A COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF THEATRE AND FILM DIRECTION

by

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1.1 INTRODUTION

I had always intended to study film in college, but what film school had to teach turned out to be not exactly what I was interested in learning. I was heavily involved in acting, writing, and directing for film throughout high school and never realized that many of the film and television artists that I admired had gotten their start in the theatre, that film school might not necessarily be the only place to get the training they had. I was shocked to arrive at Pittsburgh Filmmakers, the film school affiliated with the University of Pittsburgh, and notice that their course offerings were incredibly skewed toward the technical end of the medium, which, perhaps, exposed my rural naivety and poor high school guidance counseling. Six courses comprised their course offerings in acting, writing and directing. Sure, I was thrilled at the possibilities of taking cinematography, lighting and editing courses, but these were not my strengths, not my passions. This is how theatre came into play. With the bevy of coursework focused on acting, writing, and directing in Pitt's theatre arts department, I had found a great compliment to my film education. Five years and over sixty credits each in these two disciplines later, I have consistently found myself taking knowledge from one of these mediums and utilizing it in the other. On the best days, I have been able to borrow from each medium to further my creative work; on my worst days I have felt like I have fallen into the crevice between the two forms and don't really know anything about either one. I often find myself frustrated with students in one discipline because I

see a simple answer in the other for what my classmates view as a complex problem. For example, students in my senior seminar in film studies were recently debating the nature of comedy, whether humor belongs to narrative or spectacle. Of course, I thought, comedy is narrative. Without a story, comedy is series of empty bits, akin to a blooper reel. I remember an old actor's tale (of which my theatre professors have their fair share) about a married couple that acted on stage for many years together. They were working on a comedy together and the husband mentioned to the wife that after a number of successful shows, he was no longer getting laughs when he asked her to "pass the salt." His wife told him that it was because he was playing the "laugh" not the "salt." No salt, no laugh. In theatre this is common sense; in film it is grounds for debate. These moments of clarity with my theatre mind borrowing from film and my film mind borrowing from the theatre have become more and more common as I have progressed through college. I began to wonder, if I learn so much about theatre from film and about film from theatre in my day-to-day educational experience, what would happen if I actively tried to pursue the possibilities of exchange between these two forms?

I tossed this thought around in my head for a while as I continued my course work in acting, writing and directing for both mediums. The idea eventually dawned on me to direct for theatre and for film and compare the two experiences. Both projects were something that I had been thinking about for some time. "What would it be like if we made a zombie movie?", my friends, Kevin Riley and Erik Hinton and I asked each other one summer afternoon somewhere in the middle of my college life. At the time, we were working with our sketch comedy group, *The Bachelors of Fine Arts*, and we were ready to take on something a little more complex. Somebody suggested it be about what's happening to the people around a zombie apocalypse, those who never see a zombie, let alone fight one. We all liked the sound of this; a zombie movie

with no zombies in it. The next summer I received my first Brackenridge Undergraduate Research Fellowship from Pitt's Honors College to write the script, with the help of Kevin Riley, while simultaneously researching parody and zombie film. While writing the script that summer, I learned the value of research in art. Books on parody and horror filled my bookshelf and every morning I would jog over to Hillman Library to watch a zombie movie. Also, I got paid to do it; life was good.

Middle-Aged White Guys by Jane Martin is a play that has been with me for some time as well. I read the play in my second year at Pitt. Its comic elements, political undertones and rural perspective were all things that drew me to the play. Though I had the required coursework completed three years ago, my academic and creative schedule was too full for me to direct the piece. Midway through my fourth year, these several aspirations, to direct a play, to direct a film, and to look at the exchange between the two forms, coalesced and provided the inspiration for my B.Phil.

I applied for a second Brackenridge last summer in order to get these projects off the ground and cement exactly what my B.Phil was going to explore. Ultimately, I decided that my B.Phil is the direction of these two projects. The accompanying director's notebooks should provide a detailed glimpse into the technical components of both processes. It is important to me, however, that each piece does not exist in a vacuum. I wanted to be sure, throughout this process, that I was actively thinking about how these projects related to each other, and what I have learned by working in these two forms. Outside of the actual completion of these two projects, I spent last summer and part of fall researching the exchange between film and theatre direction.

I knew when I began this research that there were a number of film artists, writers, directors, and particularly actors, who had gotten a start in theatre. The theatre experience of both

Orson Welles and Kenneth Branagh is essential to even the briefest Wikipedia biography of their careers. But, I wasn't aware of the extent to which numerous major film directors have found success in, and inspiration from, both film and theatre. I was unaware of the extent to which their theatre experience was a major part of their cinematic aesthetic. Ingmar Bergman, Elia Kazan, Sam Mendes, Mike Nichols, Julie Taymor, Branagh and Welles are all film directors who managed to find dynamic and novel ways to include principles from the theatre in their film work and vice versa. Each of these directors has developed perspectives on the physical and emotional world of their films that are deeply influenced by their work in the theatre.

As I was embarking on the filming of *If You and I Were the Last Two People On Earth* … and beginning the preparations for the direction of *Middle-Aged White Guys* last September, I immersed myself in the films and writings of these filmmakers. I found a lot of information. For a while, I even entertained the possibility of creating a casebook that would illustrate what exists in the theatre that can aid filmmaking and vice versa. Though this project soon proved too daunting to complete in addition to a film and a play production, I am glad that I approached my research with this mindset. In studying these directors, I have discovered vast possibilities in using theatre and film in dialogue with each other. I'd like to discuss both experiences in-depth, to describe the trials and tribulations in directing in both forms. I'd also like to share some of the knowledge that I have gained from the directors I have studied that I have attempted to apply to my work. Though this discussion will lack some of the technical structure of a casebook, my hope is that through an account of my experiences with these endeavors, I will illuminate some of the issues that arise in the exchange between cinematic and theatrical form.

1.2 MIDDLE-AGED WHITE GUYS

There isn't much that has been written about what the theatre director can learn from film. At least, this is what I gathered from my research last summer. I find this very interesting because I am willing to wager that there are more theatre directors with sizable audiences in this country than there are film directors and that these directors can more easily access quality films than they can quality theatre. This, I think, isn't so much a matter of taste as it is a matter of technology. Scholarship warrants in-depth analysis. Films can be viewed a number of times; they can be rewound, paused and fast-forwarded. Theatre, at least as far as I know, cannot. This means that scholars can meticulously break down films in order to examine what is theatrical in them. There were, however, anecdotes here and there in interviews and biographies of these directors that provided some perspective. Elia Kazan said of his later theatrical work, "I think I have learned something from films for the stage, too. I try to be more theatrelike [sic], even more theatric, in directing for the stage." (Kazan 19)

This may seem like a vague statement -- okay, well, it is a vague statement, but I think it brings up an interesting question. What does theatre *do* that film cannot? I was glad that I had read this as I prepared for my production of *Middle-Aged White Guys* because I attribute much of its successes to that very issue. Before we get into all of that, however, an overview of the production is necessary. The production of *Middle-Aged White Guys* was performed from September 24-28, and from October 3-5, 2008. I made use of six actors, five University of Pittsburgh students (Henry Brinkerhoff, Elise D'Vella, John Fallon, Dylan Geringer and John Jameson) and one Pitt faculty member (Doug Mertz). My crew included a lighting designer (Alden Davidson), sound designer (Christina Kruise), set designer (Todd Mazzie), stage manager

(Krystal Harwick), and an assistant manager / dramaturg (Karoline Nielson), as well as several stage crew and board operators. The budget of the project was roughly $500, most of which was spent on the set. The running time was roughly fifty-five minutes. The rehearsal period was a little over three weeks.

I chose the play because it does a few things that I think good theatre should try to do. Theatre can appeal to a regional market in a way films often cannot. I do not mean that plays do not have universality, Shakespeare, Kushner and playwrights in between prove me wrong. Plays are often produced for a specific audience in mind, however, whereas, the prevailing notion when producing a film is that it must appeal to as wide an audience as possible. In a Pitt Laboratory production, for example, you can assume that the majority of your audience is under twenty-five and from Pennsylvania. Jane Martin doesn't write explicitly for younger folk or Pennsylvanians, but (s)he (Martin writes anonymously) is deeply concerned with regionalism in his or her work. Often the work is set in the rural south, and addresses concerns specific to Kentucky, where her (or his) plays usually premiere.

Though the accents may be different, the issues central to *Middle-Aged White Guys* are relevant to Pennsylvania, more specifically, the region between Philadelphia and Pittsburgh known affectionately as "Pennsyltucky." Much like the fictional town of Mayberry where *M.A.W.G* is set, many towns in the mid-state have been poorly managed by local politicians who allow urban and suburban developers to erect Wal-Marts, dump waste, and build cookie cutter homes up and down the rural landscape. *M.A.W.G.* features two brothers, a businessman (Clem), and the town mayor (Roy) who have been poor stewards of the land. They reunite with their soldier-of-fortune brother (Moon) to mourn R.V., the woman they all used to love. R.V. returns to them as a ghost and informs them that they will act as prophets. They must lead white men

across the country to the Washington Monument wearing only signs that say “I’m Sorry.” They have abused their women, their land and themselves, and God (Elvis acts as Her heavenly representative) wants some old fashioned repentance. When I read the play, it reminded me of home; this play is the kind of satire that fills you with both reverence and dismay with your rural roots.

These men have thrown away the good gifts that they have been given. Appropriately, the play is set in a dump. Underneath all of the garbage, imported from the big city, there are glimmers of the rural glory that once was, or, perhaps, could have been. This image, then, is central to the play and was the concept from which all of our design elements were wrought. This tension between the beauty of the past and the waste generated by expansion and progress is not only central to the play, but a central tension across rural landscape in this country.

It is interesting how different designers will respond to a strong concept. The director becomes a salesman, and sometimes, even though you are the boss, designers can be hard sells. My sound designer, Christina Kruise, came aboard late in the process (after rehearsals began) and set designer Todd Mazzie was conceptually in step with me throughout the process. I got exactly what I wanted from them. Christina came through with a soundtrack populated by old time bluegrass and gospel music, with strange, disconcerting sounds thrown in. The beautiful, nostalgic design was periodically interrupted by the rough sounds of modernity. Mazzie’s set was a junkyard punctuated by junk from “grandma’s attic.” Amidst oil barrels and tires there was a broken rocking chair, a cracked mandolin, a dingy old photo of an unknown colonial ancestor, and other destroyed heirlooms from a simpler time. Mazzie’s set embodied my concept and Christina’s provided its foil.

The costume design took yet another spin on this simple image. While the set's look was dominated by the earthy, dirty and corrupted, the sound design was predominately ethereal and beautiful. The costume design sought an even mix between the two. Half the characters represented one side of the coin and half the characters embodied the other. Elvis, R.V. and Mrs. Mannering were all, in one way or another, clothed in light. R.V.'s dress was a vibrant red that shimmered in the light while Mrs. Mannering sported a pipe cleaner golden halo. Elvis was surrounded by lights and was supposed to have a Christmas lights on his cape, but the sequins in his suit did the job for us. The three brothers, by contrast, had dirty clothes, fatigues, overalls and an Abraham Lincoln suit that had been rolled in the mud. Mona, Roy's wife, with her frazzled hair and worn out robe, was designed to look like a cross between a housewife and a modern day, female John the Baptist.

I had almost complete continuity in the design elements, but the lighting design was a different story. The general color scheme was quite a nice one, as it boasted a light palette marked by yellows and oranges that would slowly morph into a green hue by the end of the play. I also liked Alden's conceptualization of the show stopping moments of the play, R.V and Elvis's entrances; she was in favor of harsh flashing lights for both moments. Unfortunately, there was one aspect of the design that never quite hit the mark. After my original meeting with Alden, she pitched the idea of colored gobos (patterned inserts that shape light) that would project on the back wall, which would embody the light of the past shining through the dump. This, again, was in line with my concept, but ultimately, didn't look very good. I expressed reservations, but let Alden proceed. By the time I saw that they looked kind of trippy, and that they were inconsistent with the look of the rest of the show, it was rather late in the process. When I finally mentioned that I didn't like them, she responded that she felt that they were in

line with my concept and that she had already shifted her initial vision to accommodate it. The gobos stayed and I learned the valuable lesson of shifting clearly from collaborator to boss once rehearsals begin.

Working in film also makes you appreciate theatre's ability to stray away from realism. Film is generally subjected to extreme constraints of realism, and even stylized work needs to create a kind of airtight world to be believable. The seams cannot show. Theatre allows for a different sort of aesthetic, and though I am no Brechtian scholar, the impossibility of complete realism in theatre allows for some intriguing possibilities. The aesthetic approach I used for *M.A.W.G.* was something I referred to in design meetings as "shitty funny;" the idea was to let the seams show. The play calls for no shortage of special effects, and on a five hundred dollar budget, that is a near impossibility. To set the scene, the three brothers are told they are going to be prophets of a new generation. Elvis Presley is the divine messenger who delivers this edict. As Martin wrote it, Elvis is to descend from the heavens upon his entrance. It is suggested that this happen vis-à-vis a glowing rope of lights. As if this weren't demanding enough, during his big speech, a milkshake, a tissue, and, later, signs reading "I'm Sorry" must drop from the firmament. Rather than trying to make things look realistic, we reveled in the impossibility of it all; you could both literally and figuratively see the strings at all times. Elvis was pushed on stage by shabbily dressed angelic stagehands and the props fell from the catwalk, obviously attached to wires. This meant that my props master, Thomas Donahoe, had to run out on stage with a white sheet and a pipe cleaner halo and then scale a ladder in order to drop items from the catwalk. Rather than flying in the ghost of the boy's mother, Mrs. Mannering, we had her scale a ladder and poke her head up into a hole in the wall. She simulated flying as angelic music played to further sell the impossibility of it all.

Shaping the performances was a more complex task. Creating the design is difficult because you are trying to unite numerous contrasting elements, but shaping performances is perhaps even more trying because all of your actors are using the same instrument, and if one of them doesn't quite fit in with the other performers, then you will be out of step. I decided to cast actors of a lower experience level in all but one of the roles, in hopes of forming an exuberant, daring cast, and I think I got results. Incidentally, this is the exact opposite of the approach that I took with the film, but more on that later. Frankly, I needed actors who weren't afraid to look foolish and wouldn't second guess the work, an unfortunate tendency of some seasoned university actors. I wanted to be in control, to have some malleability from them. The company was generally hungry to prove themselves and we attacked the comedy with tenacity from day one.

The most difficult challenge regarding the acting was striking a balance between the "straight" characters, R.V. and Moon, and the comic characters, Clem, Mrs. Mannering, Mona, and Elvis. It is a common notion in theatre that productions don't succeed when the actors are not all "in the same play". This could mean that the actors may be playing at different levels of emotion, employing different styles of gesture or any number of things, but it always means that the acting is inconsistent. I felt that in *Middle-Aged White Guys*, that Moon (John Jameson) and R.V. (Elise D'Vella) were serious characters inserted into a comic atmosphere. They could be funny, and certainly had humorous moments, but they didn't resort to the broadly comic antics of other characters. The trick to keeping them in the same play was to make sure that the comic characters maintained some humanity and the human characters kept some comedy in their performances.

This dynamic was further complicated by Roy, played by Henry Brinkerhoff. At first I had Henry come at Roy from a totally comic perspective, similar to John Fallon's portrayal of Clem. As time went on, I realized that Roy served as a kind of bridge between the two types of characters in the play, moving from deeply human to heinously comic in the blink of an eye. He was a grotesque, a satirical figure. I am not sure if I ever quite found the perfect mix with him, however. The necessary subtlety of film, it seems, allows for less of these deviations in character, because inconsistencies are more noticeable in close-up. One of the joys and challenges of the theatre is to conduct the work of your actors in a wide-ranging, dynamic dramatic score.

Doug Mertz, a University of Pittsburgh faculty member, played Elvis in the production. Ben Miller, whom I will discuss below, played Officer Mercer in *If You and I Were the Last Two People on Earth* … Both of them are professional actors; Doug and Ben are both members of Actor's Equity and Ben is a member of the Screen Actor's Guild. I am glad that I was able to use professionals in both productions, though I was careful to give them both roles where they wouldn't have sustained direct contact with younger actors, for fear of disturbing the overall tone of both productions. Admittedly, it was somewhat intimidating -- working with professionals -- but in both instances they provided a model for younger actors to work with. In *Middle-Aged White Guys*, Mertz was an exemplary model of how an actor can be funny while remaining true to the emotional demands of the scene – even when masquerading as the King of Rock n' Roll.

In general, concerning both design and performance, I gained an appreciation for the breadth of possibilities in the theatre. I said above that there is a requirement of realism in film. If the film is not going to be naturalistic, the filmmaker is required to create a fully contained world; the seams cannot show. On stage, however, incongruity can exist from design element to

design element, from actor to actor, and the results can work, as long all as the tension of these elements can be contained within the world of the play. Film, it seems, allows little room for incongruity.

One of the greatest differences between student filmmaking and student theatre, as well as one of the greatest lessons I will take into my future film projects is one of infrastructure. The stage manager is perhaps that most valuable asset to a theatre director. They handle all of the non-creative aspects of a production; they keep things organized and running smoothly. Sure, production managers are a huge part of professional filmmaking, and perhaps, larger scale independent films and student productions at elite film schools have such personnel, but in the theatre, there is a stage manager on even the smallest production. I, for one, would never go to battle without a stage management team. My stage management team served me very well during *Middle-Aged White Guys* as Krystal and Karoline went above and beyond the call of duty. In addition to the traditional organization and support roles, they were also quick to provide creative answers to our technical issues and quickly communicated with the right people concerning feasibility. Boy would that be useful on a film set.

From this I suppose I can speculate on two major lessons I learned from directing in the theatre that I will take with me into future creative projects of all kinds. The first is the importance of concept. Unifying the group to work towards a given goal is of the utmost importance in any creative endeavor. Designers and actors alike respond well to conceptual consistency. It also makes decision making easier. The trick is not to let anyone hijack your sense of concept from you. The second lesson that I learned is the value of a clear hierarchy. There were many times on the film set when I wished that I had crew members working on one specific job and a clear chain of command as to who would answer what questions. In the

university theatre system, the hierarchical approach is preached from day one and it yields positive results.

Before we shift gears and discuss the experience of the film, I would like to discuss the differences between these two texts, and by extension the difference between a filmic and theatrical text in general. *Middle-Aged White Guys* is a decade old. The play has been produced numerous times before and will be produced many times again. *If You and I Were the Last Two People on Earth* … will most likely never be produced again. Though in this instance, this is partially because Jane Martin is famous and I am not, the same is true of *The Godfather*, *Raging Bull* and *Citizen Kane*. These text is locked and will not be reproduced. This is a very important distinction between these two forms.

This effects the approach to directing each form. The filmmaker is always an artistic partner in the formation of a text, a collaborator in the original product. This, perhaps, is why critics call the great film directors *auteurs*. The theatre director, by contrast, is in dialogue with the original creative work. There have been and will be other productions of a text (unless, we are dealing with a new work). The textbook approach to theatrical directing is to attempt to give voice to the playwright and frame your style in line with the playwright's wishes, or at least in the way that you believe will best give air to the playwright's voice. In the last half-century or so, probably as a direct result of the dominance of film and television, many directors, including Kazan and Bergman, have been known to take an approach that is more in line with that of the auteur. This is a prevailing tension in the world of theatre. I have not yet taken a stance on either of them personally; it seems to me that there is value in both and the two approaches are not mutually exclusive.

1.3 IF YOU AND I WERE THE LAST TWO PEOPLE ON EARTH …

After pre-production work, *Middle-Aged White Guys* began rehearsal, opened, and closed within a matter of three weeks. *If You and I Were the Last Two People On Earth* … is a process that has lasted six months and counting. Though some of this has to do with missed deadlines by collaborators and complex academic schedules, this is, perhaps, one of the key differences between film and theatre. In the theatre, all parties, designers, actors, managers and publicity, are working simultaneously to bring a production off. Film is a long relay. Pre-production moves into production at a point where, hopefully most of the sets, costumes and props are accounted for. The film is shot, and then editors and sound technicians come in to put it all together. Theatre takes place in one location, whereas, even with films shot in a studio, cameras must move from place to place with the scenes. This may be an obvious notion, but that doesn't mean that I didn't find myself remembering fondly the confines of the theatre as we were setting up our cameras in front of busy bridges or rushing in vain to return a living room back to the condition it had been in before our film crew had invaded it.

First, a brief overview of the process of creating *If You and I Were the Last Two People On Earth* … We finished principle shooting in December of 2008, though it began in June of 2008. There were seven actors involved in three separate vignettes. Woven together into a larger narrative, these threads accumulate to a forty-five run time; they comprise the totality of the film. My crew consisted of a director of photography / editor (Erik Hinton), a composer / sound technician (Martin Brown) and a co-writer / special effects technician (Kevin Riley). There were additional crew who served as grips, sound operators and production assistants. The cast

included Nate Jedrzejewski, Stephanie Byars, Brittany Andrews, Eric Prendergast, Kevin Riley, John Graham, Ben Miller and myself. The budget was just over $1000.

Another difficulty of student filmmaking was that despite arrangements and pleas for commitment, at the end of the day only three people could make anything close to a complete commitment to this film. Only one person was able to stay with it all the way through the process, and he is writing this paper. In the absence of an institutional hierarchy that awards credit and résumé building for participation, getting help on *If You and I Were the Last Two People On Earth* … required nothing short of begging and bribing. Though at the outset of the process I was confidently armed with several assistant directors and head production assistants, after things shook out, only two people made it to more than two days of shooting, myself and my director of photography, Erik Hinton.

Though we recruited a number of production assistants, something like twelve in total, to work alongside us, most of our assistants hadn't been on film sets before, and no one of them could consistently be on set to learn the ropes. This meant offering crash courses in production in the field, and often meant that Erik and I would have to serve double or triple duty. There was one day where I was holding a bounce board, reading lines and directing at the same time. Such days were not easy.

I hoped that matters could be simplified through detailed location scouting. It just so happens that the Pittsburgh Film Office offers a free location guide. Though there were a vast number of locations available, none of them worked out and after visiting numerous locations, we settled on using the houses of friends and Pitt faculty. We did ultimately utilize Pittsburgh Film Office's suggestion that we look to the Alleghany Parks for filming exteriors. North Park,

nestled around the Wexford area, proved perfect for the majority of our scenes set on roads and paths.

After tons of prep work, we were left with exactly what we didn't want, numerous, spread out locations and no permanent or even semi-permanent crew members. This meant that each day would essentially be a new shoot. At the beginning of a given week, I would have to coordinate equipment, crew, transportation and catering for a new group of people. Each day of shooting came and went with varied levels of success; ultimately, the most successful days of shooting were those in which a makeshift hierarchy could be put in place. For example, we were lucky enough to have our composer, Marty Brown, on set for several of our shoots. His expertise with sound made him the go-to man for sound that day, relieving a significant amount of pressure. If only we had been so lucky with the rest of our crew. Throughout the process I ached for a fulltime production manager who could coordinate disparate production elements with ease of a stage manager. If only collegiate filmmaking had the infrastructure of collegiate theatre. That being said filmmaking does provide more freedom in production because there is no "right way" to do things.

I think that part of the issue comes from an intrinsic difference between film and theatre. On a high budget studio production, your cinematographers and sound technicians are essentially designers. Though most films, generally, have a naturalistic look, it takes a skilled hand to create that look on film. For a low budget filmmaker, however, you are probably better off altering the natural situation a little as necessary to achieve a look. As a result, finding a student to be in charge of lighting or sound is not as easy as it is in the theatre because there is less of a sense of artistry involved. It was far easier to find someone to compose the music, edit the film and operate the camera. Even on a low-budget level these things are widely considered to be artwork.

Light and sound work is viewed as a more purely technical field, a least when the only tool that you have access to are a sound mixer and a boom pole or two six-hundred fifty watt bulbs and one thousand watt bulb.

Notice I use the word “look” and not the word “concept” when I talk about a film. To me, the word “concept” is more appropriate in theatre for two reasons. The first is that in theatre you are approaching a previously published work. The second is that you have more freedom to stray from realism, and combine production aspects with varying degrees of realism in the theatre. There needs to be an evenness on film and all artistic parties are trying to create a cohesive portrayal of a new work. The demands of this original, never before produced, work will drive the production. Hence, in film, you achieve a look.

The look of *If You and I Were the Last Two People On Earth*… mirrors the thematic content of the script. The script asks what movies are going on around the horror films that typically constitute a zombie film. The shooting, scoring and editing were set up to mirror typical horror film conventions. It is as though a horror film crew happened to catch the non-horror moments that comprise the vignettes. From Erik’s color work, in which he aimed for a darker, grainier appearance, to Marty’s score, where he hoped to manipulate traditional horror themes to create a more melodic composition, worked toward this end. Perhaps “look” and “concept” are similar, but I see some distinct differences.

Whereas I opted to go with inexperienced actors for *Middle-Aged White Guys*, I sought out experienced performers that I could trust for *If You And I Were the Last Two People On Earth* … My reasoning for this was simple; I had never attempted something on this scale, with this many locations, and I didn’t need any more variables than absolutely necessary. There are also unique challenges to film acting that younger theatre performers may not always understand.

In my research, I found a quote from Kenneth Branagh's autobiography of his early life, *Beginnings*, which speaks to the complexities of film acting with regard to the talent of famed British stage actor Ian Holm (he played Fluellen in Branagh's *Henry V)*:

> Acting with Holm was like playing a racket game with someone very much more skilled. One was never sure how the ball would come back, but it would always be exciting and unexpected. He is a master of film technique. I'd heard the Ian Holm school of Acting described as follows: "Anything you can do, I can do less of.' (Branagh 235)

I found this to be absolutely true in filming. I asked for stripped down performances from some of the most talented stage actors I knew and they delivered in spades. Eric Prendergast, one of the least experienced actors on set, actually ended up delivering one of the most truthful performances. Several early viewers of the film remarked that his lines seemed "so natural" and "almost like improv." Though Eric is perhaps the least experienced stage actor in the cast (except for Stephanie Byars), his improvisational background helped lend an air of authenticity to his work. The other actors held their own as well. All of the film's performers have received some level of acting training from the University of Pittsburgh. One of the greatest benefits that arose from this was, as I am also a University of Pittsburgh theatre arts student, I had worked with each of these actors before. Though the training offered at Pitt is neither as rigorous nor as distinct as many schools of training, I was able to get a consistent style of work in the film. The actors are trained in Stanislavskian realism, and are subject to both positive and negative traits that are learned in a liberal arts theatre education. They are generally smart actors who lack the flamboyant or overwrought style that can be picked up by theatre actors heavily trained in styles. A negative, however, is that because of their liberal arts education, they have less training and therefore, fewer tools than highly trained or highly experienced actors might have.

Though I had already cast the film when I began my research, I found that the directors I studied took a similar approach toward acting when they made films; they tended to build a repertory of performers. They accomplished this in a variety of ways. Orson Welles was already part of a studio system, and as a result had the radio, stage and screen talent attached to RKO at his fingertips. Bergman was able to use actors from both the Swedish film and theatre scene to build his personal acting group. He used some actors over a dozen times during the course of his career. Kenneth Branagh, himself an alumni of the Royal Shakespeare Company and the Royal Academy of Dramatic Art in London, was able to call upon the likes of Emma Thompson, Brian Blessed, and Ian Holm to be a part of his film work. Elia Kazan was an early member of New York's Actor's Studio, which allowed him to utilize some of the greatest American method actors, including Eli Wallach, Karl Malden, and Marlon Brando, in his work.

One way in which I differed from these directors, however, was in the amount of rehearsal I was able to conduct prior to filming. My hope had been that I could rehearse my actors extensively before we went out on set, as was a common trait among the directors I studied. Sometimes, unfortunately, this was impossible. When you aren't paying actors and you can't provide them with University credit, their schedules are not very flexible. Whether it be other creative gigs, waiter jobs, airplane fights or familial obligations, a laundry list of things prevented the fostering of a unified, well-rehearsed atmosphere prior to filming. As a result, I had to count on the familiarity of the actors with each other, which most of the combinations in the film had, as well as a little on-set rehearsal time before shooting, to build interpersonal relationships. Admittedly, this is not the ideal scenario for independent filmmaking. Until I can afford to pay people, however, I have a feeling that this is how it is going to be.

Two of my actors, I think, bear special mention. Stephanie Byars (Samantha) is a freshman at the University of Pittsburgh and Ben Miller (Officer Mercer) is a recent MFA graduate and taught several courses there. Their dynamic was quite different from the rest of the cast, as they were not peers in the same way that the other actors in the company were. I was lucky enough to film the scene between Stephanie and Ben first in their vignette. Seeing Ben and Nate Jedrzejewski (Josh) work together on the first day, Stephanie was able to see the kind of subtle, yet nuanced work that was necessary for the film's success. Like Doug Mertz's work in *Middle-Aged White Guys*, Ben provided a model and mentor for younger actors. Though next time I work with such experienced actors I will certainly be less hesitant in giving notes, I am grateful for their involvement in these projects.

A final note on the acting, and one that I think is important is that I, and co-writer Kevin Riley, were actors in the project. I have seen this done many times by professionals, and many of the directors I researched attempted the same thing, most notably Branagh and Welles. I have a new respect for these directors who can switch hats so seamlessly. Granted, they have larger crews and a firmly established chain of command, but I can't imagine stepping from behind the camera to in front of it is ever an easy transition.

Though it is obvious that I took some ideas about acting in both theatre and film from the directors I have studied, I admittedly didn't take too much else aesthetically into my theatrical work from film, other than, perhaps, a better appreciation of what makes theatre special. Having unlimited access to a number of films by these directors, however, had a direct impact on my aesthetic work. One thing that stuck out to me most concerning the stage director turned film director is their use of space. The physical realities of the stage are very different from those of film. Each of the directors I studied sustains shots longer than other film directors. Theatrical

work is a great way to develop an understanding of the space "around the screen" because, in the theatre, the director is constantly forced to account for numerous actors and objects positioned all over the stage. This requires careful management of spatial relationships through the use of levels and movement. The films of the theatrical director gravitate toward pressing conventional limits as to what can be contained within the frame. Kenneth Branagh, Ingmar Bergman and Orson Welles, not only sustain their shots, but do so in unique ways that have influenced filmmakers who have followed them.

Orson Welles's work is perhaps the best known of these three figures. He and cinematographer Greg Toland made use of the *deep focus* technique in their collaborative filmmaking. The principle here is a simple one. Rather than focusing on telling a story by cutting back and forth between two events, you let multiple events unfold simultaneously in one shot. Deep focus allows for a greater immediacy in storytelling, as the audience's eyes can shift focus from event to event faster than an editor cutting back and forth, heightening the tension in a scene. Ingmar Bergman does the opposite, always working to lay the frame as elegantly bare as possible; Bergman was obsessed with empty spaces. Many of his films feature vacant rooms at the beginning and end of scenes, creating a sense that the setting holds power even without people in it. Perhaps even more interesting is Bergman's development of what I have termed the "silent soliloquy," wherein a character carries on his or her business, whether it be tidying up, pacing, or merely sitting calmly, with no cuts, no music and, generally, no distractions. Kenneth Branagh heavily favors long shot durations while employing a steadily moving camera that dollies in and out while twisting and turning, sometimes moving in complete 360 degree circles. Branagh views this technique as a sort of compromise between the Shakespearean text and Hollywood commercial expectations. Such fine acting and such hallowed language, in Branagh's

mind, should not lie on the cutting room floor, but filmed plays where the camera lingers on stagnant shots of actors does not fully utilize the film medium. Branagh's solution is the floating camera, a technical bridge between two eras and two forms.

There are a number moments in my film where we employed different ways of sustaining shots, to varying results. Some of these attempts ended up on the cutting room floor, including several dolly shots which were cut due to the dolly's relentless squeaking, while others became key shots in the film. It bears mentioning, however, that such techniques were used sparingly, if consistently, throughout the film. One of my favorite illustrations of this principle comes in the vignette that tells the story of Samantha and Josh, a brother and sister who travel to meet their parents at a disaster shelter. Through the course of the story, Josh is bitten by a zombie and Samantha helps him to an abandoned house, in which they attempt to give Josh first aid. The bathroom, which we were able to use for our location, was cramped quarters indeed; this limited our shot possibilities. Rather than attempt to shoot a number of shots of the two of them, we shot a master, which captured both Samantha and Josh. Josh was generally filmed in long shot, while Samantha was in medium shot for most of the scene. This shot is rather dynamic; you see Josh trying to clean himself up and we see Samantha's face as she watches. We cut in several inserts – Josh dressing his wound, washing his hands etc. - to maintain excitement, but generally, the scene unfolds through the use of one uncut shot.

1.4 CONCLUSION

Though I don't claim to make theatrical films or cinematic theatre, I do believe that these endeavors have not only increased my knowledge of each form, but have informed my knowledge of the other. It seems to me that any work in another art form should increase one's awareness of art as a whole This should be particularly true of two forms so closely linked. Theatre gave birth to film. And many believe that film will eventually replace the theatre. Despite being related, these two forms have their own unique demands, and there are stories that could be told effectively in one that would find no resonance in the other.

There is a lot to be learned because these forms have so much in common. That much is obvious. They both involve actors and stories and lights and sounds. What has interested me, though, has been how these two forms differ. The patience that a theatre director brings to film is as wildly fascinating to me, as is the awareness of the seams of theatre, of the give and take the theatre director has with reality, that comes from working within the verisimilar demands of film. Discussing what is the same between these two art forms will increase our knowledge of its components. Perhaps we will produce better actors, writers and directors as a result. Studying how these two forms differ, however, will produce new types of art, and could throw into question long held assumptions about these forms. Something as simple as, "you cut when the characters stop talking" can be challenged, examined and either dismissed or upheld. It is easier for a novice in a form to mistake the dogma of that form for truth. Maybe it isn't. Examining what is necessary in a form and what can be rethought might create new and innovative art.

As for me, I don't know if I will ultimately become a theatre or a film director, or even, necessarily, a director at all, but this project has certainly been a fruitful endeavor. I have learned

about creativity and organization, aesthetic and hierarchy, and I count each of these lessons as valuable.

APPENDIX A

MIDDLE-AGED WHITE GUYS DIRECTOR'S NOTEBOOK

DIRECTOR'S NOTEBOOK

Middle-Aged White Guys by Jane Martin: Opening Statement

"Thank God I'm a Country Boy" – John Denver

It is intriguing that in direction, which may be the art most dependent on other artists, I find myself constantly making personal statements. Though it may seem simple, I was first drawn to the play *Middle-Aged White Guys* because it reminded me of home. Here, just as in my personal experience, we see the raping of the land by those who should be its stewards, not corporate interests, but its own. This occurs all over America, and has occurred since its inception. The weight of previous generations has finally come to bear in this country. We are running out of places to throw trash, harvest natural resources and build homes. We have used up what was around us and spit it out. That is what this play is about.

My concept for the play highlights this. I imagine the dichotomy between the spiritual power and purity of a distant (perhaps imaginary) past, provided by ethereal lights and sound, and the earthy qualities of "dirty" sets, costumes and acting. I think this speaks to the play's point: there is a huge gap between where we are and where we ought to be. Disappointment runs roughshod through this play. The women are hollow, defeated by men. The men have long ago collapsed under the pressures of heroism, abandoning their destiny for profit and the comfort of selfish solitude; according to playwright, Jane Martin, the sin of modern man is a failure of responsibility: to the women, to the land, to God.

Martin airs her love-hate relationship with rural life. The most eloquent metaphor that the play offers for this is the baseball diamond covered over by a garbage dump. There are also references to Wendy's, Hardees and the Holiday Inn. Martin is speaking of a country that doesn't look so much like the country anymore. Warehouses and Supercenters dominate the landscape of greed. She allows moments of beauty to poke through, vestigial, fleeting, spiritual beauty that is finally smothered. Underneath the dump there is a baseball diamond; anyone from the shifting countryside can ride through housing developments and landfills and see the ghosts of what once was.

In addition to being drawn to this play by my cultural empathy with it, I also think the play is a fine example of where theatre must head in the next century. Having premiered at the Humana Festival of New American Plays in Louisville, Kentucky, Martin took cares to ensure that the play spoke to the region surrounding its home theatre. The characters are the same "Good Ol' Boys" you find just outside the city limits. With the ease and immense profitability of film, theatre is a far more regional endeavor. The world is film's community, it creates stars that are heard nationally and internationally. This leaves a gaping hole for theatre to address local problems; theatre can risk alienation and speak directly to a culture.

Middle-Aged White Guys, and all other major works by Martin for that matter, encapsulates the best aspects of modern American theatre. It is fast, tightly constructed and wildly funny while maintaining the necessary weight of good drama. It is specific without being inaccessible. For all this talk about concept, I simply hope that I can remain true to that vision in production.

- Brenden Gallagher - 8/13/08

Original Production

Middle-Aged White Guys was first presented at the 19th Humana Festival of New American Plays at Actors Theatre of Louisville in March 1995. It was directed by Jon Jory with the following cast:

R.V. ..... Karenjune Sánchez
Roy ..... John Griesemer
Clem ..... Bob Burrus
Mona ..... Karen Grassle
Moon ..... Leo Burmester
King ..... Larry larson
Mrs. Mannering ..... Anne Pitoniak

THE CAST

Roy, The Mayor, 48
Clem, The Businessman, 47
Moon, The Mercenary, 46
R.V., A Forerunner, 25
Mona, A Woman in Transition, 40
King, A Messenger
Mrs. Mannering, Mother to the Brothers, 70

Double

TIME

The play is current

THE PLACE

A dump

Notes

Set
Sound
Lights
Props
Costume

MIDDLE-AGED WHITE GUYS

A small-town dump and junk yard, its mounds and valleys of debris slightly steaming in the rose of the sunset. Piles of cans, boxes, barrels, the rusted hulk of an old car, broken bedsteads, refrigerators, garbage, old signs, mounds of the unimaginable. The effect created is a dark, eccentric, contemporary hell.

On top of the junked car, a young woman in a short, red dress, with a snake tattoo coiling up her left arm from wrist to shoulder, sits cross-legged. Heat lightning flashes in the distance. Far away, thunder rolls.

R.V.: Moon? Yo, Moon, can you hear me down there? Down, down, in that river of sleep? Down with one foot in the dark continent? You remember that day, Moon? You know the one I mean. Old guy leans over, touches my tattoo, says, "Hey, Snake, we got a no-hitter goin', woman; we're workin' a virgin top of the sixth." (*Thunder.*) They say there's an hour in everybody's life where all the luck you shoulda' had comes together like drops on the windshield. You ever hear that? State championship high school game, and all the luck we'd never have again just riding your arm through the late afternoon. Roy, he was four for four; Clem caught that relay bare

handed for the double play. And there you were, right into the eighth, throwin' smoke and sinkers like Mr. Smooth in the bigs. And then, just then, some tanked-up dickwad on the third base side yells out, "Workin' a no-hitter, Moon!" And you froze stiff in your windup and looked over there like he woke you up from an afternoon nap, and then you shook your head and threw 14 straight, fat ones up there, and they put *five* runs on the board. I couldn't believe it, Moon. (*Thunder nearer; a dog howling.*) Omens and portents. (*She looks at the sky.*) Read 'em an' weep. (*She knocks on the car top.*) What the hell were you doin', Moon? How come you threw it away?

(*Roy Mannering, a man in his late 40s, appears over the ridge of the dump. He is dressed as Abraham Lincoln, including beard and stovepipe hat. Roy carries two six-packs of beer. He looks down and yells a name, apparently not noticing R.V.*)

ROY: Clem? You here, Clem? (*To himself.*) What damn color is *that* sky? (*He takes a step forward and falls ass-over-teakettle down the dump's incline.*) Well, that's just perfect. That's just sweet as hell. Clem?

(*The girl has disappeared. He wipes at his clothes with a handkerchief.*)

ROY: What is this stuff? Oh, that's perfect. (*He pulls out a portable phone and dials.*) Mona? Mona, it's Roy. What's with the voice, Mona? You're not cryin' again, are you? Well, you better not because I'm sick of it, woman, that's why. Listen, Mona, go to the closet...you got any mascara on your hands? Well, you wash them off, go to the closet, get my gray silk summer suit...gray suit...stop cryin', Mona...run that gray suit up to the July 4th reviewing stand...because I got nasty stuff on the Abe Lincoln suit. Mona, I can't give the Gettysburg Address covered in dog shit. Now give that gray suit to Luellen...my assistant Luellen...I am not sleepin' with Luellen, Mona...she is one year out of high school...what the hell are you cryin' about, I put your Prozac right where you could see it. Now I need that suit, woman; you do what I tell you. (*He cuts her off the phone.*) I can't stand that damn cryin'. (*He dials again.*) Luellen, sweetmeat, it's Long Dong Silver. You got any word where those fireworks are? Well, those damn Chinese don't know what U.P.S. means. Well, we'll shoot what we got. Listen, I'll be there...40, 45 minutes, max. (*Feels beard.*) Yeah, I got it on. This stick-on stuff stings like hell. Look,

tell Carl keep the high school band a couple extra numbers 'cause we're missin' those Chinese fireworks. Well, you tell him to do it. I'm the damned mayor!

(*Puts phone back in pocket. A man appears above. It is Roy's younger brother Clem. He wears overalls and a work shirt, and carries an umbrella.*)

CLEM: That you, Roy?

(*Roy startles.*)

ROY: Damn, Clem.

CLEM: I tried not to scare you.

ROY: (*Scraping at his pants.*) Look at this? What are we doin' in the dump, Clem? What the hell are we doin' here?

CLEM: We promised her, Roy. It's a sacred trust.

ROY: (*Still looking at his clothes.*) A sacred trust.

CLEM: I get it. You're dressed up as a Smith Brothers cough drop.

ROY: This is Abe Lincoln, Clem.

CLEM: Oh, I see.

ROY: Seventy-five dollar rental, and I fell down the hill.

CLEM: Abe Lincoln, sure. We promised R.V. we'd come down here every 10 years.

ROY: I know that, Clem.

CLEM: Twenty years ago today. You want some Cheezits?

ROY: (*Another matter.*) Clem, I got to talk to you.

CLEM: It's Mama's birthday, too.

ROY: What?

CLEM: I know, you never like to think of her dead.

ROY: Our beautiful Mama.

CLEM: 'Member how she always called you "Tiny"?

ROY: Mama's birthday! Why did she leave us, Clem?

CLEM: She died, Roy.

ROY: I know she died, goddamnit.

CLEM: Our two beautiful ladies in the heavenly choir.

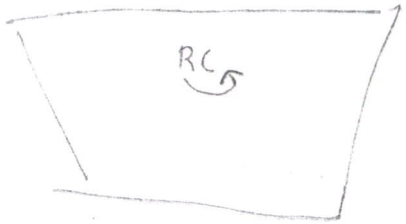
ROY: I miss you, Mama!

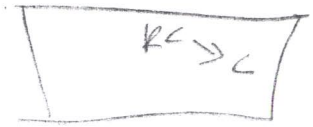
CLEM: Mama and R.V. Makes this a sacred trust.

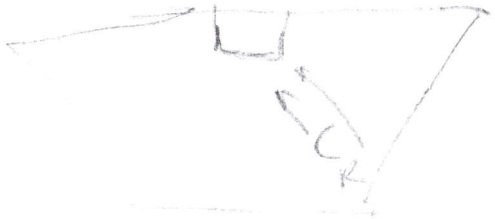
ROY: All right, Clem. You hear anything from Moon?

CLEM: Can't make it. Wired R.V. a dozen white roses, just like when we did this in '~~84~~ '98

ROY: Well, I knew little brother wouldn't show. Where was the roses wired at?







CLEM: Food additives.

ROY: I got the letter, I went over to the newspaper. Now that pissant editor has a load receipt from Long Island Petrochemical tells him how many barrels of this, how many barrels of that they sent down here.

CLEM: Food additives.

ROY: Food additives, that's right. I explained we have no barrel leakage or ground water problem on the site. I explained the value of the contract to the city; Hell, it's 37% of the municipal income, you'd think a damn moron could understand the economics, but he reads me a state statute says four of these additives—chloroethylene, hexochlorobenzine, polychlorinated biphenyls and...somethin' else—are prohibited from interstate transport. Too much damn government, Clem, that's what that is. Now where do you think he got that load receipt?

CLEM: Well...

ROY: You gave it to him.

CLEM: Well, he goes to our church, Roy.

ROY: You gave it to him.

confession

CLEM: Well, he said, since it got the town so much money, just how many barrels was it? So I gave him the load receipts, and he was real impressed.

comedy

Act

ROY: Now we got to go get it back.

CLEM: Why, Roy?

ROY: So he can't put it in the paper.

CLEM: It's just food additives, Roy.

ROY: Uh-huh, that's one thing, plus you and me set up the haulage company. You ever hear of nepotism?

CLEM: That's a positive word around here.

ROY: Never mind, Clem. Luckily you rent him the building he's in, so you got a key.

CLEM: Sure, but...

ROY: I'll go get the fireworks started. I got to be there 'cause the new poll says it's a real tight race. You go pick up your key...later on, we go on down to the newspaper, get that load receipt.

CLEM: Walk right in?

ROY: Uh-huh.

CLEM: That's not burglary?

ROY: It's fixin' the problem.

CLEM: I see.

ROY: Clem, there is America and there is not-America. America is the light. Not-America is the darkness. America isn't a place, Clem, it's an idea. Right now Clem, America isn't America, Japan is America. The problem is to get America back *in* America. Now, Clem, this is the idea that *is* America: see the problem, fix the problem, that makes a new problem, fix that problem. Whoever does that the best *is* America, and right now it's *not* America. Not-America, which right now *is* America, has two damn characteristics. Number one: fools. Fools, Clem, cannot see the problem and cannot fix the problem. These people are Democrats. Number two: idealists. These are fools who fix the wrong problem and tell the people who are fixing the right problem that they are short-sighted. For instance, Clem, let us posit this: the world's greatest bomb defuser is defusing a hydrogen bomb planted by Arabs under the Speaker's platform in the U.S. Senate. This is the only man who can defuse this bomb. He has defused bombs like this for years. Because fixing this problem is stressful, he is a chain smoker. Not-America number two, the goddamn idealists, Clem, pulls that expert defuser off the job because of the danger to United States senators of secondary smoke, and Washington, DC blows up! We are America, Clem—you, me, we fix the problem—but the forces of darkness, the non-America number one and the not-America number two is now America, and these not-Americans are saying the *real* Americans *are* the problem, which of course *is* the problem we, as real Americans, have to fix!

CLEM: We're the real Americans, right?

ROY: That's right.

CLEM: The good ones?

ROY: That's right.

(*Clem's face crumples. He pulls out a flask.*)

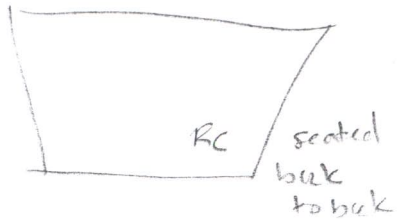
ROY: Don't you dare cry, Clem. You're a big businessman.

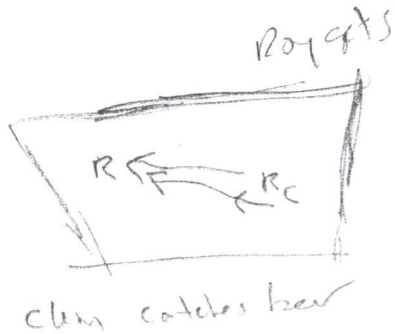
CLEM: Then how come Evelyn left me?

ROY: Because you drank her right out of the house.

CLEM: (*Taking a hit.*) I'm a bad person.

ROY: You got a haulin' business, you're into real estate. You run Gunworld, Clem, the biggest handgun retail outfit in a three-





state area. You're a big success and you drive a dan iata, how can you be a bad person?

CLEM: Evelyn still hasn't called, you know. She didn't call you, did she? How the hell am I going to raise those boys? They miss their mama. What kind of woman would run off like that and not even leave a note for those boys? How could she do that?

ROY: (*Handing him his handkerchief.*) She did it because women are a sorry damn lot, Clem. They are neurologically disadvantaged with the objectivity of a collie dog. They hate all systems, all logic, all authority, and any damn evidence runs contrary to their damn feelings. You take out the sex drive, there isn't one man in a million would stay in a house with 'em for 48 hours.

(*Clem weeps.*)

ROY: Stop cryin', goddamnit.

CLEM: Jimmy Peaslee...

ROY: What?

CLEM: His mama is the daughter of that woman used to run the Cherokee Diner.

ROY: I got the Gettysburg Address in 20 minutes. I got some colored lawyer dead even in the polls...

CLEM: Jimmy Peaslee took a gun to school, tried to shoot his second grade teacher.

ROY: When?

CLEM: Yesterday. An AK-47. He fired off a burst, but it went wild...

ROY: Down at Lincoln Elementary?

CLEM: Said his teacher was a damn lesbian.

ROY: Was she?

CLEM: I think she just wore a pantsuit.

ROY: We wouldn't have this kind of problem if we had prayer in the schools, Clem. Now let's do the damn toast.

CLEM: (*Heedless.*) That weapon come from Gunworld. It was mine, Roy.

ROY: You sold it to the boy?

CLEM: To the daddy.

ROY: So?

CLEM: I feel real guilty, Roy. (*He weeps.*)

ROY: Clem, I got 1,500, maybe 2,000 people showin' up for my fireworks show, and due to the Chinese I got five, six minutes of fireworks, tops. My wife's on a cryin' jag, I got a little girl on the

: is gettin' real pushy, I got to break into the newspaper, I'm runnin' against a damn minority, and my Lincoln suit is covered with dog shit. *You* don't have a problem, Clem. You sold a legal weapon to a legal daddy, and if he is so damn dumb he leaves it where Junior can get it, it sure as hell is not your fault. Democracy honors the individual, Clem, at the cost of givin' him personal responsibility, and if he can't handle the responsibility, the state ought to castrate him so he can't mess up his kid! Plus you don't even know she *wasn't* a lesbian.

CLEM: You explained that real fine, Roy.

ROY: That's right. Now, I got to go to the fireworks. You meet me right after behind the Dairy Freeze. Bring the keys and a ski mask. (*He starts out of the dump.*)

CLEM: What about the sacred trust?

ROY: I don't have time for the sacred trust. (*Starts out.*)

CLEM: She was your wife, Roy.

ROY: That was 20 damn years ago!

CLEM: My wife left me, Roy. (*Weeping.*) My Evelyn left me! (*Roy stops.*)

ROY: Goddamnit Clem, you're gettin' me homocidal. (*Clem weeps.*) If I do the toast, will you stop cryin'?!

CLEM: You'll keep the sacred trust?

ROY: I will keep the goddamn, sonofabitchin' sacred trust. I'm givin' this five minutes, you understand me?

CLEM: You're a prince, Roy. You want some Cheezits?

ROY: Do it! (*He comes back down.*)

CLEM: (*Looking up.*) R.V.? It's me, Clem. I'm here with Roy, in the dump. It's about 8:30. Sky's a real funny color.

ROY: You gonna' do a weather report, Clem?

CLEM: Right, right.

ROY: Four minutes.

CLEM: So, R.V., it's Clem. I'm here with Roy in the dump.

ROY: You're drivin' me apeshit.

CLEM: R.V., we're here like we promised. Roy, me...well, Moon, he's tied up with fecal matter. Boy, I miss your shinin' face. You never loved me. Wasn't your fault. I know you loved Moon. I believe you loved Roy here...mainly. I don't know why you killed yourself, but that was just the worst thing ever happened to me. I still wake up cryin'. You asked in that death note would we hoist

Unit 7: a visit from Mona

There needs to be sound.

U.S.L.

a beer every ten years on the pitcher's mound where we almost got to be state champs an' you sang the National Anthem. See, they sold the field for a dump site when they combined the high school over to Mayberry.

ROY: One minute.

CLEM: (*Quickly.*) I can still hear your beautiful voice. So clear and high. Sounded like Snow White or Cinderella singin' to the mice. Boy, I miss you, R.V....it's just a dump now, but it's a world of memories to me. (*He weeps.*)

ROY: Goddamn it, Clem.

(*Clem stops.*)

ROY: R.V.? You were a damn fine woman with beautiful breasts and a good sense of humor. We shouldn't have got married with you still stuck on Moon, but that's 20-20 hindsight. You knew what a man is, but you didn't throw it in his face. You were mentally unbalanced, but you never let it show up in bed. That's a good woman in my book.

(*A middle-aged woman, Roy's wife Mona, wearing only a slip, high heels and a strand of pearls around her neck, appears on the ridge behind them. She carries a pistol.*)

ROY: You are my damn baby, R.V. honey, and any woman since you've gone is just passin' the time.

(*At this moment, Mona on the ridge raises the pistol and fires down on Roy. He and Clem scramble.*)

ROY: Hold it.

CLEM: (*Simultaneously.*) Don't shoot.

MONA: (*Holding Roy's gray suit on a hanger in her other hand.*) You are my nightmare, Roy Mannering! (*She fires again.*) You are a maggot b-b-born in the dung, b-burrowed down in my flesh eating me alive! I hitchhiked out here, so here's your g-g-gray suit! (*She flings it down into the dump.*)

ROY: You hitchhiked in your underwear?

(*She fires again.*)

ROY: Mona, that's enough now.

CLEM: Jeeminy.

MONA: I c-curse you, Roy. I c-call demons from their d-dank c-caves and crevices the c-creatures of the night to g-give you prostate cancer and Lou G-Gehrig's disease, and make you impotent that one t-time every c-couple of months you can still get it up.

ROY: You've got to relax if you want to stop stuttering, Mona.
(*She fires again.*)

MONA: Your teenage whore assistant called me up to say you were t-taking her to the Mayor's c-c-c-c-c-conference next week. She said you b-bought her a sapphire and d-d-diamond ring. Said you were divorcing me and m-m-m-m-marrying her. She said you called me a c-c-corpse with jewelry, Roy. Well, I am. I am eaten up with l-l-loathing for m-myself, and you taught m-me that with your fiendish c-c-c-criticism and little jokes and p-patronizing ways. I looked in the mirror t-t-tonight and I saw my b-bleached b-brain an' my d-dead eyes an' I said Mona, what b-became of you? Where are you, Mona?
(*The door of the junked car in the lot opens quietly, and Moon, dressed in jeans and a skull t-shirt with an army field jacket over it, boots and an old kerchief around his head, steps out. He is bearded and in every way piratical.*)

MONA: I curse your sons and your sons' sons that they should be b-born without testicles, blind as newts, and they should disinter your corpse and rifle through your pockets for spare change. Now I'm going to shoot your p-puffy head off, and that will make me feel considerably better. (*She raises the gun again.*)

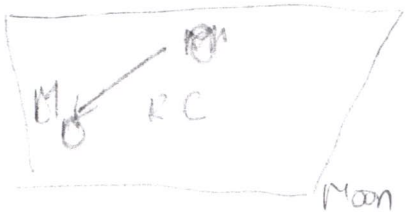
MOON: (*In his left hand, he carries a stubby full automatic as if it were an extension of his arm. As she raises the gun, he speaks consolingly.*)
Good evening, ma'am.
(*She turns, pointing the gun at him.*)
I had a friend used to stutter until his confidence caught up with his heart.

CLEM: Moon.

MOON: How you doin'? Well ma'am, I'd have to agree with you about Roy, untutored as he is, he probably thinks you're a household appliance. He just don't know what a woman is, ma'am, and he's just unteachable as a rooster.

ROY: What the hell, Moon?

MOON: Shut up, Roy. Now ma'am, I'm a brute killer for pay, and they tell me I'm one of the dozen best shots in the world, left-handed or right. May I call you Mona? Mona, what you're holdin' there is a Rossi 518 Tiger Cat Special, accurate up to about 40 feet and, combined with your understandable emotion and inexperience, you most likely won't hit me, whereas, my first



Moon stands

couple of rounds will tear off your wrist, leavin' you with one hand for the rest of your life. They tell me the pain's unendurable unless we cauterized it with fire, and by the time we got some kindlin', you'd likely bleed to death. It's strange when you can see right inside your own body like you can when an extremity's gone. We never know what we are because we're covered with skin. Once you find out, you realize we're just walkin' meat. Now I'd feel more comfortable if you'd point that thing at Roy, if you don't mind.

(*She does.*)

ROY: Damn, Moon.

MOON: Well I feel a whole lot better. Much obliged. Now what can we do for you, ma'am?

MONA: K-K-K-Kill him.

ROY: Moon?

MOON: (*To Roy.*) There's no punishment in death, ma'am. It's over in the blink of an eye. The thing I like least about killin' people is how easy they get off. Hell, he stole your life from you. Wouldn't you say that's the situation?

MONA: I was...I was...I had dreams.

MOON: Sure, I know. You got some place you could go?

MONA: Clem's wife, Evelyn, she called from Arizona.

Clem pops up

CLEM: Arizona?

MONA: She says it's n-nice. She l-lives with the Navajos.

CLEM: My Evelyn?

MONA: She said I could c-c-come out there.

MOON: You know what you get out there, ma'am? You get yourself a shadow, so you don't get lonely.

MONA: But I don't have the money. He didn't let me work.

MOON: Well see, he is so small. He is such a small person he could only enlarge himself at your expense.

ROY: Now that's just damned well enough.

MOON: She's going to kill you, Roy, we're lookin' for alternatives.

ROY: She can't hit the side of a barn.

MOON: She isn't stuttering, Roy. Her hand's steady. You ought to hold that with two hands, ma'am. Sort of like this.

(*He demonstrates. She changes her grip.*)

ROY: Dammit!

MOON: She might get lucky, put one right up your nose.

F: I don't know you.

MOON: Ma'am, I believe I'm goin' to take up a collection, how about that? Gimme' your wallets, boys.

(*They don't respond.*)

MOON: I said gimme' your goddamn wallets!

(*They throw them on the ground.*)

MOON: I get real pissed off at myself, the course I've taken. I should have got into robbery, it's just so damn easy. (*Picks them up. He looks.*) You don't mind if your pretty wife goes on a little shoppin' spree, will you, Roy?

(*Roy glowers.*)

MOON: So now I'm comin' up there, ma'am. Roy, throw me over your car keys, will you?

ROY: I am not givin' you my car keys.

MOON: What are you drivin' these days?

ROY: No way. No damn way.

MOON: Go ahead, ma'am, shoot him.

(*She fires. Roy hits the ground. She misses.*)

ROY: Goddammit to hell. Son of a bitch.

MOON: That was about a foot left, ma'am. And if you wouldn't mind a little advice, I wouldn't go for the head, I'd go for the gut.

ROY: All right. All right. I'm gettin' the keys.

MOON: How are you doin', Clem?

CLEM: Well, Evelyn run off.

MOON: Sorry to hear that. You better have a drink.

CLEM: (*Pulling out the flask.*) Okay, Moon.

MOON: There's a case to be made for finishin' the century blind drunk.

CLEM: Care for a dollop?

(*Clem, having taken a hit, passes the flask to Moon.*)

MOON: Well, I don't mind. (*Drinks.*) How about you, Mona?

MONA: (*A roar.*) I hate men!

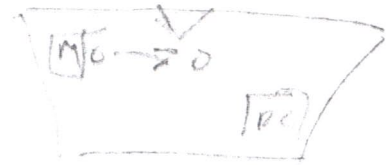
MOON: Me too, ma'am. (*Drinks.*)

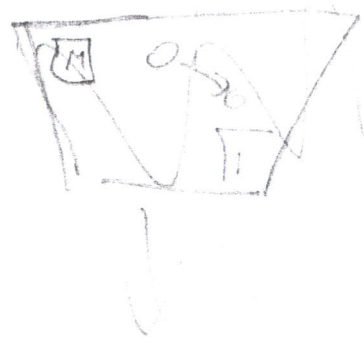
ROY: There. (*Tosses the keys.*) This is egregious damn car theft.

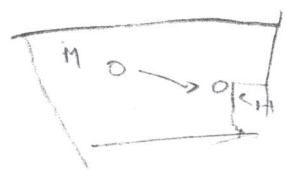
MOON: Tell him "shut up," ma'am.

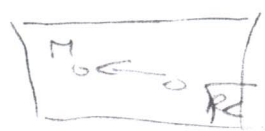
MONA: Shut up!

MOON: Here I come now. (*Starts up toward Mona.*) Just bringin' the wallets and the car keys. Get you started, you know, before the divorce.









MONA: I was g-good at math.

MOON: Yes ma'am.

MONA: I was better than the boys.

(*He nods.*)

MOON: Yes ma'am.

MONA: I could have done r-research on the universe.

MOON: Well, you're still young, ma'am.

MONA: No, I'm not. I'm dried out.

MOON: (*Puts the wallets down near her.*) Well, you look a little chilly. You might like to put this around your shoulders. (*He puts his field jacket down on the ground. He looks off.*) Clem, are you drivin' that Mazda Miata or the Chrysler?

CLEM: I'm the Mazda, Moon.

MOON: Good for you, Roy, you bought American made. Hey, Clem, would she still take 79 South and then 64 West? It's been a long time.

CLEM: 64 to 44, then take Interstate 40 west all the way.

MOON: Down to Arizona?

CLEM: Yes sir, headin' west.

MOON: Nice two-day drive.

MONA: I'm too old, Moon.

MOON: Ma'am, Buddha said a good fire can only be made from seasoned wood. The point isn't to end the journey, the point is to make the journey.

MONA: I made the journey with you, Roy. I thought I would rest easy and you would care for me. I knew I wasn't a beautiful, wild creature like that R.V., but I thought we could make a quiet life, Roy. That's a horse laugh. A woman's just disposable goods to you. I gave myself over an' forgot who I was, but those days are over and gone, Roy. I'm makin' my own movie now, and you're just something in the rearview mirror to me. I let your tropical fish go free in the creek; I burned your Louis L'Amour first editions, and I pushed your satellite dish off the roof. I'm an outlaw now, Roy, no one will ever treat me that way again.

MOON: Louis L'Amour would despise you, Roy. (*To Roy and Clem.*) Take off those belts! Do it!

CLEM: I don't have a belt, Moon.

MOON: Lie down on your stomachs. (*Takes off his own belt and, with Roy's, expertly belts the two brothers' hands behind them.*) It took

me four planes, an oxcart, and I forded a river on a man's back to get here, boys. Had to sell the gold teeth I'd been collectin' to get it done. See, I wanted to be here for R.V., do a little business, see my big brothers and take a little vacation from gettin' people down on the ground and tyin' them up with their belts. I guess it just shows you're a prisoner of your talents. That isn't too tight, is it?

CLEM: It feels real nice, Moon.

MOON: (*Looking over his handiwork.*) Well, okay... (*Up to Mona.*) You might want to get started, ma'am.

MONA: Are you the worst?

MOON: Beg pardon?

MONA: You have raped and pillaged and slaughtered?

MOON: More or less.

MONA: Are you the worst of men? I need a b-benchmark.

MOON: Well I don't know, ma'am. I guess I'm close enough to be competitive.

MONA: Then I'll k-keep the pistol.

MOON: Good idea. Say, you know what they do all over the world?

MONA: Who?

MOON: Those who have prevailed. Those who have brought their enemies to their knees and made them eat the dust of the road. It doesn't matter if it's Medellin or Kumasi or Kuala Lumpor, they fire their weapons in the air. They empty themselves into the universe in celebration. (*He hands her his automatic weapon.*)

ROY: My God, are you deranged?!

MOON: Go ahead, ma'am.

(*Mona looks at him and then fires a long burst in the air.*)

MOON: Feels good, huh?

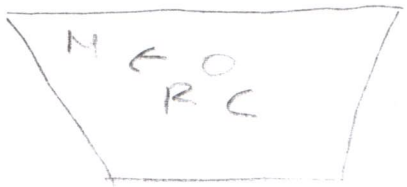
MONA: It feels g-g-g-glorious! (*She hands back the automatic, keeping the pistol.*)

MOON: (*She smiles for the first time.*) Well, you might want to get goin', ma'am. Keep your mind real empty and close to hand, that'll let it heal up. You might want to put on some clothes, but everybody's got their own way.

MONA: Good-bye, Moon.

MOON: Adios, babe.

MONA: (*She turns to Roy and Clem.*) Good-bye, Clem. Good-bye, Roy. I'm sorry I was such a bad shot. I'm free now. When I'm out



in Arizona, I'm going to take this money and raise b-bees. Millions of b-bees. Then with the aphrodisiac of my freedom, I will lure men to hotel rooms. I will tie them to the b-bed with silk scarves for a g-good time. Then I will place the queen b-bee on their penis and when they are completely covered with the swarm, I will leave them there to figure it out. (*She exits.*)

MOON: Nice night, beautiful stars, minimum of snipers. That's what I call perfect conditions.

ROY: Untie me, you bastard.

MOON: How come you're dressed up like an Amish farmer, Roy?

ROY: Do you know what a divorce is goin' to cost me?

MOON: That's just overhead, Roy, it was comin' on anyway, you just have to amortize it.

CLEM: There's ants in my shirt, Moon.

MOON: I'm goin' to smoke me a Cuban cigar, Clem. They roll these babies on the inside of a beautiful woman's thigh. One of the few luxuries left.

CLEM: My wife left me too.

MOON: Everybody's wife leaves, Clem, it's a shit job.

CLEM: How am I goin' to raise my boys?

MOON: Just tell 'em to do the opposite.

CLEM: The opposite?

MOON: I wouldn't worry about it, Clem. (*Moon lights up.*)

ROY: My own brother robbed me.

MOON: You can get on the phone and cancel the cards, they got all-night service.

ROY: I'm talkin' about my car! You stole my car.

MOON: A Chrysler ain't a car, Roy, it's just upholstery on wheels. (*Suddenly the dump is alive with movement. Small black shapes scurry everywhere.*)

ROY: My God, what's that?

MOON: Looks like the rats are leavin' the dump, Roy.

ROY: Untie me, goddamnit.

MOON: I once saw rats eat a man alive. They ate him in circles like a corn dog.

CLEM: I'm scared of rats, Moon.

MOON: (*Looks up at the stars.*) You both owe me money. (*Silence falls.*)

ROY: Now Moon, this isn't the time to talk about that. This is a time

for three brothers, lost to each other by geography, to take hands, kneel down…

MOON: You owe me for the fishing cabin Pop left me that you sold for me in ~~'86.~~ '99

ROY: Moon, that cabin was in bad shape.

MOON: How much did you get for it?

ROY: …water damaged, rotted out.

MOON: How much, Roy?

ROY: Maybe $1,300, well, no, a little bit less.

MOON: You sold 1.3 acres down on the river for $1,300?

ROY: Hey little brother, this was eight years ago.

MOON: It was appraised 20 years ago at $7,500.

ROY: Are you accusing me of cheatin' my own damn family?

MOON: Yes.

ROY: There is no bond like blood, Moon, and there is nothing so despicable as to doubt it.

CLEM: Mighta been $5,000, Moon.

MOON: That's good, Clem, and when you started your pawnshop I fronted you $5,000, which was ten percent of the capital.

CLEM: Would you care for some Cheezits, Moon?

MOON: You sure that pawnshop didn't grow into your gun store? Because you would owe me ten cents on every dollar of profit.

CLEM: No. No, the pawnshop and the gun shop, that was two completely different enterprises.

MOON: I see. You still located down on the strip across from the Pentacostal Tabernacle of Simple Faith?

CLEM: Well, no, we kind of shifted over toward the water, when I changed over to family security.

MOON: Uh-huh.

CLEM: Riverfront development, you know.

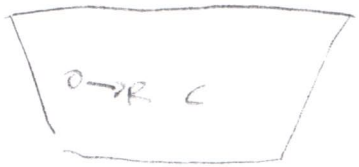
MOON: It wouldn't be located on 1.3 acres of riverfront property, now would it? (*Pause.*) Would it, Clem?

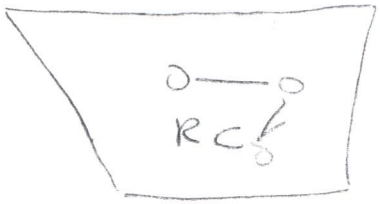
CLEM: (*Pause.*) Come to think of it, Moon, Roy and me might owe you a small sum, and we'd sure like to settle up. Don't you think so, Roy?

ROY: Well, now that we think of it.

MOON: Sounds good to me, boys, because I'm thinkin' of openin' up a chain of coin laundries over in Albania.

CLEM: Albania.





MOON: Clem, those people really need their clothes done.

CLEM: Sounds like a real opportunity.

MOON: *(Rises.)* Well, boys, I look forward to settlin' up.

ROY: There's nothing' that people of good will can't work out.

MOON: There better not be. (*Moves to untie them.*) Say, Roy, there's some barrels in the dump labeled Phinoethylbarmetholine. Don't they use that stuff in nerve gas?

ROY: (*A beat.*) No, actually it's used in barbecue sauce, stuff like that.

MOON: Sure, that must be where I remembered it from.

ROY: We can work the money out, Moon.

MOON: Okay.

ROY: Well, I got a Fourth of July speech to give.

MOON: So.

ROY: I got to go *now*. Gimme your keys, Clem.

CLEM: We got to finish the sacred trust, Roy.

ROY: Goddammit.

MOON: We got to finish the sacred trust, Roy.

ROY: You can't have your community festivities until the mayor speaks to nail down the significance. That is *democracy* which you two wouldn't know a damn thing about.

MOON: Democracy, sure. Hey, I'm out there killin' people for the free enterprise system.

ROY: You're just out there killin' people.

MOON: When you start a democracy you have to kill a few people, if you know your history.

ROY: You don't know squat about history, Moon.

MOON: I was in Nam, man, I *am* history.

ROY: You're history all right, it was the first damn war we ever lost.

CLEM: Now hold on, Roy.

MOON: Are you mockin' my dead buddies?

CLEM: Now hold on, Moon.

ROY: I been workin' 20 years to fix what you and your buddies screwed up!

MOON: (*Starting for him.*) I'm gonna' rip your head off.

CLEM: (*Out of desperation.*) Mama's dead.

(*Moon stops in mid-charge.*)

MOON: What's that?

Stand-up

CLEM: I didn't know if you knew Mama's dead?

MOON: When?

C July of '. We didn't know where you were, Moon. We tried oldier of Fortune magazine.

MOON: How'd Mama go?

CLEM: It was cancer, Moon, it wasn't too bad, she went pretty easy.

MOON: Goddamnit to hell! Was it the cigarettes?

CLEM: I don't know, Moon.

MOON: I told you to get her on to the low tar. I told you to take those Camel cigarettes away from her.

CLEM: I tried, Moon, but...

MOON: Damn! Buried or cremated?

CLEM: Moon, I just don't think...

MOON: Which was it?

CLEM: Cremated.

MOON: Aarrrgh! (*Moon, in a rage, slings trash across the dump.*) A man don't want his mother cremated! You understand that?

ROY: Well, she left instructions.

MOON: Instructions? Piss on the instructions! I want my Mama's grave! Where is she, goddamnit?

CLEM: Scattered.

MOON: (*Sitting down.*) You made bonemeal outta' my Mama.

CLEM: Well Moon, she didn't want to be a bother, see. She didn't want us worried about the upkeep. She just wanted to disperse.

MOON: You two morons went and dispersed her?

ROY: Well, we...

MOON: Dispersed her *where*, damnit?

CLEM: Wendy's.

MOON: Wendy's Fast Food?

CLEM: Well, she stopped cookin' with everybody gone and she liked to go down to the Wendy's.

MOON: You spread our Mama out at a fast food restaurant?

ROY: In the daylily garden.

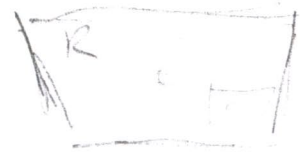
MOON: I can't kneel down at a fast food restaurant and ask my Mama what to do.

CLEM: Well you could, Moon.

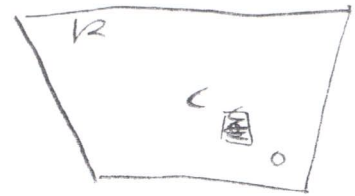
MOON: Never mind!

CLEM: It's a real busy corner though.

MOON: I don't want to talk about it. (*Throws his head back.*) R.V.!? The world's goin' to hell, R.V. Mama's dispersed. You're dead. Roy and Clem cheated on me. Communism wimped out. My



Roy Change his suit



trigger hand shakes. Where the hell are we? What the ...t's goin' on?!!

CLEM: I'll get the beer.

MOON: (*A moment. He calms.*) I still remember your smell, R.V., the curve of your thigh. I don't know why you killed yourself, but you're sure as hell well out of it. You could gentle me down, I remember that. We never got to say good-bye, so I'm here to do it. Hell, I'm only 20 years late, that's not too bad. You asked for it, an' I'm doin' it, but I tell you what, R.V., I'm tired of dead people. They're piled up, one on top of the other, everywhere you go on this planet. Damn, I'm tired of *that* smell. You an' me were two crazy sons-of-bitches, and that always gave me some comfort. I tell you one thing, R.V., I hope wherever you are you still got that red dress and that snake tattoo.

(*R.V. appears again on the car behind them.*)

Heaven for climate, hell for company. Let's chug these beers.

(*They do. R.V. speaks from behind them.*)

R.V.: Did you love me, Moon?

(*The men turn, startled.*)

R.V.: Holy shit, you got old!

(*Clem slumps to the ground in a faint.*)

MOON: Is that you, R.V.?

R.V.: It's me, Moon.

ROY: (*To Moon.*) You see her, right?

MOON: I see her.

R.V.: I forgot you would get old.

ROY: Go on now, whatever you are. Go on, shoo! Shoo!

R.V.: Hello, Roy.

ROY: Looks just like the day she died.

MOON: What is it you want, R.V.?

R.V.: I bring the messenger to...say, is Clem all right?

ROY: Damn, but she looks real to the touch.

R.V.: Real to the touch?

(*She walks directly to Moon and involves him in a long kiss. Roy talks through it. Clem moans.*)

ROY: Shut up, Clem. Is she real, Moon? What's she feel like, Moon? I wouldn't do that, Moon. Hell, she could be a vampire.

(*She steps back from him. Their eyes are locked.*)

MOON: Your lips are cold.

I wrote you 1,200 letters in Nam. I got two postcards.

MOON: It was a bad time.

R.V.: How's the Buddha, Moon?

MOON: I lost track.

R.V.: Where'd you go when you left Nam?

MOON: Angola for awhile, Rhodesia, Ghana, Yemen, Burundi, Salvador, Somalia, a little while in the Seychelles, Afghanistan, Azerbaijan, shacked up for a time in Albania, 26 days in Cambodia, two years near Zagreb, and I was down around Liberia when this came up.

R.V.: You know I married Roy.

MOON: Damn R.V., what'd you do that for?

R.V.: I was having nightmares.

MOON: Were you drunk?

R.V.: Some of the time. Shoot, Moon, back then he was the next best thing.

ROY: Thanks a helluva damn lot.

R.V.: Beggin' your pardon, Roy.

CLEM: (*Reviving.*) Roy! Roy!

ROY: (*Annoyed.*) What is it, Clem?

CLEM: (*Not seeing R.V.*) She was *here,* Roy.

ROY: Clem, damn it...

CLEM: No, no, I saw her. I saw R.V. So help me, no kiddin'. Wearin' the red dress just like the last night. I'm not foolin, Roy. (*Roy points. Clem looks.*)

CLEM: Oh, my God, the graves are opening. It's the last judgment, Roy, it's on us. My God, humble yourself.

ROY: Will you be quiet, Clem?

CLEM: (*Drinks from his flask, sings.*) "Swing lo', sweet char-i-ot, comin' for to carry me home..."

MOON: Clem, knock that off!

R.V.: What's shakin', Clem?

CLEM: Oh my God, oh my God, oh my God, oh my God.

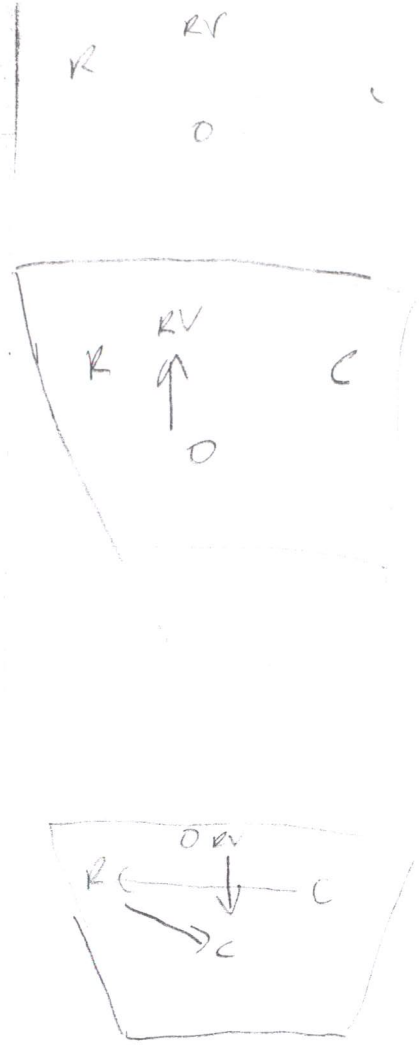
R.V.: (*R.V.: touches him on the cheek. He quiets.*) I had Clem one time, too. I had Clem and Roy 'cause you never answered my letters.

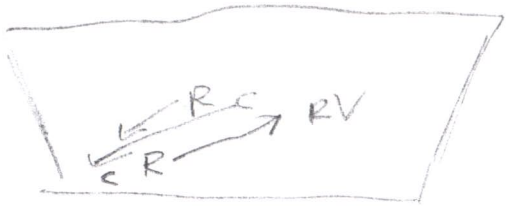
MOON: Come on, R.V.!

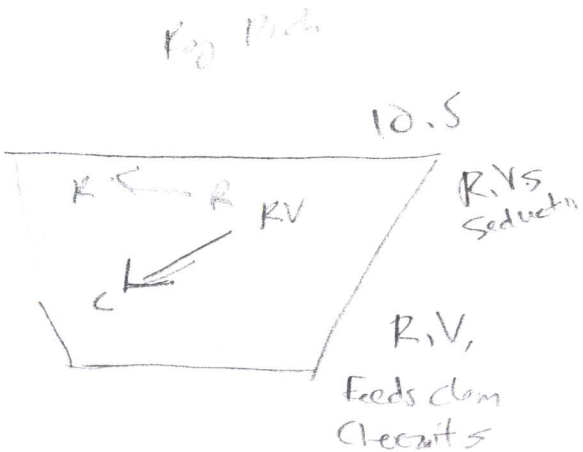
ROY: Clem!?

CLEM: Oh my God, oh my God.

ROY: You didn't have Clem? Not while we were married, was it?







R.V.: It was just one time, Roy.

ROY: While we were married?

CLEM: It was just one time, Roy.

ROY: (*To Clem.*) You're my own damn blood and you screwed my wife?!

MOON: That's pretty low, R.V.

ROY: It wasn't in my house, was it?

MOON: You said you were waitin' for me.

ROY: You better answer me, Clem!

CLEM: It was in the garden.

ROY: In the garden? It wasn't near Mama's daylilies, was it?

CLEM: Heck no, Roy, it was over in the phlox. You were sleepin'; it didn't mean to happen.

ROY: I just can't believe this!

R.V.: Roy, you and I were hardly makin' love at all.

ROY: Worst case, we always did it once a week.

R.V.: Yeah, Tuesdays.

ROY: It wasn't only on Tuesdays.

CLEM: We didn't do it on a Tuesday, Roy.

ROY: Shut up. Godawful, R.V., ol' Clem puffin' away in the missionary position.

R.V.: Not quite, Roy.

ROY: What do you mean, *not quite?*

CLEM: Well, I'm double-jointed, Roy.

ROY: Goddamnit!

R.V.: He was the only one of you boys ever loved me. Why the hell are you gettin' riled up? I'm dead, for one thing. He'd bring me coffee, get me car parts, roll my joints, remember my damn birthday, and come down every night to hear me sing at the Holiday Inn. He loved me like a dog; why shouldn't he get laid one time?

MOON: Because it's Clem, damn it!

R.V.: Roy was passed out. I couldn't sleep. The moon was real orange over the hills, so I walked out into the garden and there was Clem sittin' on the bench.

ROY: You didn't go out there naked, did you?

R.V.: I went out there naked all the time. It was 3:00 AM, who cared?

CLEM: I was just out walkin', Roy. I just sat down there for a minute.

ROY: You are a snake in the woodpile.

R.V.: We just sat there on the bench. He told me I looked like a statue in the moonlight. He said he come there some nights when we were asleep, he'd sit there and hope me and him were breathing in and out at the same time. We just sat there, whispering, with our shoulders touching, and after awhile we lay down in the phlox. You did real good, Clem.

CLEM: Thank you, R.V. You want some Cheezits?

R.V.: Sure.

ROY: Why the hell didn't you love me, R.V.? Goddamnit, I'm lovable. I'm a hard worker, ambitious, patriotic; I'm a damn fine provider, like to dance, I got a serious side. Why the hell didn't you love me?

R.V.: You're just too much man, Roy.

ROY: Well, I can't shrivel myself up to win a woman's love. I can't downsize what I am, R.V., I got to let it roll! It's like this country is what it's like. Those pissant third worlds can't stand the sheer magnificent expanse of us. They can't take their eyes off us, but they want to cut us down to size. It's tragic grandeur, that's what I got! Goddamnit, woman, you should have *loved* me!!

R.V.: It's not a function of the will, Roy.

(*A moment.*)

MOON: You're sure you're dead, R.V.?

R.V.: Deader than hell.

CLEM: There was omens, Roy, the Gifford horse, the frogs, the way the sky was. I must have seen 15 possum in a bunch headin' south on the highway, and a possum he travels alone.

R.V.: How about a beer, boys? A cold one for the road.

ROY: You want a beer?

R.V.: You get pretty dry when you're dead, Roy.

MOON: Get the lady a beer, will you?

ROY: I have got to get over to the...

R.V.: You can't go, Roy, you've been chosen.

ROY: What do you mean, chosen?

R.V.: Chosen, Roy.

(*Clem hands out the beer.*)

R.V.: How come you were sleeping in the dump, Moon?

MOON: I got in late last night. I can't sleep indoors, it makes me dream.

R.V.: Dream what?

MOON: Things I've done.

ROY: What do you mean chosen?

MOON: Outdoors, I've been dreaming about you.

R.V.: I know. (*She pops the beer and proposes a toast.*) To the white man, God help him.

(*Clem, Moon and R.V. drink.*)

ROY: What kind of toast is that?

MOON: Where are you, R.V.?

R.V.: Say what?

MOON: When you're not here?

R.V.: Heaven.

CLEM: Oh my Lord, there is life after death?

R.V.: Well, I'm drinkin' my beer, Clem.

CLEM: Moon, Roy, can you believe this. We're sittin' in the dump, and it's been revealed!

MOON: Take it easy, Clem.

CLEM: What do you do there? What's it like, R.V.?

R.V.: It's pure unadulterated longing. It's like you lost a leg but there's still feeling where the leg used to be. The feeling is for the life you didn't live, and you pass the time until you find some way to make yourself whole.

CLEM: Sure, but what's it like?

R.V.: The one you guys have is a celestial theme park with a thousand T.V. channels, continual sex and a 5,000 hole golf course.

ROY: Jee-sus!

R.V.: I go over sometimes for the salad bar.

MOON: Are you kiddin', R.V.?

R.V.: Could be.

ROY: I said chosen for what, damnit?

MOON: How you like it up there?

R.V.: Too damn serene.

MOON: Yeah?

R.V.: I tried to kill myself up there, too. Hell, you know, just for variety. Hurled myself down the cloud canyons. Forget it. Once you're immortal, you're immortal.

MOON: Sounds like a tough gig.

R.V.: It's a perception thing, Moon. See, I only got the perception I took up there, and that just doesn't cut it, you know. I took the messenger gig because I figured you could help me out. I'm

locked inside 25 years, Moon. I only get the heaven 25 years can understand. Hell, you must be close to 50. Tell me what you know.

MOON: Shoot low and shoot first.

R.V.: Goddamnit Moon, I'm not jokin'.

MOON: Who said I was jokin', R.V.?

R.V.: Move me on, Moon, don't leave me where I am.

MOON: Got me a limited perspective.

R.V.: You lived all those years and only got smaller?

MOON: I yam what I yam, babe.

R.V.: Well, damn! (*She kicks something across the dump.*) How come this dump's sittin' on the ball field?

ROY: The dump's the whole point, R.V.

R.V.: What point?

ROY: The point. Town was fallin' apart, R.V. The town, the job pool, the tax base.

CLEM: Dollar movie closed down.

ROY: I said to myself, Roy, what is this country based on? And by God it came to me, it's based on garbage. There is nobody in the world has the garbage we do! (*He pulls stuff out of the dump.*) Blenders, TV's, Lazyboys, syringes! We did a little study showed that within one truck day of this town, two billion tons of garbage produced weekly. Bingo! You know where people want to put their garbage? Somewhere else, that's where. And there is no damn town in this country that is more somewhere else than we are. And I sold that idea, by God, and it saved the town. We got the dump here plus nine other locations. I'm not sayin' I can walk on water, but I'll tell you this here is a damn miracle.

R.V.: So the ball field's down there?

CLEM: Down there somewhere. (*Finishes the flask, throws it away.*)

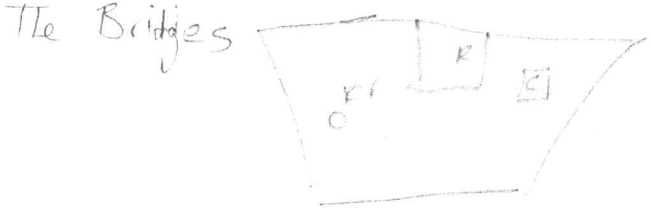
R.V.: How come you started throwin' those change ups, Moon?

MOON: How come you drove off the bridge?

R.V.: You ever been airborne in a Corvette Stingray on a cool night at 145 miles an hour?

MOON: No ma'am.

R.V.: Hang time, it's a real rush. Damn, I love speed. What was I supposed to do, Moon? Stick around, do hair stylin' at Babettes, work part-time at the Seashell Gift Shop, make chocolate chip



cookies down at Suzi's Love Oven?! Blow that crap out your ear, man.

CLEM: You could sing, R.V.

R.V.: Good enough for the Holiday Inn Lounge, huh, Clem?

CLEM: I came every night.

R.V.: Bunch of drunks in bad ties, yellin' out "Moon River." Yeah, I could sing that good.

CLEM: You was pearls before swine.

R.V.: Thanks, baby. Ol' Jimmy Dean an' me, we weren't countin' on tomorrow, see? You think I'm gonna drag a broke life behind me down Main Street, like some old rusty tailpipe kickin' up sparks? Hell with that, man! That night I flew the Corvette, I put on my red dress an' I looked fine! I was wearin' the hell out of that thing, you dig? Figured it was time to go out large, so I just slipped my good lookin' legs into some red rhinestone heels and put the pedal to the metal!

CLEM: We could see you go off the bridge from down at Bob's Big Boy parkin' lot. Slow motion right across the moon.

R.V.: Sure, I could see you boys standin' still lookin' up. Hell, 20 years later you're still there. You look sad, Moon. Is it me or the bridge?

MOON: What bridge?

R.V.: Your bridge.

MOON: What the hell are you talking about?

R.V.: The bridge in Liberia. (*A beat.*)

MOON: How do you know that, R.V.?

R.V.: I keep track, Moon.

MOON: Then why ask me?

R.V.: To see if you have the balls to tell me.

MOON: Just a bridge we held.

R.V.: Yeah?

MOON: Yeah.

R.V.: Just a bridge, huh?

MOON: Only way you could still get over into Sierra Leone. We didn't blow it 'cause we had to run transport through there once the town fell.

R.V.: Go on, Moon.

R.V. AND MOON: (*He is unaware that she speaks with him.*) The bridge stretched out like an old rusty skeleton between two hills…

R.V.: Tell it, Moon.

MOON: Those people...

R.V.: Those people...

MOON: Kept tryin' to come across it.

R.V.: That's right.

MOON: Everybody's snipers up in the hills.

R.V.: (*In sync, she sees it too.*) Man in a big brown coat...

MOON: Midday, somebody tried to run it.

R.V.: Uh-huh.

MOON: Looked like a man in a big coat. I was in the hills...

R.V.: Uh-huh.

MOON: I fired a rifle grenade into the coat...

R.V.: It didn't explode...

MOON: Didn't explode, but the coat opened up and it was a woman...

R.V. AND MOON: ...carrying a young child.

MOON: (*Hypnotized now by memory's image.*) That rifle grenade nailed the child to the mother's chest...

R.V.: Down there on the bridge...

MOON AND R.V.: ...and they lay, mother and child, nailed together on the bridge for two days...

MOON: See, nobody dared try to go out there and get 'em.

MOON AND R.V.: Lay there screaming...

R.V.: On the bridge...

MOON AND R.V.: Screaming.

MOON: Finally I took a rifle, blew up that grenade on the second shot.

R.V.: Then what, Moon?

MOON: I stayed there another day. Then I walked out, following the river. Took me three weeks.

R.V.: How come?

MOON: I figured I'd try something else.

R.V.: Like my bridge?

MOON: Your bridge?

R.V.: Right across the sky.

MOON: No thanks, R.V.

R.V..: What is it you know, Moon?

MOON: A piece of shit doesn't throw a perfect game.

ROY: You threw the damn game on purpose?

MOON: Shut up, Roy.

R.V.: It's getting late, Moon.

MOON: Could be.

R.V.: You don't have somethin' for me?

MOON: Not a damn thing.

R.V.: Well, it's time to get started, boys. (*She raises her arm, one finger pointing up, and there is a shattering crash of thunder. She raises her other arm.*) Spirits of wind, water, earth and fire, enwrap me here! (*Thunder, lightning.*) I am appeared before you, sent by the lord of hosts. She who is both the tumult and the eye of the hurricane. She who throweth up continents and maketh men from the fish of the sea. Hear me. Hear me!

(*The rain pours down on everyone except R.V. Clem raises his small umbrella. Roy and Moon are drenched.*)

R.V.: I come at her behest to be the harbinger of her great messenger. Through him will the blind see, the broken mend and the heart be made whole. (*A powerful beam of light pours down on her.*) Great spirit, King, right hand of the all-powerful, we welcome thee! Hold onto your seats, boys, he is upon us now!

(*A tremendous explosion, as if the stage had been struck in two by a lightning bolt. The rain stops. Smoke, debris and then sudden silence. Elvis appears. He is dressed in his "suit of lights," the famous white sequined performance suit. A driving guitar riff and final chord surround his entrance. He is the same age as at his death.*)

CLEM: My God, who are you?

ELVIS: I'm the King of the White Man, asshole, who are you?

CLEM: Elvis?

ELVIS: The Velvet Rocker, buddy, the Hillbilly Cat, the King of Western Bop.

CLEM: You thinned down, King.

ELVIS: I been dinin' on cumulus Nimbus.

ROY: Kinda' lost your magnitude.

ELVIS: Well, I'm not dressed up as a Smith Brothers cough drop. I'll tell y'all one thing, boys, there wasn't nobody, nowhere, no time, no way, ever seen a white boy move like me. They couldn't shake it where I shook it or take it where I took it. I was born with a guitar in one hand and the ruination of western civilization in the other. Y'all look a little tight there, boys, so the King's gotta' get you ready to party! Heck, have some Dexedrine… (*He scatters*

hundreds of pills in a multi-colored spray from his pockets as if they were coins for the multitudes.) Have some Tuinal, Dilaudid, Quaaludes and Demerol! Get up, or get down, get wherever you need to be to hear the *word!* (*Lightning crackles, framing his figure in its flash.*)

CLEM: (*Picking some up.*) Thanks, King.

ELVIS: Uh-huh! Hit it! (*Another crash and sizzle of lightning.*) The Lord, she stood on the rim of the universe, and she did regard the earth, baby. And wherever her gaze did fall there was real bad doody goin' down. There was a sickly caste, a dread pigmentless, soulless, milky pale fungi suckin' the sustenance right out of the world, man, leavin' things undone, done badly, overlooked, overgrazed, snafued and skimmin' the cream right off the top. And who the hell was in the driver's seat takin' care of business? Buddy, it was a bunch of fat old white men, that's who it was! Greedy ol' farts livin' off the fat of the land while the land fell apart in their hands. They weren't gettin' it there, dudes! You can't rhumba in a sports car, baby. You can't do no Australian crawl in a shot glass. We had it, man, and we pissed it away! Regard me, brethren. I was the most beautiful cat ever rolled into Memphis in a '39 Plymouth. I could sing black boogie and the Mississippi Delta blues. I could shuck and jive like a funky angel. I was the white man triumphant, baby. If I wanted it *now,* I got it *now.* I was the boss, the king, El Presidente Grande, and I ended up fat as a grain-fed hog, down on my knees on the bathroom floor with my head floatin' in a toilet bowl. Hell, you're down in the bowl with me, boys. Y'all had played errorless, no-hit ball goin' into the eighth inning, and you took it from there to the dung heap, poisoned in spirit and your women flee you into the night with whatever they can carry.

CLEM: (*Delighted.*) He's talkin' about us, boys!

ELVIS: She-it, compadres! The last time the Lord saw something' like this, she had the game rained out, man but the Lord wouldn't even trust you cats to build an ark! Huh-uh! She was set to hurl the white man into the eternal dark and see what somebody else could do with it. My people were goin' down, baby, the bell was tollin' the midnight hour, cats, so I had the cherubim and seraphim deliver me to the Lord's right hand an' I whipped out my guitar and shucked out a tune, boys.

CLEM: We love you, Elvis!

ELVIS: (*He throws out his hand and an unseen band crashes into a rock and roll riff. Elvis' voice is now amplified.*) I rocked it, baby, laid down a hot lick, turned it every way but loose, like you know I can, and there amongst the beatific host, the Lord, she got down, she got tight, she got right with my music, and she boogied through the day, and a night, and a day and when I sent that last reverb down through the chambers of her immortal heart, she said, "Elvis, I thought I'd seen it all when I saw Lucifer, but the way you're rockin' tonight, I'm gonna give the white man one *(Chord.)* more *(Chord.)* chance." *(Chord. The music ends.)* And I said, "Lord, I'm hip and I'm on it, what's the deal?" And she laid her cool hand on my cheek and asked did I remember what my precious mama said to me when I done wrong and lied about it. And I said, "Yes Lord, I do." She said, "Sonny boy, there ain't nothin' done in this old world so debauched and brought low that you can't get right with your God and your mama with just two little words... (*The big finish.*) and listen here now, those two words, those two paradisiacal confections, sweet as plums or summer cherries, those two words are...I'm **sorry!**" (*A pause. Distant thunder rolls. The words "I'm Sorry" echo through the heavens.*)

MOON: Hey Elvis?

ELVIS: Yeah?

MOON: The Lord God wants us to say we're sorry?

ELVIS: Uh-huh.

MOON: Just "I'm sorry?"

ELVIS: Well, it's kind of a cosmic thing, man. But you got it, yeah. Otherwise she's gonna' send down the white flu, let it blanket the earth, uh-huh, all you white guys sneeze yourself right into eternity inside of two weeks.

CLEM: The white flu!?

ROY: What the hell are we s'posed to have done?

ELVIS: (*His arms wide.*) This.

ROY: Hey, everybody throws things away, okay?

ELVIS: But who was runnin' the store, buddy?

ROY: Well, it wasn't me, big guy.

ELVIS: Well, who the hell was it?

Roy sits down

R.V.: Oh man, repent all and regard thee here thy immortal soul.

ROY: Damnit, Moon, listen to this.

MOON: I'm listenin'.

ROY: Clem?

CLEM: Well...

ROY: Stand up for your own blood, goddamnit!

CLEM: I guess God's my own blood, Roy.

R.V.: Lo, the plague will descend, your bodies be consumed, and your heart sundered.

MOON: I don't have a heart, R.V.

R.V.: You just never turned it on, Moon.

ROY: R.V.?

R.V.: Sinner, save your kind and rejoice, lest you and all your tribe shall perish from the earth.

MOON: You comin', Elvis?

ELVIS: I'll be just above your head, man.

MOON: You sorry?

ELVIS: I failed my precious mama. I can't sleep the eternal sleep when I done like that.

ROY: The white man shouldn't have to take the rap for this!

ELVIS: Tough nuggies, Roy.

ROY: Who the hell has the moral authority to stand here in this dump and tell me I got to take off my underpants?!

ELVIS: I was you, I'd ask your precious mama.

ROY: How the hell am I gonna ask my mama.

MOON: You can't ask her, you damn moron, you dispersed her!

ROY: Hell, you got your media, your cartels, your multinationals, your big government.

ELVIS: And who was runnin' them?

ROY: How the hell am I supposed to know?

ELVIS: Well, let's just say they weren't purple, how about that?

ROY: I'm damn tired of everybody talkin' trash on the white man. Hell, we thought up about 90 percent of civilization. It was twelve of our own kind sat with Christ at his table. If these goddamn minorities shoulda led us somewhere, why didn't they step up to the plate! *(He sneezes explosively.)*

ELVIS: Sounds like you're comin' down with somethin'. Say, R.V., how about some seraphim send us down a milk shake, maybe put an egg in it? *(R.V. snaps her fingers.)*

CLEM: Say, King...

ELVIS: Uh-huh?

CLEM: You kinda lost me on the curve, King.

(The milk shake descends from the skies.)

ELVIS: Hell, y'all explain it, R.V., I'm gonna take a load off. *(Takes the milk shake and makes himself comfortable.)*

R.V.: Hear me, fishermen. *(Lightning.)* You, before me, of all those assembled, are the chosen. The bellwethers, the forerunners, you hold redemption in the palm of your hand!

ELVIS: She ain't kiddin'.

R.V.: See Clem, the Lord, she asked me did I know any white guys, and I said sure.

CLEM: How come she asked you, R.V.?

R.V.: I was just standin' there. She touched my snake tattoo, filling me with light, saying I should pave the way and we should proclaim the news.

ELVIS: *(Drinking his milk shake.)* Do it, iridescent one! Attend me, white ones! *(Sizzling lightning crash.)* The Lord God, the First Cause, the Celestial She, the Big Femina, instructs you here to prepare your hearts and set out on foot from this place to great Washington Monument in the city yclept "D.C." and to carry on that journey of the spirit a sign of apology.

CLEM: Gollee Roy, we could do that!

R.V.: Your garments shall you here divest, and your journey shall be unclothed. *(A pause.)*

MOON: Say what?

ELVIS: You got to do it butt-naked, buddy.

ROY: Now just hold on here.

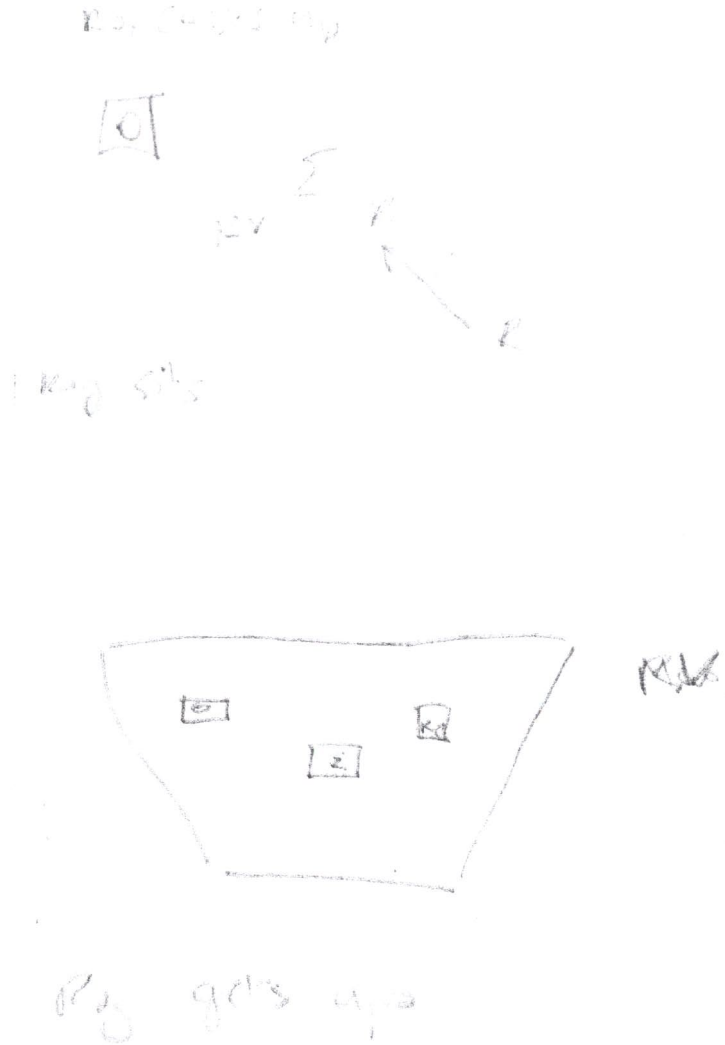
ELVIS: *(Holding out the milk shake.)* You ever try one with an egg in it?

ROY: You want us to strip down and walk 600 miles from here to D.C. with a sign says "I'm sorry"?

ELVIS: Gonna get a hell of a suntan.

ROY: When hell freezes over, boy! I'm the best damn thing genetics ever come up with, an' that's the American white man, runnin' the most powerful damn nation this world's ever seen, an' we don't strip down for some damn hallucination! *(He sneezes.)*

ELVIS: Have a Kleenex, Roy.



ROY: Shut up!

CLEM: (*Suddenly twisted with rage; the straw that broke the camel's back.*) Don't...you...tell me...to...shut up!! You have... humiliated me...for 40 years. (*He reaches down and picks up an iron bar out of the dump.*) If you ever...ever speak to me in that tone of voice...Roy...I will mash you like a potato, tear out your liver and heart and devour them, whole.

MRS. MANNERING: (*Clapping her hands as you do with children.*) Now that is enough, now. You may not eat your brother. That is out of the question.

CLEM: (*Returning to himself.*) Golly, Mama...I didn't mean that.

MRS. MANNERING: Of course you didn't.

MOON: (*Looking at the sky.*) Well, they know what you got in your dump all over North America now, Roy.

MRS. MANNERING: (*With finality.*) People do not eat their own. (*She points up.*) Think of your mama seein' your dirty laundry bein' washed right across the night sky, Roy. You better get right with the deity. (*Roy hangs his head.*) Now have you boys been brushing your teeth?

THE BOYS: Yes Mama.

MRS. MANNERING: Then get undressed.

ROY: I don't want to, Mama.

MRS. MANNERING: It is very, very late.

ROY: I...just can't...Mama.

MRS. MANNERING: Why not, Roy?

ROY: I'm ashamed of the size of my sexual member.

MRS. MANNERING: God gave you that body, there is no reason to be ashamed of it. You think I haven't seen your thing before?

ROY: Yes Mama.

MRS. MANNERING: You have a responsibility to your fellow creatures, Roy Mannering, now I don't want to hear anymore about it. Your sweet Grandpa Abbey, 100 years old, your kind Uncle William always sent five dollars on your birthday, you want them to die of this flu?

THE BOYS: No Mama.

MRS. MANNERING: Well, I would think not. I carried you inside me, boys, and you were, every one of you, breech births. I have cradled your tiny fevered bodies in my arms and sang to you from the opera Aida by the immortal Verdi. I watched you grow

(*A heavenly chord; a puff of smoke. Their mother appears on the ridge. She is in her early 70s, wearing a housedress. She has a halo.*)

CLEM: Holy smoke!

MRS. MANNERING: Hello, son.

ROY AND MOON: Mama!

MRS. MANNERING: Now you do what Elvis says, Roy. I only hope to goodness you took a shower.

CLEM: It's you, Mama.

MRS. MANNERING: Hello Bootsie. I just cannot believe you let an eight-year-old child get hold of an AK-47.

CLEM: I know, Mama.

MRS. MANNERING: I believe you've been imbibing hard liquor.

CLEM: It's only 80 proof, Mama.

MRS. MANNERING: Well, you had better pull up your bootstraps. Moon Mannering, what is that on your face?

MOON: Facial hair, Mama.

MRS. MANNERING: You got something to be ashamed of hid behind that mess?

MOON: Well, Mama...

MRS. MANNERING: You better not let your father catch you like that. Do you have blood on your hands, son?

MOON: I do, Mama.

MRS. MANNERING: I ought to whip your butt off. Thou shalt not kill, do you hear me? Tiny, what in heaven's name are you got up as?

ROY: Abraham Lincoln, Mama.

MRS. MANNERING: Remember the sin of pride, Tiny. Pride goeth before a fall. Look up sinner.

(*Roy does.*)

CLEM: Gollee Moses.

ROY: Oh, my God, Mama.

(*Clem lets out a long whistle.*)

ROY: It's the load receipt printed in fire on the sky.

CLEM: Those letters must be a mile high.

ROY: See what you did, Clem?

CLEM: It's real readable.

ROY: Shut up.

CLEM: (*Trying to make up.*) You want some Cheezits?

ROY: (*Ripping them from his hand. Stomps them.*) Arrrrrrgh!

CLEM: You broke my Cheezits. Those were all the Cheezits I had.

ROY: Shut up!

CLEM: (*Suddenly twisted with rage; the straw that broke the camel's back.*) Don't...you...tell me...to...shut up!! You have... humiliated me...for 40 years. (*He reaches down and picks up an iron bar out of the dump.*) If you ever...ever speak to me in that tone of voice...Roy...I will mash you like a potato, tear out your liver and heart and devour them, whole.

MRS. MANNERING: (*Clapping her hands as you do with children.*) Now that is enough, now. You may not eat your brother. That is out of the question.

CLEM: (*Returning to himself.*) Golly, Mama...I didn't mean that.

MRS. MANNERING: Of course you didn't.

MOON: (*Looking at the sky.*) Well, they know what you got in your dump all over North America now, Roy.

MRS. MANNERING: (*With finality.*) People do not eat their own. (*She points up.*) Think of your mama seein' your dirty laundry bein' washed right across the night sky, Roy. You better get right with the deity. (*Roy hangs his head.*) Now have you boys been brushing your teeth?

THE BOYS: Yes Mama.

MRS. MANNERING: Then get undressed.

ROY: I don't want to, Mama.

MRS. MANNERING: It is very, very late.

ROY: I...just can't...Mama.

MRS. MANNERING: Why not, Roy?

ROY: I'm ashamed of the size of my sexual member.

MRS. MANNERING: God gave you that body, there is no reason to be ashamed of it. You think I haven't seen your thing before?

ROY: Yes Mama.

MRS. MANNERING: You have a responsibility to your fellow creatures, Roy Mannering, now I don't want to hear anymore about it. Your sweet Grandpa Abbey, 100 years old, your kind Uncle William always sent five dollars on your birthday, you want them to die of this flu?

THE BOYS: No Mama.

MRS. MANNERING: Well, I would think not. I carried you inside me, boys, and you were, every one of you, breech births. I have cradled your tiny fevered bodies in my arms and sang to you from the opera Aida by the immortal Verdi. I watched you grow

from beautiful, tiny, tow-headed perfections into big, splotchy, gangly things who masturbated. I paid your car insurance long after it should have been your responsibility. Yes, Jesus, I have suffered! You could see me draining out into you like a bottle emptying. There wasn't a drop, not a scintilla, left for my thoughts or feelings or dreams. I could have been a supply-side economist or the President of the United States. After you were born, your father was afraid to have marital relations with me because you boys never learned to knock. I dreamed of Mr. Presley drenching my body with scented oils and creamy peanut butter and taking his will with me, but none of you would ever drive me to Memphis! I died as I had lived, a housewife, a mother, a cleaning lady and, when that time came, when I did die, when I was no longer your lifelong wet nurse, you irresponsible sons-of-bitches dispersed me to the wrong place!

ROY: Mama!

MRS. MANNERING: I said Hardee's, goddamnit, not Wendy's! Wendy's Big Bacon Classic is pigeon piss compared to Hardee's Frisco-burger! I wanted to be at Hardee's in amongst the begonias, across from the drive-thru!

CLEM: It wasn't Wendy's?

MRS. MANNERING: Never mind! That was then, this is now. You can make it up to me *here, after death.* You can give me what I never had, my dreams, my glory, my raison d'être. You three, my spawn, have been chosen by the apogee, the highest of the high, to save the white man! All is forgiven; seize the day, do it for your mama!!

(*They stand astounded.*)

MRS. MANNERING: Go on, I'm waiting.

(*Clem unbuttons his work shirt. Roy and Moon are still. Clem takes off the shirt.*)

MRS. MANNERING: Don't make me get the strap, Roy.

(*A beat, and then Roy sits and starts taking off his shoes. Moon stands dead still, arms at his side.*)

R.V.: Did you ever love me, Moon?

MOON: I did.

R.V.: Then why the hell didn't you write?

MOON: I was ashamed.

R.V.: You damn fool, Moon. Look what became of us.

(*He stands for another moment and then starts unbuckling his belt.*)

R.V.: Cool.

(*She takes a step back.*)

MRS. MANNERING: Good night, R.V.

R.V.: Good night, Chlotilda.

MRS. MANNERING: I've still got ironing to do. Good night, Clem.

CLEM: Good night, Mommy.

MRS. MANNERING: Good night, Tiny.

(*Roy's hands move instinctively in front of his genitals.*)

MRS. MANNERING: Good night, Moon.

(*He lifts a hand in farewell. She starts to exit.*)

MRS. MANNERING: Everybody sleep tight now.

(*Humming a hymn, she disappears. A harmonica, somewhere in the universe, picks up the hymn. R.V. raises one hand and speaks.*)

R.V.: And lo, grace descended...

ELVIS: ...and they divested themselves, and the harbinger said to them...

R.V.: As you journey, oh chosen ones, men where they stand in the fields will lay down the tools of the harvest and join with you...

ELVIS: Yeah, baby...

R.V.: From far off will men hear your righteous tread and stream weeping from the corporate headquarters...

ELVIS: From the condominiums and nouvelle restaurants...

R.V.: From the universities and the oak-paneled boardrooms...

ELVIS: Outta Wall Street and the Silicone Valley.

R.V. AND ELVIS: See them, this multitude of white guys of a certain age...

ELVIS: CEO's, estate lawyers, congressmen...

R.V.: Pediatric allergists, downsizers, aldermen...

ELVIS: Gettin' on their Harleys and their Swiss Alpine snowmobiles, their longin' palpable...

R.V.: Their eyes regretful, their hands joined.

ELVIS: They are comin', baby!

R.V.: The Catholics, the Jews, the Episcopalians...

ELVIS: The down and dirty Baptists...

R.V. AND ELVIS: And all the lesser faiths!

ELVIS: And Roy, my man, you're in the front, dude.

R.V.: You too, Moon...

ELVIS: . And Clem, you swingin' dick, you're drivin' the vanguard forward...

R.V.: Until at last these pale multitudes envelope the Washington Monument, as the muscles surround the heart, and from their throats will spring one single cry...

ELVIS: The cry of sins committed...

R.V.: The cry of sins repented...

ELVIS: The cry of old white guys everywhere...

R.V. AND ELVIS: "I...am...sorry!"

(*The word "sorry" echoes through the heavens. Roy's fireworks begin overhead. Three rockets in various colors illuminate those below.*)

ROY: Luellen started the show.

(*More fireworks.*)

R.V.: Oh, boys, you were beautiful that day; your crisp, cream, pin-striped uniforms against that emerald green infield.

(*Rocket overhead. The brothers remove their last items of clothing.*)

R.V.: You boys, like music box figures, spinnin' and divin'. The endless arching beauty of that final mile-high pop-up.

(*Another rocket.*)

R.V.: You were gods, boys...

ELVIS: Gods of summer.

R.V.: Think what you might have done?!

(*A tattoo of explosions and bursts of color. The brothers are finally naked. They look up at the display.* ~~*R.V. scribbles on the back of an old "For Rent" sign with her lipstick.*~~)

CLEM: (*A particularly glorious rocket.*) Ooooooo, look at that one!

(~~*A golden light plays down the sequined rope by Elvis. He puts one foot in a loop at the bottom and takes hold of the rope with one hand.*~~)

ELVIS: We've got to get on that resurrection express, boys. (*Making his exit.*) Hail and farewell, buddies. Y'all bring it on home.

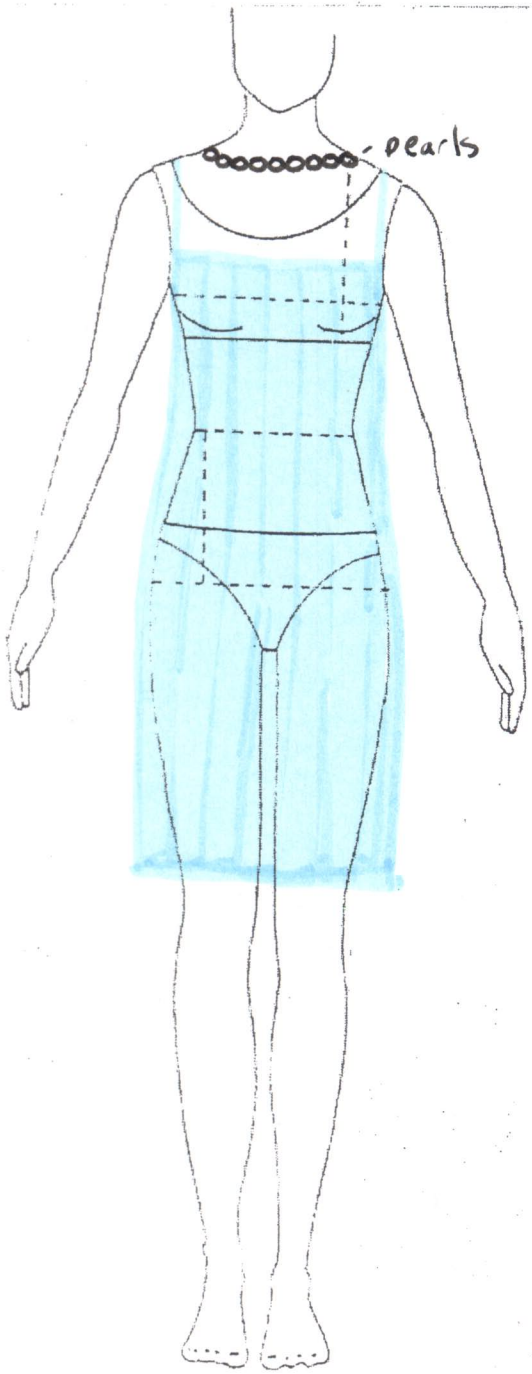
(*He is gone. A series of sharp explosions. R.V. moves down and hands the sign to Moon.*)

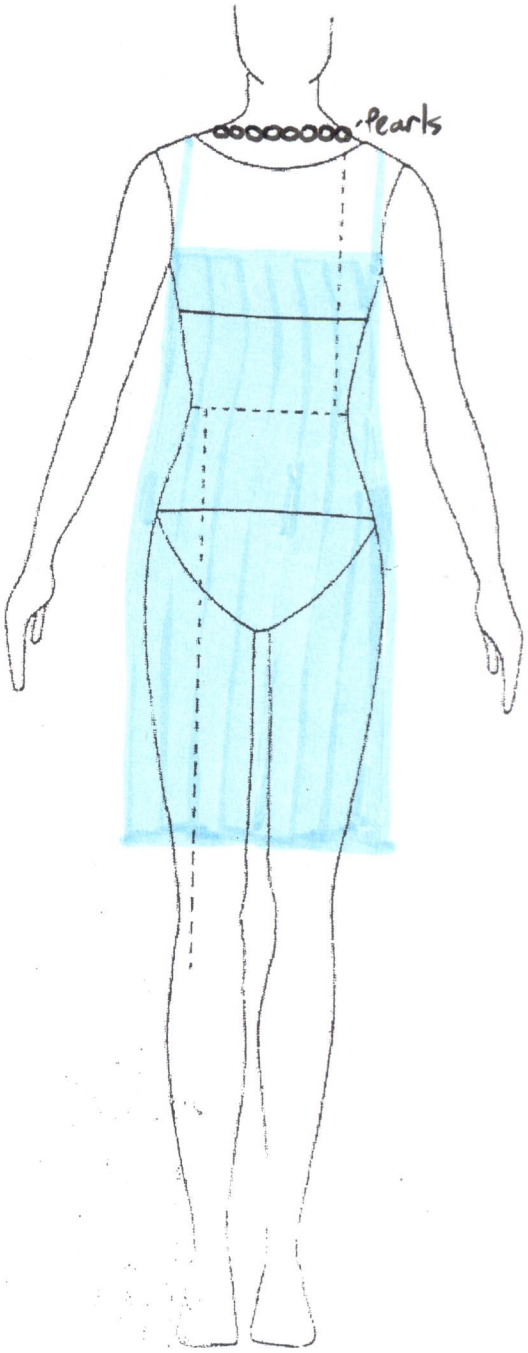
R.V.: Let's go, boys. I'd go south on Rural 501 and then east down the turnpike. They'll be comin' that way. Hold it up, Moon. Hold it high, my darlin'!

(*He does. It says, "I'm sorry." In the distance the Mayberry High School band strikes up a traditional march, the fireworks redouble. It is the finale of Roy's display. The brothers stare out at us; Moon*

MONA

SLIP - light blue, purple

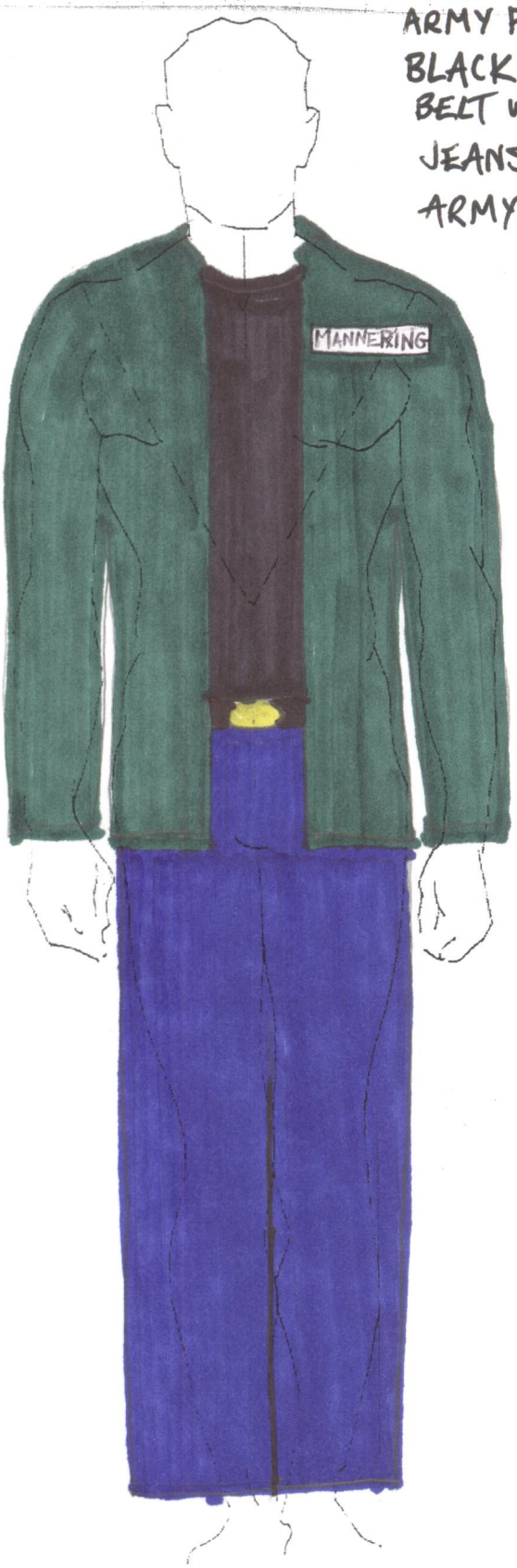




SHOES - HIGH HEELS

MOON

ARMY FATIGUE JACKET CAMO/GREEN
BLACK T-SHIRT
BELT W/HUGE BUCKLE
JEANS/CARGO PANTS
ARMY BOOTS



MRS. MANNERING

HOUSEDRESS/MUMU - in a revolting print, hopefully
KNEE HIGHS
ORTHOPADIC SHOES/ SLIPPERS
HAIR IN CURLERS

A note on Dialects

The following pages provide a small glimpse into the kind of Dialect work we did for this play. The characters worked in a Mountain Southern U.S. Dialect. Particularly, we went for a dialect that would be typical of Western Kentucky, as that is most likely where the play is meant to be set.

For the characters of Moon, R.V. and Roy, we decided for a less pronounced dialect. For the charcters of Mrs. Mannering, Mona and Clem we went for a more pronounced dialect.

In addition to playing Elvis, Doug Mertz served as dialect coach for this production. In addition to these notes, he took daily rehearsal notes and exposed the cost to samples of an authentic Kentucky dialect.

Middle-Aged White Guys
Dialects

1) steel, feel, meal iː → iːjə any vowel before l

2) a. depart, guitar, cement ɪ → i

b. inch, string, limbo ɪ → ẽ

c. Italian, direct ɪ → əɪ

3) a. drench, strength, hem, any e → ɪ̃ nasal

b. get, chest, yesterday → ɪ before t or s – keep short

c. egg, head, measure, fresh, hedges → eɪ before g, d, ʒ, ʃ, dʒ

d. wrestle, yellow → æ

4) can't, aunt, laugh æ → æjə (keɪnt) stay

5) law, saucy, audience ɔ/a → o "aw" "au"

6) lunch, hungry, love ʌ → ɜ

7) town, down, around aʊ̆ → æʊ̃

8) very, terrible, America e+r → ɜr

9) here, clear, fear iə̆ → iər

10) there, hair, stare ɛə̆ → ɛər (stay ar)

11) poor, ore, sure uə̆ → uər oər

12) car, barn, army aə̆ → aər

13) figure, regular, deputy drop j

14) walking, running, smoking drop g

15) fellow, window, narrow oʊ̆ → ə end

0 time, night, fine

Directing Notes

Casting Rationale
Middle-Aged White Guys

The University of Pittsburgh Laboratory Theatre is designed to provide directors with a mixture of experienced and inexperienced actors, as many of the more experienced actors are cast in main stage productions. This productions was no exception, as all but one of my cast counted *Middle-Aged White Guys* as their first or second show. In retrospect, however, I don't think I would have cast the show any differently had I had access to more experienced performers. It was a benefit to have actors at similar skill levels and who were hungry for an opportunity to prove themselves.

Henry Brinkerhoff (Roy) – Henry, from the beginning, was a bit of a wild card. Even in callbacks he had strong opinions, which is something I like in an actor. Even though this would sometimes produce unorthodox choices, it also gave the character an edge, an unpredictability that I think was a great boon to the character. Henry brought a controlled nervosity to his role that I though was truly appropriate

John Fallon (Clem) – There were a number of auditioners equally as funny as John both in general auditions and callbacks, but no one was quite able to touch Clem's humanity with the same depth of which John was ultimately capable. He, like Henry, had an element of unpredictability. My wager was that this would create an explosive partnership between the two of them. Though sometimes there was tension between the two, I think I was right for the most part.

John Jameson (Moon) – I had never seen John's work before auditions, and like John Fallon, he wowed me with his ability to get to the heart of the character. While others read with a focus on the mercenary, violent qualities of Moon. James found the mixture of ennui and pain that would come to mark his portrayal of the role very early on.

Elise D'Vella (R.V.) – Elise not only had the right look for the part but, she also provided more than a superficial reading of the role. Other actresses tended towards playing seductive, but once again, there was something vulnerable in Elise's audition.

Dylan Geringer (Mrs. Mannering / Mona) – It was difficult finding an actress who could slip seamlessly between these two roles. It was surprising to me how difficult it was to find someone who was dynamic, but was capable of emotional depth in both roles. Dylan has a great deal of comedic talent. She was quite a find indeed.

Doug Mertz (Elvis) – This casting choice was in place well before the rehearsal process began. Not only is Doug an expert in dialects and accents, which enabled him to produce an Elvis voice that wasn't schticky, but he is also quite an accomplished actor. As a result, Doug was able to capture a number of facets in his portrayal of Elvis. He shifted from the exuberance of the Elvis at the top of his game to the world weary drag of an older Elvis and to then to the innocent child underneath these layers and back again with ease. It didn't hurt that he has almost the exact physical build that I was looking for.

Character Description – Roy

Roy is a selfish son of a bitch. His sense of entitlement, which sourly colors all of his actions, stems from a general sense of superiority as his being an American, conservative white male. Sexist, racist, xenophobic, self, insensitive: Roy Mannering is a man with his head up his ass.

Desire – Roy has a constant need to justify his greatness. This drive has provided him with some notable accomplishments. He is mayor and has made a good amount of money. Roy knows deep down, however, that he is a fraud. He hopes that by continue to live in a way that places himself head and shoulders above others, the fact that he is a fraud will be forever concealed. Roy Mannering is constantly running from himself, trampling others in order to do so.

Will – Roy is strong-willed, if not bull headed. He identifies everything in his path as either something to be controlled or something to be destroyed.

Moral Stance – Roy fervently believes in Christian, conservative, American ideals. But, this is only true insofar as it allows him to take full advantage of those around him. In reality, Roy only believes in himself. He also earnestly believes that the three value systems above put him at the top of the totem pole, and thereby integrate into his selfish moral framework seamlessly. The thing that stops Roy Mannering from being pure evil is that he lacks the self-awareness of an Iago (or other truly evil villain). However, delusional he may be, Roy Mannering believes that he is doing the right thing.

Decorum – Roy is similar to Moon, in that projects a slight manner of heroism, but he is different from Moon in that he does so purposefully, and is thus a grotesque. It is only appropriate that he attempt to look like Abraham Lincoln, but is smeared with dirt. That is an outward expression of Roy's bankrupt inner character.

Summary Adjctives – proud, pompous, loud, puffed up, insecure, blowhard

Character Description – R.V.

R.V. is a woman whose uncontainable lust for life was too much for even her to control. All three brothers tried to have her, and none of them could fully give to her and appreciate her on the level necessary. She is a force of nature.

Desire – R.V. lives (or, rather, lived) to push the limits. This has always been the soul of her desire. Whether it be laying down with Clem in the Phlox or taking her last ride, an aura of destructive mystery surrounds her need to push the envelope. She even tries to kill herself once she's in heaven. She might be the only person ever to be bored in Heaven.

R.V. is also desirous of Moon. It is as though R.V. and Moon could have been glorious heroes in another play, at another time and place. Here, however, our potential heroine is relegated to crooning for lower middle class businessmen and the hero is a killer of women and children. This devastating reality may really be what led R.V. to kill herself.

Will – R.V. is difficult to ascertain. On one hand, she is strongwilled enough to take her last ride, but she is also rendered helpless in the face of her options. She took the only way out she could find, but that way out could hardly be characterized as heroic.

Though there may seem to be a values judgment implicit in this assessment, I would argue that it is textually substantiated. R.V. herself feels that she and those around her are all examples of a life wasted. Now, the only recourse is to submit to God's will. The atonement is not just the boys' but hers as well.

Moral Stance – R.V. is morally self-contained. Though she is a profit of sorts, her moral structure is earthbound, practical and personal. It may seem odd to call such a colorful suicide practical. But it is. She has insisted on living the life she sees as best without compromise.

Decorum – R.V.'s outward appearance is nothing if not a reflection of her inward appearance. She represents temptation, as she wears red and a serpentine tattoo slithers down her arm. She also bears an enigmatic quality, an ethereal nature, that perhaps she had even before she passed.

Summary Adjectives – enigmatic, ethereal, sensual, ghostly, sexual, empowered, desireable, alluring

Character-mood-intensity – Distant yet fierce

Character Description: Mona / Mrs. Mannering

This may seem a strange pairing, but as these two are two-sides of the same ancillary character coin, I think it only fitting that they be paired together. Also, they will be played by the same actress in this production.

Mona is weathered and beaten down by men. She has been robbed of any chance at success by their selfish dominance (mainly by Roy). Though she is strong-willed, social expectations and male strong-arming have rendered her weak until the events of the play push her over the edge.

Mrs. Mannering is sort of a parellel to Mona. Unlike Mona, however, she has made peace with the world and is enjoying her eternal stay among the heavenly host. Though on Earth she suffered at the hands of men, Heaven has brought about a change in perspective. Though she is still bitter about her time on Earth (as comes up often in her speech), she has ultimately come to terms with the unfairness of life on Earth

Desire – Mona just wants to be appreciated as a human being. Though this may seem a fundamentally simple want, it is one that has been denied her; it is also one that she is willing to take drastic action to see provided her.

Mrs. Mannering's desire is for her boys to finally live up to expectations, for once in their miserable lives. Though she did the best that she could raising them, working herself to the bone in hopes of their success, they have been a constant and unrelenting disappointment. Though she is now free of mortal anger and resentment, she still wishes to do right by her family tree.

Will – Both Mona and Mrs. Mannering are strongwilled. Yet, the two of them have spent their lives dominated by the whims of men. In both of their cases, it seems that initially they felt that it was their duty to succumb to subjugation by men, but ultimately realized what sort of lot they had been given and rebel against societal shackles.

Moral stance – The two of them lack a larger societal moral stance, but rather they personal efficacy in the struggle for equality.

Decorum – Mona is worn down both mentally and physically. Though we have heard the saying "I have given you the best years of my life" ad nauseum, someone like Mona has the right to say it. She has wasted away; she has been broken down by an intense lack of appreciation

The same is true of Mrs. Mannering, but she has received Heavenly compensation for her suffering

Summary adjectives –

Mona – wasted, dried out, sad, vengeful, self-actualizing, servile

Character Description – Clem

Clem is simple. Though his actions make him just as evil as Roy, he is more like an animal, incapable of complex moral judgment and lacking in all but the most simple understanding of the world around him. This makes Clem a surprisingly sympathetic character. He would do the next right thing, if only he were capable of comprehending the world any more deeply than moment to moment.

Desire – Clem wants to make others happy. Though he is greedy and lives well, there is a sense that all of this is done to satisfy what he believes others want him to be: R.V., Roy, his mother etc. When he realizes that he has actually hurt people, as usually he is unable to see the consequences of his actions, he takes on an animalistic animal and blows up at Roy, whom he had previously believed had his best interests at heart.

Will – Clem is weak willed.

Moral Stance – Clem seems to ascribe to Christian values; he feels genuine remorse when he messes up. He also believes in the "omens and portents" that spring up from time to tiem in the story. But, once again, is simple-mindedness prevents him from acting upon the moral feelings he has on anything other than a moment to moment basis.

Decorum – Clem looks like a slovenly good old boy. He to is clothed in the outward manifestation of his psyche. He wears a suitcoat and maybe even dress shoes. But, he also wears a goofy hat, overalls and no belt. It is as though he is attempting to look the part of the businessman, but he is at a loss for exactly how one would accomplish such a thing.

Summary Adjectives – simple, compassionate, idiotic, short sighted, weak

Character Description – Moon

Moon, like R.V. is defined by his potential for heroism and his inability to live up to these expectations. This is perhaps more explicit for Moon than for R.V. He is the pitcher who blew the game, the son and husband who ran away, the hero who hides behind villainy. Moon is a tortured soul. What tortures him is man's (and his own) inability to live up to expectations.

Desire – There is a constant battle within Moon's tortured soul. He wants to be left alone on a superficial level, as evidenced by his position as a globe trotting mercenary. Also, he wants to be a hero, somewhere deep down. Yet the layers between that core want and the outward expression of his actions are rife with self-doubt: the feeling that "a piece of shit don't throw a perfect game."

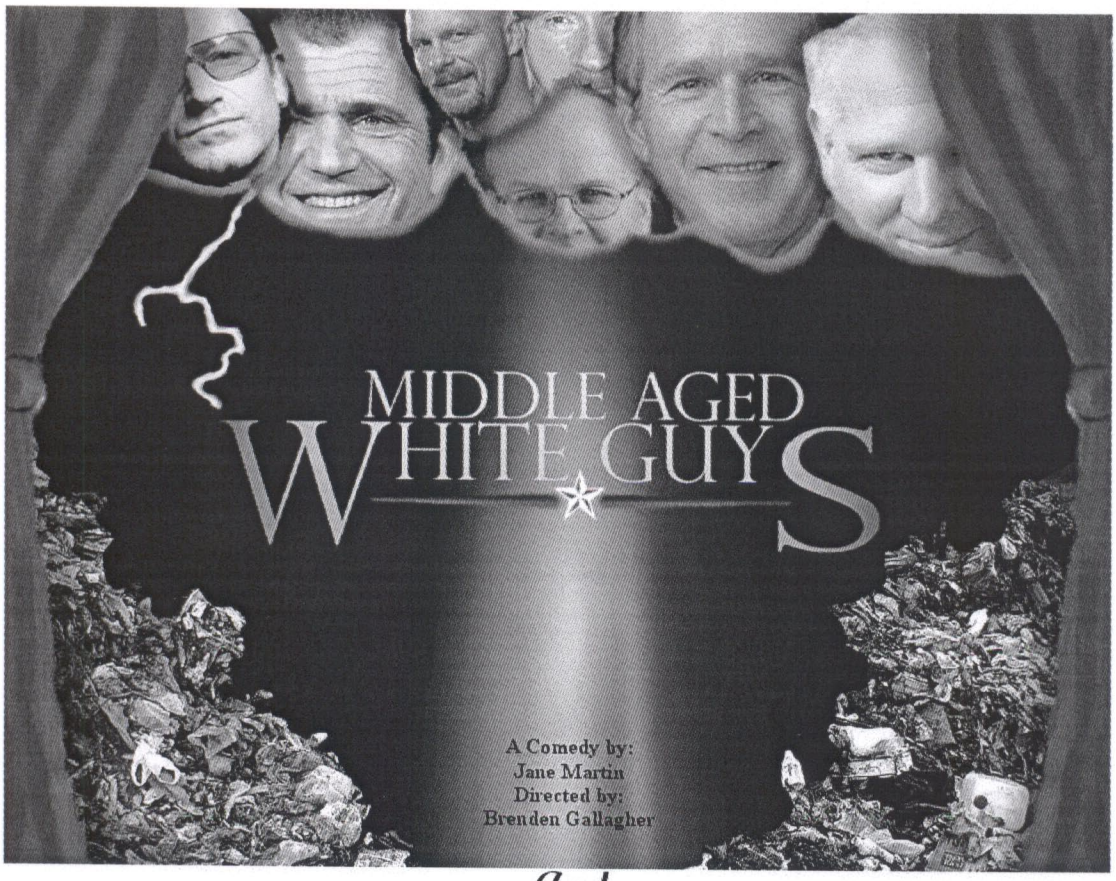
Will – Moon has a very strong will when necessary. He solves the Mona issue and elicits money he is owed from his brothers. At the same time, he lacks the will to deal with R.V. He lacks the will to deal with his Mother's death. Most importantly, he lacks the will to be the man he has the potential to be.

Moral Stance – Moon's values are clouded. He is, deep down, a good man, but his cowardice in the face of expectations has clouded those values.

Decorum – Moon looks like a grizzled mercenary: a faded, washed-up hero. He looks simultaneously like a soldier and a brigand. All of his outward appearances reflect this duality.

Summary adjectives – soldierly, beaten down, noble, reprehensible, fallen

University of Pittsburgh Repertory Theatre Presents...



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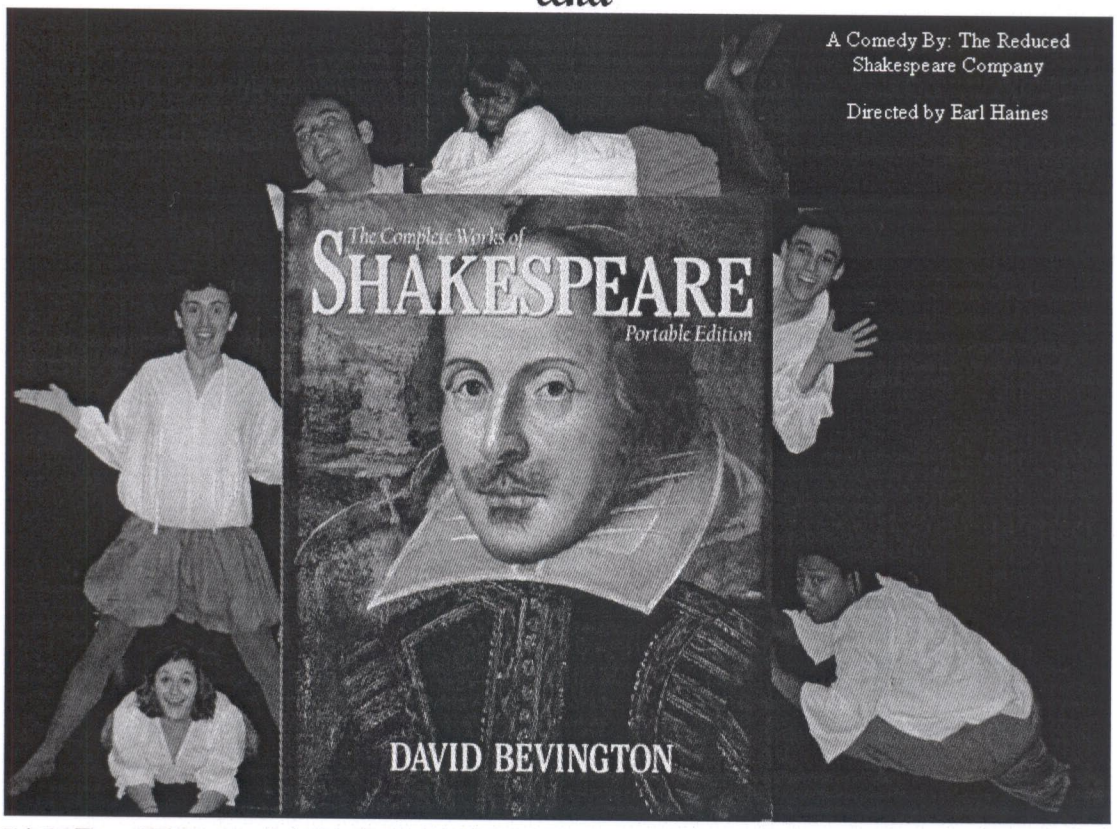

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PRICES: Students $7 — Regular Admission $10 FOR TICKETS CALL: 412-624-PLAY (7529)

Alden Orion Davidson (LD) — is a senior in the writing program at Pitt who has done all manor of backstage thing for Pitt Rep. She would like to thank Captain Adrian Rooney and AMD for prodding her to design her first show, and her manly assistant Toby for the heavy lifting. Alden firmly believes cupcakes are the cure for everything.

Thomas "Boomer" Donahoe (Props Master) — Normally an actor, this is "Boomer's" first endeavor into Prop Mastery. He'd like to thank Nick for extra fire power, his dad fro some potent chemicals, and his sister for showing him the sign. He'd like to pass this message on from Uncle Ty: "Hey Marty, we're in the papers! We made it, buddy!"

Joanna Getting (Costume Designer) — marks her third excursion into
costume design with MAWG. She thanks Ellen and Cindy for her spectacular (and much needed) guidance and expertise. Joanna can be seen on stage
later this semester in Lysistrata.

Ellen Silverstein (Asst. Costume Designer) — While her academic pursuits include math and anthropology, Ellen is thrilled to set those areas aside to tackle yet another one of Brenden's creations; her work was last seen in Eight Times. Ellen wants to thank her friends and family for their enduring love and support and applaud the cast and crew for their exceptional talents.

Christina Kruise (Sound Designer) — is a senior Theatre Arts and Urban Studies major. This is her second sound design credit, her first being for the play "Autobahn" while working in Germany this summer. She thanks Brenden and his wonderful cast and crew for their patience, humor, and insight.

Todd Mazzie (Set Designer) — is a senior Theatre Arts Major here at the University of Pittsburgh. This is his first ever set design and is thrilled to finally expose his talents. He wants to thank Mr. Gallagher for the wonderful opportunity to work with such an amazing cast and crew.

Doug Mertz (Dialects Coach) — is a Teaching Artist in the Theatre Arts Department here at Pitt. He has appeared in numerous productions both on campus and off, in places like Pittsburgh Public Theatre, City Theatre, Quantum
Theatre and PICT. This is his first lab. Thanks to Brenden for asking!

MIDDLE-AGED WHITE GUYS

Directed by: Brenden Gallagher

CAST

R.V. ..... Elise D'Avella
Roy.....Henry Brinkerhoff
Clem..... John Fallon
Moon.....John Jameson
Mona.....Dylan Geringer
The King ..... Himself
Mrs. Mannering..... Dylan Geringer

PRODUCTION TEAM

Director .....Brenden Gallagher
Stage Manager .....Krystal Harwick
Assistant Stage Manager ..... Karoline Nilsen
Lighting Designer .....Alden Orion Davidson
Assistant LD .....Toby Horn
Faculty Advisor.....Kathy George
Props Master .....Thomas "Boomer" Donahoe
Costume Designer .....Joanna Getting
Asst Costume Designer .....Ellen Silverstein
Sound Designer .....Christina Kruise
Music Recorder/Producer .....Marty Brown
Lead Guitarist .....Henry Brinkerhoff
Operations Manager .....Laura McCarthy
Guitar Tech .....Dan Kitching
Set Designe.....Todd Mazzie
Dialect Coach .....Doug Mertz*
Light Board Operator .....Ben Coppola
Sound Board Operator .....Ari Leber
Stage Crew.....Molly Dooley, Jake Swanson, Nina Williams, Thomas "Boomer" Donahoe

Poster/Program Art Designed by Henry Brinkerhoff

*Member of Actors'Equity Association, the Union of Professional Actors and Stage Managers in the United States

A Special Note

This play's direction was completed as part of the fulfillment of the B.Phil Honors Degree from the University of Pittsburgh Honors College. This production was made possible by a generous grant from the UHC.

A Special Thanks to…

Cindy Albert
Lou Taylor
Doug Mertz
Kathy George
Laura McCarthy
Sloan MacRae
Annmarie Duggan
Johnmichael Bohach
Dean Alec "Doc" Stewart
University Honors College
UHC Brackenridge Fellowship
Marty Donahoe
Pi Lambda Phi
Kait Wittig
Catherine Costanza and USITT
Arielle Goldstein
Phil Hahn
Toby Horn
The Cast and Crew of *The Complete Works of William Shakespeare (abridged)*

BIOGRAPHIES

Brenden Gallagher (Director) – is a fifth-year triple major in film / fiction / theatre. Though this is Brenden's 1st time directing for Pitt Rep, he has directed in numerous other capacities for theatre and film. He has acted in numerous shows for Pitt Rep., including *Memory of Two Mondays (Gus)* and *The Nina Variations (Treplyev)*. He also wrote *Eight Times,* a part of last year's lab season. He thanks God, his family and his roommates.

Elise D'Avella (R.V.) — is an undecided sophomore. She is very excited to be performing in her first show at Pittsburgh and is very thankful at having been given the opportunity.

Henry Brinkerhoff (Roy) — is a second year Physics/Theater Major anticipating minors in Mathematics and Studio Arts. He has appeared in Phaedra's Love as Theseus, as well as playing various roles in The Vermont Sketches by David Mamet.He is a regular at the Redeye Theater Project and Friday Nite Improvs.

John Girtain Fallon (Clem) — is a senior studying Political Science, History, Theatre, and Women's Studies. In his free time... oh wait... he doesn't have any. In his future, he plans to... wait... no idea. One thing he knows for sure is that he is proud of everyone involved in the show.

John Jameson (Moon) — is a sophomore at Pitt University with an undeclared major. This is his first Pitt Theatre production. He would like to thank the whole cast and crew for making the show an enjoyable
experience as well as a process of learning and growing. He would also
like to thank his friends and family for their support and understanding.
I love you Mom and Dad and Becca and Erin.

Dylan Geringer (Mona/Mrs. Mannering) — is a sophomore Theatre Arts major, who is extremely proud to call 'Middle-Aged White Guys' the first production that she has been involved in here at Pitt. She would like to thank her friends, family, and The Mint Man for trying to help her write this biography.

Krystal Harwick (SM) — is a junior English Literature major, PPW Certificate, and Theatre Minor. She'd like to thank Tara Adelezzi for suggesting her for this great opportunity, as well as Brenden and Karoline for their endless support during the process. A final thanks goes out to her roommate for late-night Caribou trips and other countless good deeds.

Karoline Nilsen (ASM) — is a junior English Lit and Linguistics double major, and an RA and Program Coordinator in Tower B. This is her fourth
show with Pitt Rep, and she would like to thank everyone for this fantastic experience (especially Krystal - yay, Lit majors!)

Post-Mortem: *Middle-Aged White Guys*

Concept. Concept. Concept. I have learned quickly in my theatrical directing career that the concept is all. Looking back on the production, which is quickly becoming a distant memory, I think that most of my successes and all of my failures can be attributed directly to the strength and consistency of my conceptual work. The concept from which I was operating was a rather simple one: bright rays of the past poke out of a bleak modern landscape. This mirrors the themes of the play, which details how three brothers, each of who share a reverence for "American" values and the beauty of the rural U.S. betray the legacy of that which they hold dear.

Each design element, in one way or another, mirrored or contrasted this initial perspective. The set design provided a perfect mirror, as pieces of what we termed "grandma's attic" were dispersed throughout an industrial dump. An old scrub brush, a broken mandolin, a rusted washboard, and a faded portrait, among other things, poked out of an industrial mass of tires, oil drums, and old couches. The sound provided a counterpoint, a traditional gospel and bluegrass tunes were interrupted by droning hums and harsh scrapes. The costume design split the difference, as half of the costumes shimmered with light and the other half were covered in dirt. Finally, the lighting design strove to act as the light shining through, but slowly mutated into a toxic green by the play's end.

As I said above, the shortcomings of the productions could have been remedied with an even greater dose of conceptual consistency. Though the lights worked within the concept, there were some deviations. We used colored symbolic gobos, which we thought would illuminate the concept, but ultimately, they didn't; their bluntness betrayed a lack of confidence in our work. Rather than cut them, we kept them in and we kind of tipped the scales of the production. The acting, though quality, generally struck a balance between the comedic and the dramatic, which, in a way, reflects the concept; the script sometimes provides a joyous country romp, and at other points it is a drama about the decay of the United States. There were acting missteps; sometimes I would allow the performances to become either comically or dramatically indulgent.

Like any play, *Middle-Aged White Guys* is unique; it has its own intrinsic demands. Nonetheless, I have learned that regardless of how far a play may be from the norm, you approach every piece from the same stance: find what lies at its core and let that radiate through the production. You may miscalculate exactly what the play is about, but if you fail to nail down your initial opinions and impressions, there is no way they can change.

Finally, it bears mentioning that I was lucky to be working with so many talented, creative minds on this project. Like a good politician, a director has to surround himself with good people. He must also be able to delegate. This is where the message comes in. If the message is inconsistent, it doesn't matter how strong the individual pieces of your platform may be. The concept is the message. The art is in the message.

Brenden Gallagher
3.15.09

APPENDIX B

IF YOU AND I WERE THE LAST TWO PEOPLE ON EARTH

DIRECTOR'S NOTEBOOK

Opening Statement: *If You and I Were the Last Two People On Earth*

"What would it be like if we made a Zombie Movie." This statement, like so many creative ideas, was generated when a bunch of guys were sitting around, goofing off in one of the parents' houses over a long summer break. Anyone who has taken a collegiate film studies or production course has probably seen that really weird looking kid in the George Romero t-shirt in the corner babbling about the zombie film he is working on. After a couple years of dealing with that kid over and over again, my friends, Kevin Riley and Erik Hinton, and I finally got around to talking about how we would make such a film. At the time we were working with our sketch comedy group, *The Bachelors of Fine Arts*, and we were ready to take on something a little more complex. It's hard to remember who suggested the idea, and I am sure each of us would guess that it was ourselves, but somebody suggested it be about what's happening to the people around the zombie apocalypse, those who never see a zombie, let alone fight against them. We all liked the sound of this; a zombie movie with no zombies in it.

We proceeded to write the first sections of what would turn into the three vignettes that comprise this story. The next summer I received my first Brackenridge Undergraduate Research Fellowship from Pitt's Honors College to write the script, with the help of Kevin Riley, while simultaneously researching parody and zombie film. The next summer, I received the same fellowship, but this time I began to compare film and theatre direction; this was a way for to make the film while preparing to work on the theatrical production of *Middle-Aged White Guys* through Pitt Repertory Theatre in September of 2008. Ultimately, this turned into an Honors Thesis comparing theatre and film direction. Before I knew it, I had secured over a thousand dollars in funding, some professional actors, faculty support, and I was ready to make a movie.

Here I am now, three years after that initial meeting, two years after that first Brackenridge, and only two months after principle shooting has finally been completed on the film. There have been trials and tribulations throughout the process of completing this film. We have been approached by the police. We have filmed in ninety degree weather and nineteen degree weather. We have even found ourselves in a park, filming in the middle of what we eventually realized was a hot-spot for romantic liaisons between secretive couples. It's hard to believe that its finally finished, and it feels like an entire movie could have been made about the process of making the movie that would be even funnier than film itself.

To those viewing the film, I don't have much I'd like to say, as I have come to believe a film should speak for itself; if you don't read it as a commentary on zombie films, then all that research was for naught. To those viewing this director's notebook, I hope that the charts and papers included will provide a small glimpse into what went into getting this film produced: location charts, special effects lists, casting rationales and all. Though I am sure that a documentary about all of it would be much more interesting, that would probably take another two years to complete.

Brenden Gallagher – 2/5/09

Script

This is the latest pre-production draft of the script. Rather than reflect the film exactly, I thought it would be interesting to include this draft for the sake of comparison. In my estimation, this draft of the script is ten percent larger than the final product. The most significant cuts were made to the Hal, Paul, and Eli section of the script, though all three sections have been trimmed.

-Brenden Gallagher

CLEM: iberia.

ROY: Well, brother Moon, he's seen the world. Hasn't *built* a damn thing. Hasn't *been* a damn thing. White roses every 10 years. I'm surprised he had the money.

CLEM: R.V. loved him.

ROY: She loved me.

CLEM: Well, Roy, I'd have to say...

ROY: I don't want to hear it! Three brothers, Clem, but everybody thought he was pure gold, didn't they?

CLEM: Oh, they did.

ROY: Well, I'm the gold and you're the gold, an' he's down in Liberia washing out his clothes in a stream full of fecal matter.

CLEM: I miss old Moon. He sure does love to kill people.

ROY: He always killed things. Back in elementary, he'd kill bugs, birds, squirrels, wild dogs...he just grew up, that's all. Clem, I got a time problem...

CLEM: Well, we'll do the toast.

ROY: There's somethin' else, Clem.

CLEM: What, Roy?

ROY: A real bad sign.

CLEM: Bad signs, that's right. You know that palomino horse old Gifford keeps out at four corners? Drivin' over here, seen that horse run mad, goes straight into the barbed wire, tangles himself up, goes to screamin', blood gettin' throwed up into the air, most horrible thing I ever saw, plus everybody's gettin' boils, the creek's turned red, and there's piles a dead frogs right downtown...

ROY: (*Hands him a letter.*) I'm not talkin' about that kind of sign, Clem.

CLEM: There's been three cases of rabid bats...

ROY: Just read the letter, Clem.

(*Clem opens it.*)

ROY: I'm not worryin' about dead frogs or rabid bats; I'm worryin' about re-election, Clem.

CLEM: (*Referring to the letter.*) So the newspaper guy knows about the chemicals? (*So what?*)

ROY: What chemicals?

CLEM: (*Indicating the barrels stage right.*) Well...these ones.

ROY: They are food additives, Clem, not chemicals.

INT. CHURCH NURSURY - DAY

An empty nursery. Quite dark. The silhouette of rocking horses, beanbags, blocks. The door handle jiggles.

PAUL
(O.S., whispered)
Get your hand off my ass!

ELI
(O.S., whispered)
Sorry! I was going for the knob!

HAL
(O.S., whispered)
Just open the door.

HAL, PAUL and ELI, 20, burst through the door and stumble into the nursery. Eli is the slimmer of the three. Hal is stern, brows often furrowed.

Paul pushes Eli into the room.

PAUL
Move!

Paul walks loosely, like he owns the place.

Paul scopes out the room and Hal joins him. Eli sits against the wall Indian style, sullen.

ELI
Why do we have to be in the nursery? Empty nurseries freak me out. Next thing we know we'll see a rocking horse that rocks on its own or a little girl singing "Ring Around the Rosie" as her head pops off.

HAL
What are you talking about?

Paul examines the structural integrity of the door and windows.

PAUL
Only room in the church with one door.

HAL
Where is everybody? We've looked everywhere!

Eli pulls a PAPER out of his pocket.

ELI
The paper says the crisis meeting areas are this church, the school and the fire hall.

Paul tears the paper from Eli's hands.

PAUL
Let me see that.

HAL
Maybe it isn't a crisis.

ELI
No, this is definitely a crisis. My mom was going apeshit on the phone.

PAUL
Your mom goes apeshit when they announce Sadie Hawkins Dances.

ELI
There are fliers all over town.

Eli grabs the flier back from Paul.

ELI
(Cont'd)
Maybe *they* got one.

PAUL
You think *they* can read?

ELI
I'm just sayin' no one's here and if they *can* read, this is an all you can eat buffet.

HAL
We don't even know if they're real. And whatever these things are, they are not literate enough to pick-up on an invite to a potluck dinner.

PAUL
Of Brains!

HAL
(impatient)
Of Brains. So, what do we do, stay or leave?

PAUL
I say we leave. No one's here. We're

sitting ducks. We need a more strategic locale.

HAL
Like where?

PAUL
Uh ... I don't know. A bomb shelter or a bunker or something.

HAL
Well, I don't know where any of those are. Let's just wait. For all we know, we're the first ones here.

Eli sits up, rigid.

ELI
Shit, was I supposed to pick up Chrissy?

PAUL
How am I supposed to know?

Eli fumbles with his phone and DIALS A NUMBER.

He stands up.

ELI
Hey baby ... Eli ... how you holdin' up? ... Yeah ... are the guys from the Lion's Club over there already? ... That makes total sense ... If your dad drills a hole in the side of the house, how's he gonna see outside ... Yeah, windows are pretty vulnerable ... He *is* a good shot ... sure ... Barbed wire? ... I don't doubt it ... That's the thing about instant soup ... definitely ... Well, tell your dad thanks for the invitation ... a secure compound is a great idea for ... I'm sure my mom will be glad to hear it. Okay babe ... love you. Bye.

Eli hangs up.

HAL
I am pretty sure Chrissy's dad's insane.

ELI

I think he's formed a militia.

PAUL
God bless the second amendment.

HAL
They'll probably getting antsy and kill each other.

PAUL
He probably has a better plan than we do.

ELI
Everyone has a better plan than we do. We don't have a plan. What's Rene gonna do, Paul? Probably pre-game with the girls and see if they can't land some hot zombie ass at the club?

PAUL
So, Hal, what are you and your girlfriend gonna do later? Your parents probably aren't around ... perhaps a little romantic spot ... Oh wait, that's right. I forgot. Hal hasn't had a girlfriend since the seventh grade and Eli's girlfriend is in the seventh grade.

ELI
She is only two years younger than us. And, I'll remind you, once again, that sixteen is the age of consent in this great Commonwealth.

PAUL
Thank God for Hillbillies.

ELI
I wish some Hilllbillies were here right now. They'd have guns.

Hal shakes his head.

Silence. The nursery's phone RINGS. The boys spring to attention.

ELI
Hal, get that.

HAL

Why me?

PAUL
'Cuz you're a people person, man. Just answer it.

ELI
You are good with people.

HAL
No, I can just stop myself from berating them for five minutes.

PAUL
Exactly ... good with people.

ELI
Someone's got to pick it up ... it might be the police calling with information.

PAUL
Something tells me the police have better things to do right now than randomly calling church nurseries.

ELI
Who do you think it is?

PAUL
I don't know. And I'm fine with keepin' it that way.

The phone stops RINGING.

HAL
Well, now we'll never know.

PAUL
They'll call back.

Silence.

ELI
Maybe it's the -

HAL
The what? I doubt these ...

ELI
Zombies.

HAL
(begrudgingly)

... have the motor skills advanced enough for telephone use, Eli.

ELI
I'd like to see them conquer the world without the powers of telecommunciation.

PAUL
Maybe it's a P.R. campaign thing. Zombie awareness. For the price of a cup of coffee a day, you can provide destitute Zombies with the brains the need to succeed.

HAL
(head in hands)
Oh my God.

ELI
Maybe some teenage Zombies were prank calling us!

PAUL
Damn you Zombies! Always pouring salt in the wounds with your clever practical jokes!

HAL
It is not zombies. Who said it was zombies?

PHONE RINGS AGAIN. Hal walks to the phone, staring down Eli and Paul. He picks up the phone.

HAL
(on phone)
Hello?

Hal listens.

HAL
(on phone)
Woah. Calm down Miss. Calm down ... I can't under ... I know ... I'll look...

Hal moves across the nursery, looks around. He tosses toys to the side as he goes.

HAL
(on phone)
Where do you want me to ... Oh, the

crib ... right ... yeah ... sorry.

Hal approaches the crib, brings his hand slowly to the covers and pulls them off.

Hal's jaw drops.

HAL
Yeah, he's here ... yeah... okay ... okay ... yes ... I promise. Goodbye.

Hal hangs up.

HAL
It's the mother. Her baby umm ...

ELI
What?

HAL
Is here. So, we're gonna have to return that ... it ... him.

PAUL
Where?

Hal stares at the baby.

HAL
Apple Court.

ELI
That's like five miles away. Why can't she come get it?

HAL
She said she couldn't.

ELI
Why?

HAL
Maybe she's trapped or something. I don't know.

PAUL
Rescue mission, huh? Better than sitting around here.

ELI
We're safe here. Why should we leave?

PAUL

Yeah, I know we've really made this place a home after all these minutes, and it's so well fortified for survival, but some times you just gotta go.

ELI
But ...

PAUL
We're leaving. Eli, if you want to stay, you stay here alone. C'mon Hal.

Paul turns away, opens the door and leaves. Hal follows.

PAUL
See ya, Eli.

PAUL
I'll close the door behind me. Turn off the lights on your way out.

Hal closes the door and exits. The sounds of FOOTSTEPS.

Eli stands up in a huff and follows after his friends.

Eli exits.

Eli pops back into the room and turns off the lights.

EXT. FRONT OF CHURCH - DAY

Hal and Paul are well on their way down the street.

Something is behind them. It approaches as quickly as it breathes.

Eli rushes up behind them, sweating. Tombstones guard the entrance to the church. Eli cuts past them as though they were road cones or trash cans.

ELI
Hey, why'd you guys leave me?

PAUL
Shut up.

ELI
This isn't the way to Apple Court.

PAUL
Shut up.

HAL
We're goin' to Paul's house first -

PAUL
pick up some weaponry.

ELI
What weaponry? You got a garrison in your basement, or maybe one of those fire places that opens up to a secret passage revealing your immense armory? You don't even hunt.

PAUL
Whatever we can find.

Eli gives Paul a look of disdain.

ELI
So ... I see obvious parallels to *Three Men and A Baby* here. Which one of us is Burt Reynolds?

PAUL
I'm Burt Reynolds!

HAL
That's Tom Selleck, guys.

PAUL
They look a lot alike.

ELI
Tom Selleck is kind of a zombie Burt Reynolds.

PAUL
That's ... true.

Hal wheels on Paul and Eli.

HAL
This baby does not have three fathers. One father and two jackass uncles maybe, like "Full House". If it wasn't for me, we'd still be sitting in the nursery being harassed zombie prank phone calls!

Hal walks off.

PAUL
(whispered to Eli)
He's definitely Guttenburg.

EXT. ROAD - DAY

Hal, Paul and Eli walk down the street. Hal lags behind slightly, still holding the baby. He is shirtless.

Paul and Eli TAUNT Hal as he approaches.

PAUL
You know, Eli, it's pretty chilly out here isn't it?

ELI
Yeah. I have never been so glad to have a t-shirt in all my days.

HAL
I wasn't gonna use my t-shirt as a diaper and put it back on.

ELI
Cheer up buddy. At least you'll get a tan.

PAUL
You said you wanted to be the mom.

ELI
He's right. That means you're the go to guy for diaper duty.

PAUL
It's not our fault you didn't grab any diapers from the nursery.

HAL
It's been this way ever since I met you assholes. You always want handouts. Like when you took my sweater at that rock concert and I froze my ass off all night.

PAUL
I don't think you can call Jimmy Buffet "rock". And you made us hide it in our bag after a fat guy in a straw hat and cargo shorts called you a faggot-

ELI
-Cause the shirt had an Irish setter on it. And then I put it on when I got cold.

HAL

Fine. But how many times have I lent you my car, given you food, told drunk guys that Paul wasn't really trying to fight them and he didn't actually have a Boston accent.

PAUL
I like the Departed. So sue me.

ELI
Don't blame us. You're too nice. Look out for yourself once in a while.

HAL
Okay, what if you needed help? I mean wouldn't you want somebody to-
[help you out]

ELI
Somebody needs food, I'll feed them. Someone's stranded, I'll pick them up. But, I think the baby could have gone an hour without a new diaper.

HAL
You see, you guys-

PAUL
Take it easy. We get it. Do unto others. Great. And this ... this is a good look for you. Much like the proud prehistoric cavewoman caring for her young.

HAL
You know what? Forget it. Just shut up.

EXT. IN FRONT OF PAUL'S HOUSE - DAY

The boys reach Paul's porch.

PAUL
You guys wait here.

Paul walks up to his front door and searches under the mat. Nothing.

PAUL
Key's gone. Help me get the window open.

Eli comes up on the porch and helps Paul. Hal follows behind

with the Baby.

PAUL
Eli ... Eli ... Look at me. I'm gonna pop the screen. When I say so, twist the crank.

ELI
Okay.

Paul stands on his tip-toes and works his fingers across the screen, attempting to pop it out.

PAUL
Go ahead.

Eli leans over, about at Paul's waist height, and reaches for the crank. He has to reach around Paul to do so. He begins twisting the crank.

PAUL
Stop.

Eli keeps twisting the crank.

Paul removes his hand quickly from the window.

PAUL
Oww! I said stop goddamn it!

Paul nurses his hand.

Hal takes a seat and gently rocks the baby. [MOMENT OF VULNERABILITY]

HAL
Guys, do we really need weapons? I haven't seen a single one of "them" yet, have you?

ELI
What are you talking about?

PAUL
Of course we need weapons. Are you kidding?

ELI
If I have to be out in the open, I'm not gonna do it unarmed.

Paul finally pops the screen. It falls inward.

PAUL

I'll be right back.

Paul moves through the windowsill and into the house.

ELI
Okay.

Eli leans in through the window.

ELI
Make sure you get a bunch of knives! Bats won't do it. You gotta penetrate the brain!

PAUL
(O.S.)
Yeah, sure, whatever!

HAL
I think you have zombie killing confused with skull fucking - Oww.

Eli continues to lean in the window.

ELI
What is it dude?

HAL
I think the Baby bit me.

ELI
Maybe he's goin' for the nip.

HAL
Breastfeeding?!

ELI
Yeah. It's a reflex in infants. (beat, to Paul) Paul! You know what else would be good. If you got some-

VOICE (O.S.)
Freeze! Put your hands in the air!!

Eli and Hal turn around. Eli immediately puts his hands in the air.

Hal's face contorts, confused, scared.

OFFICER MERCER, 45, aims his GUN at the boys.

MERCER
I said put your hands in the air!!

HAL
I ... I ...

OFFICER MERCER
Don't make me repeat myself boys!

ELI
Hal! Put your hands in the air!

HAL
Dude's ... he's -

MERCER
Okay, fellah, put that ... bundle
... down.

Mercer gives them a moment.

ELI
Officer, he can't. The [baby]...

MERCER
(cont'd)
Young man, now don't make me do
somethin' I don't want to do.

HAL
He's going for the nip!

ELI
He's going for the nip?!

OFFICER MERCER
I beg your pardon?

Officer Mercer sneers in disgust and slowly lowers his gun.

MERCER
You ... you sick sons of bitches!

WHACK! Mercer GROANS and falls to the ground.

PAUL appears behind them. Silverware is falling out of his pockets. He holds a bat.

PAUL
Let's move.

HAL
What the Hell, Paul?!

PAUL
(shocked at himself)
He was ... he was gonna waste you

guys, I swear! Nothing angers cops more than babies in the arms of sexual deviants.

HAL
Shut up.

ELI
What's all that silverware for?

PAUL
I heard his voice and I panicked. I just grabbed anything pointy.

Eli picks up a spoon from the ground.

ELI
Are you crazy? Now that you've assaulted an officer, we better get the hell outta here.

PAUL
See, I thought we'd just chill here for a while out in the open, maybe wrap raw steaks around our necks ...

Hal and Eli walk away. Paul stays behind for a moment. He stares at Mercer's motionless body. He grabs Mercer's gun, stows it in his pocket and catches up.

EXT. ROAD - DAY

Hal, Paul and Eli walk quickly. Hal holds the baby close to his bare chest.

PAUL
All I'm saying is that in the tundra, you see what's coming.

Paul clasps his fingers together, forms his hands into a gun and points it into the distance.

Paul assumes a heroic pose. Hal and Eli look on, incredulous.

PAUL
There I stand, my gun poised. My brothers in arms next to me, doing the same. Through our binoculars we see them at least two miles ahead of time.

ELI
(indulging Paul)

How we gonna keep from freezing to death?

PAUL
Parkas? I don't know. Why the Hell do I have to think of everything?

ELI
And where are you getting this gun of yours and ammo and stuff?

Paul discretely feels his pocket.

PAUL
Valu Town. They have everything.

ELI
Then why don't we just go to a Valu Town and hole up there. Build barricades and booby traps.

PAUL
Okay, number one, I just said that the reason that we are going to the tundra is because you can see for miles. I don't care how super a center your Valu Town is, you won't see for miles. Number two, whereas the tundra provides no food for zombies, due to the inhospitable environment, Valu Town provides meat freezers galore and a senile associate at every door.

ELI
You've thought about this a lot haven't you?

PAUL
Yeah, I mean, it's one of those things that you gotta keep in mind, just in case-

ELI
Just in case of what?

PAUL
Situations like this.

ELI
How often do situations like this come up?

PAUL
I don't know ... right now.

HAL
3347. Right?

ELI
3351.

Paul glares at Eli.

HAL
Here it is. Up this way.

EXT. IN FRONT OF 3351 APPLE COURT - DAY

The boys walk past a couple more houses and turn into the driveway of 3351 Apple Court.

They stop short, on the edge of the driveway.

HAL
We gonna do this or what?

PAUL
I dunno.

ELI
Yeah ...

Silence. Hal walks down the driveway.

Paul follows Hal.

Eli takes a deep breath and follows behind them.

Paul moves in front of Hal. He motions for Hal to get behind him. He pulls out his gun and edges towards the front door.

PAUL
(whispered)
After you.

ELI
(whispered)
Holy shit!

Paul "shh's" Eli.

ELI
Dude is that the cop's-

PAUL

(under his breath, stern)
Shut the fuck up!!

Paul nods to Hal.

Hal knocks on the door. Nothing.

ELI
Guess she's gone.

HAL
She's not gone. She just called us.

ELI
No one answered.

They enter.

INT. 3351 APPLE COURT - DAY

Hal, Paul and Eli enter slowly. A set of stairs greets them. They move around the stairs and look into the living room and the kitchen.

The kitchen. More signs of distress: things knocked over etc.

THUMP from above.

Hal, Paul and Eli wheel around. Paul takes the lead and moves toward the stairs.

SCUFFLING above. Hal, Paul and Eli pause at the landing of the stairs. Paul and Hal turn towards the stairs. Eli pulls on their shirts to hold them back.

Paul smacks Eli's hand away and climbs the stairs. Hal, then Eli, follow.

Three doors: left, right, center. The door to the right, again, is slightly ajar. Paul peeks in the room, and opens the door. Nothing.

The boys turn to the left. This door is closed. Paul takes a deep breath and moves his face toward the door. He listens.

A mammoth THUMP from behind the center door. Blood seeps from under the door.

ELI
Oh my God!!

Hal, Paul and Eli scramble down the stairs and out the door.

EXT. 3351 APPLE COURT - DAY

Hal, Paul and Eli run frantically. Hal lags behind with the Baby in tow. Eli stops, out of breath. Hal catches up with Eli.

Paul looks back at Hal and Eli.

ELI
Holy shit!! Holy fucking shit!! We gotta get fuck out of here.

HAL
Oh my God.

The baby cries. Hal tends to it. The others fail to notice.

PAUL
We are such pussies!! We even have a fucking gun. We should have done something.

ELI
And do what? Be a fucking hero?! Is that what you are if bad shit happens and you act like a fucking idiot!

PAUL
We don't even know what was up there. It could have been the mom.

ELI
Mom's don't sound like that, man.

PAUL
I don't know. I've heard your mom make some pretty interesting noises.

ELI
Shut the fuck up! You're still making fucking jokes. This is fucking bullshit! I'm not going to die because of you two.

HAL
We're not going to die!

ELI
How do you know? How do you fucking know that?!

HAL
We gotta go back in there. We have

to get him back to his mother.

ELI
For what?

Hal and Paul walk back towards the house.

ELI
For what?

Hal and Paul continue towards the house.

ELI
Goddamn it.

Hal walks up to the door and twists the handle. It opens. Paul forces his way into the lead. Eli follows behind.

INT. 3351 APPLE COURT - DAY

Paul enters. The others follow.

PAUL
Hello? Hello?!

ELI
Hello again.

The staircase greets them. They move to the left and circle around the first floor. They move through the kitchen this time. The kitchen leads to a living room which wraps back around to a hallway which leads back to the front door. Off of this hallway, there is a doorway into another room with a closet.

Calm.

Paul sits down on the stairs and trains his gun upstairs. The others sit down too.

ELI
What if she never comes?

HAL
She'll come.

ELI
What if she's dead?

HAL
Shut up Eli.

ELI
I'm serious. How long do we sit here

P.O.V. - Something walks up behind Hal, Paul and Eli

ELI
Because really, they'll both probably die anyway. And after you're dead, I don't see how dying with your baby in your arms can be that much of a consolation.

A NOISE.

HAL
What the-

Eli grabs Paul's gun and FIRES.

PAUL
Eli?!

The MOTHER, who had been hiding in the closet, crumples to the ground dead.

Hal and Paul are dumbfounded.

They search for something to say. Nothing.

Paul gets up and inspects the body.

PAUL
Let's go.

HAL
What?

PAUL
We can't stay here.

HAL
We can't leave ...

Paul walks towards Eli.

PAUL
I don't think she'll mind.

HAL
Paul ... Eli just ...

PAUL
Eli ...

Eli hold the gun with a firm grip. His hand shakes.

PAUL

Give me the gun.

HAL
Paul ... don't-

PAUL
We need to leave, and I don't think that Eli should-

Paul moves closer to Eli and towards the gun.

Eli pulls the gun closer to himself.

ELI
Don't touch it.

PAUL
Give me the gun Eli.

HAL
Paul, stop it. What? You want to leave you want to run away and-

PAUL
I'm not running anywhere.

HAL
We can't just-

PAUL
What .. your gonna stay here? You two gonna move in? Keep her company? Raise a fucking child?

HAL
Where you gonna go? The fucking tundra?!

Paul moves for the gun.

PAUL
Eli, just give me the fucking gun and-

Eli pushes Paul's hand away.

PAUL
Eli-

Eli raises the gun to his temple.

PAUL
(tense)
Eli!

INT. HOUSE - NIGHT

A party. GUESTS chat, flirt, drink etc. It is hard to hear clearly through the chatter.

MIKE, 20, lanky, talks to TRICIA, 19, perky. He is only half listening, as something across the room draws his attention.

TRICIA
So me and my sorority sisters went to this bar and the booze comes in a fish bowl and they have these crazy straws and you totally have to share 'cause they're soooo big...

MIKE
Yeah...

Mike turns his attention fully to ...

NATALIE, 20, a natural beauty, sits on a couch next to some STONERS, BILL and JAMES.

Bill and James fashion a bong out of random ridiculous objects.

BILL
So, yeah, if you stick this ... into this ... then you're pretty much ready to go.

NATALIE
(sarcastic, Natalie's natural state)
That's wow ... wow.

JAMES
The survivalist Bong.

BILL
Swiss Army Bong.

JAMES
McGyv-bong.

BILL
McGyv-bong!!

They high five.

NATALIE
(as the Stoners high five)
Well, if they drop you in the woods with only the clothes on your back,

at least you'll be able to do something.

James brings his hand down behind Natalie's head, totally platonic.

Mike's eye's widen. He turns back to Tricia.

MIKE
No ... yeah ... a fishbowl probably brings out all of the different flavors-

CELL PHONES RING. First one, then more, until almost all of them are going off. All but one. Natalie's does not ring.

The party goers stand in shocked silence.

Then, slowly, they answer their phones.

PARTY GOER 1
Hello?

PARTY GOER 2
Hello?

PARTY GOER 3
Hello?

Cell phones continue to ring.

PARTY GOER 4
Pick up Suzy and meet you where?

PARTY GOER 5
Just put Dad on ... I don't understand what you are ... no, I'm not talking down to you ... sure, I appreciate the gravity of the ... I'm not mocking you, I just-

PARTY GOER 6
Wait, what happened?

TRICIA
No mom. I'm fine to drive. Mom! Yes! I'm telling you (improv) ...

Tricia walks to the door as she talks. Most of the party goers migrate to the door and out into the street.

JAMES
Natalie. Bill and I are gonna go. You need a ride?

BILL
Yeah, 'cuz like if you need a ride, James and I are gonna go.

NATALIE
No, I'm fine.

James and Bill get up. Natalie stays on the couch.

Natalie takes out her phone, opens it, stares at the screen for a moment, and then closes it. She stands up and walks toward the door. Mike approaches her.

MIKE
Hey-

Natalie walks past Mike and out the door.

EXT. HOUSE - NIGHT

Natalie steps off of the porch. Under the porch light, a BOYFRIEND comforts his GIRLFRIEND, who is crying, drunk.

GIRLFRIEND
What the FUCK is going on?!

BOYFRIEND
Baby ... shhh ... baby ...

Natalie rolls her eyes as she walks past.

Mike walks past two DRUNKEN DUDES. One of them straightens up rigidly and extends his arms like a zombie.

DRUNK DUDE #1
Brrraaaiiinnnss!

DRUNK DUDE #2 doubles over with laughter.

Natalie listens to her phone. She hangs up. RUSTLING behind her. Closer. Closer. Natalie tenses up.

Mike jumps in between Natalie and her car.

MIKE
Can I ride with you?

Natalie breathes a SIGH of relief.

NATALIE
Didn't you drive?

MIKE
I ... uh ... had a little bit to

drink.

Mike walks around to the passenger side. Natalie puts the key in the door. Mike tries to open the door as she tries to unlock it. Mike does it again. Mike does it again. Natalie opens her door and walks around to Mike's side and opens his door.

MIKE
It's the alcohol ... you know?
(improv)

Natalie puts the key in the ignition and starts the car. Mike hops in and buckles his seatbelt.

Natalie looks over at Mike, turns her eyes back to the road and pulls down the driveway, past a REVELER puking. His BUDDY stands next to him, on the phone.

BUDDY
Hey ... dude ... are you okay ...

We make out less and less of what he's saying as Natalie pulls out into the street.

INT. CAR - DAY

Natalie pulls the car to a stop in an alley way. Mike stares out the window. Natalie faces forward.

MIKE
(on phone)
Yeah, Mom. We're on our way ... I don't know ... like half an hour?

NATALIE
At least an hour.

MIKE
(on phone)
Maybe longer ... I don't know ... I'll be there soon ... we're going as fast as we can ... don't worry ... Okay ... bye ... love you too ... bye.

Mike hangs up.

MIKE
Geez ... I'm surprised it's not your mom that's bugging the fuck out of us. Remember the time you were sick and I brought your homework over and she called the cops?

NATALIE
Well, you did break in through the cellar door.

MIKE
The front door was locked.

NATALIE
That doesn't make it okay ...

MIKE
I would have just thrown stones at your window until you came out, but I didn't want to break any-

NATALIE
Mike-

MIKE
I thought it was a nice gesture.

NATALIE
Well, my mom didn't ... and yeah, I've been trying, but I haven't been able to get a hold of her ... Which way do I go from here?

MIKE
- Just gotta get back on Jackson Street. Then its a straight shot to the highway.

NATALIE
How do I get back to Jackson?

MIKE
Hemlock. Fifteenth, then Jackson ... everyone seemed kind of shaken up at the party.

NATALIE
People get scared Mike. Just because all the milk's gone doesn't mean its gonna snow. You know?

MIKE
I guess.

NATALIE
The whole thing's probably a hoax.

MIKE
I don't think the government does hoaxes.

NATALIE
What about ... like ... SARS and stuff.

MIKE
SARS was not a hoax.

NATALIE
Did you know anyone with SARS?

MIKE
No but-

NATALIE
Exactly. And who said anything about the government.

MIKE
We should get going. My mom's pretty worked up.

Natalie starts the car and they pull away. THE FOLLOWING LINES ARE VOICED OVER.

MIKE
All I'm sayin' is that it's a pretty convincing hoax.

NATALIE
Shut up.

Natalie drives. Focused. Mike is on the phone.

EXT. HIGHWAY - DAY

SIRENS. THE FOLLOWING DIALOGUE IS V.O.

NATALIE
What the hell?

MIKE
I dunno. Maybe he's trying to get by you. Just pull over.

NATALIE
There's two lanes.

MIKE
Just pull over.

Natalie pulls over. The Squad Car's tires BRAKE against the gravel.

MIKE
Nope, it's us.

NATALIE
Are you kidding me?

The squad car down opens and slams shut.

Mike looks back.

MIKE
What the Hell?

NATALIE
This is such bullshit.

MIKE
Just be cool.

Sirens STOP.

MIKE (CONT'D)
Maybe he's got information for us.

OFFICER MERCER, 45, all-business, approaches the car and taps on Natalie's rolled up window.

Natalie rolls down the window.

NATALIE
What's going on officer?

OFFICER MERCER
Hold on now, little lady, I'll ask the questions.

NATALIE
(perturbed)
Okay.

OFFICER MERCER
You know how fast you were goin'?

NATALIE
Umm-

MIKE
Well, officer, she was going significantly faster than the speed limit allows, but I think that considering the circumstances-

OFFICER MERCER
Eighty-seven miles per hour.

NATALIE
Are you serious? I mean, we just heard-

OFFICER MERCER
That is twenty-two miles over the speed limit.

MIKE
With all due respect Officer, I don't think that-

OFFICER MERCER
License and registration please.

NATALIE
(under breath)
Ridiculous.

MIKE
(under breath)
Natalie!

OFFICER MERCER
(snaps)
License and registration please!

Mike and Natalie freeze up.

NATALIE
Coming right up Officer.

Natalie looks at Mercer and slowly moves for the glove compartment.

Natalie produces the license and registration and hands them to Mercer.

MERCER
Sit tight.

Mercer walks away from the car and back his squad car.

MIKE
He's wound a little tight, huh?

NATALIE
He's fucking crazy, Mike!

MIKE
You think he knows what's going on?

NATALIE
He has to have heard. He's a police officer.

MIKE
Even if he has heard, it doesn't mean he stops doing his job.

NATALIE
What's that supposed to mean?

MIKE
Someone's gotta keep order.

NATALIE
Are you seriously taking his side?!

MIKE
I am not taking his side. I am just saying that ... I mean if you were on patrol ... and nobody told you to stop ... no call or whatever ... wouldn't you just ... keep going?

SLAM. Officer Mercer slams his hand down on the roof of the car. Natalie and Mike tense up.

Officer Mercer lowers his head into the car, flashes a smile and hands Natalie a ticket and returns her license and registration.

OFFICER MERCER
You folks drive safe now ...

Natalie stares at the ticket, fuming.

OFFICER MERCER
Any problems, you can call the number (points to paper) there and if you choose to contest this, I will see you in court. I'm Officer Tom Mercer by the way ... didn't mean to be rude ... (to himself) I don't usually forget to introduce myself ... Better get a move on. They're about to set up a detour 'bout twenty miles up the way. If yer interested yer gonna wanna take a left Springdale Rd. and take another left on ol' Hickory Road as far as you can. After that you take a couple a lefts and yer on the main drag.

Natalie nods.

Mercer stands motionless.

Natalie and Mike stay still.

OFFICER MERCER
Watch yer speed as ya return to the road.

Mercer stands motionless.

EXT. SIDE OF THE ROAD - CONTINUOUS

Natalie and Mike finally get up the courage to drive away, leaving Mercer, still motionless.

INT. CAR - DAY

Natalie and Mike pull into a parking lot.

MIKE
I didn't know detours were optional.

NATALIE
Fuck him. We're not doing it. We'll just find the highway and everything will be fine.

MIKE
Okay. Which way's the highway?

Natalie glares at Mike and leans down toward the glove compartment.

NATALIE
(as she fishes for the map)
Cause ... I mean, fuck him, you know.

MIKE
Definitely. Whatever you want. I'm just along for the ride. I'm the first mate, you're the captain.

Natalie draws the map from the glove compartment. Mike gives a cheesy salute. Natalie throws him the map.

NATALIE
So ... your like the Schmee to my Hook?

MIKE
See I was thinking more like *Pirates*

of the Caribbean or *Master and Commander* style ... you know, two scallywags relying on each other to-

NATALIE
I like Schmee and Hook.

MIKE
Your loss. Hook's a jackass ... and Schmee does have some pretty sweet clothes.

Natalie chuckles and glances at Mike. Mike glances at Natalie.

The RADIO CUTS IN.

RADIO ANNOUNCER (V.O.)
PENNDOT has announced that all major arteries must be cleared for military traffic. This includes I-76, I-83, I-81, 376 ...

Natalie turns the radio off.

MIKE
Shit.

NATALIE
What road was it?

MIKE
Springdale Road. We're almost there.

NATALIE
Fine. Fine. Well take the bastard's stupid detour.

Mike unfolds the map. She accelerates out of the parking lot.

MIKE
What do they mean, military traffic?

NATALIE
I don't know, Mike. Does it matter?!

MIKE
Just wondering.

INT. CAR - DAY

Natalie and Mike are pull up to a STOP SIGN.

NATALIE
Which way on Hickory? Left?

MIKE
I think ... yeah.

NATALIE
Check the map again.

Beat. Mike fumbles with the map.

MIKE
This is ridiculous.

NATALIE
Yeah. It is. And where the fuck are we? I don't see anybody.

MIKE
Maybe we're alone ... Maybe we're the last two people on Earth.

NATALIE
That'd be great 'cause that cop would be dead.

MIKE
I'm just sayin', isn't it custom for the last two people on earth to procreate?

NATALIE
Hold your horses, cowboy. Just find us on the map.

MIKE
I'm looking. Give me a break.

NATALIE
Besides, that's only true when Charleton Heston is the last man on Earth. You'd be a pretty poor father of mankind.

MIKE
I don't think mankind has a choice. Besides, there's always ol' Officer Mercer back there.

NATALIE
Eww ... But how can you be so sure there isn't some hunky tribesman on some remote island who is ... more deserving?

MIKE
What d'ya want me to do, take a fucking census?

NATALIE
I want you to learn to read a fucking map!

Mike looks at Natalie, hurt.

MIKE
Geez.

Mike goes back to the map.

NATALIE
Sorry. What do you think all this is about? What has brought about our impending doom?

MIKE
Zombies.

NATALIE
Nice. But, you know, that really messes up your plans. What if I get pregnant and then the zombies attack? A new world filled with demon spawn.

MIKE
It wouldn't be a demon spawn, baby, it'd be "us spawn". Besides, I don't think zombieism travels through the umbilical chord. And if we take the right precautions, we won't have anything to worry about.

NATALIE
You can't save the human race if you use protection.

MIKE
No, I mean, like lock the car doors.

NATALIE
See, then I'd get performance anxiety. All those zombies slobbering all over the windshield.

MIKE
You think they'd be into it?

NATALIE

I think the horny teenage one's would be. The old-timers would shake their heads dissaprovingly-

MIKE
-But they'd secretly be thinking of how much they miss their younger human days.

NATALIE
Exactly.

Natalie smiles at Mike. She lets out a laugh.

Mike finally finds the right spot on the map.

MIKE
Found it. It's definitely a left.

NATALIE
How may lefts did he say it was?

MIKE
It's been a few already ... definitely more than a couple. He said a couple, right?

NATALIE
I don't know Mike. Just look at the map.

MIKE
Maps don't tell you whether you need to go a few or a couple. Just go left and we'll figure it out from there.

NATALIE
Okay.

Natalie turns left. Natalie and Mike pull out on to the street.

EXT. ROAD - DAY

Natalie and Mike reach a dead end.

Natalie slams her hands on the steering wheel.

NATALIE
Fuck. Fuck. Fuck!

Natalie brings the car to a SCREECHING halt. She throws the door open, rushes out of the car and walks away.

Mike follows Natalie.

Natalie rips her phone out and frantically DIALS.

Natalie breathes heavily as she listens to the phone.

Natalie closes her phone, THROWS it on the ground and keeps walking.

Mike follows behind and picks up the phone.

MIKE
You ... ummm ... dropped this.

Natalie walks on.

Mike runs up to Natalie and plants himself in front of her.

MIKE
Natalie.

Natalie shoves past him.

Mike grabs her shoulder as she passes him and turns her around.

MIKE
Natalie!

NATALIE
Get the fuck off of me Mike! What do you want me to do? Keep driving?! We don't know where the fuck we are. We haven't seen a fucking thing for miles. All we're doing is wasting gas, following the directions of a lunatic, trying to remember if he said *a couple* or *a few* or told us to turn on Hickory, Pine or Maple! And the one time in my whole life I should be hearing from my mother, I can't fucking get a hold of her! So, what do you want to do Mike?!

Mike approaches Natalie.

MIKE
You got us this far.

NATALIE
This far. We're fucking nowhere. Look around Mike. Where the fuck are we?!

MIKE
Better than where we were before.

NATALIE
How?

MIKE
Well ... these trees are certainly ... majestic? I don't know Natalie ... would you rather be back at Jeff's house?

NATALIE
No.

MIKE
And we haven't been attacked yet, zombies or otherwise. Unless you count the intimidation tactics of Officer Tom Mercer.

NATALIE
That's true.

MIKE
C'mon ... would Cap'n Hook let one pesky clock get to him?

A chuckle escapes through Natalie's rage. She softens.

NATALIE
Yes ... 'cause of the alligator, remember?

MIKE
It's been a while since I read that one.

NATALIE
You know Schmee, you can be pretty funny sometimes.

MIKE
Yeah?

NATALIE
Yeah ... So you're waiting on my orders, huh?

MIKE
I mean ... yeah.

NATALIE
I guess we'll just get back in the

car and drive on until we find something.

MIKE
Makes sense to me. We haven't seen anybody since Mercer and I don't plan on trying to meet up with him again.

NATALIE
Let's set sail.

MIKE
Aye Aye, Cap'n.

Natalie and Mike get into the car and drive away.

EXT. YARD - DAY

Natalie pulls the car into a driveway.

Natalie calmly opens the car door and steps out onto the pavement.

NATALIE
Are you fucking kidding me?

PULL BACK TO REVEAL:

The party house where they began their journey.

Mike kicks a used, red plastic cup on the ground.

MIKE
(feebly)
Party?!

Natalie and Mike stare at the house.

NATALIE
I am never letting you use a map ever again.

MIKE
What are the odds? Same house.

NATALIE
Impossible.

They stare some more.

MIKE
Let's see if anyone's home.

Natalie approaches the house. Mike follows.

Natalie knocks on the door. No answer.

She opens the door a bit.

NATALIE
Hello?!

MIKE
Anybody home?

Natalie and Mike look at each other. They turn their heads back toward the door.

INT. HOUSE - DAY

Natalie enters the house. Mike follows.

NATALIE
Jeff?! If he's here he's-

MIKE
Passed out in the basement.

NATALIE
Do you think he would ... now?

MIKE
Desperate men take normal measures.

NATALIE
Romantic sentiment.

INT. HOUSE HALLWAY - MOMENTS LATER

Natalie and Mike stop in front of the door to the basement. Mike swings open the basement door.

MIKE
After you, Madam.

NATALIE
No you go ahead ... allergies ...
mold and stuff.

MIKE
Oh ... okay.

Mike flicks on the basement light and looks around, while Natalie waits at the top of the stairs. We hear his FOOTSTEPS. We hear him search. We hear FOOTSTEPS again.

MIKE

Nothing.

Mike rejoins her. They walk on.

INT. UPSTAIRS - DAY

Mike climbs the stairs. Natalie follows. Natalie sits on the counter and looks over at Mike. Mike peers through the blinds and doesn't notice Natalie's gaze.

Mike moves on to the kitchen. Half empty liquor bottles line a formica counter dotted with juice and liquor stains. Natalie holds up one of the liquor bottles.

NATALIE
How 'bout a drink?

MIKE
Nah. Let's look around.

NATALIE
Okay.

Mike and Natalie walk upstairs.

INT. UPSTAIRS, HALL - DAY

Natalie walks out of the bathroom into a hallway.

She draws out her phone, checks her messages and walks into the nearby bedroom.

NATALIE
Empty.

Natalie turns off her cellphone and walks into the bedroom.

Mike follows her into the bedroom.

Natalie closes the door behind them.

FADE OUT.

FADE IN:

EXT. STREET - DAY

Something has gone terribly wrong here. Perhaps a riot. Perhaps a natural disaster.

SAMANTHA, perky, 13, walks down the street. She carries a grocery bag.

She walks past a storefront with busted windows.

She walks on the curb like a balance beam.

She jumps over a downed parking meter, side steps an overturned dumpster and bypasses two wrecked cars along the way.

A body lies prone in her path. She approaches it cautiously.

She stares at it. It stares back.

She grabs a newspaper from a nearby garbage can, covers the body's face.

NEWSPAPER HEADLINE: GOV'T WARNS AGAINST "UNKNOWN THREAT"

Samantha continues on her way.

EXT. HOUSE - DAY

A picturesque suburban home. JOSH talks on his cellphone and paces up and down the sidewalk.

JOSH
(on phone)
Yeah, I know ma. But, which building are you talking about ... which bridge? Okay. That's all I needed to know. If you had just given me the street name in the first place ... forget it. We'll be there as soon as we can ... No we can't take the car because you have the car. No one's gonna let me borrow a car right now ... Because everyone's using their cars right now. How else do you evac ... Mom, calm down, we'll be there soon.

Josh hangs up the phone. He lights up a cigarette. He puffs quickly as he walks back towards the house.

At the front door he throws his cigarette down, stamps it

out with his feet and kicks it into the front lawn.

He opens the front door and enters the house.

INT. HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

Josh enters to see Samantha watching the news. She is mesmerized.

T.V. ANCHOR
(O.S., not totally audible)
The death toll continues to rise this evening as our worst Hollywood nightmares become a shocking reality. Though many have been critical of the current administration's lack of preparedness in the face of the current threat, numerous vocal supporters of the administration are asking just how anyone could prepare for such a-

Josh picks up the remote and turns off the television.

JOSH
You shouldn't watch that stuff.

SAMANTHA
It's important to keep abreast of world events.

JOSH
Who told you that?

SAMANTHA
My teacher.

JOSH
Your teacher's wrong.

SAMANTHA
It's not important to keep abreast of-

JOSH
Okay, listen, we have to leave and meet mom and dad in town. So you need to pack a couple changes of clothes - just enough to fit in a backpack - and then we'll go.

Samantha nods her head.

JOSH
C'mon. Let's go.

Samantha gets up and goes to her room.

Josh watches her go, waits until she reaches her room.

He walks down the hallway.

INT. PARENT'S ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Josh opens the door and enters the room. He looks under the bed. He can't see much. He thrusts his arm under it and begins feelings around. He reaches for something way under there. He pulls out a chest. He tries to open it.

It's locked.

Josh pulls open drawers in a dresser and roots through them.

SAMANTHA
(O.S., yelled from her room)
Josh! I'm ready to go!

JOSH
Well, I'm not, so you're just gonna to have to wait! Alright?!

Josh continues to root frantically.

SAMANTHA
(O.S.)
Can I bring a book too?!

JOSH
Sure! Nothing too scary though, I don't want you having nightmares!

SAMANTHA
(O.S.)
Okay! Hey! Josh?!

JOSH
What?!

SAMANTHA
(O.S.)
Can I watch T.V.?!

JOSH
Sure, just don't put on the news again! And remember, we're leaving in five minutes!

Josh yanks a small drawer out of the dresser. It is filled with socks. He digs through it and withdraws a small key.

Josh puts the key into the chest and turns. The chest pops open. Josh pulls a gun out of the chest.

Josh surveys the mess he has made.

He leaves the room.

EXT. HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

Josh walks out of his parent's bedroom, pokes into his room, grabs his backpack and shoves the gun into the bag.

Samantha SCREAMS and CRIES.

Josh runs toward the living room.

INT. LIVING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Josh runs into the room.

JOSH
What's wrong?

Samantha is crying with her head buried in a sofa cushion.

T.V. ANCHOR
(O.S.)
That was an artist's rendering of one eyewitness account of the group who invaded Sacred Mercy Hospital early this morning. The police have issued no formal statement as of yet-

Josh turns off the television as he approaches Samantha and pats her head.

JOSH
Hey, buddy. It's okay. I'm here. I told you not to watch the news.

SAMANTHA
(head still in cushion)
I know. I'm sorry.

JOSH
Don't worry about it. You okay?

SAMANTHA
Yeah, I'm fine.

JOSH
You ready to go?

SAMANTHA
Yeah.

JOSH
Okay let's go.

Josh grabs Samantha's hand and leads her to the door and out of the house.

EXT. ROAD - DAY

Josh and Samantha walks down the road with backpacks on their backs. Samantha is breathing heavily.

SAMANTHA
Can we slow down?

JOSH
Why? Can't keep up?

SAMANTHA
Your legs are longer than mine.

Josh looks over at Samantha, notices her sweating and heavy breathing.

JOSH
Yeah, alright, we'll slow down.

SAMANTHA
Thank you. Hey Josh.

JOSH
What?

SAMANTHA
Why are we running away?

JOSH
We're not running away. We're meeting up with mom and dad. That's the opposite of running away.

SAMANTHA
Why are we meeting mom and dad? We were at home. They should be meeting us.

JOSH
Because they want us too.

SAMANTHA
Is this about what was on the news?

JOSH
I don't know. I didn't watch the news. You did.

SAMANTHA
I know.

JOSH
Well ... what'd the news say?

SAMANTHA
It said that monsters broke into the hospital.

JOSH
That's .... that's probably got nothing to do with us.

SAMANTHA
Why are we doing this then?

JOSH
(firm)
Because mom and dad asked us too.

SAMANTHA
Okay. Jeez. Just asking.

JOSH
Sorry. Listen ... I don't know why we're going, and the news doesn't know why we're going and mom and dad don't know why we're going. But we're going and nothing is going to change that. And when I figure out what's going on, I'll let you know.

SAMANTHA
Okay. Hey, Josh.

JOSH
What Sam?

SAMANTHA
A kitty.

A CAT scurries across the street and behind a house.

JOSH
Yeah it is.

SAMANTHA
We should save it from the monsters.

Samantha runs after the kitty. Josh runs after Sam.

JOSH
Samantha Jane Collins, don't take another step!

EXT. SIDE OF HOUSE - DAY

Samantha rushes on. Josh tries to catch up with her.

SAMANTHA
I'm not going to be held responsible for that kitty's death!

JOSH
Samantha-

Josh closes in on her.

SAMANTHA
I'm not leaving that cat to die!

Samantha rounds the corner of the house chasing the Cat.

SAMANTHA
(O.S.)
Here kitty, kitty, kitty.

Josh follows behind, rounds the corner and joins her.

Samantha sees something. She is deeply disturbed.

Josh grabs his gun out of the bag and pushes Samantha behind him.

Samantha gasps upon seeing the gun.

SAMANTHA
Josh, where did you-

JOSH
It's dad's! Get back behind the house. Watch your back.

Samantha runs to the other side of the house and curls up. Tears stream down her eyes as they dart back and forth.

GROWLS AND MOANS emanate from the other side of the house.

JOSH
(O.S.)

What the-

Sounds of struggle. CLAWING.

JOSH
(O.S., pained)
Ahhh!

2 GUNSHOTS.

Samantha runs along the side of the house. Before she can turn the corner, Josh hobbles out from the back of the house. He holds his side. He is bleeding.

JOSH
Cat didn't make it.

SAMANTHA
You're bleeding.

JOSH
Yeah. Can we go now?

SAMANTHA
Yeah.

Josh doubles over and grabs at his side.

SAMANTHA
Are you okay?

JOSH
I don't know.

SAMANTHA
We should at least wash it.

Samantha runs to the front door of the house and pounds on the door.

SAMANTHA
It's open. Come on!

JOSH
Alright, hold on.

Josh hobbles toward the front porch.

JOSH
Let me go in first.

Josh talks the lead and enters the house.

INT. HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

SAMANTHA
Where do you think the bathroom is?

Samantha peeks around the first floor.

JOSH
Don't go too far.

SAMANTHA
I don't see a bathroom. It's prolly upstairs.

JOSH
Shit.

Josh starts to move up the stairs and stops short, in pain.

JOSH
You're gonna have to help me out Sam.

Samantha supports Josh's weak side and they hobble up the stairs into a small bathroom.

INT. BATHROOM - CONTINUOUS

SAMANTHA
Here's the sink. You should wash it.

Josh puts the gun down on the side of the sink.

JOSH
I'll take it from here. You just chill for a minute. Read or something.

SAMANTHA
Okay.

Samantha sits in the doorway to the bathroom and pulls out her book, "Peter Pan". She tries to concentrate on reading. She can't.

Josh fumbles through the medicine cabinet. He grabs Bactine and Neosporine.

He washes the wound and the sink fills with blood.

Samantha cringes.

He pours the bactine on the wound and rubs the neosporine on it. He cleans his hands and grabs gauze from the cabinet. He starts to wrap the wound. He doubles over in pain again.

Samantha shoves her book back in her bag and rushes to Josh's aid.

SAMANTHA
Let me do it. You shouldn't try to be tough.

JOSH
I'm not being tough.

SAMANTHA
Yes you are. And even if I don't know what's out there, I know it's dangerous. So don't try to make me read my book when I can help you.

JOSH
Okay ... I won't.

SAMANTHA
Good. Now let me wrap you up.

Samantha takes the gauze and wraps it around Josh's stomach, covering the wound.

A KNOCK at the door.

OFFICER MERCER
(O.S.)
Hello? Who's there?!

SAMANTHA
Nobody!

JOSH
Uhh ... sorry we're in you're house, but nobody was home and we had an emergency-

OFFICER MERCER
(O.S.)
Police! Open up!

JOSH
Let's go.

Samantha finishes wrapping Josh and helps him out the door. Josh grabs the gun as he exits. She helps him to the landing and down the stairs.

INT. HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

Officer Mercer waits for them with the door open.

OFFICER MERCER
Parents home?

JOSH
No we-

OFFICER MERCER
I got an order to tell everyone in this neighborhood to evacuate-

JOSH
Officer, we're not-

OFFICER MERCER
But I'm also looking for looters, who are trying to, uh, capitalize on the, uh, situation.

JOSH
Well, officer, we don't live here, but I got injured and no one was home and we-

OFFICER MERCER
You don't have permission to be in here?

JOSH
No Officer, as I was just trying to explain, you see, we-

OFFICER MERCER
I heard ya. Why don't I take you down to the station and we'll get this sorted out?

JOSH
Officer, I need to get to my parents across town, so why don't you just ride us over-

OFFICER MERCER
Why don't I just take you down to the station and we'll get this whole thing sorted out.

JOSH
Officer, I don't think you understand. It's an emergency and we-

Officer Mercer draws his pistol and points it at Josh.

OFFICER MERCER
I don't think you understand young man, now put your hands in the air...

Josh puts his hands in the air, through excruciating pain.

OFFICER MERCER
... and march your ass over here. I don't know why people think that just because something happens - an unforeseeable thing - then common sense just flies out the-

SAMANTHA
Why won't you just leave now and let's us get back to mom and dad.

JOSH
Samantha.

SAMANTHA
Doesn't he have better things to do.

Mercer turns his head toward Samantha.

Mercer looks at Samantha and smiles.

OFFICER MERCER
Okay, little lady, there's no need for any of that. I'm a policeman and policemen protect little girls like you. And I can't think of a better to be doing.

A gun COCKING. Josh has trained his gun on Mercer.

JOSH
Put it down!

OFFICER MERCER
Okay now son, I don't think you want to-

JOSH
I'm gonna count to three. One, two-

OFFICER MERCER
Hold on there son. I'm not putting nothing down. 'Cause if you fire, I'll still get one on you.

JOSH
Okay ... well ... we're gonna leave

now. Okay? We didn't take anything. Don't even think about coming after us.

Josh and Samantha exit the house.

Mercer stays motionless. He breathes.

EXT. STREET - DAY

Samantha and Josh walk down a street approaching a bridge.

Blood shows through Josh's shirt. He has blood on his fingers from checking his wound.

SAMANTHA
Are we almost there?

JOSH
Just a little farther.

SAMANTHA
How far?

JOSH
Past that bridge.

SAMANTHA
Oh, okay.

JOSH
Mmmhmm.

SAMANTHA
Josh?

JOSH
Yeah.

SAMANTHA
They looked a lot like on T.V., huh?

JOSH
I didn't get a good look.

SAMANTHA
It was really close.

JOSH
Yeah?

SAMANTHA
For a drawing.

JOSH
What difference did it make though?

SAMANTHA
What do you mean?

JOSH
That you saw them on T.V.

SAMANTHA
I knew they were dangerous.

JOSH
(joking)
If they hadn't been on T.V. I would have just walked by without paying any attention. Just part of the scenery.

SAMANTHA
That's not what I mean, silly.

JOSH
And either way I'd still have a hole in my stomach.

SAMANTHA
It's important to know what you're up against.

JOSH
Why?

SAMANTHA
You'll be less scared.

JOSH
Tears are still tears.

Josh and Samantha move closer to the bridge.

JOSH
Ahh.

Josh falls to the ground in pain. Samantha drops down next to him.

SAMANTHA
Are you okay?

JOSH
Yeah, just give me a second.

Josh takes a couple breaths and tries to get up. Too much

pain.

JOSH
Ahh.

SAMANTHA
Come on. It's just a little farther.

JOSH
Okay. Okay. Try and help me up.

Samantha grabs Josh under the arm and tries to help him up.

SAMANTHA
Come on.

Josh tries as hard as he can to get up. He makes a little progress.

JOSH
I can't.

Josh flops back to the ground.

JOSH
You just go ahead across and you can bring mom and dad back here once you get inside the building.

SAMANTHA
Okay.

JOSH
Okay.

SAMANTHA
I'll be back in a little bit. And mom and dad will be with me and they're gonna help you.

JOSH
Bye Sam. Love ya.

SAMANTHA
Love you too.

They embrace. Sam gets some blood on her shirt.

JOSH
Sam ... forget what I said earlier ... it's good to keep abreast of world events.

SAMANTHA

Okay.

Tears well up in Josh's eyes. He closes them to hide them.

SAMANTHA
Josh?

Josh opens his eyes.

JOSH
Yeah?

SAMANTHA
I'm sorry.

Samantha turns away from Josh, tears in her eyes, and walks away.

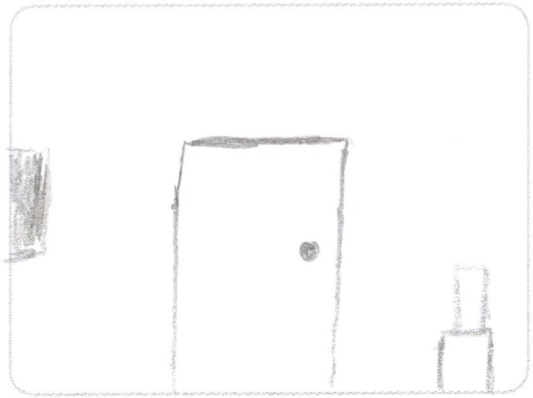
EXT. BRIDGE - DAY

Samantha walks across the bridge solemnly, deliberately, with a purpose.

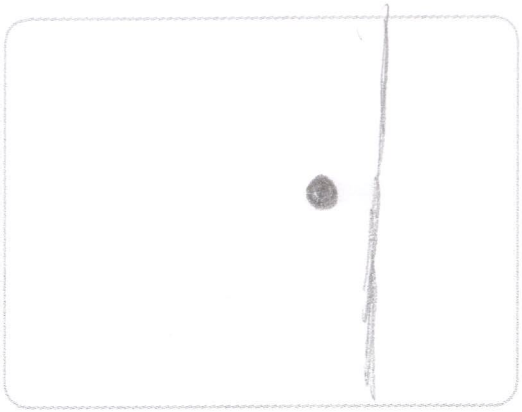
When she is about half way across the bridge, a SHOT rings out. Samantha flinches. She does not look back.

FADE OUT.

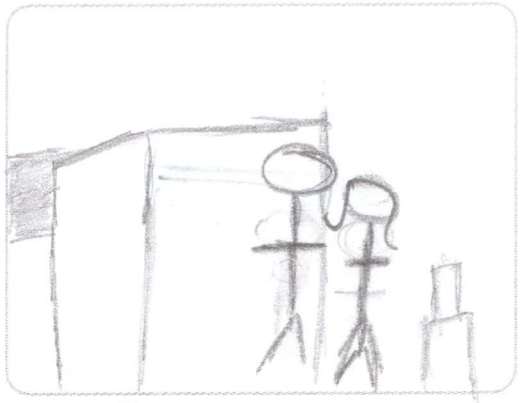
Title: If You & I . . .	Scene	6	Seq.	
	Dir.	Brendan Gallagher	DP	Erik Hinton



Wide Shot Room

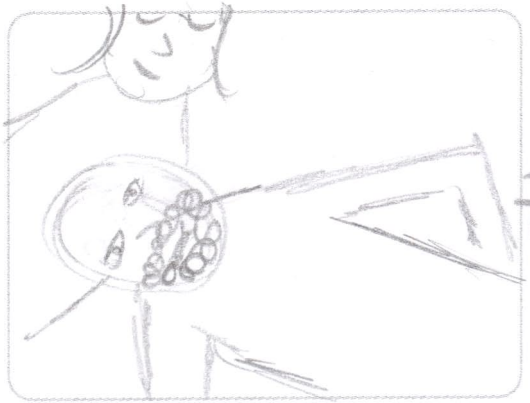


Insert C.U. door knob,
Door open



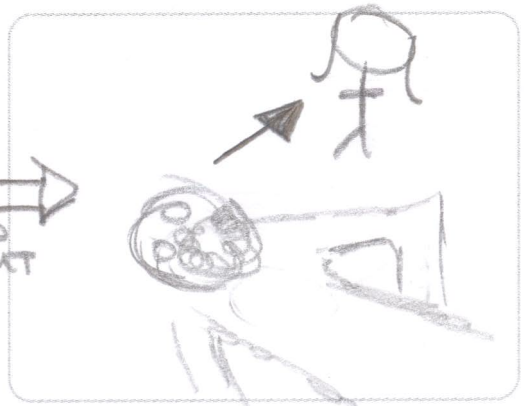
Sam & Josh enter
Wide shot
"You're heavy..."

MCU Samantha
"Support, Josh
... you know that?



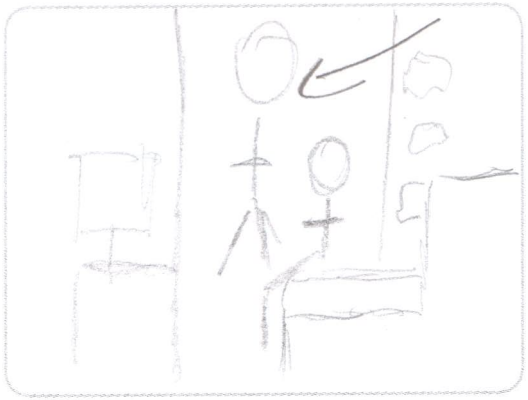
2 shot Samantha eases
Josh to floor
"Maybe . . . "
". . . bathroom is?"

NO CUT



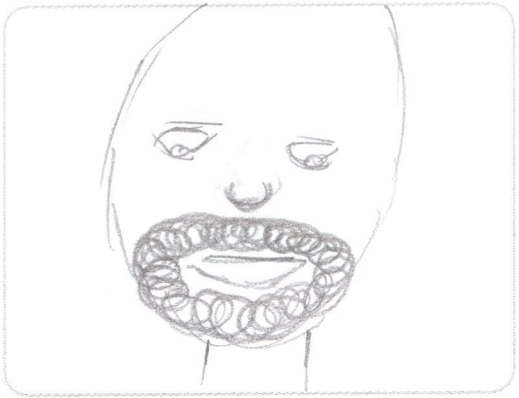
Wide shot Josh & Sam,
"Don't go too Far,"
..."Shit"

Title: If You & I . . .	Scene	2	Seq.	—
	Dir.	Brenden Gallagher	DP	Erik Hinton



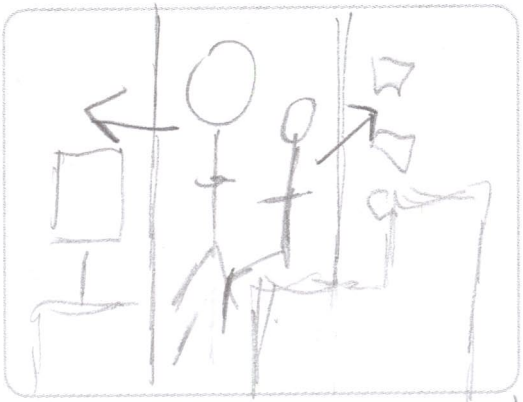
Master Sam & Josh
2 shot
you shouldn't . . . Says who?

MCU Sam
"Ms. Adams . . . My Teacher



CU Josh
"Well Today She's wrong"

MCU SAM
so . . . events



Master 2 shot Sam & Josh
OKAY . . . C'MON LET'S GO."

Budget

Equipment Costs			
2 in black gaffers tape		13.75	http://www.filmtools.com/2blacwhitgre.html
48" x 24' diffusion 1/2		90	http://www.bhphotovideo.com/c/product/90644-REG/F
super tuff-r		20	Home Depot
15 panasonic dvs		100	http://www.taperesources.com/DV60-P.html
Kodak Grey card kit		14	http://www.filmtools.com/kodakgraycards.html
c-47		5	(http://www.filmtools.com/nh-cp50.html)
cinefoil		32.95	http://www.bhphotovideo.com/c/product/44694-REG/F
2 ctb 1/2		11	http://www.bhphotovideo.com/c/product/44122-REG/F
1 ctb full		5.65	http://www.bhphotovideo.com/c/product/44119-REG/F
china balls		11	http://www.filmtools.com/24whitchinla.html
c.ball fixtures		14	http://www.filmtools.com/chinlansocas.html
c. ball bulbs 250		10	http://www.filmtools.com/eca25tunphot.html
c. ball bulbs 500		5	http://www.filmtools.com/ect50tunphot.html
duffle bag	N/A		hintons
uv filter		31	http://www.filmtools.com/tiffiluvhazf8.html
stingers	N/A		gallaghers / scene shop
Pittsburgh Filmmakers			
Access Membership		250	www.pghfilmmakers.org
Properties / Costumes			
Gun		25	Dicks Sporting Goods
T-shirts, White		15	Kohl's
Blood FX Materials		35	Giant Eagle / Rite Aid
Bandages		10	Rite Aid
Misc.			
Craft services		200	Various
gas		200	various
GRAND TOTAL		1098.35	

Casting Rationale

If You and I Were the Last Two People On Earth ….

Though one of my goals for this production was certainly to cast quality actors, my primary concern was choosing actors who I knew I could work with. Not only was this a non-paying job, but I knew from the outset, with unpredictable locations and time tables, familiarity and dependability were of the utmost importance.

John Graham (Eli) – Not only is John's look perfect for the part, with his light complexion, curly mop of hair and lithe build. He has experience playing the neurotic, fidgety sort of character I was looking for with the role. I also needed someone who would fit in well with Kevin and I, who have a great familiarity with each other, and like to do a lot of improv on set.

Kevin Riley (Paul) – Though Kevin has less acting experience than many of the other older actors in the film, he was not only a co-writer on the project, but he has worked with me extensively in the past in a sketch comedy and improv setting. Though the film is not a comedy, I felt that Hal, Paul and Eli would need that sort of rapport, with their constantly riffing off of each other.

Nate Jederwski (Josh) – Though Nate looks a little bit older than his twenty-three years, I felt that he was one of the only actors I knew who could simultaneously portray the maturity necessary for the role, while convincingly bringing the element of immature sibling bickering that, I think, really sold his and Stephanie's relationship. With the exception of Ben, Nate is the most experienced of the actors. He was able to bring an aura of professionalism to the set, which was very helpful when working with Stephanie, who is the least experienced performer of the group.

Stephanie Byers (Sam) – Stephanie was, admittedly, a gamble. I knew that I wanted to use Nate, and it was difficult to get someone who looked fifteen and could pass as Nate's sister. Nate had worked as Stephanie's director in high school, and, felt that she would be appropriate, even though she is actually a college freshman. She looked the part and I was ultimately happy with her work.

Brittany Andrews (Natalie) – Brittany is another very experienced actress. She has this great ability to banter while still keeping the aura necessary for an ingénue. She was perfect for Natalie, who while being tough and witty, is also immensely attractive to Mike. Brittany reminds me very much of the sort of actress who would be at home in a Kevin Smith or Judd Apatow film.

Eric Prendergast (Mike) – Eric is another actor who is quite capable of playing a nerdy, neurotic type. But, I think that he comes off as cool and comfortable on screen no matter how animated a character that he plays may be. He is another experienced improvisational artist, which was helpful with Brittany, as the two of them had very limited time frame to learn to be comfortable with each other. They had never worked together before.

Ben Miller (Officer Mercer) – Ben is the only card carrying professional actor of the group. I think that he is capable of a wide variety of performances, and has proven this in the roles that I have already seen him play. That being said, Ben is extremely capable of playing a character who just "isn't quite right". Rather than letting a character's quirkiness wear on the exterior, he internalizes it and allows it to come out at certain moments. This was exactly what was necessary for Officer Mercer.

CHARACTER, ACTOR, COSTUME, SFX, PP.

CHARACTER	ACTOR	COSTUMES	SFX, props	PP.
HAL, PAUL, ELI				
HAL	Brenden Gallagher	t-shirt, pants	Fight	
PAUL	Kevin Riley	t-shirt, pants	Fight	
ELI	John Graham	polo shirt, pants		
BABY	none	swaddling clothes		
OFFICER MERCER	Ben Miler	police outfit		
MOTHER	Maddie Marcenlle	White - ethereal	SHOT	
T.V. Announcer	TBA			
NATALIE & MIKE				
Natalie	Brittany Andrews	purple shirt, necklace		
Mike	Eric Prendergrast	cool shirt, pants		
Tricia	Jerelynn Miller	alluring		
Bill	John Fallon	drug rug		
James	Mac Marcenelle	stoner chic		
Reveler	John Fallon			
Party Goer 1	Paul Nutter			
" " " " 2	Rene Brown			
" " " " 3	Martel Manning			
Party Goer 4	Thomas Donahoe		CELL PHONES	
Boyfriend	Zach Braun			

CHARACTER, ACTOR, COSTUME, SFX, PP.

Girlfriend	Jerelynn Miller		
Drunk Dude #1	Martel Manning		
Drunk Dude #2	Thomas Donahoe		
REVELER	John Fallon		
Buddy	Kyle Smith		
OFFICER MERCER	Ben Miller		

SAM & JOSH

Sam	Stephanie Byers	oversized shirt	
Josh	Nate Jedrezewski	white t-shirt, pants	Blood Fx
OFFICER MERCER	Ben Miller		

Location List

Hal, Paul and Eli

INT. CHURCH BASEMENT
- Miller Residence, Mt. Washington

EXT. IN FRONT OF CHURCH / ROAD
- North Park, Courtesy Alleghany Parks

EXT. PAUL'S HOUSE
- Mancing Residence, Cranberry, PA

EXT. ROAD
- North Park, Courtesy Alleghany Parks
- Mt. Washington

EXT. /INT. 3351 APPLE COURT
- Miller Residence, Mt. Washington, PA

Natalie and Mike

INT. HOUSE – PARTY
- Marcenelle Residence, Mt. Washington, PA

EXT. HOUSE
- Marcenelle Residence, Mt. Washington, PA

EXT. RESIDENTIAL NEIGHBORHOOD
- Maripoe St. Oakland, PA

INT. CAR
- North Park, Courtesy Alleghany Parks

EXT. SIDE OF HIGHWAY
- North Park, Courtesy Alleghany Parks

EXT. ROAD / INT. CAR
- North Park, Courtesy Alleghany Parks

Sam and Josh

EXT. STREET
- Oakland, Bloomfield, Lawrenceville, Mt. Washington, PA

EXT. FRONT OF HOUSE
- Hinton Residence, Oakland, PA

INT. HOUSE
- Gallagher Residence, Oakland, PA

EXT. ROAD
- Haver Residence, South Hills, PA

EXT. SIDE HOUSE
- Haver Residence, South Hills, PA

INT. HOUSE
- Taylor Residence, Lawrenceville, PA

EXT. STREET / BRIDGE
- Enfield Bridge, Bloomfield, PA

Properties

Hal, Paul and Eli

Hal
Baby
T-Shirt

Paul
Silverware
Baseball Bat
Mercer's Gun

Eli
Gun

Mercer
Gun
Badge

Natalie and Mike

Natalie
Cell Phone
Keys
License and Registration

Mike
Cell phone
Map

Party Goers
Cell Phones
Red Cups
Beer Cans
Vomit

Bill and James
Bong Parts

Mercer
Gun
Badge
Pen
Speeding Ticket

Samantha and Josh

Samantha
Grocery Bag
Backpack
Newspaper

Josh
Backpack
Cigarette
Lighter
Gun
Socks
Key (Chest)
Jacket

Mercer
Badge
Gun

Costume Plot

If You and I and I Were the Last Two People On Earth

Hal
Look: Average
Neutral – Gray t-shirt
Jeans

Paul
Look: Tough Guy
Strong, solid t-shirt – Black
Jeans

Eli
Look: nerdy
Goofier, more colorful shirt – green, white and blue polo shirt
Jeans
Unkempt Hair

Sam
Look: Young, awkward
Oversized Shirt and Backpack – in hopes of making her look younger
Jeans

Josh
Look: Worn down
White T-shirts – Replaceable in case of blood mishap
Faded Jeans

Natalie
Look: Casual, yet attractive
Purple T-Shirt
Necklace
Jeans
Hair in face

Mike
Look: Nerdy, yet cool
Brown T-shirt
Jeans
"Cool" Hair style

Officer Mercer
Look: Uptight / Tightly Wound
Police Uniform – Top Button unbuttoned

Samantha and Josh

Ext. Street
Disaster Scene
Car
Newspaper

Int. Living Room
T.V.
Couch
Wall Dressing
Wooden accoutrements
Lamp

Int. Parents' Room
Dresser
Bed
Sock Drawer
Vase

Int. House / Bathroom
Medicine Cabinet
Drawers

Set Dressing

Hal, Paul and Eli

Int. Church
Crib
Furniture
Assorted Toys
Cross
Phone (land line)
Paint brushes

Ext. Church
None

Ext. Road
None

Ext. Paul's House
Window Screen

Int. 3351 Apple Court
Furniture
Kitchen
Living Room

Natalie and Mike

Int. Party
Couch
T.V.
Red Cups
Beer Cans
Car
Kitchen
Party Remnants
Keg
Liquor Bottle
Cereal
Fridge decorations

Ext. Party
None

Int. Car
None

	PAGES	SET DRESSING	PROPERTIES
HAL, PAUL AND ELI			
INT. CHURCH BASEMENT – DAY			
	1-8		
		Child's Toys Furniture Christian Misc. Phone	Eli's List (p. 3) Baby (p.7 – end)
EXT. FRONT OF CHURCH & ROAD – DAY			
	8-11		
			Baby (p.8-end)
EXT. PAUL'S HOUSE			
	11-15		
		Window (w/Screen)	Baby (p.11-end) Hal's Shirt (p.11 – end) Mercer Gun (p.13 – end) Silverware Baseball bat
EXT. ROAD			
	15-17		
			Baby (p.15-end) Paul's Shirt (p.15 - end) Mercer Gun (p.15-end)
EXT. 3351 APPLE CT.			
	17-18,19-20		
			Baby (p.17 – end) Hal Shirt (p.17 – end) Mercer Gun (p.18-end)
INT. 3351 APPLE CT.			
	20-26		
			Baby (p.20 – end) Hal Shirt (p.20 end)

	PAGES	SET DRESSING	PROPERTIES
NATALIE AND MIKE			
INT. HOUSE – NIGHT			
	1-3		
		Couch T.V.	Red Cups Beer Cans Bong Parts Cell Phones Drug Rugs
EXT. HOUSE – NIGHT			
	3-4		
		Red Cups Beer Cans Car	Cell Phones Vomit Keys (Natalie)
INT. CAR – DAY			
	4-6		
			Keys (Natalie) Cell Phones (2)
EXT. HIGHWAY – DAY			
	6		
INT. CAR			
	6-14		
			Cell Phones (2) Speeding Tickets License & Registration Keys

EXT. ROAD

14-16

Cell Phones (broken)
Keys

EXT. YARD

17

beer cans
car

INT. HOUSE

17-19

T.V.
Couch
Keg
Liqour

Natalie Cell Phone

	PAGES	SET DRESSING	PROPERTIES
SAM AND JOSH			
EXT. STREET			
	1		
		Newspaper Car	Umbrella Grocery Bag
EXT. HOUSE			
	1		
			Cell phone Cigarette lighter
INT. LIVING ROOM			
	1-3,4-5		
		T.V. Couch	Cell Phone
INT. PARENT'S ROOM			
	3-4		
		dresser bed	gun box Gun Socks Key
INT. HALLWAY			
	4		
			backpack Gun
EXT. ROAD			
	5-7		
			back packs (2) Gun

INT. BATHROOM

7-9

First Aid / Medicine

Back Pack (2)
Cigarette
Bandages
Lighter
Gun

INT. DOWNSTAIRS

9-11

Gun (2)
Back Pack (2)

EXT. STREET

11-13

Gun
Mercer Gun
Back Pack (2)

EXT. BRIDGE

13

Back Pack

Credits

Produced / Directod by : Brenden Gallagher
Written by: Brenden Gallagher and Kevin Riley
Director of Photography: Erik Hinton
Editor: Erik Hinton
Original Music by: Martin Brown
Make-up / Blood FX: Kevin Riley

Cast
Natalie .... Brittany Andrews
Sam ..... Stephanie Byars
Hal ... Brenden Gallagher
Eli ... John Graham
Josh ... Nathan Jedrzejewski
Mom ... Maddie Marcenelle
Officer Mercer .... Ben Miller
Mike. .... Eric Prendergast
Paul ... Kevin Riley

Pary Goers
Tricia .... Jeralynn Miller
Boyfriend .... Zach Braun
Rene Brown
Thomas Donahoe
Martel Manning
Paul Nutter
Kyle Smith

Grips / P.A. / Sound Tech
Ben Beitzel
Ryan Ben
Martin Brown
Lauren 'Ren' Cashman
Kelly Coburn
John Fallon
Casey Gallagher
John Graham
Cassidy Gruber
Maddie Marcenelle
Ben Miller
Kevin Riley
John Tronsor
Christine Van Kirk
Spencer

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Post Mortem: *If You and I Were The Last Two People On Earth ...*

Going in to a creative process, you often anticipate how much you will learn from its creative components, from making the lights, actors or shots work. More often than not, I find that technical and organizational knowledge is the area in which I learn the most in a given process, and *If You and I Were the Last Two People On Earth* ... was no exception. I was wise in my previous film work to limit each project to a several minute long skit; this allowed for all aspects of a given production to have a sense of being self-contained. Shooting a longer piece, like this one, was a comparatively sprawling endeavor. Working across over a dozen locations, using over a half dozen actors in numerous combinations, and utilizing a revolving-door crew all contributed to this feeling; these were exercise in logistical juggling. As a result, the stress levels were often through the roof. At the same time, the sense of accomplishment that we felt collectively, after weathering some aggravating and unorthodox challenges, also increased in magnitude.

The biggest lesson that an independent filmmaker learns on his first longer feature, it seems, is that there are never enough people involved, and those that are willing and able to wear multiple hats are invaluable. Though it would have been nice to have a gaffer and sound technician permanently on-set, though it would have been great to give post-production a leisurely time frame to complete the film, there is a certain charm to the feeling that we were all in this together. By the end of the process, I felt a closeness with my collaborators, gained by working so closely as to be holding bounce boards next to them or setting up voice-over equipment, that I am sure many directors cannot boast.

Looking at the final product, I am proud to report that we have maintained a unity of vision for the project, despite being pulled in so many directions. Though the seasons and actors may have changed as shooting progressed over six months, the essential feeling of the project hangs together throughout, and for that I am thrilled. We often see it is as so strange that abstract concepts like look or tone can be so vital to a piece. Essentially, look and tone rise out of the same thing: all of the various aspects of a process coming together. This, it seems, is the only path to success. Through this process I have learned that the attitude and personalities of the crew will surely show through in the final project, and sometimes can be the glue that holds a work together.

If I could go through this process all over again, there are certainly some things that I would do differently, but I am glad that I can look back over the project as a whole and say that each creative component grew together toward the completed whole. That might be the essential consideration in evaluating whether a project has succeeded or failed. In this, I believe we succeeded.

-Brenden Gallagher
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