(Beat. She sits, finished with Yael's braid.)

So what do you think?

Yael

(Still referencing her phone)

About this?

Jessa

What? No, but you're getting way too into that blog, if you ask me.

Yael

(Somewhat defensively)

You know I love blogs.

Jessa

Yeah, but if you think it's long or boring, just unsubscribe. Peace out. Not like there aren't a frickin' million options out there.

Yael

I like sticking with it. It's long, but definitely not boring, all the parts about princes and travel! I'm also obsessed with this other one that Carrie shared. It's like basically Eat, Pray Love, except the writer is definitely single, atheist, and into Soylent as an alternative for meals. Total queen. She's working for a few months in India, and it's called "Myself in Mumbai," but I think it should be called "All Mumbai Myself." Isn't that funny?

Jessa

Yeah. Anyway, I meant what you think about having kids, getting married, all that.

Yael

Oh, oh my god! I'm super excited. The choice to make children is so selfless and pure. It's a little you that you get to dress up in fancy expensive doll clothes and exploit all over Instagram. And pass around simchat bat, to which of course you invite all of your ex-boyfriends, right?

Jessa

I'm pretty sure that response was an oxymoron.

Yael

No, that's when three words are broken up by commas. The Vampire Weekend song, you know, "who gives a fuck about an oxymoron?"

Jessa

(Shaking her head and adopting the façade we're familiar with, as they return to surface, distant topics)

So wait, though, how's the post wrap up, bitch? Do you think she knows Cooper is back in New York? And like, dating?

Yael

(Putting on some lip balm)

No, yeah.

Jessa

No or yeah?

Yael

Honestly? Definitely not.

(JESSA shrugs and the two stand to EXIT, as CARRIE welcomes NOAH who knocks and ENTERS from Stage Left.)

CARRIE

Noah, hi, howdy, hello! Come in, come in. Welcome to my humble abode.

(Introducing him to the place with a signature grand flourish)

Or, the humble abode of the elusive Rowan, a “public relations professional, slash communications analyst, slash creative content creator, slash social media savant,” who’s off doing some marketing consulting in Mumbai. I’m just renting the place off Airbnb, so I don’t even know her last name or anything, just that title...

(Trails off, bites at her nails)

NOAH

(Eyeing the sofa set-up)

You’re renting the place or the uh, couch?

CARRIE

Oh gosh no, the apartment, the whole bachelorette pad, baby! I sleep there by choice. I find couches sort of calming and secure, like big spoons for the lonely? And you never have to worry about a sofa getting a pesky boner, you know what I mean. Sometimes I *think* I feel a dick poking around back there

(Playfully poking his shoulder with her finger)

But it’s usually just the remote control. Ha.

(Beat.)

Wanna take some shots?

NOAH

Uh yeah, I’m –

CARRIE

Cool! I mean –

CARRIE

Only if you’re up for...

NOAH

Totally down for...

NOAH

That.

(Another beat.)

CARRIE

Cool! Cool, cool, cool. Just one or two apiece or three or four combined or five or six each. We'll just toss 'em back quick and hit the road, Jack.

NOAH

It's Noah.

CARRIE

Oh, yeah, I know, I was just –

NOAH

I'm uh, just kidding.

CARRIE

Oh, ha, I get it! Hit the road, Noah.

NOAH

If you insist, I'll pack my bags and go, uh.

CARRIE

Yeah, get out of my sight.

(NOAH makes an exaggerated move for the door.)

No, I already regret my fickle impulsive farewell! Come back, my love! Noooo-ah.

NOAH

It's uh, it's actually Jack.

(The two force relatively awkward laughter, shaking heads at each other in a "I see what you did there!" manner. CARRIE shakes finger guns at NOAH, a gesture she picked up from Cooper.)

(Silence then falls as they smile at each other nervously. NOAH stuffs his hands into his pockets.)

CARRIE

So uh... shots!

NOAH

(Taking his hands back out again for a semi-awkward gesture)

Yes, hell yeah! Let's do it, do it.

CARRIE

I make a mean glass of pure cheap vodka.

NOAH

Ooh, mixology. Whip me up, sister.

CARRIE

(Crossing in front of NOAH towards the "kitchen" Stage Left)

The bars are going to be so loud and stimulating, we won't have to talk to each other about class, or our personal narratives... Or even acknowledge each other's presence!

(She EXITS, leaving NOAH alone onstage for a brief moment.)

NOAH

Great.

(LIGHTING TRANSITION resulting in NOAH and CARRIE on the floor, leaning against the couch with empty bottles between them and Noah's jacket and things sprawled about. Switching music helps here, too; I recommend "Self Control." She is indulging in sarcasm and cynicism, lost on Noah.)

CARRIE

How about... favorite past U.S. politician?

NOAH

Didn't we relocate to another continent to, you know, avoid American government?

CARRIE

That is fair, but hey, this isn't the present. We're talking history here, baby! *Her-story*.

NOAH

Okay, I mean, yeah, let's do it. 1...2...3!

CARRIE
SONNY BONO!

NOAH
GEORGE WASHINGTON!

(Beat.)

CARRIE
G.W. Classic choice.

NOAH
He was the first.

CARRIE
No way! You should be on Jeopardy.

NOAH
(Sincerely flattered)
Oh, thanks.

CARRIE
Your turn to question the pick.

NOAH
Okay, um... How about... What's one thing you haven't told anyone here?

CARRIE
Dang, that's a wonderful Q! Now we're talking. Or shouting I guess, over each other.

NOAH
That's the the name of the game, isn't it? "Shouting Over Each Other." It could be picked up by Hasbro.

CARRIE
Screaming is therapeutic. Okay, I'm ready. Let's count together.

(THEY try, but NOAH starts on 1, and CARRIE on 3. After a few attempts, they eventually figure this out, in Carrie's favor.)

BOTH
1... 2... 3!

NOAH
I HAVE A BILLION DOLLARS
AND FOUR BMW'S!

CARRIE
I HAVE A TON OF UNPACKED
BAGGAGE AND A FRESHLY
BROKEN HEART!

(A beat, as they each process what the other just revealed.)

CARRIE
What'd you just confess? You have four BLTs? Wow, man, I don't even have one BLT. I don't even have the B or the T, all I have is a little lettuce there in the fridge, sitting on a plate not even in a bag, and it's pretty... wilted.

NOAH
No, not BLTs, BMWs.
(Counting on his fingers)
And a boat, and a plane, too, but technically that's my family's, like, you know, it doesn't have my name on it or anything. We also have a blimp.

CARRIE
That's a lot of... modes of transportation.

NOAH
I just don't like people thinking I'm, you know, pretentious because of it. I mean, it's my parent's money, and they were always careful about not giving me too much or letting it spoil me. I hate that word, spoil. Just because I've been privileged, which I'm, you know, insanely grateful for, it doesn't make me like, immune to sadness or whatever. I just have a slightly different upbringing that's, like, molded my perspective on life.

CARRIE
I'll say.

NOAH
What *did* you say, speaking of which? I heard the word "broken?"

CARRIE
Broken, ha! No, ha nope, it's -

NOAH
Are you sure?

CARRIE

No, yeah, it's nothing.

NOAH

Okay.

CARRIE

I'm just basically in a poor emotional state currently, that's all. Call me the latest resident of Mississippi, the most impoverished state per capita and family income.

NOAH

What?

CARRIE

(Becoming tense, anxious)

Never mind. Bad joke.

NOAH

Okay, your turn. We've already covered favorite pet and TV show, and...

CARRIE

Coffee order?

NOAH

Oh, I don't drink coffee. I can scream decaf, but... Hm. Now I've ruined the surprise.

CARRIE

Hey, can you give me a second actually? I have to have a panic attack; I mean have a... peeing attack. Drank too much, silly Carrie, ha!

(CARRIE stumbles a few feet away, shutting an invisible door behind herself, fidgeting and biting her nails. She shuts her eyes and focuses on breathing in and out, composing herself.)

(Just then COOPER ENTERS, accompanied by sad 80's breakup song, "Don't Dream It's Over," overacting a cool burnout, John Bender type, pretending they're at a school dance.)

CARRIE, CON'T.

(Startled)

Oh, jeez! Of course, now, when I want to avoid your presence, you just instantly...

COOPER

Hey, Ace. What's a fine Betty like you doing spending this bitchin' dance in the corner?

CARRIE

(Reluctantly slipping into the bit)

Book outta here, wannabe.

COOPER

For cear? 'Cause you're having a major rush without me, huh? I'll bet you are, with such a narbo zeek as your prom date.

CARRIE

Hey, it's not like you're a bad stud, so I'd bag your face if I were you.

COOPER

You gonna' take him to third base, get freaky?

CARRIE

Barf me out.

(Beat. SHE wants him to chase, pursue, her.)

CARRIE, CON'T.

So what if I did? Would that make ya crunchy [jealous]?

COOPER

Get real.

CARRIE

Step off.

COOPER

You're the one always kirkin' out. Take a chill pill.

CARRIE

I would, but

(Instantly dropping the act; earnestly bordering on fearfully)

I don't have any.

COOPER

Fine, we can break, take 5. But that was a fun scene, pal, let's run it again sometime.

CARRIE

(More to herself)

How does one go about legally obtaining a "chill pill?" I'm going crazy...

(Meanwhile COOPER takes a seat and watches NOAH, who has produced a DS from his pocket and is playing a game.)

COOPER

So, uh... this kid. He certainly bares a striking resemblance to yours truly. Style wise. Conversationally, I must say he has a little difficulty keeping up with bits.

CARRIE

Don't be an asshole. He's trying his best.

COOPER

Yeah? Isn't that adorable?

CARRIE

It is. He's cute and nice and down to earth.

COOPER

Well, there's a Tinder bio better suited for e-Harmony - one only your parents would swipe right on. The old Boy Next Door.

CARRIE

The Boy Two Levels Down, actually.

COOPER

Yeah, I would say he's at *least* two levels down for you, Care; you know that by "cute and nice and down to earth" you mean he's well-groomed, and predictable, and easy to read. And quite frankly, you hate books like that. You think they're boring.

CARRIE

He's a good person.

COOPER

Which also bothers you, because you, most certainly, are not.

CARRIE

Sorry?

COOPER

Oh, did I not articulate enough?

CARRIE

No, your enunciation was annoyingly sharp, per usual, but it's weird to hear that *I'm* not a good person, from a masochist Machiavellian martyr addicted to indulgence and indifferent to love and support, who can theatrically articulate promises like "I'll always love you," but not actually care at all about anyone besides himself and Kanye West.

COOPER

(Rising from his chair)

He's the modern day Da Vinci.

CARRIE

He's mediocre at best. You're lazy, and unoriginal, and not going to make it as an actor.

COOPER

And you're crazy, and self-absorbed, and not going to make it as a writer.

CARRIE

Hey! You're cold.

COOPER

You're sensitive.

CARRIE

(Breaking down a bit, showing emotion)

Sensitivity should not be considered a character weakness. God *damn*, Cooper, I just... Miss you! And somewhere deep in my stupid heart, that fucked-up cluttered mess of a space, I just hope –

COOPER

Hope is a foolish hunger that's never satisfied. Recalls a quote to mind – "Life is under no obligation to give us what we expect." Do you know who said that?

CARRIE

Yes.

(Beat.)

No.

COOPER

Margaret Mitchell. *Gone with the Wind.*

(A gust of wind blows and tumbleweed music sounds, as Cooper waves dramatically.)

CARRIE

(Shutting this down)

Coop. Cooper, do you still love me?

(Beat. No response.)

Did you ever?

(Silence still from COOPER, provoking CARRIE to burst off in angry thought.)

CARRIE, CON'T.

When we were dating, I thought we were facing each other through a window, an open frame without a screen to purely let in the summer breeze, white clay and blue rafters like on a, I don't know, a beach somewhere in Greece. But... I think I was wrong. I think it was more like a mirror between us. And a cracked, clouded one at that.

(SHE may gaze into the mirror, if there is one. COOPER crosses his arms.)

CARRIE, CON'T.

See? Exactly my point. I can't climb through this space to hang out on the same side as you, like *partners*. It's always been a versus game, a competition, like chess which yes I KNOW you know how to play and I don't. It was always "who could point out their own flaws they notice reflected in the other first?"

COOPER

(Calmly)

Still a better pitch than "Shouting Over Each Other."

CARRIE

At least it's not shouting at each other!

COOPER

It can't be that; you're the only one shouting.

CARRIE

I have to, or else you won't HEAR ME!

COOPER

Yeah? Here's a thought: what if I'm not even *listening* in the first place? What if every message you chuck out into the void, under your delusional assumption that the universe will deliver it directly to me like Amazon Prime, is lost because you, quite frankly, don't have my address anymore? Your beloved pet energies don't work like a commerce conglomerate.

CARRIE

I think they do. Just they're not as grabby and capitalist, so they work because they *want* to. I – I think. I'll prove it.

COOPER

Fine. Shout away, pal. Scream until your throat is raw. But I'm like, going to have my headphones on if you don't mind.

(He slips on headphones.)

CARRIE

Oh my god, you're UNBELIEVABLE. You're – seriously.... FUCK YOU.

(CARRIE spins furiously on her heels, sucks in a breath. To herself)

Goodbye, love...

(Flinging open the "door" and striking a pose in the frame with a dramatic hair toss. In her sexiest, "come hither" voice –)

Hello, *stranger*.

NOAH

Uh, hey... Did you just vomit?

CARRIE

No, I -- want to role play? Imagine: I'm a 20s flapper trapped in the lowest level of the sinking Titanic, and you're a first class tobacco dealer caught in a loveless marriage. Or -- oh, we're Rose and the Tenth Doctor moments from the falling of Pompeii.

NOAH

Carrie, I don't think any of that makes sense, historically or geographically. And uh, Doctor Who?

CARRIE

It doesn't matter, just -- come on! Roll with it, riff with it, you know?

NOAH

Riff...?

CARRIE

PICTURE THIS. You're Genghis Khan, and I'm-

NOAH

Jesus, Carrie! Why are all of your fantasies so hopelessly tragic?

CARRIE

Because they're not real; they're romantic!

NOAH

They're sad.

CARRIE

They're magical! They're -- I don't know, love is pain, right?

(Growing self-conscious)

I'm just doing, you know -- a bit.

NOAH

(Totally lost at this point, shaking his head and trying to follow)

A bit of *what*?

CARRIE

Okay, new vision. I'm a vengeful lit fuse and you're an innocent, unsuspecting coping mechanism, a mute coping mechanism. Eager to participate because you're either horny or bored or gay.

NOAH

I'm sorry?

CARRIE

No, I am. I'm being inappropriate.

(Desperate beat.)

Hey, do you want to have a little kiss?

NOAH

Yeah, I – um, I do. Do you, are you sure?

CARRIE

Yes, silly!

NOAH

Okay, uh, hell yeah! Let's do it.

(THEY kiss, and CARRIE holds up her third finger in the direction of COOPER, who is disinterested. NOAH nuzzles his face in her neck, and Carrie stares ahead: her eyes empty and flat.)

(LIGHTING TRANSITION.)

(END OF SCENE.)

ACT I

SCENE 4

SETTING:

The coffee shop, early spring – a shift designated by changes in clothing, or CARRIE may have an umbrella. Midway through the scene we will also see action happen for the first time in COOPER'S apartment.

AT RISE: After Noah and Cooper exit, CARRIE seats herself at the coffee shop table, laptop set aside. She is preoccupied with a stack of letters representative of texts and emails, etc., which, as she speaks, she makes her way through one at a time, crumpling some and folding others into paper airplanes she launches stage right.

MUSIC SUGGESTIONS: “It Only Hurts Me All the Time” – The Graverobbers
Silence in between
“Little Woman” – Twin Shadow (at end of scene)

(The projection screen flashes:)

“March – Bargaining.”

CARRIE

Dear Cooper. Or should I say “friend Cooper?” Or how about just Cooper, but then comma? Colon? Suspenseful ellipsis? It feels strange you haven’t reached out today. I know it shouldn’t, it’s no longer *our* anniversary. The date now belongs to other happy-go-lucky couples out there, all smug and self-obsessed, soaking in their own murky, unfiltered love. But still it feels like someone declared ‘No more Christmas,’ and you know how much I fucking love Christmas.

(Yael ENTERS stage right, marking the first time action has taken place there. She sits and attempts to braid her own hair.)

CARRIE, CON’T.

Anyway, just checking in, casually, not begging; I have your best interest at mind, too. Just like, don’t you agree that we, individually and as a once successful collective unit, deserve some sort of closure? Whatever. So have you been in any shows lately? How’s your fam? Are you eating enough fruits and veggies to stave off scurvy? I just feel so in the dark, and remember how petrified I used to get whenever you’d turn out the light? I would have to nuzzle up and - okay, scratch that. I love you. Nope, double scratch that. Exercise *restraint*, Carrie, jeez. So, um, what’s new with me? I finally got around to watching Wes Anderson’s *Rushmore*, as you always recommended. And listening through the latest Charli XCX album; my rating is 4.6 stars, what’s yours? I’ve been paying attention to your horoscope. I have a new cold brew machine. And boyfriend.

(Meanwhile NOAH ENTERS Carrie’s apartment; he has a key.)

CARRIE, CON’T.

Or, I don't know. I'm dating this guy Noah. I think you'd actually like him in real life. Maybe you two would be friends or make each other jealous and decisive, which would be dope... Okay, no. How about just, hope you're well? Life over here is swell. Dandy. Fine. Stay cool. Stay cool, cool, cool. No, stay optimistic? Vulnerable? No, that's so - stay gold. Yikes, um... Happy anniversary, love! I mean, happy... March Equinox, pal.

(SHE sighs and puts her head in her hands, exhausted.)

Come on, Coop, when I just want to live my life over here, you won't leave me alone, but when I call out like this, you're nowhere to be found? I feel like I'm in two places at once. Fine, I don't care.

(Seeking distraction, she opens her laptop and scrolls through Facebook, until her eyes catch on something and her face goes cold.)

(JESSA ENTERS, wearing the same expression as Carrie. She's eating a wrap, sporting a blazer, and cradling a stack of resumes, having just come from a job interview, while looking at her phone. She tries to shuffle items around to make a call, eventually grasping the wrap by biting it and holding her phone by the crook of her neck.)

(Yael picks up.)

JESSA

Facebook official? Oh my god, were you not going to tell me? Not going to ask for my blessing? He should've come to my parlor and requested your hand. Or at least like, bought me a few Long Islands when we were out the other night.

Yael

He did, Jessa. He bought you three.

JESSA

Yeah, bitch, I said a few.

Yael

Three is a few. Here, I'm putting you on speaker.

(SHE taps her phone and sets it down so that she can braid her hair.)

JESSA

No, a few constitutes five, at least. It's like, a handful?

Yael

But that would just be like, one cocktail. That's all you could hold in one hand.

Jessa

Don't doubt my drink-holding skills. So, how did he ask?

Yael

It wasn't a big deal, I don't know.

Jessa

You don't know, were you not there?

Yael

No, he just... So we're having dinner with his family tonight. They're Italian so probably some churchy spaghetti schmoozefest. And I asked how he plans on introducing me. Like, this is Yael, the chick I take home Thursday through Saturday night and sometimes Tuesdays and Wednesdays? Or, this is Yael, the darling woman who may just end up being The One but hey, who's to say?

(Fed-up with her hair)

Oy...

Jessa

The other night at Anne's you kept telling people, hey, this is my crush.

Yael

Ugh, that's embarrassing.

Jessa

It's endearing. You were like, "Shh, don't tell him!"

Yael

That's not what I sound like.

Jessa

Yeah, you sound more like,

(Drunken and sloppily)

"Shh, don't tell him!"

Yael

/Feh./

(COOPER enters.)

COOPER

Hey, babe, who're you talking to?

Yael

Jessa, obviously.

COOPER

Hey, Jessa.

Yael

He says hey.

COOPER

Yeah, she can hear –

JESSA

Hi, Cooper!

Yael

She says hi.

COOPER

Right, so the gimmick of speaker phone is –

Yael

Don't mind him.

JESSA

Yeah, so anyway/

COOPER

/Jesus./

JESSA

So that's it? You're like, frickin' girlfriend-boyfriend now?

Yael

(Swiping up her phone and putting it back to her ear, a bit sheepish.)

I don't know, I guess.

JESSA

You two need to take more pictures together! The only one that pops up with the Facebook announcement is that goofy group shot from last weekend, with the both of you sharing one lei so it's like, strangling him? Caption: "got leid?" Hilarious. I thought of it. Well of taking the picture; you deserve caption credits, my punning queen. Oh my god, that was the night Anne insisted on playing a game of Red Rover out in the frickin' street and when it was Eli's turn he lunged himself so violently at your guys' arms he threw up?

(NOAH has flopped comfortably onto the couch, plays a game on his DS.)

Yael

Classic. Hey, we're leaving soon, so I'll talk to you later.

Jessa

And by that you mean you'll text me the second you hang up?

(COOPER plays with Yael's hair. He tickles, goofs with her.)

Yael

Cooper, stop it!

(To JESSA)

Okay, Jess.

(COOPER switches up his distraction tactic and over JESSA'S monologue shows Yael funny memes on his phone.)

Jessa

Wait, yeah, 'cause I have to tell you about this hoagie I just got from the bodega near the coffee shop – which was a steal because they let me pay entirely in nickels – right after this interview I just had. This interview I just...

(Beat. She expects Yael to respond asking about the interview.)

So it was a long line, and everyone was on their phone of course, so when I made it to the front, I was like, "Are we all just trying to disassociate from our own minds and identities by escaping into this literal virtual reality, perhaps the only safe space in existence right now?"

(Beat. Everyone on stage is indeed immersed in their technology.)

And the worker was like, "But yeah, so what kind of meat do you want?" I totally, I was just off in my own world. They did point out some toothpaste on my top, but I was like, "Oh my god, gross, no, it's mayonnaise obviously." So they were like, "So are you eating mayonnaise for the second time today, or is that like, really old mayonnaise?"

Yael

(Distracted by Cooper's phone)

Wow, that's awesome. Same.

Jessa

In my defense, the shape of the subway too closely resembles a soma pill capsule, like from *Brave New World*? I'm listening to it on audiobook. It's good though, probably not made of old people. Like, imagine like "Yum, tastes like grandma."

Yael

(Still distant)

Yas, queen.

Jessa

Yeah. But so I have to tell you that story, because if you ask me –

Yael

(Half-joking)

I didn't. I rarely do.

(Beat.)

Jessa

Oh. Yeah. Uh, alright ... talk to you later, then. *Mazel tov* on the engagement.

Yael

Shalom!

Jessa

Love you, Yael...

Yael

Bye!

(Jessa hangs up, newly dejected. If we see her screen, she starts to text: "Hey mom, interview went well! En route to financial independence!" but receives a text from her mom before she can send it. "Your sister just won FIRST in her pageant!!! Have you manicured your nails lately??")

(She puts in her headphones and stalks off, EXITING.)

(Meanwhile, NOAH calls CARRIE, who picks up absently.)

NOAH

Hey, babe!

CARRIE

(Echoing Yael's absence, but more indifferent than distracted)

Hi.

Yael

(To COOPER)

Jessa says we need to take more pictures together.

COOPER

Of course she does. I'm surprised she hasn't asked for couple's nudes yet, quite frankly.

Yael

Maybe that's what she meant.

COOPER

Well, how fortunate you happen to be dating a professional erotic male model.

Yael

(Joking)

Is that on your business card?

COOPER

It's called an acting *resume*, dear.

Yael

Jargon... hot. Here, let me get your good side.

COOPER

(Turning around)

Do you mean this side?

NOAH

I'm in your apartment.

CARRIE

Dope.

NOAH

So are you, coming home anytime soon?

CARRIE

I don't know. I'm still working.

Yael

(Snapping pictures as COOPER "models")

Yes, queen, yes! The camera loves your little tuchus.

COOPER

(Laughing)

Yael!

Yael

Coop!

CARRIE

Coop?

NOAH

Like a chicken coop?

CARRIE

I said oops.

NOAH

Oh, cool. So do you wanna shows together tonight? With some takeout, my treat of course, from that Indian block around the cafe? I mean the Indian cafe around the block. I mean, if that's what you're hungry for, cock. I oh god, I meant... I, ha, I get so nervous asking out my own girlfriend. Sorry, I know you hate labels.

(COOPER hugs Yael and they take one together, then check it.)

Yael

Oh my gosh, it's super cute actually.

COOPER

Actually?

Yael

You know what I mean.

COOPER

Yeah, that I'm fat?

Yael

(Going to sit and look through the pictures)

You do turn a lot of drunk food into hangover food.

COOPER

I'm just trying to round myself out a little, babe! Grow into the dad bod so I can expand my range and settle into older, goofier characters – the lovable father in films like “Cheaper by the Dozen” and “Daddy Day Care.” The step-dad who just wants the family to bond over his summer picnic or Christmas – or Hanukkah! – extravaganza. I'm tired of playing types like “withdrawn and misunderstood boy in gray hoodie who won't leave his room, with dark rings around his eyes even though he's only 14.”

Yael

You'll be an adorable old person.

COOPER

You think?

Yael

Not as often as the average bear, but I do think now and again, yes.

COOPER

(Miming using a walker, acting elderly)

How old are we talking, sonny?

Yael

Thirty?

COOPER

Thirty?!

NOAH

So do you hate me forever, or is that....?

CARRIE

No, it's cool. Cool, cool, cool.

NOAH

Oh, okay, are you sure? Great, let's do it!

Yael

Yeah, talk thirty to me, dear.

COOPER

Oh, I'll talk *forty* to you, babe.

(Standing back, puffs his chest out, presents himself as older)

Financial stability. Job security. Health insurance coverage. Prime time television sitcoms. Emotional and mental health satisfaction. PTA meetings.

Yael

So how's this sound for my Instagram caption: "Headed to a parent-teacher meeting for date night. Hope the weird pictures little Kirsten doodles aren't cause for alarm! Lol"? No filter.

COOPER

That's hilarious, Yael. You really crack me up, pal.

CARRIE

(Picking at her nails)

They have inside jokes?

NOAH

Who?

CARRIE

What?

NOAH

You know what, I'll um, I'll quit distracting you, babe; you sound hard at work on that Great American in England Novel. I'll see you soon for some Netflix and Chicken tikka masala. Get it? Chicken like chill? Oh, Jesus, I forgot about your vegetarianism for a second... I am so sorry. I mean, um, Netflix and Chickpeas? Hey, I know I'm a lot, but that's why you love me, right? We haven't used that word yet.

(In a panic)

Bye, Care!

CARRIE

(Hanging up)

Later.

NOAH AND CARRIE

Goddamn it.

(NOAH EXITS, forgetting his DS. A longer beat. CARRIE has formed a finger gun with just one hand, closes an eye, aims it at the happy couple. NOAH at any point during the rest of the scene speedily returns, snatches his DS, and EXITS for real.)

COOPER

So, uh... Where did Little Kirsten come from?

Yael

(Slightly bashfully)

Oh. She was my favorite American Girl doll.

COOPER

Damn, Yael. I am so happy with you.

(COOPER and Yael share a moment and kiss before they EXIT, Yael forgetting her lip balm. SHE runs back for it, reflecting Noah's action, and then actually EXITS, leaving CARRIE finally alone on stage.)

CARRIE

(Redirecting her finger gun at her own head.)

Dang, Cooper, I am... So... So...

(She aims the finger gun at her own head. Her phone buzzes and she drops the "gun" to check it. Texts from her mom appear on screen, accompanied with weird emoji choices, something like)

Hi Carrie, just checking in... it's mom.... Haven't heard from u in a few days.

How r you ?!?! How is school.

What're you up 2?

R U eating enough fruits and leggies.....???

**Veggies (I meant veggies) (vegetables)

R u OK...
?????
.....?

(CARRIE responds:)

Yes, I am fine! Lol!

(She stays frozen for a moment, before her face wrinkles up and she lays her head down on the table on the verge of tears.)

I am so...

(LIGHTS FADE TO BLACKOUT.)

(END OF SCENE.)

(END OF ACT.)

ACT II

SCENE 1

SETTING: Morning, Carrie's apartment. Time has passed and the space has become noticeably messier.

AT RISE: CARRIE and NOAH are asleep on the couch, Noah spooning Carrie and covered by a blanket.

MUSIC SUGGESTIONS: "Put Your Records On" – Corinne Bailey Rae (towards the end, when Carrie and Rowan begin to bond)

(Upon the screen:)

"April – Depression."

(ROWAN ENTERS with a suitcase and bag, coming from the airport, having just returned from Mumbai. She pauses at the sight, stomps one foot, then begins jumping up and down or clapping until NOAH and CARRIE stir, shifting the blanket.)

ROWAN

Good morning, sunshine.

(Noticing NOAH)

Sunshines.

CARRIE

(Squinting, then awaking with a start, flustered)

Oh, my gosh. Are you Rowan?

ROWAN

Master of the house, yes. Are you homeless?

CARRIE

What? No. Well I mean, not technically. I'm Carrie, from... the Internet?

(SHE pulls her arm out from beneath the blankets to shake hands, sending a canister of Pringles rolling.)

ROWAN

(Re: Carrie being on the couch, not in the bedroom.)

Why are you... out here? I swear I was *explicit* three months ago over Airbnb messenger about your bedroom key being in a small Ziploc bag inside an envelope inside a bigger manila envelope behind the potted fern under the air conditioner in that mouse hole.

CARRIE

No yeah, you uh, you did / wait, did you say mouse hole? /

ROWAN

/ No yeah? No or yeah? / American slang is so damn indecisive I'll never –

NOAH

(Emerging with a grumble)

Carrie prefers sleeping here. She has a kind of fetish for couch boners? It's niche.

(To ROWAN)

Who're you?

ROWAN

Who am I? Who am I?

CARRIE

(Interrupting, fighting to gain control of the situation)

I am so sorry, Miss Rowan. I thought you weren't coming back for another month; I guess I lost track of –

ROWAN

Another *month*? How bloody long have you been asleep for?!

CARRIE

I honestly don't even know.

ROWAN

Jesus. I feel like I just stumbled into a Rip Van Winkle narrative, except instead of a children's fable, it's a cheap-ass porno.

NOAH

A porno, ha, don't get it twisted, Mrs. Ronan. The only stains you'll find on this fine piece of upholstery, Mrs. Ronan, are tikka masala and vodka sauce. That's vodka and sauce blended together in a NutriBullet. Our daily routine is order delivery, smoke some weed, asleep by twelve. Noon or night.

(Finally sensing the tension)

I mean, I'll uh... I'll go make some delicious instant coffee.

(HE fumbles up and scurries offstage, EXITING.)

(Beat.)

CARRIE

I am so terribly embarrassed.

ROWAN

Yeah, this is... how you live your life?

CARRIE

No, jeez no. I'm just going through this silly breakup, see, and, I need some time to–

NOAH (O.S.)

Milk or sugar?

ROWAN

To rebound.

CARRIE

No, that's Noah, he's very sweet. Bad with uh, names, but...

NOAH

Just kidding. All we have is Red Bull and salt. I'll add both.

ROWAN

Gotcha.

CARRIE

I'm sorry, Rowan. I'm... healing.

ROWAN

Healing? What self-help books are you reading that suggest this? Walling yourself off with bowls of cold, dry carbohydrates?

(Holding one up)

This is a mug of... uncooked rotini noodles?

(Studying its contents)

And I think maybe some Cinnamon Toast Crunch.

CARRIE

Oh, can I have that?

(ROWAN stares at CARRIE in shock. CARRIE recoils.)

CARRIE, CON'T.

I mean, only if you don't want it.

ROWAN

Goddamn, dudette! Your Airbnb profile said you're a frequent flyer, not off your rocket. When's the last time you left my house?

CARRIE

I don't recall.

ROWAN

Showered?

CARRIE

Pass.

ROWAN

Been to therapy?

CARRIE

I don't know, a long time ago, when I was young. And back in high school briefly, I guess. Therapy's expensive, you know?

(Beat.)

Hey, you're uh... pretty harsh for a stranger.

ROWAN

Alright, just to reinforce this because it seems everyone is forgetting:

(Louder, so Noah can hear from the kitchen:)

This is my home. I own this residence. I'm not a stranger.

(Back to normal volume)

But yeah, friends have too much empathy for this shit. They probably see you as under a sad cloud, not the eye in this tornado of self-pity.

(ROWAN makes awkward moves towards her bedroom.)

CARRIE

Can we talk about it?

ROWAN

We meaning... you and me? I uh, we just met, man. I've gotta unpack my luggage, change my clothes before class. You could try writing a blog? I know you followed "Myself in Mumbai," so you can use that as inspiration, yeah? Namaste.

(ROWAN turns to exit when CARRIE lets out a sob, causing her to, after a brief hesitation, turn back, annoyed but softened.)

ROWAN, CON'T.

Alright, yeah. Breakups suck.

(CARRIE finally breaks, clutching her stuffed puppy in tears. ROWAN perches on the arm of the couch.)

CARRIE

(Through sobs)

Every 80's movie makes it look so light and breezy and flirty. I don't want to soak in a fucking bubble bath or eat a tub of strawberry ice cream. I can't even bring myself to wash my hair or cook these pastas.

ROWAN

Hey, now don't overgeneralize. That's just Hollywood, idolizing suffering because there isn't enough of it there in real life. Now Bollywood... Damn, some of the movies I watched over there were awesome. Ever heard of Queen with Kangana Ranaut?

CARRIE

Yes, obviously.

(ROWAN eyes CARRIE quizzically.)

CARRIE, CON'T.

No.

ROWAN

(Excitedly)

It's about this Punjabi woman from New Delhi named Rani, who's all psyched about her wedding until her shitty fiancé goes and calls it off. Her family and friends assume Rani's crushed, of course, but instead, she shocks everyone by embarking on her honeymoon solo. And she celebrates female friendship and tries on all these hot clothes. But then she accidentally sends a picture of herself in one sexy little number to her ex, and so he sets out to find her.

CARRIE

And what – does he? Do they end up together?

ROWAN

That phrase is hilarious - “end up.” What about all the time before then?

(Coming back to earth, grounding herself)

And I've spoiled too much already, you'll have to watch it – or at least the music video to London Thumakda. The lyrics are literally, “You're the Bell of Big Ben.”

(CARRIE releases a half-cry, half-groan.)

CARRIE

Cooper's half-brother's name is Ben. God, I'm sorry. I am so sorry.

ROWAN

It's alright. No need to apologize. Just watching you tugs so nostalgically at my own heartstrings – which have been snipped and re-tied many a time, too, believe me.

CARRIE

Really?

ROWAN

Clearly.

CARRIE

So when do they stop feeling like this? When do you stop lying eyes wide open every night and then jerking awake after a few minutes of precious sleep because you can't breathe, because you had some stupid, fucked-up dream where you're back together and so being conscious is terrible, and those heartstrings just pull so achingly and –

ROWAN

Breathe. Breathe now, alright? Breathe now, and eventually you won't have to remind yourself to. I promise.

(Finally, SHE goes to sit beside CARRIE on the messy couch. She pulls away a blanket to make room, revealing a bong poking up from between two cushions.)

ROWAN, CON'T.

Is this the kink your rebound was referring to?

CARRIE

No! Oh my god, no.

ROWAN

May I move it?

(CARRIE nods, and ROWAN sits.)

ROWAN, CON'T.

Consider this a rite of passage, my dudette, a universal human experience. You'll come out empowered and matured as hell, whether you trust that now or not. This is when you get to find yourself, and love yourself the way you loved –

CARRIE

Cooper.

ROWAN

Gross. Did he rock scruff and a lot of flannels?

CARRIE

(Nearly tearing up again at the thought)

Oh, so much. His wardrobe was like in a cartoon, all plaids lined up in a row. He'd wear them unbuttoned though, with a quirky t-shirt underneath.

ROWAN

So he's about as adorable and creative as every other Homo Saipan between the age of fourteen and sixty. Coffee and wool sweaters are not defining personality traits, for the record. Nor are cigarettes when drunk, indie bands like Tame Impala, owning a record player, or disturbingly charming cynicism.

CARRIE

It was mutual.

ROWAN

The record player? That sucks.

CARRIE

No, the split.

ROWAN

Oh good grief. You, my tenant, are a true card-holder for the Lonely Hearts Club.

CARRIE

My mom once said to me if you push a boy out your door, he should come climbing back through your window.

ROWAN

Was your mom a Victorian era prostitute that had to hide her night job from her parents?

(Beat. ROWAN passes the rotini mug to CARRIE.)

No offense.

(CARRIE crunches down on a cold noodle.)

ROWAN, CON'T.

Newsflash, my child, boys can't climb. They couldn't when your prostitute mom assembled a shrine to John Cusack in her closet, and they can't climb now. The lead in every rom com, Disney Channel original movie, and Taylor Swift song is a stunt double on a rope, giving the *illusion* they can fly. Real people are... Penguins, you know? Flightless birds confined to the ground.

CARRIE

(Gazing longingly at the bong)

I guess that's why I like getting high.

ROWAN

Duh. But the shitty truth of your window story? No one is ever going to do that. No one is ever going to show up outside your house in the rain with a boom box, because all we have are iPhones, and those are only loud enough for one, and lofting technology of any kind above your head in a storm is pretty much asking to be electrocuted. And also, people are insecure as hell and nobody wants to face possible rejection like that.

CARRIE

I guess I just thought I was... worth that possible rejection.

ROWAN

And you're letting this amateur DJ type white boy bitch tell you you're not? Maybe you have to, I don't know, stop rejecting yourself first.

CARRIE

I can't. I have no clue who I am.

ROWAN

Yeah, that makes two of us. How old are you? Where are you from? What's your last name, your spirit animal, your favorite holiday, museum, movie snack? Are we gonna fuck?

CARRIE

What?

ROWAN

Just kidding.

(NOAH reappears with the coffee.)

ROWAN

Oh, whoa, I forgot about you.

NOAH

That's what my parents used to say.

ROWAN

(Standing)

Alrighty, kiddos, your girl is hitting up hot yoga - hot referring to the instructor's sweaty abs and fire playlists.

(To NOAH)

Could I have that to go, please?

NOAH

Yes, ma'am.

(HE turns to leave, not yet exiting.)

CARRIE

Hey, uh, Rowan, I know we just met and all, but... if you happen to have one of those bring-a-guest gym packages... Could I come?

ROWAN

To yoga? Sure, if you think you can handle it. You've clearly been neglecting the workout leggings you're wearing for a while.

(Picking up a mug and picking out a piece of cereal.)

CARRIE

Hey, now...

ROWAN

Mmm. I missed Cinnamon Toast Crunch in India.

NOAH

I would be honored to join too, I mean, if you don't mind; take it as a quick warm-up before hitting the pool. I do triathlons.

CARRIE

You do?

ROWAN

Of course you do. Fine, yeah, let's go, team.

CARRIE

(To NOAH)

Seriously when?

NOAH

(Ignoring Carrie, perking up eagerly)

Team? Oh, wow, are you sure? Should we like – hands in, all say something on three, you know, like...?

(Urging ROWAN and CARRIE to participate, to no avail)

Yeah, no, okay. I'll go grab my sweat towel.

CARRIE

I'll go change.

(NOAH EXITS Stage Left, headed down to his apartment. CARRIE EXITS Stage Right, off to the bathroom or bedroom perhaps. ROWAN lingers for a moment, processing what has transpired since her return. She takes a bite from the mug's contents, expecting cereal but instead crunching down on a cold noodle.)

ROWAN

Hm. Not bad.

(She heads down the hall, EXITING.)

(LIGHTING TRANSITION.)

(END OF SCENE.)

ACT II

SCENE 2

SETTING:

Split scene: Briefly a NYC gym, then the coffee shop, for Yael and Jessa. Also Rowan (and Carrie's) apartment. Spring has sprung.

AT RISE: YAEL and JESSA are center stage at the same workout class, performing lunges or bizarre moves led by FITNESS INSTRUCTOR, aware of but ignoring each other. It's been a while since they've seen each other. Meanwhile, CARRIE, ROWAN, and maybe occasionally a helpful NOAH are at long last tidying up the apartment space, as well as performing montage-like fun activities, such as coming in with museum gift shop bags.

MUSIC SUGGESTIONS: "Heart of Glass" – Blondie (for the fitness class)
 "Girls Chase Boys" – Ingrid Michaelson
 "London Thumakda" – Amit Trivedi, movie *Queen*
 "On Hold" – The xx (for Cooper's entrance)
 "Don't Delete the Kisses (Remix)" – Wolf Alice, Charli XCX, Post Precious

FITNESS INSTRUCTOR

Alright ladies, I want to see you channel all your years of socially conditioned self-hatred into these forward lunges. Can I get a "yes, queen"?

YAEL and JESSA

Yes, queen!

(THEY glare at each other, annoyed.)

FITNESS INSTRUCTOR

That's right! Spring body coming up!

YAEL

(Calling out)

Spring *mind* coming up!

FITNESS INSTRUCTOR

Yes, hunny! You deserve to be so skinny you have trouble buying clothes!

JESSA

(Said loudly enough to be heard over the workout music. All of their lines are performed this way)

Suck up!

Yael

Shut up! This is / my gym! /

Jessa

/ Your gym, / I know!

Yael

(Sarcastically)

Sorry that you know more about me than most people! My b!

Jessa

Sorry that you care enough to share those things with me! And that they're offering a deal this week, first class free!

FITNESS INSTRUCTOR

Whatever you're feeling, dollies – lonely or unsuccessful, lost or confused, scared, angry, anxious, or broken – it *can* be sweat out. That's called keto dieting. Yes, queen!

Yael

(Again, loudly. They are angrily yelling genuine things)

So, how's your job search?!

Jessa

Fine. How's your relationship?!

Yael

Good! Thank you for asking!

Jessa

You are welcome!

FITNESS INSTRUCTOR

I see some of you yelling out your aggressions – that's the right idea! Yelling helps you achieve breathlessness, which takes you one step closer to fainting, and we all know that when we're unconscious, we're unable to snack! You go girl! Take control of your life!

Yael and Jessa

(BOTH to themselves)

I hate this.

(THEY stop and look at one another.)

JESSA

(Out of breath, relieved)

Wait, you do?

YAEL

Duh.

JESSA

Me too.

(Beat.)

YAEL

Wanna take a drink break?

JESSA

Sure.

(BOTH go for their reusable water bottles. YAEL tentatively offers hers to JESSA.)

YAEL

It's a latte.

JESSA

I'll stick to water.

(Small awkward beat.)

YAEL

If you're not like, busy or whatever, we could head to the coffee shop for a little, and, like-

JESSA

Oh, um.

Yael

Catch up, face to face? My treat?

Jessa

Uh, yeah. Alright.

*(Yael and Jessa walk back to sit at the table in their usual spots.
Fitness Instructor cartwheels off, exiting.)*

*(Carrie and Rowan are at this point just kicking back on the sofa, both
also on their phones, Carrie's feet in Rowan's lap.)*

Carrie

Oh, jeez.

Rowan

What?

Carrie

Mercury's in retrograde.

Rowan

Batten down the hatches.

Carrie

Seriously, Rowan! Do you know what Mercury retrogrades influence? They're eras of personal reflection –

Rowan

Sounds helpful.

Carrie

-accompanied by longing, dwelling, pondering the what could have-beens. And this one's in Capricorn, an earth sign-

Rowan

Sounds grounding.

Carrie

Grounding as in dirt paths to stroll along backwards, maybe. I'm especially at risk, as a Gemini ruled by Mercury.

ROWAN

You're ruled by Mercury? A random chunk of rock taking laps up in outer space, 50 million miles away? You aren't *ruled* by anything, my dudette. Where are you reading that?

CARRIE

The daily text summary I get from this app, see? It tracks the movements of my relevant stars and planets, so I can –

ROWAN

(Sarcastically)

Avoid permanent contracts on full moons –

CARRIE

Close enough.

ROWAN

And avoid open possibility when the sun is up?

CARRIE

They're just suggestions.

ROWAN

They're dumb. You're letting an app that fantasizes totally artificial, empty science with random algorithms dictate your life.

CARRIE

You've been on Bumble for the last hour.

ROWAN

(Showing CARRIE her phone)

And peek into my treasure trove! This is Zoey. She's from Berlin, so she probably carries a leather vibrator that pulses to EDM around in her Fjallraven Kanken backpack.

CARRIE

She's cute.

ROWAN

Cute? She's an alt-indie fairy pixie sex toy. And she likes Queen – the band, not the movie, though equally impactful, SO I'm pretty sure we're destined to be together. *You* can be ruled by the planet Mercury, but *I'm* ruled by Freddie Mercury.

CARRIE

Wanna listen to the Queens on a loop?

ROWAN

(Miming picking up a telephone)

Ring, ring, who's that? Oh, that's a *good call*. Yes, my dudette, play to me from my Royal Court.

(Attention back on YAEL and JESSA. They sit in the coffee shop, on their phones, just like at the very beginning, awkwardly waiting for the other to start conversation. YAEL knows she is supposed to speak first, but can't find anything to say, so she returns to an old, reliable topic.)

YAEL

So hey, uh... any idea how Carrie's doing? She hasn't blogged in a while. It makes me feel kind of nervous. I'm like, the other woman.

JESSA

Didn't you see her Instagram [a verb] that screenshotted Tweet about leaving Facebook? It was like a suicide note.

(Pulling it up to read)

"I think what's best for me is a little time in the present, cut off totally and completely. Reach out if you want, if any of you even read this. Here's my address." An address... She's like frickin' Little House on the Prairie.

YAEL

Little House on the Carrie.

JESSA

That's funny. You're funny.

YAEL

Thanks. That's wild, though.

JESSA

Yeah...

Yael

Maybe we should try detoxifying our lives like that.

Jessa

Probably healthier than the lemon-ginger tea I've tried injecting intravenously.

Yael

It's just like, how many Snap stories do we have to target at one sloppy drunk idiot fuckboy who won't even watch?

(Jessa snaps her fingers, appreciatively.)

Yael, con't.

How many hours of our lives do we have to waste deciding on captions, before we realize that like, honestly no one even cares? Who we pretend to be and know – that's not even what anything is like IRL, right? We should delete our social media like that.

Jessa

Yeah, we should. Oh wait, that reminds me. I got a job.

Yael

You're kidding! Doing what?

Jessa

Social media management. For this new digital startup. It's a grass roots organization and I'm kind of allergic to grass, but I think I can make it work.

Yael

Wow, queen, I'm so super proud of you.

Jessa

I'm proud of you, too. You're in a relationship in which you feel happy and healthy.

(Beat. Yael and Jessa smile at each other.)

Jessa, con't.

You know what? Let's do it. Let's each delete one app.

Yael

Oh my gosh, okay!

(Taking out her phone)

I'll delete LinkedIn.

Jessa

Maybe not that one.

Yael

How about Tinder?

Jessa

Better! I'll take LinkedIn. And how about I show you how to use it eventually?

Yael

I could benefit from some income outside my Instagram influencing.

(Jessa offers Yael her phone.)

Jessa

Can you do it for me?

Yael

Yeah, let's switch. Ready?

Jessa

(With a nod)

One...

Yael

Two...

BOTH

(Shutting their eyes and tapping their screens together)

Three!

(Beat.)

Yael

Wow. I feel more relaxed already.

JESSA

Me too. Oh my god, wait, I just had an idea. you know what I just thought of? Imagine an app that's like, both LinkedIn and Tinder. Referrals, past experiences, certifications like "recently checked for STDs."

Yael

It could be called KinkedIn.

JESSA

Double whammy, yes queen! Yael, you're brilliant.

Yael

Jessa, *you're* brilliant.

JESSA

(Genuinely touched)

Thanks, bitch.

Yael

You're welcome, queen. We're kind of geniuses, huh?

JESSA

Duh.

Yael

(Warmly)

Let's go get sushi.

JESSA

I just heard of a new place that makes sushi *burgers*. What they do is carefully craft each delicate roll, then mash all of that up with a sledgehammer, and flatten the remains into patties.

Yael

(As THEY stand, collecting their things)

We are really living in the future, aren't we?

JESSA

Living our best lives, if you ask me.

(THEY stand and gather their things. JESSA eye's Yael's water bottle.)

JESSA, CON'T.

Hey, could I try a sip of that actually?

JESSA

Duh! Could you braid my hair?

Yael

Always.

(The TWO link arms and EXIT, giggling.)

(Volume up on the Bollywood jams, streaming from CARRIE'S phone as NOAH ENTERs.)

ROWAN

(To NOAH, not looking up)

Hey, bitch.

NOAH

Hey, friends. Ah, it's this song! I remember the dance move you taught me, Rowan, I've been practicing. Something like this?

(NOAH attempts a Bollywood move, haphazardly but with a lot of heart and new confidence. CARRIE and ROWAN put down their phones and applaud his performance.)

CARRIE

Dang, Noah, you've got moves!

ROWAN

Yes, Queen!

(THEY improvise words of encouragement and let this stretch on just a tad too long, making it just awkward enough.)

ROWAN

(Finally)

So uh, what's up, kiddo?

NOAH

Oh, yeah!

(Stopping his dance)

We're playing Spoons downstairs. You two wanna join?

ROWAN

You're playing what?

NOAH

Spoons! It's the spoon game where you have a spoon for everyone except one person doesn't have a spoon, and then you lay the spoons out on a table or hide the spoons around the room, and if you get a certain hand of cards, you take a spoon, sneakily though, because everyone wants a spoon, and if you don't get a spoon, you lose.

ROWAN

What's it called again?

NOAH

Uh, spoons. I just said that like, ten times. It can get, you know, pretty insane.

ROWAN

Gotcha. Yeah, sure, we'll be down in a few.

NOAH

Right on. Oh also, do you guys have any spoons?

ROWAN

In the kitchen.

NOAH

Hell yeah.

(HE does some finger guns and EXITS. This gesture has been passed along from Cooper, to Carrie, to Noah.)

ROWAN

Alright, let's go. We can bring the rest of our Nutella and pretzels.

CARRIE

We just finished off half the jar like, an hour ago.

ROWAN

Yeah, exactly, still half full.

CARRIE

(Suddenly regarding ROWAN with rawer emotion)

Hey, can I say something? /Basically, I just-/

ROWAN

/I know that regardless of my answer, you/ will anyway. Welp.

CARRIE

Fair. You've just – dang Rowan, you've meant a lot to me these last few weeks.

ROWAN

Oh, good grief.

CARRIE

I'm serious! Our memories, whenever you're not at work, are endless – the time we road bikes through Hyde Park, the time you took me to the ER after I crashed my bike at Hyde Park, the British Library which has become my favorite museum here if you count it as a museum which you should, Borough Market for groceries because we make officially *the* dopest dinners together. We're like the Project Runway of cooking.

ROWAN

Well, cooking shows are a thing that exist, but yeah.

CARRIE

I know, I'm just... I'm going to miss you.

ROWAN

I'm going to miss you, too, dudette, but I'm not going anywhere. You can FaceTime whenever.

CARRIE

Yeah, but I can't stick my legs into my screen and pop them out the receiver into your lap.

ROWAN

I would love to watch you try.

(Beat. CARRIE makes a sad puppy face.)

Alright, whoa, don't look at me that way, like you're... suddenly falling in love with me or some desperate shit.

CARRIE

(Caught off guard, embarrassed)

What? I'm not...

(Beat.)

ROWAN

I was just kidding.

CARRIE

Hey, okay, I'm not...

(Another beat.)

ROWAN

You know it's not me, like you know it's not Noah.

CARRIE

I know, silly! I know it's not... Noah.

(Beat.)

And I know it's not you either, okay? Jeez. Why'd you say that?

ROWAN

I guess to remind you that "it" isn't anyone. Haven't you learned that from your therapist yet?

(CARRIE shrugs.)

ROWAN, CON'T.

That should be like, the first base they cover. No person is responsible for or in charge of your happiness. I for real don't know why we let humans run anything – the government, the education system. We're irrational as hell.

(She stands, stretches.)

Ready to rock?

CARRIE

I'm gonna take some time for myself, actually.

ROWAN

Gross, you sure?

CARRIE

Yeah. I...

ROWAN

Sorry I told you you're not falling in love with me. But ya can't tame a stallion, bitch. Or a panther.

CARRIE

Or a manatee!

ROWAN

Ouch... Or most animals, which sucks but is also fair. Alright, I'll see you soon then. Enjoy doing your freaky introvert thing where you run your thoughts into haywire and spiral off into distant, high-tension, existential panic.

CARRIE

Thanks. I'll send you a postcard from wherever I end up.

(ROWAN EXITS Stage Left, forgetting her phone on the couch. CARRIE rests for a moment, biting her nails, then notices the phone.)

CARRIE, CON'T.

(Standing)

Oh, Rowan, you forgot your...

(She decides against it, setting it back down instead, glimpsing the background photo in the process.)

Her background is her family's cats?

(CARRIE smiles, amused, then remembers something.)

Hey, that... [reminds me...]

(Trading Rowan's phone for her own, SHE dials a number and holds it to her ear. It goes to voicemail.)

Hi, mom and dad, it's Carrie. Your child. Obviously. Just wanted to check in, say hi, howdy, hello. And uh, thanks for everything, of course. Sorry I don't... say that enough. And Happy Anniversary. It's pretty dope you have this special day that, you know, belongs to you two. I'm excited to seeing you in two weeks. Love you both. Bye.

(CARRIE hangs up, puts down her phone, and stands, shaking off some feelings. At last, she strolls Center Stage to wait patiently, knowing COOPER will arrive soon, which he does.)

(ENTER COOPER, tentatively, with a lighting transition and the song "On Hold.")

COOPER

Hi, Care.

CARRIE

Hi, Coop. Can we talk? And by that I don't mean "can I ask you something" or "can we yell at or deject each other," but just like, can we hold a conversation?

COOPER

(Rubbing his neck, his nervous quirk)

Uh... Sure, alright.

CARRIE

Okay. So what if our pathetic excuse for a breakup had just been more... honest? What if instead of stacking filters between us, these shields to protect our silly prides and easily wounded egos, instead of locking our hearts in towers we had just ... jeez, just stood out in a clear field with open air? What if we had just actually *said* everything?

COOPER

Said, or... *acted* everything!

CARRIE

No way, Cooper, that's all we ever did.

COOPER

You've got to commit to the bit.

CARRIE

(With a sigh)

Okay, fine, we can do both. Action.

(THEY mime everything, choppily and comically, the sincerity gradually shining through.)

COOPER

Why are you leaving?

CARRIE

I'll be back.

(Points to her back)

COOPER

What if you *meet*

(Mimes cutting a steak)

someone?

CARRIE

That's an

(Rolling dice)

unlikely gamble.

(Grabbing his hands)

And you could come with me.

COOPER

(Purposefully slipping away, so their fingers are just hooked loosely)

Sounds awful committal, pal.

CARRIE

Fair. But then you can't blame me for you actualizing your fears. That's what you're doing.

COOPER

I am, sure.

CARRIE

And that doesn't excuse anything.

COOPER

Right. I'm self-destructive.

CARRIE

That's just a fancy term for hedonic.

COOPER

Which is just a fancy term for...?

CARRIE

Scared.

COOPER

As I am, quite frankly.

CARRIE

Of... ?

(COOPER shrugs.)

CARRIE, CON'T.

Wanna see me do a handstand?

COOPER

What?

CARRIE

Yodel?

COOPER

No.

CARRIE

Want to read one of my poems?

COOPER

Certainly not.

CARRIE

But I write for you. You're my muse.

COOPER

That makes me cringe.

CARRIE

Why?

COOPER

Because they're better than anything I could make for you, alright? Also, you crave attention.

CARRIE

I do not.

COOPER

And validation, yes huh. I don't think you like yourself very much.

CARRIE

You like me.

COOPER

Yeah? And to be responsible for your self-esteem along with my own is a hell of a lot of work, Care, can't you understand that?

CARRIE

Jeez, I, I don't want to be work.

COOPER

And yet you were. Keeping you happy was an unpaid internship.

CARRIE

Okay, so what're you scared of?

COOPER

Time.

CARRIE

Well, you've spent a heck of a lot of mine, you should know.

COOPER

(Rubbing the back of his neck, looking off into the distance)

There are bigger and better things out there for me I hope.

CARRIE

Hope is foolish hunger that's never satisfied. A half-wise, half-cocky kid told me that once, or quoted it, when really it's the only fuel that keeps us moving. And maybe that's what you're scared of, my ex-friend. Not time; hope. Or time *and* hope, with someone else. Intimacy. Someone really knowing you. Remember that Oscar Wilde quote from *The Importance of Being Earnest*? "I hope you haven't been leading a double life, pretending to be wicked and being good all the time. That would be hypocrisy."

COOPER

And hoping for wicked instead of good, as you do, would be pretty fucking twisted self-sabotage. Also, I never read *The Importance of Being Earnest*. Just a couple quotes off Goodreads.

CARRIE

What?

COOPER

You really get the general gist that way. A lot of people do it.

CARRIE

People, maybe – not readers. Not seekers of knowledge and insight. Not... students of the world. Phonies do that. Phony. Noun. Made famous by Holden Caulfield, but I doubt, despite being such a Sad Boy, you actually catch that reference, either.

COOPER

No, I do, ninth grade English! I loved *Catcher in the Rye*. All the riveting angst, incorrect language and grammar, identity guidance through click bait quizzes...

(Quieter)

On SparkNotes...

CARRIE

(In shock, but also gaining a confidence we have not seen before. She goes to sit beside him.)

Oh my gosh. You don't learn new instruments or chess strategies in your spare time, or study dusty old physics textbooks for fun, do you? You don't stargaze alone on brisk nights atop abandoned buildings?

COOPER

No, I do not, Carrie, Why the hell would I do any of that?

CARRIE

I don't know, just because –

COOPER

Those activities sound miserable, and... freezing.

CARRIE

Freezing?

COOPER

Yes! Every time you dragged me up onto some old rooftop to fulfill this aesthetic vision in your head, it was always like zero degrees out with horrible wind. And we'd have cups of coffee, sure, but heat radiating through paper, cardboard, and gloves only travels so far.

(Beat.)

I need warmth.

(Another beat.)

CARRIE

You're right. We need warmth.

COOPER

What did you say?

CARRIE

I'll enunciate. I said: we need warmth. You need security. I need stability. And we didn't know that when we were together, and we can't provide that for each other.

(Normal voice)

I've just been obsessed with you, Cooper, in love with you, but –

COOPER

Not love, *in* love.

CARRIE

Exactly. And love isn't instant, is it?

COOPER

Not the good kind. It's not coffee.

CARRIE

No, it's not. It's not rushing and crashing. Fighting and tragedy. I wrote you in my head like Mary Shelley's Frankenstein's monster, charming and alluring on the exterior but inside, cold empty steel. But you're not that. You're three dimensional. I've been playing characters for so long, when I don't.... I don't even know who you are.

COOPER

(With a whimsical gesture)

Well, I am a figment of your imagination.

CARRIE

(Overdramatically, doing a bit)

And maybe you have been... *the whole time!*

(THEY share mock shock, then smirks, and then CARRIE turns inwards.)

CARRIE.

I don't even know who *I* am.

COOPER

Do you still think we're supposed to fall back and end up together?

(CARRIE regards COOPER, realizing what she is finally about to do – let him go. She embraces him in a tight, meaningful hug.)

COOPER, CON'T.

And... scene?

CARRIE

End scene.

CARRIE

Thank you for being a part of my life.

COOPER

Pleasure doing bits with you.

(HE salutes her, a bittersweet moment, and then walks off, EXITING.)

(CARRIE returns to the apartment Stage Left and regards her stuffed dog for a moment. She then reaches for her phone. On projector, up pops a picture from Rowan of her and Noah holding spoons – accompanying text:

*“come spoon us ;-)” With a smirk, CARRIE responds “Be there soon.”
She then opens her notebook, speaks to herself.)*

CARRIE

Her name is Carrie. She likes diner coffee and breakfast food, and poetry, pottery, plants, and puppies, and vintage skirts with forest critters on them. She loves biking - never competitively, but up and down sidewalks with a song in her head, brushing her hair after a shower even though it splits the ends, and strapping on a backpack with a sense of renewed purpose. She needs clarity and honesty and for people to be themselves – to be earnest. She often unsettles strangers with her authenticity. But while she doesn’t perform, she plays pretend. She uh, she has some growing up to do. So that she’ll stop caring too much for the wrong reasons or running away with bad ideas.

(Pulling back her hair, wringing out her fingers, preparing to write)

Yet atop all that, all their likes, wants, loves, and needs that make a human being, is passion. Which can be addictive and poisonous, and simultaneously the one thing on earth that keeps life worth living. And if the passion is an art, not a person, then the fire is productive, burning suffering and confusion, clearing space to grow. To process the human experience. To create something universal viewers can recognize and feel. To unite the pursuit of knowledge and progress and change with ultimate...

(On the screen)

“May – Acceptance.”

(LIGHTING TRANSITION.)

(END OF SCENE.)

ACT II

SCENE 3

SETTING: Summer. The original Greenwich Village coffee shop.

AT RISE: CARRIE stands center stage, a rolled-up yoga mat under one arm, shades propped up on her head. She wears a lightweight cotton sundress.

MUSIC SUGGESTIONS: “Don’t Be So Hard on Yourself” – Jess Glynne
“It’s Too Late” – Carole King
“A World Alone” – Lorde

(The screen says:)

“Summer. New York.”

(DOG-WALKER strolls in, immediately snagging the attention of CARRIE, who runs to their dog.)

CARRIE

Oh, my gosh, are you not the sweetest thing I’ve ever seen?! Oh, you’re so kind and furry I just want to take your leash and hang myself, yes I do, yes I do. I’m going to call you Virginia Woof.

DOG WALKER

His name is Roger.

CARRIE

(Speaking to the dog, quoting Woolf.)

As a woman, you have no country – or, dog park. But get this – you *want* no dog park! As a woman, as a fierce and resilient bitch, your dog park is the whole wide world!

DOG WALKER

Excuse us.

CARRIE

No, see, I’m reclaiming the word bitch. I learned it from my flatmate I had, back in London. She’s so fierce and on top of her shit. It’s a whole movement.

(Standing, allowing DOG WALKER to pass as she waves)

Bye, Ginny! ... Maybe I should adopt a dog.

(COOPER ENTERS. He sees Carrie first.)

COOPER

Care?

CARRIE

(Turning to face him)

Cooper...

COOPER

Hey.

CARRIE

Hi.

COOPER

This is, uh...

(Baiting her)

Chance?

(Beat.)

CARRIE

Maybe. Maybe not.

COOPER

How was Europe?

CARRIE

Europe is doing well.

COOPER

Lots of pubs and zoos?

CARRIE

Those are two venues that do exist around the continent.

COOPER

Cool. Cool, cool, cool. How does it, uh, compare to New York?

(Beat. CARRIE thinks.)

CARRIE

The more places I visit, the more I start to imagine cities like... people, and vise versa. Deep down so similar, with our core necessities - to survive and be loved and wanted - the bottom two levels of Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs, you know? But then we chase and resist all that in different ways, giving us these unique layers and personalities. I can't objectively compare London to New York. I don't know.

COOPER

No, I get it. New York and LA have different vibes, too. Hell, East Village and Chelsea have different vibes.

CARRIE

Fair.

(Jokingly)

Ugh, West Side.

(COOPER begins snapping, West Side Story fashion.)

CARRIE, CON'T.

So how was L.A., by the way? I thought you were still out there actually.

COOPER

Oh, that sort of – I uh... I figured it would be beneficial to stop back through where I came from, you know where I have firmer connections. Strong roots in the concrete jungle. I'm only passing through, though.

CARRIE

When'd you get back?

COOPER

A... couple months ago.

CARRIE

Oh, hey that's –

COOPER

Temporary.

CARRIE

Like everything. It's okay to like this city, despite all its glaring flaws. To want to help make it better. I moved back for a reason, obviously. For myself, I mean.

COOPER

Right, yeah, of course.

CARRIE

So you're dating that girl Yael from school.

COOPER

How'd you know?

CARRIE

A little blue birdy told me. Twitter. She's also your profile picture on every possible social medium, including LinkedIn.

COOPER

Oh, uh...

(Tugging at his collar with an exaggerated face)

Guilty as charged. We haven't been dating too long, but we're both certainly ... invested, you know.

CARRIE

That's cool.

COOPER

It's alright.

(Hastily)

I've been holding down the fort. I come here a lot.

CARRIE

Really?

COOPER

For noon-time brunch and the weekly open mics, sure. Still the most stirring source of inspiration on the square.

CARRIE

On the square. Hm.

(Beat.)

It feels smaller than before. And younger. All these freshmen kids brooding about in beanies as if January will never turn to June.

COOPER

Oh! Speaking of hats, would you want to sit down with our *Capps* for a bit - our cappuccinos – and, you know, catch up face to face, my treat? Our old table is open.

(Gesturing to the table, where his backpack and book sit)

CARRIE

Oh, I don't know. It's so beautiful out, so liberating. Too free to be *cooped* inside.

COOPER

But it's near the window. The air is *carried* in.

(Beat.)

So, what do you say, pal?

BARISTA

Cappuccino for Cooper for here. Iced green tea for Carrie to-go.

COOPER

Oh.

CARRIE

Yeah.

COOPER

(Mock pretentiously)

An iced tea.

CARRIE

(Playing along with the bit)

I'm a changed woman.

COOPER

(Tensely)

Yep, Care, you're a regular Kafka.

CARRIE

Change isn't a past-tense operation. I've got to get to work; there are words out there begging to be lassoed from the universe like unruly stars. Or ooh, planted into the paper to grow like a garden of magic seeds. I'm just going to write those down.

(Rummaging in her bag for her writers' notebook)

COOPER

I should really be going, too.

CARRIE

Okay.

COOPER

Running into each other was dope. I hope you're well.

CARRIE

I am, thanks. You too.

(CARRIE takes her tea and exits the coffee shop down the front, leaving COOPER hesitant and a little guilty, but alright. He eventually puts away his books and belongings as CARRIE rolls out her yoga mat to sit on.)

(Meanwhile, NOAH and ROWAN have ENTERED Rowan's apartment, and are playing Spoons on the couch, maybe atop a cardboard pizza box or something, rapidly flipping cards as they converse. The stuffed dog is tossed casually among the sofa pillows.)

NOAH

So how do you think Carrie's doing these days?

(ROWAN shrugs, focused on the game.)

NOAH, CON'T.

Do you think she's gone back to that café she always talked about?

ROWAN

Oh, no shit.

NOAH

But after we helped her pack up, she like, promised us she wouldn't. I mean she pinky-toe promised.

ROWAN

Sure, so she could cross her fingers. She won't be able to resist.

NOAH

I don't get that.

ROWAN

Yes, you do. Noah, you could be on a shiny white yacht sailing any sea, but you're here in my crappy flat living room, fiddling with plastic spoons instead of dining on fine china. Why?

NOAH

Because it's fun.

ROWAN

Yeah, but why in the first place? Because you were curious.

NOAH

Curiosity killed the cat.

ROWAN

Cats have nine lives. People only have one. So if we had all those chances, we wouldn't care much about anything either, yeah? We'd be just as lazy and indifferent. Instead, we have to rush our screw-ups while we're still here to do so. That's a pillar of Hinduism.

NOAH

Really?

ROWAN

No, you fucking idiot.

NOAH

We should visit her, next time I head home for holiday or something.

ROWAN

Show up outside her window with a boom box?

NOAH

Yeah! Let's do it, do it.

ROWAN

I would be down to see more of the States.

NOAH

Me too! I've always dreamt of playing road trip games in a real car and not our vacation blimp. Like, the alphabet game - that must be so much easier with license plates and billboards instead of just clouds, right?

ROWAN

(Sarcastically)

Are you implying I don't travel in a "vacation blimp?"

NOAH

You could bring Zoey.

ROWAN

Oh, please. You know my shelf life for dates expires faster than avocados. Plus - it's not like I'm planning ahead or anything, but I have received some totally come-hither comments on my blog lately, from this badass Brooklynite named Jessa. I've got bitches in every city, my dude. Also:

(Holding up the spoon, wiggling it)

Gotcha already.

NOAH

Jesus, Rowan! I give up.

(Beat. ROWAN raises an eyebrow.)

NOAH, CON'T.

Wait, no. Rematch, let's do it.

(NOAH and ROWAN continue their match mute, battling over the spoon or "yelling" at each other. It obviously doesn't make sense they are just playing the two of them.)

(At this point, COOPER has left the coffee shop. He ENTERS his apartment with a Whole Foods or Trader Joe's paper grocery bag.)

COOPER

Honey, I'm home!

Yael

(ENTERING Stage Right to meet him)

Hi, dear! Long day at the remote virtual office? Kick up your feet; let me get you a cigar. Or an IPA?

COOPER

That sounds amazing, babe, but you've worked hard today, too.

Yael

Feh...

COOPER

You have! I saw your Instagram post. You're really racking up a followership.

Yael

(Really touched)

Thanks. I'm trying out a new angle around self-love. Turns out, people love seeing other people love themselves.

COOPER

That's surprisingly surprising.

Yael

I know, right?

COOPER

Well, I hate to have you lift another typing thumb, but if you don't mind putting in a little additional work.... Check out what I picked up today.

(HE slips a packet of sushi mats from the bag.)

Yael

Sushi mats!

COOPER

So we can make our own California rolls!

Yael

Ah, you're kidding!

COOPER

(Sincerely grateful)

No, I don't really feel like I have to do that around you.

Yael

(Inspecting the package)

Thanks, Coop. You know what's funny? I love California rolls, but I've never been to California.

COOPER

You'd really like it out there. Maybe not Los Angeles, but like, the Bay Area, or Malibu.

Yael

Malibu! That definitely sounds nice.

COOPER

We could browse some Airbnb listings over this awesome dinner, if you're up for that? Just for like, a weekend trip or something.

Yael

Wow, yes! I would love that.

COOPER

Cool.

(Beat. He smiles at his girlfriend eagerly unpacking the box.)

Is Jessa joining us tonight?

Yael

No, she's got plans. Okay, queen, let's get rolling!

(THEY sit and start excitedly removing the mats.)

(JESSA ENTERS from upstage, stepping into the coffee shop phone to ear. She quickly sits and gets out her computer, very business-oriented.)

JESSA

Alright, so the branded phrasing and graphic are fine and dandy, emoji usage supreme, but I do have a few suggestions, since you asked. First, stop referring to a handful of Tweets - that's like, five - as a media "push" or "blast." It's over-the-top aggressive. This isn't guerilla warfare. Today's audiences are frickin' smart, sincere. They reject competition between companies and can smell bullshit through the Wi-Fi, so we have to be honest. Less "this is the best grass in the universe," and more "this is some pretty decent, humble, lovable grass." No filter. Grass is what we're offering, yeah?

(Beat.)

Yeah, hold on Bill Gates, I'm getting another call. Hello?

(Beat.)

Yep, the train ticket is purchased, and I'm preparing to board within the hour. All systems go.

(Dropping the professionalism)

Thanks Mom, I love you too. Don't cut into that birthday cake without me.

(CARRIE has been seated on her yoga mat, re-reading old journal passages. She now rises, notebook and pencil still in hand, to explore the spaces she's been.)

CARRIE

As Virginia Woolf once said, 'You cannot find peace by avoiding life.' I am not avoiding life so much as I am....

(Using her pencil to cut and edit one line)

Trying to understand it. Waking up every morning to a horizon fresh with inspiration and blinding with potential - not because the skyline is different, but because its inhabitants and storylines are. It's new to me, which is cool.

I'm thriving out here on my own, actually embracing aloneness. In the deep, manipulative pockets of my noggin I'm still working through things, but at least I'm not trying to avoid them, anymore. I'm open to fate and coincidence alike, because, maybe there is more than one chance. More than one course.

There isn't like, only one coffee shop in the city, for example. That'd just be silly. And when there is, I can always, you know, build a new one. That idea makes me, oh my gosh, so happy.

(A moment passes as we observe the individuals interacting in their daily lives – working, playing, thinking, and all so naturally grounded. Literally sitting, comfortably, and invested in items that aren't tech or digital.)

Wherever you're at, in whatever corner of the world you're reading this, I hope you're traveling your universe like a tourist and creating art and friendships. You'll hear from me soon. Love, Carrie.

(LIGHTS FADE TO BLACKOUT.)

(END OF SCENE.)

(END OF ACT.)

(CURTAIN.)

PHOTOS AND RELATED MEDIA

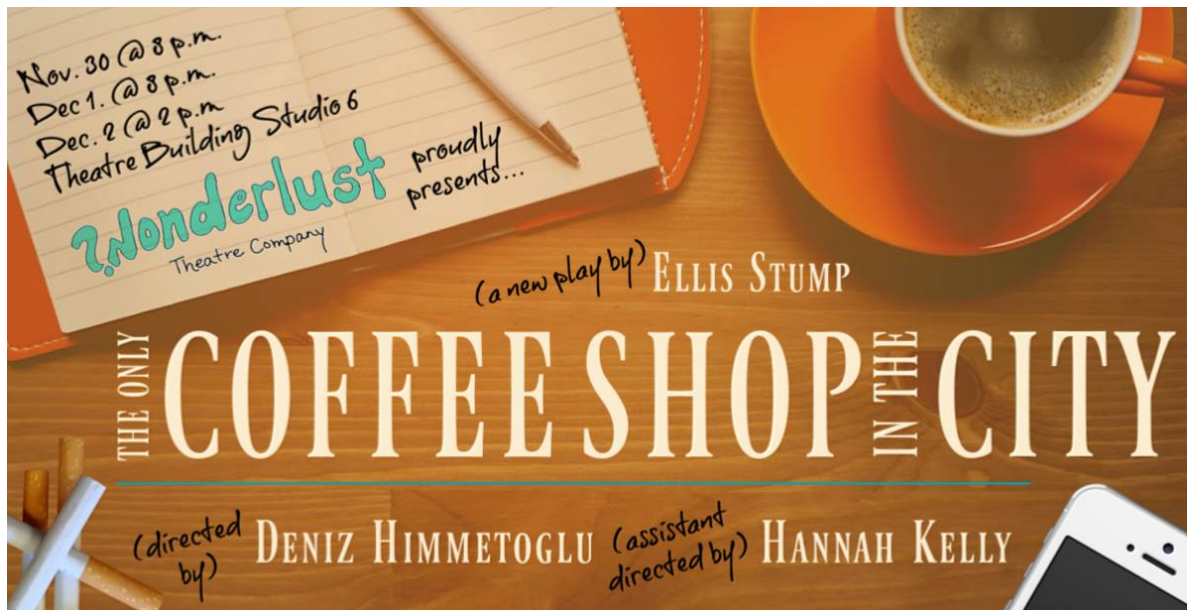
Photos from Show (Taken by Me)



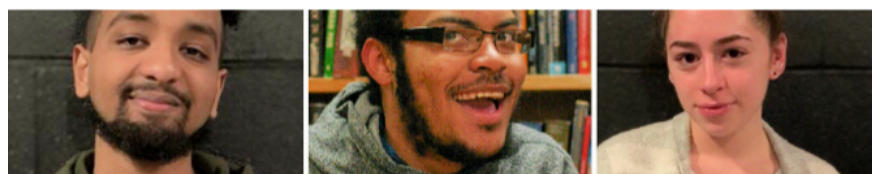




Related Media
(Designed by Me)



directed by **DENIZ HIMMETOGLU** / assistant directed by **HANNAH KELLY**
 Nov. 30 & Dec. 1 @ 8 PM, Dec. 2 @ 2 PM. Theatre Building, Room 6.



ELLIS STUMP

EDUCATION

The Pennsylvania State University | Schreyer Honors College **University Park, PA**
College of Communications | B.A. Media Studies *Inaugural Donald P. Bellisario Fellow*
College of the Liberal Arts | B.A. English *Liberal Arts Paterno Fellow*
Minors in Women's Studies, International Studies, and Psychology *May 2019*
Thesis: "Millennial Existence is a Streaming Meta Dramey: Contextual Genre Hybridity, Episodic Format, and Feminism from Screen to Stage" & *The Only Coffee Shop in the City*
Thesis Supervisors: Dr. Susan Russell and Dr. Christopher Reed

CIEE Global Institute | Berlin **Berlin, Germany**
Communications, Journalism, and New Media Program *Spring 2017*
Final Project: "My Netflix Special: Balancing Creativity and Mindfulness During Travel" (Short Film)

Shri Ram College of Commerce **Delhi, India**
Psychology and International Studies - International Certificate *Summer 2015*
Papers: "Cultures and Customs Behind India's I Dos" & "From Kama Sutra to Silence: Future of Sex Ed in India"

Elizabethtown Area High School **Elizabethtown, PA**
Honors Society, Class President *GPA: 4.0/4.0*
Notable Awards: Rotary Club Oct. Student of the Month, Destination Imagination DaVinci Award for Creativity in Scriptwriting, International Science and Engineering Fair Human Behavioral 3rd Place ("Seeing the World in Pink and Blue"), American Psych Assoc. 2nd Place Award, National Cheerleaders Assoc. Individual Leadership Award
Relevant Experience: Sunbury Press Intern, Bear Creek Creative Writing Intern, DreamWrights Touring "Shakespeare in the Park" Player

External Trainings

Intermediate Playwriting with David Williams, State College Community Theatre *Fall 2018*
Introduction to Improvisational Comedy, Magnet Theatre NYC *Summer 2018*
Improvisational Theatre (Student and Instructor), Tempest Productions Company *2017-18*

PROFESSIONAL EMPLOYMENT

Inkitt Galatea Interactive Storytelling **Berlin, Germany**
Junior Screenwriter (Freelance/Mainly Remote) *Present*
• Brainstorm in writer's room, independently produce scripts and scenes adhering to story's voice and arcs

MA Museum of Contemporary Art - Performing Arts **North Adams, MA**
Performing Arts Communications Intern *Spring 2019*
• Headed writing of quirky, irreverent social media posts
• Promoted and assisted in production for all performing arts events

Girls Educational and Mentoring Services (GEMS) **New York, NY**
Media Production Intern *Summer 2018*

- Planned, designed graphics for, and photo documented events Male Allies Breakfast and Love Revolt Gala
- Tracked digital trends for development team, supporting victims and survivors of domestic trafficking

Through Wolf's Eyes

State College, PA

Article Writer (Freelance)

Fall 2018

- Wrote blogs and essays for publication aimed at cross-generational discussion and connection

Tempest Productions – Central PA Theatre Festival

State College, PA

Dramaturgy and Social Media Intern

Spring 2018

- Selected and edited scripts, assisted with stage management and show production
- Presented own works from conception through production

Willy Wallace & Murray Library Hostels

Stirling & Anstruther, Scotland, UK

Videographer and Publicity Assistant (Freelance)

Jan 2017

- Scripted, directed, acted in, and edited two-minute video ad aired locally and shared online

Social Science Research Institute

University Park, PA

Communications Intern

Fall 2017

- Conducted interviews with academic researchers, translated their work into feature articles
- Attended national conferences for the Child Maltreatment Solutions Network

PRODUCTIONS

Full-Length Plays

The Only Coffee Shop in the City. Production at the Penn State Theatre Building (Produced), Wonderlust Theatre Company. 2018.

Sacred Trauma. Production at the Pennsylvania State Theatre (Directed), Tempest Productions. 2018.

Sacred Trauma. Production at Carnegie Cinema Theatre (Directed), Schreyer Honors College. 2018.

The Only Coffee Shop in the City. Workshop and Staged Reading at the Penn State Theatre Building (Directed), Wonderlust Co. 2018.

The Circle by Dave Eggers Adaptation. Production at Schreyer Honors Orientation (Commissioned), Schreyer Honors College and No Refund Theatre. 2016.

One Acts

How did I get here. Staged Reading at Webster's Bookstore, State College Community Theatre. 2018.

Springtime in Berlin (One Act). Reading at "Tell Me a Story" Playwriting Competition, No Refund Theatre. 2018.

PUBLICATIONS & PRESENTATIONS

Peer-Reviewed Journal Article

Rodino-Colocino, M., Beck, C., Braverman, S. Farley, E., Hamilton, M., **Stump, E.**, Weiss, C.

"#ThisEndsHere: Ending Sexual Harassment and Assault at Penn State." *Communications, Culture, and Critique*, 11 (3), Sept. 2018, 508-512. <https://doi.org/10.1093/ccc/tey018>

Presentation

Sacred Trauma Research and Process. Presentation at Big 10 Honors Leadership Conference. April 2018.

"Stereotypes of Indian and American Cultures." Shri Ram College of Commerce. Summer 2015.

Short Fiction/Drama

“Flirting at Funerals” (Drama). Penn State and Schlow Libraries Short Story Dispensers. 2018.

“Writing on Deadline” (Fiction). *KLIO Online Literary Magazine*. 2019.

“Muse Wanted” (Fiction and Spotlight Writer Feature). *Kalliope Literary Magazine*. 2016.

Art/Photography, Poetry, & Non-Reviewed Articles

- Photography and poetry in *Kalliope Literary Magazine* and *KLIO Literary Magazine*
- Art in *Chaotic Utopian Magazine*
- Non-Reviewed Articles in *Through Wolf’s Eyes*, *Penn State News* and *Science Daily* (Social Science Research Institute Internship), *The Daily Collegian* (Competitive Journal Writing Program at Penn State), *Elite Daily*, *The Odyssey Online*

RELEVANT EXTRACURRICULAR EXPERIENCE

Penn State Performing Arts: Theatre, Comedy, TV/Film

University Park, PA

Award-Winning Writer, Actor, Director, Producer

Sept 2014 - Present

- **Student Affiliation:** Wonderlust Theatre Company (Co-President/Producer), No Refund Theatre Company, Second Floor Stand-Up Comedy, Penn State Network TV (*LIVE! On Tape*), In Memoriam Sketch Club, Student Film Department
- **Community Involvement:** Next Stage, Inc., Tempest Productions, DreamWrights Theatre

Open the Box & #TimesUp Penn State

University Park, PA

Co-Founder and President with Dr. Michelle Rodino-Colocino, Ph.D.

Jan 2015 - Present

- Founded Penn State’s first and only co-ed initiative for increasing campus sexual assault awareness and resources
- Organized lectures, Q & As, and Sexual Education eXperience (SEX) Week with community experts
- Currently redirecting mission and aligning with buzzing #TimesUp movement

Schreyer Honors College Student Council

University Park, PA

Public Relations Chair

March 2015 - May 2016

- Spoke on panels, guided tours, crafted presentations for prospective students
- Mentored incoming freshman as Schreyer Honors Orientation Team Leader
- Represented SHC at Rally in the Rotunda (Harrisburg, PA) and Penn State Dance Marathon

Leadership Jumpstart

University Park, PA

Course Participant and Team Script Writer

Fall 2014

- Scripted YouTube videos, cooperating with small team, on the health detriments of college sleep deprivation
- Attended leadership seminars and retreats to complete grassroots service project

TEACHING & RESEARCH

Teaching

- **Sexual Assault Unit** at State College High School. Instructor for Dr. Caren Bloom, Ph.D. Fall 2017.
- **Elementary English math, reading, and computer skills** at Tamarind Tree NGO School (Pune, India). Summer 2015.

Research

- Penn State Levy Laboratory of Personality, Psychopathology, and Psychotherapy. Research Assistant for Dr. Kenneth Levy, Ph.D. May-Dec 2017.
Personal specialization focus on mindfulness and mentalization as means of therapy for personality disorders

GLOBAL PURSUITS

Communications, Journalism, & New Media

Berlin, Germany

Courses: Social Entrepreneurship in Berlin, German National Identity, Contemporary Women Writers of Berlin, Intercultural Communications and Leadership

- Researched female-identifying Holocaust survivors who processed trauma with writing and creative expression

World Media Studies Honors Spring Break

Prague, Brno, & Ostrava, Czech Republic

Student of Dr. Michael Elavsky, Ph.D.

March 2016

- Toured broadcasting, telecasting, and graphic design companies
- Produced short doc and multimedia presentation comparing Czech Republic's media systems to India's and U.S.'s

Psychology Honors Summer Abroad

New Delhi, Jaipur, and Pune, India

Student of Dr. Richard Stoller, Ph.D.

Summer 2015

- Spearheaded global penpal Facebook page "The Culture Express" in collaboration with Delhi University, liked by 1,500+
- Contributed to health and economy discourse seminars on topics like poverty, policy surrounding rape and domestic abuse, treatment of women and girls, and traditional family structures

HONORS & AWARDS

Dean's List and Numerous Scholarships

2014 - Present

Inaugural College of Communications Donald P. Bellisario Fellowship

2018 - Present

(10 selected from 3,000-student College)

College of Liberal Arts Paterno Fellowship

2014 - Present

Penn State Libraries "New Beginnings" Short Drama Competition, *1st Place*

May 2018

No Refund Theatre "Tell Me a Story" Playwriting Competition, *Top 6 Finalist*

April 2018

Big 10 Honors College Leadership Conference Recognition for *Sacred Trauma*

March 2018

"No Hate Penn State" David R. Neumann Gallery Art Showing for MLK Day

Jan 2018

Grant Funding for *Sacred Trauma*

Nov 2017

No Refund Theatre Awards, Various Nominations and Wins

2016 – Present

Dancer in Penn State Dance Marathon 2016, *Nominated and Earned Spot*

Feb 2016

"Scholars of Penn State" Recognition for Open the Box

Oct 2015

Certifications

Certificate of Library Knowledge, issued by Penn State English Department

Nov 2018

Victim, Survivor, Leadership Training Certificate, issued by GEMS

July 2018

Certificate of International Studies (India), issued by SHC

Dec 2015

HIPAA Human Subjects IRB Certification, Social Science & Biomedical, issued by Levy Lab

June 2017

NIH Protecting Human Research Participants Certification, issued by Levy Lab

June 2017

Selected Performance

Theatre: *Radium Girls*, Grace (Lead), *The Humans*, Brigid (Lead), *Play it Again, Sam*, Nancy (Supporting), all with NRT. *Voices*, Rosalinde (Lead) with Next Stage, Inc.

Promotional: Comm Agency Promo 2018, Prague Study Abroad Testimony, "We Are" 2016 Promo

Student Film: *Just a Thought* (Lead), *The Third Floor* (Lead), *What We Need* (Feature/Improv)