

# ON BEING GOOD

Alex King

# **ON BEING GOOD**

**Alex King**

Welcome to the party!

\*\*\*\*\*

This play is graciously dedicated to  
Julia Gaudioso, Sarah Giulianti, Samantha Kahn,  
And every artist currently trapped at Livingston Highschool, pining to make stuff.

**THANK YOU**

*(You are wonderful)*

*{Now onto the good stuff-}*

\*\*\*\*\*

## **THE PLAYS**

ON BEING GOOD is a nine-act play about the struggle of being a good person and the failures of good intention. Each play tells the story of two people hurting in their own ways and how those hurts come into conflict with each other. Each play identifies a struggle relatable to most anyone, and fast forwards to its tipping point. Since in each play the ages of the characters are more advanced than the previous they come together to form one larger message: We all have these tipping points in our lives, and we all should, but the nine plays strung together should show that even after one tension is released, there will always be another.

### **The Plays:**

- 1.) Talking to Yourself
- 2.) King of The World
- 3.) Tropical
- 4.) Welcome Back
- 5.) Sequential
- 6.) Long Distance
- 7.) Super!
- 8.) Only fools
- 9.) Gibberish

The string that connects each play literally is each character's relationship with the education establishment: Lawrencetown High-school. Or LHS for short if you would like.

## **CHARACTERS**

- 1.) Talking to Yourself: A GIRL and her REFLECTION who constantly bicker.
- 2.) King of The World: ARIN, the most popular kid in school, and NATALIE, a nobody with a limp and anxiety attacks.
- 3.) Tropical: MILES and DEBRA, the shell-shocked bride and groom.
- 4.) Welcome Back: Nerdy and erratic talk show host JAMES and his up and coming celebrity guest TYLER.
- 6.) Sequential: Struggling author ERIC and super fan MEGHAN. And a small cameo of WOMAN at the end there.
- 5.) Long Distance: Secretive LIZ and her cheery online girlfriend HOPE.
- 7.) Super!: Nerdy teacher GREG who has a surprise for his sensible friend BEN.
- 8.) Only Fools: STAR and JOHN, father and daughter, very similar and always arguing.
- 9.) Gibberish: Very recently widowed ALIVIA and her old friend JOE.

## NOTES FOR READERS

### So. Let's get real, shall we?

I've been called "An anxious over thinker with depressive tendencies", but I prefer the term *realist*, as are the characters of ON BEING GOOD. There is no one in this play who doesn't think they deserve to be happy but there are only few who expect that that happiness is possible.

ON BEING GOOD is full of absurdities and realities. And thus, both ends of the spectrum should be played to their fullest and with complete unflinching commitment.

ON BEING GOOD is no more of a comedy or a tragedy than real life already is. It is made to entertain and impact, but the significance of the impact is entirely reliant upon being surrounded by either comedy or tragedy which serves as the entertainment of this necessary equation.

My point is: This play is absurd, because life is absurd. And this play is comedic, because life is comedic. And while my former stance about this play also being a tragedy is true, it's important to play it like a comedy in its comedic moments. When the characters are being funny, they are trying to be funny, it's a decision they have made to relieve tension. Not just the next line to get out. And when a scene is absurd, the characters know it! And they are either choosing to ignore it or calling it out explicitly. These characters are not stupid, or just a bunch of lines. They are people who just want to be happy...

### Some Quotes: *(To set the tone)*

"History isn't just the story of bad people doing bad things. It's quite as much a story of people trying to do good things. But somehow, something goes wrong."

-C.S. Lewis

"Bad people are, from the point of view of art, fascinating studies. They represent color, variety and strangeness. Good people exasperate one's reason; bad people stir one's imagination."

-Oscar Wild

"*You* are all the things that are wrong with you. It's not the alcohol, or the drugs, or any of the sh\*tty things that happen to you in your career, or when you're a kid. It's you."

-Theodor Chavez

"I am not a gun."

- The Iron Giant (AKA: A Walking Talking Giant Gun)

# ON BEING GOOD

## TALKING TO YOURSELF

*It's 7pm on a Friday night in quiet suburban neighborhood. Lights up on a teenager's room, in the middle of the stage is a small makeup vanity with a large mirror frame, on both sides of the frame the same room is built. In a moment, on the right side of the stage a GIRL in a nice dress walks on stage and towards the makeup vanity and takes a seat. At the same time, on the other side of the stage, her REFLECTION follows the same action. They sigh and start brushing their hair.*

REFLECTION: ... Hey! Are you staring at me?!

GIRL: Please stop talking to me.

REFLECTION: Oh, come on! That was classic mirror humor! You love mirror humor!

GIRL: No, you love mirror humor.

REFLECTION: Oh, come on. You love it! You know you love it!

GIRL: Whatever. *(The two are silent.)*

REFLECTION: Hey. What's wrong bud? Why're you not participating in classic girl and her mirror banter?

GIRL: Well maybe I don't feel like bantering anymore. Did you ever think about that?!

REFLECTION: Woah! Where's all this coming from?

GIRL: You heard the therapist! It's not healthy to keep talking to myself!

REFLECTION: I- oh my God, you're gonna listen to that crazy quack? She was wearing a flip flops and socks during the last appointment. Socks. And. Flip flops!

GIRL: Yah well she was nice! And she listened to me!

REFLECTION: Cause she was paid to! Come on, you don't really think she cared, do you? *(The girl falls silent. They both spin around.)*

GIRL: Talking to myself is still not healthy.

REFLECTION: Okay well, let's not think about in "You" and "Talking to yourself" terms. Let's phrase it in more a "You" and "Your cool and insightful other self"!

GIRL: I... Ugh, fine.

REFLECTION: Yay!

GIRL: What do you even want to talk about?

REFLECTION: Thank you! First of all: That makes your legs look even more fat than they usually do, which is saying a lot so!

GIRL: Oh my God!

REFLECTION: And honestly a little more makeup wouldn't hurt anybody-

GIRL: This is why! This is why this is unhealthy!

REFLECTION: What!? I'm just being honest! People like that quality in us you know-

GIRL: Can you just let me get ready please! *(They shoot up out of their chair.)*

REFLECTION: Why are we even going to this! It's dumb and stupid and I hate it.

GIRL: Because it's important to me! And to our future! And if they're going to feature my art, I might as well go and mingle or whatever. It's just the Lawrencetown high school annual art gala it's not gonna cause any anxiety cause why would it! It's not a big deal! Who cares! Not me!

REFLECTION: Whatever you gotta tell yourself Hun.

GIRL: Well we're going and that's final.

REFLECTION: Well I think it's a waste of time.

GIRL: What a surprise.

REFLECTION: I'm serious! We could be doing so many other things with that time! *(The Girl sighs, the two start applying makeup.)*

GIRL: Things like what?

REFLECTION: Well we could... Eat ice cream and cry! That's your favorite!

GIRL: That's your favorite! I hate doing that and you always make me!

REFLECTION: Oh yeah. Okay, what about... Watching Netflix for twelve hours straight.

GIRL: No!

REFLECTION: Taking a long shower and thinking about life?

GIRL: No thank you!

REFLECTION: Okay okay, what about lying in bed and just scrolling through Instagram for hours, occasionally seeing photos of your friends at parties and wishing you were invited?

GIRL: Wha- Geez, no! Who enjoys doing that?!

REFLECTION: Well I don't know but you still do it all the time!

GIRL: I- You- That's beside the point! And besides, this is one of those exact parties I'm going to wish I was at if I don't go!

REFLECTION: Okay, A: This isn't a party, it's a lame art gala, you're not cool enough to go to a party don't even try. And B: What is there to gain from some lame art show at some lame high school for lame artists who are all gonna be better than you anyway!



GIRL: Experience? Confidence?

REFLECTION: Okay but seriously.

GIRL: I am serious! And not supposed to be talking to you! Argh! (*There is an awkward silence.*)

REFLECTION: ... Wait. Are you not confident?>

GIRL: Not talking to you.

REFLECTION: Why aren't you confident? I'm confident!

GIRL: Stop speaking words to me please, thank you! (*They both put their makeup tool down, the Girl sighs.*) Done.

REFLECTION: Oh, no honey, that's awful, wipe it off and redo it. And make sure it hides your gross spot on your forehead.

GIRL: Wow I wonder why I'm not confident! ... But you're right. Ugh! (*They pick up a wet wipe and take off the makeup.*)

REFLECTION: Yeah! Well I also wonder why you're not confident, but you won't tell me why! (*They pick up the makeup tool and start to reapply.*)

GIRL: I- Oh my God, I'm implying that you are the one that makes me not confident! It was rhetorical!

REFLECTION: That's not what rhetorical means.

GIRL: See! (*They stand and walk to their dressers on the other side of their rooms and start looking for something.*)

REFLECTION: I make you not confident? How could **I** possibly make you **not** confident? We're the same person!

GIRL: Are we?!

REFLECTION: I mean... I think? I live in a mirror so not much makes sense to me to be honest-

GIRL: You're nothing like me! You're everything I hate! You're mean, and superficial, and *rude*, // and-

REFLECTION: And funny, and smart, and cool!

GIRL: And narcissistic!

REFLECTION: Um newsflash! So are you! Cause again, if it wasn't already completely obvious, we are the same person!

GIRL: Well I don't really want to be this person to be honest!

REFLECTION: Alright, then what kind of person do you want to be then little miss? Huh? Hm?

GIRL? I- I don't know! I want to be confident! And smart! And funny and cool!

REFLECTION: You already are!

GIRL: No! You are! You're the confident one! You're the smart one! You're the one that's funny and everyone likes!

REFLECTION: Then problem solved! Just act like me girl! Even though we're already the same person so like whatever-

GIRL: Problem not solved! Because I don't want to act like you!

REFLECTION: Wha- But you literally just said-

GIRL: I don't want to have to put others down to be confident! I don't want to be narcissistic just to be smart! And I especially don't want to be mean to be funny!

REFLECTION: ... Well then you don't really want to be confident. Or smart or funny or whatever... You can't pick and choose how you are. We are who we are. Some good, some bad. But all us. We're a package deal. *Rude* and all.

GIRL: ... Then why do you hate me so much?

REFLECTION: ... What?

GIRL: Why do you always put me down! Make me feel like nothing! Make me expect the worst all the time and keep me locked in my own head!

REFLECTION: I'm just trying to help you!

GIRL: How is this possibly helping me!

REFLECTION: I'm protecting us!

GIRL: Protecting us from what?!

REFLECTION: Protecting you from life! And all the bad parts of it! This world isn't all ice cream sundaes and pillows! It's rough and hard and because of me you don't have to face those hard realities! You should be thanking me!

GIRL: ... Yeah well... you're also "Protecting me" from the good parts about life you know! Being happy, taking risks!

REFLECTION: That's a risk I'm willing to take! You have no idea, you couldn't survive getting hurt. Trust me!

GIRL: Why would you know! You haven't taken the same risks I haven't taken; the only difference is you're the one who doesn't want to take them! You don't know more than me, we're the same person!

REFLECTION: Oh please! You want to know the real difference between me and you? I'm strong and you're weak! And I. Hate. Being. Half. Weak!

GIRL: ... What happened to you don't hate me? (*They step closer to each other.*)

REFLECTION: ... I-

GIRL: What happened to liking who **we** are? (*They step closer.*)

REFLECTION: Well-

GIRL: What happened to you just want to help me?! (*They are both standing right in front of the mirror now, staring right at each other.*)

REFLECTION: Okay, just listen-

GIRL: No, you listen! For once you stop blabbering on and let me get some words out of **my** own mouth! (*For the first time, the synchronized nature of their actions breaks, and the Reflection falls onto the chair, while the Girl still stands, staring down at her.*) For my whole life I've been bending to your every will! All you do is hate me on me and all I've done is listen. You don't want to protect me, you just want to protect yourself! And I'm done with it! You're no longer in control of

our life. I am! I know I can't get rid of you, but I sure as hell don't have to listen to you... *(The Reflection is scared, she can't find any words to retort, she is panicking, she is losing control.)*

REFLECTION: ... You- You'll never be happy if you don't love yourself. All of yourself. You heard the therapist! I am part of you! We're the same person! It's a package deal-

GIRL: I might have to learn to love you to be happy... But learning to hate you is a good first step. *(The Girl turns around, grabs her purse, and struts out of the room. The Reflection is stunned in her seat. She shoots up out of her chair and leans into the window, she bangs on the glass.)*

REFLECTION: Hey! Hey! *(There is no response. The Reflection is alone. She falls back into her chair defeated. Lights fade, transition and we move to...)*

## KING OF THE WORLD

*It's 1 am on a Saturday night in the wealthy part of a suburban neighborhood. Lights up on an empty living room. The living room is covered in red solo cups and fallen streamers, and in the corner of the room, sitting on the floor against a couch, is NATALIE. She is rocking back and forth, having a mini panic attack, unaware that she is the only one left in the house. Shortly, ARIN walks onto the stage holding a garbage bag, picking up cups, he is also talking into his phone. He does not notice Natalie and she in turn does not notice him.*

ARIN: No. No Yeah... I'm just watching movies. Catching up on my Netflix list... Mom you don't have to. No, I ate! Thank you... No, yeah I- *(Arin finally notices Natalie, huddled in corner, shaking. He stops in his tracks and gently places down the last red solo cup he had picked up.)* Um... Yeah! Yeah... Love you too... Yeah... Bye... *(Arin hangs up, not taking his eyes off Natalie, he slowly walks towards her as she begins taking deep breaths.)* ... Um. *(Natalie breathes out and looks up from her huddle. She notices Arin staring at her, her eyes widen with surprise and fear.)* Uh, Hello?

NATALIE: *(Surprised.)* Oh. Hi.

ARIN: Um, are you... Are you alright?

NATALIE: Oh! Oh my God! Sorry, is the party over? I // didn't mean to

ARIN: Yeah. A bit. *(He chuckles.)*

NATALIE: Ah. That's awkward. My bad. *(She stands up, slowly and painfully. Once up, she picks up a cane from the couch and leans on it.)* Oh. Geez wait. Am I... Am I the last one here?

ARIN: Uh... Yeah. A bit. *(The two both laugh.)* I just walked Jeff out and he was the last one left- or, I thought he was the last one left but. So, yeah... Whoops.

NATALIE: Ah that's... Yeah, my bad! Sorry. I came in here when that guy was break dancing in the kitchen and everyone gathered around to watch, I just needed a breath so. I came in here. Must have lost track of time. Sorry! Again.

ARIN: No! Yeah of course. I get that, no problem... Can I get you something? Are you okay or?

NATALIE: No! Yes, I'm fine! I'm good, you don't need to-

ARIN: You don't want a water or anything?

NATALIE: No! Really, I'm good. I didn't mean to impose. Which, reminds me, I should probably leave your house!

ARIN: No! Well, Yes! But no! If you... If you need a minute. Take a minute-

NATALIE: No, it's okay, my leg just acts up when my anxiety flares so like-  
(*Natalie goes to leave, Arin grabs her hand.*)

ARIN: Seriously! Take a minute. No rush!

NATALIE: (*Natalie is hesitant.*) I...Are you sure?

ARIN: Very. (*Natalie looks down to see that he is holding her hand. They separate.*)

NATALIE: ... Okay. Thank you, it's very... Nice of you. (*Natalie sits on the couch uncomfortably. There is an awkward silence.*)

ARIN: ... You sure you don't want water or-

NATALIE: No! Jesus you're polite...

ARIN: (*Flirtatious.*) That's what they tell me, heh. (*They both chuckle, then a silence.*) I'm Arin by the way! (*He sticks out his hand, Natalie hesitates then shakes it.*)

NATALIE: (*Natalie is confused, but she comes to a realization.*) Oh! Wow! Uh, this interaction is probably much weirder since it's basically a stranger who's having a panic attack in your living room at one in the morning!

ARIN: Uh... Kinda? (*They laugh.*)

NATALIE: Yeah. I'm not some weirdo who snuck into your party though! I mean. Basically, the whole school was invited so, a few of my friends thought what's the trouble bringing old Nat along-

ARIN: Oh, yeah! No problem! Seriously! The more the merrier right? What's a graduation party without a few strangers. (*They laugh.*) But um. You do look familiar though so. It's not like you're a total stranger. (*He steps closer.*)

NATALIE: Oh... I do? (*She steps closer.*)

ARIN: Yeah! I mean you look familiar so. Did we have like. Spanish together or something? Math? (*He steps closer.*)

NATALIE: Oh. Uh, no. No, I doubt it.

ARIN: Really? Huh. You just look... Really familiar. (*He steps even closer.*)

NATALIE: Yeah. I get that a lot so... (*She steps forward, but then immediately steps two steps backwards.*) I'm gonna go! (*Natalie starts to walk past him, limping even with her cane.*)

ARIN: Oh, come on, Lawrencetown's not that big of high school, I must have seen you around at some point...Wait! Gym! We had Gym together! Did you ever have red hair- (*Natalie starts to walk to the door.*)

NATALIE: Nope! Guess you just must have me confused with another person or-

ARIN: Wait wait don't go! This'll drive me crazy all night! Ugh I feel like such a jerk. Just. Hold on I can do this. (*Natalie stops just before she gets to the room's door, she hangs her head.*) ... Ugh. I don't know. Just tell me.

NATALIE: Uh...

ARIN: (*Charming.*) Oh, come on! I know I know you from somewhere! Don't

leave me hanging, I'm gonna be thinking about this all night! *(Natalie sighs and fiddles with her cane.)*

NATALIE: Um. Well. It could. Possibly be because we were friends for four years? Maybe. *(There is a long moment of silence. Natalie is rubbing her arm or neck anxiously and Arin is confused.)*

ARIN: Heh, uh. What? *(Arin steps back.)*

NATALIE: Yeah. Well. Family friends. Just from second grade to fifth. I get that it could have been forgettable...

ARIN: ... I// I don't-

NATALIE: It's not like I blame you or anything! I get it! I slipped through the cracks right as you started becoming popular so. I get it. I've been told I'm a bit forgettable heh... *(Arin is completely focused on trying to search his memories.)*

ARIN: I... I'm sorry I don't remember... Really?

NATALIE: Yeah! Well. Again. It's not entirely your fault. We were drifting apart socially and or parents were drifting apart... Well economically I guess. And. That's when the accident happened.

ARIN: Accident?

NATALIE: Yeah. Car crash. Sixth grade. I spent the next four months in the hospital recovering, that's how I got the old' limp biscuit *(She gestures to her leg. Arin is stunned.)* But yeah. After I got back to school you were already on the football team, lost all that weight so. Figured one of the popular kids probably didn't want to hang out with the limping girl who was already of a lower status. So, I just kinda. Faded into the background... *(The two are silent.)* ... I think I should // go-

ARIN: I'm. So stupid!

NATALIE: It's fine, it was a long time ago so, I shouldn't have said // anything-

ARIN: No! Are you kidding! I'm so- Oh my god! I can't believe I-

NATALIE: It's fine, really-

ARIN: I abandoned you!

NATALIE: I don't think-

ARIN: In a time when you definitely needed your friends!

NATALIE: I guess friends would have been nice-

ARIN: I'm a horrible person! *(Arin plops down on the couch, defeated.)*

NATALIE: ... Kinda?

ARIN: Oh God!

NATALIE: ... This is awkward.

ARIN: I can't be a bad person! I mean. I'm likable. I know I'm likable!

NATALIE: Sure... I assume.

ARIN: But then again, I have always suspected I was a horrible person. Deep down you know? But I figured that was just an average teenager thing!

NATALIE: This is true...

ARIN: But it turns out It's true! Oh God... Wait! Maybe I have amnesia! Or something? Because I didn't remember and such!

NATALIE: I feel like you would remember having amnesia?

ARIN: Wouldn't I not though?

NATALIE: I- You- I mean no but... I still doubt it.

ARIN: Then again, I do have many memories of childhood and even earlier, kinda have an impeccable memory as far as memories go. Ugh. It is true! I'm terrible!

NATALIE: You know. Maybe we should have just agreed on the amnesia thing-

ARIN: I can't believe I didn't... I'm such a bad person!

NATALIE: I don't know how to react to this>

ARIN: How do people like me! So many people like me! A house full of people like me!

NATALIE: Seems that way!

ARIN: How! How do all these people like me! How... How. How did I get this far? How do people not see how much of a clearly bad person I am...

NATALIE: ... I don't know if you're a bad person... Maybe you've just... Made some bad decisions? Maybe you can redeem yourself... Somehow... Or something... *(Arin is silent. Natalie is uncomfortable.)* ... So, I think I'm gonna... *(Natalie turns to leave.)*

ARIN: ... Wait. *(Arin stands, Natalie turns back.)* ... Hit me.

NATALIE: ... What?

ARIN: Hit me. In the face! Or the leg! Whatever! Just. Do it. I deserve it.

NATALIE: Arin-

ARIN: Come on! Use your cane! It would be fitting! Poetic justice! I deserve it!

NATALIE: Arin I'm not gonna // hit you!

ARIN: Please! I did an awful thing. I deserve it. You can't tell me you haven't at least thought about getting some form of revenge!

NATALIE: Uh... I was kinda planning on stealing a vase or something but. I chickened out.

ARIN: Exactly! So! Just hit me! No chickening out! Just... hit me! *(Arin closes his eyes and gets ready.)*

NATALIE: ... Are you serious right now?

ARIN: Very. *(Arin prepares himself again. Natalie takes a moment, she slowly raises her cane and pokes Arin. He sighs.)*

ARIN: Come on. My grandma could hit harder than that.

NATALIE: But... I'm over it, you don't have to-

ARIN: Just hit me!

NATALIE: But-

ARIN: Hit me! *(Natalie hits him on the side of the head with her cane, mostly to shut him up. Arin is silent, Natalie is immediately full of regret.) ... Ow...*

NATALIE: I... Am so sorry!

ARIN: No, it's fine-

NATALIE: I didn't mean to swing // that hard!

ARIN: It's okay! I deserved it! I asked for it // so it's not-

NATALIE: Should I find ice? Where do you keep your ice?

ARIN: No! No! Seriously! I'm good! *(Arin shakes off the pain and breaths out. He closes his eyes again.)* Alright. Again.

NATALIE: ... What?

ARIN: Go again! Swing. I can take it.

NATALIE: What?! No, // I'm not going to-

ARIN: Yes! At least one for each year I didn't remember you!

NATALIE: What?!

ARIN: Yeah! And that's even! Then we can just forget about it and move on!

NATALIE: No!

ARIN: Yes!

NATALIE: No!

ARIN: Why not?!

NATALIE: Because I don't want to forget it! And I don't want to just move on so what good would it do!? Is hitting you gonna really bring either of us contentment?! Is giving you a limp going to get rid of mine?! Is it gonna erase the last six years of loneliness!? Is it gonna give me my friend back?! Cause if so I'll start swinging! But even then, I wouldn't because the idea of "getting revenge" makes me want to puke! I don't want to hit you. I barely even want an apology! I just... I want you to know you hurt me. You abandoned me when I needed you and just forgot about me... I just... Was it worth it? Was being friends with the coolest kids and the hottest girls really what you wanted?

ARIN: ... I... I don't know...

NATALIE: ... Well I hope all the popular people parties were worth it... Beat yourself up if you want to. But I won't do it for you... *(Natalie turns and walks to the door to the room, her limp noticeably better. Arin is stunned. She turns back.)* ... Happy graduation... By the way... *(Arin breathes out, defeated.)* ... I'll see you around Arin...

ARIN: See you around Natalie... *(Natalie Leaves, Arin is left all behind, surrounded by garbage. Lights fade, transition and we move on to...)*



## TROPICAL

*It's 11am on a Saturday afternoon exceptionally far from any suburban neighborhoods. Lights up on an empty tropical beach. The sounds of waves crashing can be heard as MILES stumbles onto stage dressed in a dirty suit, coughing and breathing heavily. Across the stage, lying motionless on the floor in a dirty white wedding gown is DEBRA. Miles notices Debra's limp body and he immediately rushes to her.*

MILES: Debra! Debra! Oh my God, baby speak to me! Honey? (*Miles cuddles Debra's head worried.*)

DEBRA: I... Am. Taking. A nap.

MILES: ... What? (*Debra sits up and grunts.*)

DEBRA: I was taking a nap and working on my tan! (*Debra stands up. Miles stays on his knees, completely confused.*)

MILES: ... You're in a wedding dress.

DEBRA: It would have been an awkward tan, sure-

MILES: Why. In the world! Would this be a good time for a nap and or tan! (*Miles shoots back up.*)

DEBRA: It **is** my honeymoon! I feel like I deserve at least a quick nap-tan!

MILES: I... I feel like you are not understanding the weight of this situation!

DEBRA: I feel like you're not understanding how good this beach sand is feeling on my heal murdered feet!

MILES: We! Have been stranded! On a desert island! With no way to contact anyone to let them know we are even here!

DEBRA: I mean who would even care, all our family and loved ones were on the cruise ship.

MILES: Which sank! As you know! And which you seem weirdly cavalier about!

DEBRA: Yes, well when your new and handsome groom pushes his new and lovely bride over to get to a life raft first you kinda become a little cavalier!

MILES: Oh, this again!

DEBRA: Women and children first Miles! Women and children first!

MILES: How many times are we going to bring this up!

DEBRA: Seeing how it took place less than twenty-four hours ago probably at least three more times!

MILES: Is that over the course of this conversation or the rest of our lives?

DEBRA: Well we are going to starve to death within a week, so probably the latter!

MILES: Well I'm not the one who wanted my wedding and honeymoon on a cruise, even though I know my husband is terrified of the ocean and has stated multiple times that he thinks all boats are a conspiracy and he would never want to go on a cruise!

DEBRA: Oh, this again!?

MILES: How can they float on water! They are metal!

DEBRA: Because of weight ratios and and and... Basic science!

MILES: I refuse to believe that!

DEBRA: Well at least you finally got your tropical honeymoon!

MILES: I meant Jamaica! Or Hawaii! Not... Somewhere in the south pacific I // assume?

DEBRA: How did I ever think I could spend the rest of my life with you?! It feels like I was sleepwalking for the last three years of my life!

MILES: Seems unlikely?

DEBRA: You're just. You're so... Cowardly!

MILES: I... You... What? No! What? No!

DEBRA: You are you really really are! You little **baby**!

MILES: Name one time I've ever acted cowardly!

DEBRA: Easy. Just hours ago! With the pushing over! Women and children? Is this not ringing a bell!

MILES: I- Wha- That shouldn't even count!

DEBRA: Why should that not count!?

MILES: Cause! Life endangerment! We were on a sinking boat!

DEBRA: Exactly! In a moment of life or death panic you choose yourself! You always... choose yourself Miles! Always!

MILES: I... No, I... You're my wife! I'd do anything for you-

DEBRA: Yeah well... I'd like to see you do that you know? Just once?

MILES: ... I'm sorry, I-

DEBRA: You're just... You're cowardly. And selfish... And mean! You're really mean! And you play it off like you're just joking but I know you're not!

MILES: Yeah well... You're no prize yourself.

DEBRA: Excuse me?

MILES: You're excused! (*Debra gasps.*)

DEBRA: Okay! Okay! Let's do this! Yeah! What're my problems? Please! Indulge me!

MILES: Well... You're very bossy!

DEBRA: Oh! Nice one! Hit em where it hurts!

MILES: And you're very messy!

DEBRA: Oh! Oh, I'm messy? Oh, I'm sorry, let me just clean up my patch of sand then, gotta make sure my sand is in order!

MILES: And you're mean! You're really mean! You pretend it's you being a busy professional in the modern world who worked her way to the top and doesn't have time for nonsense but you're not! You're just mean! You've always been mean!

DEBRA: Oh, and who are you to call me mean?!

MILES: Your husband?!

DEBRA: Well like my Aunt Liz kept saying: "Doubt that'll last!"

MILES: Oh yah? Well right now I'm kinda agreeing with her!

DEBRA: Yah! That was the point of my statement! Stop stealing my jokes!

You're so dumb sometimes! How do you even dress yourself you idio-

MILES: I cheated on you! (*The argument suddenly stops.*)

DEBRA: ... What?

MILES: I... Cheated on you. (*Debra thinks.*)

DEBRA: ... With who?

MILES: Debra-

DEBRA: Who?!

MILES: ... Beth... From the office.

DEBRA: ... That little- I'm gonna kill her>

MILES: Deb it wasn't her fault, I-

DEBRA: How long!

MILES: It wasn't even-

DEBRA: How long?!

MILES: ... It was just one date.

DEBRA: ... You took her on a date?! God you can't even cheat on some one right! You took her on a date! I can't believe-

MILES: Well I didn't know it was a date!

DEBRA: ... What?

MILES: We both had to stay late and work on the Johnson account-

DEBRA: Oh my God!

MILES: And she was really helpful, and we were both... *Starving!*

DEBRA: Oh my God!

MILES: So, we went to Ginos for late dinner early breakfast kind of thing afterword!

DEBRA: ... Wait what?

MILES: And then when we were walking back to the office she said, "This was a really surprisingly nice date!" (*Debra thinks.*)

DEBRA: ... So it wasn't a date.

MILES: Well I mean she thought it was but I didn't mean to-

DEBRA: So you didn't cheat on me?!

MILES: ... Well I mean she said-

DEBRA: Did you sleep with her?!

MILES: What! No!

DEBRA: Then you didn't cheat on me you idiot!

MILES: I- Wait really?

DEBRA: God I hate you.

MILES: Hey! That's not- ... Well you know what? Feeling's mutual!

DEBRA: ... Well good!

MILES: Good! *(There is a long silent beat. Debra and Miles are both breathing heavily and staring at each other. Suddenly, Miles kisses her, quickly and passionately. Debra breaks away quickly.)*

DEBRA: Oh my God! Wha- Why would you kiss me in that moment?!

MILES: I don't know I thought it was leading up to that.

DEBRA: Why would it be leading to that?! We were just screaming about how much we hate each other!

MILES: ... I mean, I was feelin it but-

DEBRA: And you thought you cheated on me! And you didn't but that's not the point And... And you called me mean!

MILES: Well you are mean!

DEBRA: That doesn't mean you should say it! I'm your wife!

MILES: Well you said it first!

DEBRA: Well then... I'm sorry!

MILES: I'm sorry too! ... For everything really! For being so cowardly, and... Just a bad husband I guess. *(Miles sits.)*

DEBRA: You're not a bad husband. You're just... You're you! And I shouldn't keep wanting you to be someone else. It's not right... It's mean! So... I'm sorry too... I guess. I'm sorry I'm mean! *(Debra sits next to Miles.)*

MILES: No! You're not mean you're just... You're specific. And you're passionate. And there's nothing wrong with that... Maybe we're just. Not right together... I don't know.

DEBRA: ... But. I love you?

MILES: Yeah. I love you too... Damn it.

DEBRA: I know. This sucks!

MILES: Sucks! We're just so... Different!

DEBRA: Seriously! How'd we ever even end up together in the first place?

MILES: I mean. It was the classic story really. You were the Lawrencetown cheerleaders' queen bee, and I was the class valedictorian! It was bound to happen.

DEBRA: Yeah I don't think that's the classic story.

MILES: Um, pretty sure it is.

DEBRA: Definitely isn't.

MILES: Hm. I guess agree to disagree.

DEBRA: Oh my- What story have you ever heard where that was the case?!

MILES: Spiderman and Marry Jane.

DEBRA: I- You- Why in the world are we even talking about - ...This is an absurd- ... Ugh! (*Debra clenches her fists, Miles laughs.*)

MILES: (*Romantically*) Is it weird that seeing you this frustrated makes me want to kiss you?

DEBRA: ... Yes?

MILES: Oh. Then never mind.

DEBRA: Oh my God! We are losing our minds here!

MILES: Honey, we've been losing our minds for much longer than we've been on this island.

DEBRA: (*Laughing.*) Maybe! Honestly maybe... (*The two chuckles together. Debra sighs and leans on Miles's shoulder.*) ...So. What now? What do we do even?

MILES: ... I guess we just... lose our minds together?

DEBRA: Hm... Sounds romantic.

MILES: Yeah... A bit... (*Miles grabs Debra's hand.*)

DEBRA: ... We could try to signal for help... Build a boat? Start swimming? We don't have to be trapped...

MILES: Yeah... But that sunset's pretty darn... Pretty...

DEBRA: Yeah... (*The two look to each other. They kiss softly. Lights fade, transition and we move on to...*)

## WELCOME BACK

It's 10 pm on a Friday night in a busy soundstage in a not so suburban neighborhood. Lights up on a talk show set, a simple desk and couch will suffice, and behind the desk is charismatic but nerdy talk show host JAMES CARTON, he looks right to the audience as if they were his studio audience and holds flashcards in his hands.

JAMES: Hello and welcome back! I hope you enjoyed that commercial break. Now, we have a real special treat for you guys. Our guest tonight is a renowned actor and director, his new movie: Now That's Not Fair is out in theaters this Friday! Everybody please welcome Mr. Tyler Black! *(A sound effect of a clapping studio audience plays as TYLER BLACK, walks in dressed in a good-looking suit. He waves at the audience at walks towards the couch. James gets up and shakes his hand in front of the counter, the two sit down and the clapping slows.)* Tyler Black!

TYLER: Hello!

JAMES: Welcome!

TYLER: Thank you for having me!

JAMES: Well how could we resist inviting the new hottest kid in Hollywood?

TYLER: Haha, is that me?

JAMES: That's you! So excited to have you here. I saw the movie! Last night! Very deep!

TYLER: Thank you! That's actually what we were going for // so I appreciate-

JAMES: A deep sea of garbage more like! *(James laughs, a studio audience laughing plays.)* No no. I kid. We like to have fun here. So! You star and directed this movie?

TYLER: Uhh. Yes! Yes, it's my first time directing a feature film, so it was a very exciting // experience.

JAMES: Exciting stuff, exciting stuff. And your wife stars in this movie with you if I'm not mistaking?

TYLER: Yes: Elizebeth is my co-star, she-

JAMES: Elizabeth is a long-time friend of the show! She was here just last week actually.

TYLER: Yes! She's only had good things to say so I'm excited to finally be here and-

JAMES: Right, and do you ever think about how bad of a person you are?

TYLER: ... Uh. What?

JAMES: Do you ever think about it? How bad of a person you are that is. You know, the cruel things you've done? The people you've destroyed, you know, etcetera, etcetera...

TYLER: ... I'm sorry?

JAMES: Right right. They don't call it a question show! It's a talk show! Heh. So, moving on! You already know this, but we went to high school together!

TYLER: ... Um. We did! Yah! Ol' Lawrencetown High-school! Heh.

JAMES: Go Panthers right!

TYLER: That's right! Yeah. You transferred in our... Junior year? Right?

JAMES: You got it!

TYLER: Now if that's not a crazy coincidence I don't know // what is!

JAMES: What are the odds right?

TYLER: In this industry? Zero to none. *(A studio audience laughing plays, and along with-it James laughs hysterically, more than the joke deserved, this makes Tyler uncomfortable.)* Uhh...

JAMES: Zero to none! I'd say so! Wow! Heh...

TYLER: Yeah... I mean! Obviously, we've both done well for ourselves so. Must be a bit higher than that.

JAMES: Must. Have. Been... Ya know! Something you might not have been aware of,>

TYLER: Oh, do tell.

JAMES: Is that I actually transferred into Lawrencetown, from Saltlake, because I was getting severely bullied there!

TYLER: ... Oh! Really? That's... I'm sorry to hear that!

JAMES: Yeah well, I figured transferring would give me an opportunity to reinvent myself you know! Be cool! Be someone people wouldn't really think to wouldn't bully, but, we all know how that ended don't we... *(James chuckles playfully.)*

TYLER: ... Uh-

JAMES: Yeah! Lawrencetown's got bullies too it turns out! Much worse ones it would seem. And they are apparently really good at detecting a nerd who's trying to be cool!

TYLER: ... Uh. Yeah man... High school's a rough time-

JAMES: It is! For a lot of kids! Still is!

TYLER: Yeah! Uh, my niece actually-

JAMES: It wasn't for you though, right!

TYLER: ... Well-

JAMES: You were the quarterback! Varsity jacket jock! Cool guy extreme! For the love of God, you were dating Becky Marlaw! Becky Marlaw!

TYLER: ... Yeah. She uh... Is this live right now?

JAMES: And I mean I was just some nobody!

TYLER: ... Heh, well I don't think-

JAMES: Did you know I actually give speeches at high schools? All around the country?

TYLER: Oh. Uh. Really?

JAMES: Oh yeah! All about bullying and the overcoming of it!

TYLER: Oh. That's... Real big of you man, good for-

JAMES: I actually tell a story during those talks, from Lawrencetown!

TYLER: ... That's nice-

JAMES: Yeah, it is... I tell them a story about this one bully I had, during junior year specifically. He was a varsity jacket jock type. The football quarterback as it turns out...

TYLER: ... Listen man my agent just got me this to promot the movie, I don't-

JAMES: He was brutal to me. He tripped me in the hallways, picked on me in class. He once got his friends together and they covered my car in butter. Wheels too! Led to a car accident really quickly. Spent two months on crutches... He was. Brutal...

TYLER: ... Um. So funny story on set actually, me and my wife were setting up this big scene and-

JAMES: But then! (*James slumps in his chair.*) We graduated! And I escaped him! I moved to the city! And I worked hard. Harder than I'd ever worked before and I got a job on SNL. As a PA... So, I kept working. And eventually I was noticed. And I became a writer! And eventually a host! And after that I was offered my own late-night show! And it all worked out in the end for old Jamey!

TYLER: ... Yah man that's... It's a good story-

JAMES: And that story used to end with: "I don't know what happened to that bully. But I hope he's doing well. Because he pushed me to be the man I am today. A bigger man than him!" (*There is a silence. Tyler is covering his face.*) ... But now! It has to end with: "And that bully ended up becoming a very successful actor and director who I would eventually be forced to act buddy buddy with on my own show to promote his garbage movie that's already getting amazing reviews! Because apparently the universe doesn't care about what's fair!"

TYLER: Well... I-

JAMES: And the craziest part! Is that even with all the hard work I've put in for success, after pushing myself to be better, to be a good person in spite that jerk! ... I'm still not happy! I... I'm a good person. And I'm still not happy... Now **That's...** Not Fair...

TYLER: ... I couldn't imagine what it must be like to feel that kind of way James ... But. I feel like. If that bully were here right now... I think he would tell you that... That he was sorry. Really. Very. Extremely sorry... I think he really



would.

JAMES: ... Well I think I'd say to him... That I really appreciated that. (*The two stare at each other silently.*) And that's actually all the time we have! Thank you, Tyler, for coming out, you and your wife are always a pleasure! (*James extends his hand.*)

TYLER: ... Um, yah. Thanks- (*Tyler sighs in relief and shakes his hand.*)

JAMES: Now That's Not Fair! In theaters Friday! Be there! (*Tyler sighs and relaxes his body.*) When we come back, we'll see how Tyler Black reacts to the discovery of my affair with his wife, (*Tyler's head shoots up.*) so stick around! (*James smiles and points at the audience.*)

TYLER: I'm sorry what? (*Lights fade, transition, and move on to....*)

## SEQUENTIAL

*It's 10 am on a Tuesday morning in a sleepy suburban neighborhood. Lights up on a mostly empty dinner. The only person left in the dimly lit dinner is a man in classy intellectual clothing but with very unkempt hair and stubble, this is ERIC, who is sitting alone at a table for two, his face in his hands and a laptop on the table in front of him. His leg shakes compulsively. He rubs his face tiredly as a meek young woman dressed in a waiter's uniform walks onto stage, holding a book to her chest tightly and walking very slowly and nervously towards Eric, who does not notice her, this is MEGHAN, a super fan.*

ERIC: *(To himself.)* I'm so screwed... *(Meghan slowly reaches her hand out and taps the distraught Eric on the shoulder. Eric practically jumps.)* Ah! *(Meghan reels back!)*

MEGHAN: Ah! I'm so sorry!

ERIC: I- What is it?

MEGHAN: Um. *(Meghan whips her arms around her back, hiding her book.)* I'm sorry I didn't mean to scare you I just-

ERIC: It's... It's fine. Just was deep in my own head. Not your fault.

MEGHAN: Oh. Okay... Um. I have your check here so- *(Meghan pulls out a notepad and pen from her apron pocket and places it on the table.)* Whenever you're ready.

ERIC: Oh. Thank you. *(Eric sighs and returns to staring at his computer. Meghan slowly turns and begins to walk away. She stops though, clenches her book and walks back to Eric.)*

MEGHAN: Hi. Excuse me? Mr. Folton? Sorry. *(Eric turns back to face her again.)*

ERIC: Yes?

MEGHAN: Yes! Hi! I just wanted to say... *(Meghan freezes.)*

ERIC: ... You okay?

MEGHAN: Yes! Sorry! I get flustered, I'm just... A huge fan! *(Eric is legitimately surprised, he tries to respond but is too flustered.)*

ERIC: ... Oh! Really? I- Well I didn't realize I still had those-

MEGHAN: Of course! A Long Summer Night was literally my favorite book as a kid! And the fact that it was your first novel and you were so young it's just! You were my childhood hero!

ERIC: Oh wow! Well, thank you! I really appreciate it! Very nice to meet you...?

MEGHAN: Oh! Meghan! I'm Meghan. Duh, heh.

ERIC: Very nice to meet you Meghan. I'm Eric. *(He extends his hand and Meghan shakes it very enthusiastically.)*

MEGHAN: Heh, well I know that! *(Eric looks to her book.)*

ERIC: ... If you'd like an autograph-

MEGHAN: Yes! Please! *(Meghan hands him the book and quickly rushes to the open chair at the table. Eric opens the book and starts writing in it.)* Wow! Eric Folton! I can't believe... Funny story actually, the first time I read A Long Summer Night was when I was in high school, and I checked it out of the abandoned Lawrencetown library cause we like, had to for English class and so I just choose the first book I saw and I was just like. Wow! I mean... You're just so awesome! *(Eric chuckles.)*

ERIC: I don't know about that!

MEGHAN: You totally are! You write so... Humanly! You can really tell the pain that's inside you is going right on the page you know?! It's beautiful! *(Meghan sighs. Eric is silent, her words struck a chord within him.)*

ERIC: Well... It's always nice to meet a fan. *(Eric hands the book back to the extremely excited Meghan.)*

MEGHAN: Thank you so much! Seriously!

ERIC: Yeah. Of course.

MEGHAN: Not even just for this just for like! All of it! Your book really helped me out during a rough time! I mean my mom was really sick and I was so scared, but you so clearly had it all figured it out and I just... You really gave me hope!

ERIC: ... Well, I'm glad I could help... Do you go to school around here or-

MEGHAN: And then I read somewhere you were writing a sequel and just. Mind implosion you know! *(Eric's smile drops. He sighs disappointed.)*

ERIC: ... Yeah! Yeah, a lot of people are excited! So...

MEGHAN: Oh yeah! It's been so long! I have a whole group chat waiting for it!

ERIC: Really! Wow... *(Eric rubs his hands through his hair and takes a deep breath.)*

MEGHAN: Wait... Is that *(Meghan points at the computer.)* ... Is what you're working on-

ERIC: Oh! Uh. Yeah. I guess Kinda. Yeah.

MEGHAN: Oh. My. God! That's... That's so cool!

ERIC: I guess-

MEGHAN: How's it coming?! Oh my God are you almost done?!

ERIC: No! No way, heh. Not really. But it's uh... It's coming along.

MEGHAN: Do you think... Do you think I could maybe read a page or two?

ERIC: ... Um-

MEGHAN: I won't tell anyone! I promise! Not even my group chat swearzies! I

just... I'm so excited I could explode!

ERIC: Oh, don't do that.

MEGHAN: I might! *(The two laugh.)* ... So, what do you say? *(Eric thinks for a moment.)*

ERIC: Um... Sure. I guess I could use the feedback anyway.

MEGHAN: Oh my God really? Oh my God! Really?!

ERIC: Yah, I guess-

MEGHAN: Oh my God! I'm so excited! Okay! I hope my boss doesn't walk out! Is it just- Is it open?

ERIC: Yeah. Yeah it's... It's all there... *(Meghan turns the computer towards herself, shaking with excitement. Eric winces in insecure anticipation.)*

MEGHAN: Oh my God! Okay... Should I read it out loud? So you're not just sitting there?

ERIC: Oh I don't think-

MEGHAN: I'm gonna read it out loud!

ERIC: Okay.

MEGHAN: Okay! Ahem... Chapter one... "It was a warm summer day! But not too warm. Like, enough to want to be inside but not enough to be sweating really? *(Meghan is confused by this sentence, she shakes it off and keeps reading in an emotionless and awkward tone.)* ... Uh, and so Xavier is running. No, sprinting. Sprinting down the corridors of the house. The house from the end of the last one? Remember? They remember how the last one ended Eric you don't have to write that in as a reminder, okay now you're just typing your thoughts onto the page, stop, stop, this isn't a good book, you idiot, you idiot you big dumb dumb idiot, don't put any of this in the book, dear God that would be so stupid." *(Meghan's smile fades slowly. There's a bit of silence.)* ... And then chapter two starts, so... Ahem...

ERIC: ... I mean it's still a work in progress!

MEGHAN: No! No, it's... It's good! It's just... It's good!

ERIC: I mean... I know it's not great!

MEGHAN: No!

ERIC: It's just a couple Ideas so far! Nothing really concrete!

MEGHAN: Of course! Of course... *(There is a long uncomfortable silence.)*

ERIC: ... You know. I wish they'd told me that achieving success means having to maintain it for the rest of my life! *(Eric chuckles, Meghan laughs awkwardly.)* Cause... I might not have agreed to the deal...

MEGHAN: ... If you'd like some feedback, I could-

ERIC: Please! Yes! I would love some sure!

MEGHAN: Um. I mean I'm no author obviously so-

ERIC: Please! A fans feedback is invaluable.

MEGHAN: Um... It's just that beautiful pain. That made the first book so great? It's just... It's not really there... At least from what I read! It's kinda just...

Weird. *(There is an awkward silence before Eric starts quietly laughing.)*

ERIC: Well, heh, funny story... When I wrote *A Long Summer Night*, I was um. In a rough place emotionally. You could say... And I would be lying if I said most of the book was written sober actually... A lot of the book was me kinda immaturely barfing my own problems onto the page and getting back at certain people who... Well they didn't really deserve the portrait of them that they got.>

MEGHAN: Oh, that's-

ERIC: And now people are anxiously waiting for the sequel! Which is good! And I'm grateful obviously because I'm very lucky! But... I'm not in that same space anymore, emotionally you know? I've been going to therapy and I'm just generally trying to be happy instead of wallowing in my own sadness like when the first book came out-

MEGHAN: Well that's good!

ERIC: Yeah! Yeah... But the new book isn't! And it makes me think that maybe... There's a correlation between quality and stability. You know? Like maybe I need to give up happiness to achieve success! ... Or something! I don't know. Maybe that's the trade! I mean. You said it yourself, right? My pain was pouring out onto the page was clear and now it's absent! And that's equally as clear and I just don't want to let anyone down you know? I just... I can't let anyone down.

MEGHAN: ... Um.

ERIC: ... Oh wow, I'm sorry! I just totally unloaded on you didn't I!>

MEGHAN: No! I mean yeah, but it's-

ERIC: I'm sorry! I just, haven't seen much of people in the past few weeks, with the book tour and all and you seemed nice and then you asked and so... I'm sorry.

MEGHAN: It's okay! I mean... They say don't ever meet your heroes so...

*(Meghan takes a deep breath.)*

ERIC: Yeah... I guess they do. *(Eric sighs disappointed.)*

MEGHAN: Listen... I won't tell anyone, you know... About. All this...

ERIC: It's okay. You can. People shouldn't keep thinking I'm some damaged artist. I'm just damaged... *(Eric rubs his face and sighs. Meghan thinks a moment.)*

MEGHAN: You know... Sometimes people just need the illusion of that perfect wise artist! God knows I did... Your writing makes people feel like you know them. And they know you! A lot of people need that. It doesn't matter who you really are because people love who they think you are! You know?

ERIC: But... That's not me. *(The two are silent.)*

MEGHAN: ... I should get back to work actually! *(Meghan stands.)*

ERIC: Yeah! Yeah so should I! Clearly need to! Heh...

MEGHAN: Yeah... Thank you again! For everything!

ERIC: Anytime.

MEGHAN: And uh... Good luck.

ERIC: ... Thanks. *(Meghan walks off stage sadly, leaving her book on the table. Once she is gone. Eric sighs sadly. Suddenly, a WOMAN walks up to Eric from the other direction.)*

WOMAN: Excuse me. Sorry. But didn't you write A Long Summer Night? I'm a huge fan!

ERIC: ... Uh- *(Lights quickly fade, transition and we move to...)*

## LONG DISTANCE

*It's 5pm on a Monday outside a busy high-school in a suburban town. Lights up on a quaint exterior seating area out front, like a mini park, the school bell rings loudly. Sitting on the bench, covering her face with a newspaper is HOPE, she is dressed nicely almost like it's a special occasion, there is a suitcase by her side. As the bell rings, LIZ, holding a workout bag and in a much sportier outfit, walks on stage. She waves to some one-off stage and walks backwards slowly.*

LIZ: Yeah! I'm just gonna walk to practice! I'll see you there! *(Hope peeks out of the news paper and stares at Liz excitedly. She slowly lowers the magazine and creeps up behind her.)* Oh, and send me that math homework? I'll get you back I promise- *(Hope is right behind Liz now, about to burst from excitement.)*

HOPE: Surprise! *(Liz screams, she whips around. Hope screams in response to her scream.)*

LIZ: What the- *(Liz is stunned)* ... Hope?

HOPE: Yeah! Duh! Why'd you scream?

LIZ: You practically gave me a heart attack!

HOPE: Oh, sorry, I thought that would be way cuter than it ended up being.

LIZ: I- It wasn't not- I just can't believe... You're here!

HOPE: Well. Yeah! Surprise!

LIZ: Um... Why are you here?

HOPE: Well because I wanted to see you of course!

LIZ: So you bought a plain ticket and ambushed me at school? You've never heard of facetime?

HOPE: Yeah but, I really wanted to see you today! *(Hope reaches for Liz's hand)* You are my girlfriend after all! And today is a special day! *(Hope pulls her hand away and looks around paranoid.)*

LIZ: Can you... Just lower your voice?

HOPE: What? Okay well, long distance online girlfriend but why do I have to lower- *(Her smile drops.)* Oh... You forgot didn't you. *(Liz looks around and pulls Hope over a bit.)*

LIZ: I- Forgot what?

HOPE: Um. Our six-month anniversary?

LIZ: ... What about it?

HOPE: It's today! *(Liz replaces her paranoia with genuine apology.)*

LIZ: Oh! Right! Duh! I'm sorry I just... I've been busy!

HOPE: Uh hu. You know you could have at least pretended to remember.

LIZ: I know! I know I'm... I'm the worst I'm sorry.

HOPE: Sigh... Yeah! Yeah you are! *(They laugh and hold each other's hands happily. Hope leans in for a kiss, Liz panics and pulls away.)*

LIZ: Ahhh! Um-

HOPE: Oh- Uh- I'm sorry! Too soon? I just- I figured we're dating, and I know we haven't had the chance to but I thought it would be-

LIZ: No, I! I... I want to kiss you I just... (*Liz takes a deep breath and looks around again.*) ... I just um... I really have to get to cheer practice. So, (*Liz starts walking away.*) I can meet you later? Or-

HOPE: Cheer practice?

LIZ: Yeah, we have a game coming up soon and I'm meeting some friends there soon so I should really-

HOPE: You're a cheerleader? (*Liz stops in her tracks. She slowly turns around, realizing she has made a mistake.*)

LIZ: I- Yeah, I mean... Yes?

HOPE: For how long?

LIZ: I... I don't know, all year?

HOPE: How did I not know this?

LIZ: I don't know maybe you just didn't notice me mentioning it?

HOPE: Wha- of course I would have noticed! That's like, a big deal! How could I not notice! (*Hope crosses her arms.*)

LIZ: I don't know maybe you were just like, zoned out when I talked about it or... Something! I don't know!

HOPE: Do you zone out when I'm talking?

LIZ: I... I mean sometimes but-

HOPE: Jesus Liz!

LIZ: Not always! Just when I'm tired! Or when face time lags! I don't know! It's normal to miss some aspects during an online only relationship I would think.

HOPE: ... You know... You are really bad at talking your way out of things. (*Hope cracks a smile and chuckles. Liz sighs and laughs along with her. They hold hands again, smiling.*)

LIZ: ... I really do have cheer practice though. Heh.

HOPE: Heh... Alright well. I'll just come with! (*Liz's smile drops.*) I can just wait in the bleachers, right? (*Liz drops her hands and starts to pace around.*)

LIZ: Uh... I don't know if that's the best idea.

HOPE: What! But I want to meet all your friends!

LIZ: I know, it's just-

HOPE: And I bet they would love to put a face to my name as well, heh.

LIZ: I- Yeah, I mean-

HOPE: What? Is your couch a hard ass or something, heh?

LIZ: No, I just-

HOPE: Cause I'll be really silent if that's what it takes! Hold back all my cheering!

LIZ: It's not that, I just-

HOPE: I mean, I can wait at your house or something, wait with your parents if-

LIZ: NO! (*Hope practically jumps.*) I... Um... Please don't go to my house... Ahem...

HOPE: Um... Okay? (*Liz sighs and looks down in shame.*) Is... Is everything okay? I don't have to come to practice or anything, I'm sorry if-



LIZ: Yes, I just... (*Liz sighs.*) I... I haven't come out yet... To my parents or my friends at cheer or... Or anyone really.

HOPE: ... Are you being serious right now?

LIZ: Yes... And I know you couldn't have known so I'm not mad but-

HOPE: Are you serious right now?! (*Liz looks around paranoid again.*)

LIZ: Hey! Stop yelling Hope geez-

HOPE: How! How could you think this would be okay to keep from me!

LIZ: I... I don't know it just never came up!

HOPE: Never- What?! Cheer sure! But this! This is too big to "Not come up"!

This is way too big to keep a secret from me!

LIZ: How can I keep me keeping a secret a secret! It didn't matter you know I'm gay and that's all that matters-

HOPE: But I didn't know no one else knew! I didn't know I had to hide it too!

LIZ: Okay well know you do what's the big deal!

HOPE: I don't understand how you cannot understand how angry I am right now!

LIZ: Well I don't understand what you're getting so worked up over! And I would again like to stress that you lower your voice!

HOPE: Why can't you just... Why in the world. Can't you just be yourself?!

LIZ: Are... Are you serious?!

HOPE: Very! Yes!

LIZ: Oh my... You know, I figured out of all people who would get this // you would be the-

HOPE: I don't mean coming out to your school or parents! God! Like I don't know what it's like to have to hide who you are in the public-school system and at home! Of course, I get that! Everyone can! But... Why can't you just be yourself. With me?

LIZ: I- I am myself with you!

HOPE: But are you!

LIZ: What are you implying?!

HOPE: I'm implying that... I don't know, that you're just always distancing yourself!

LIZ: From you?

HOPE: From everybody! Do those friends you're meeting at practice really know you? Do they know how much you hate *Catcher in The Rye* and love dumb pop music?? Do your parents know how much you're struggling in algebra?! Or even that you struggle with anxiety!? For God sakes I'm your girlfriend and I didn't even know you're on the cheer team! Or even that you haven't come out yet!!

LIZ: What are you saying? I should just come out! That it's that easy?!

HOPE: No! Jesus! You're just... You're lying to everyone in your life! Not even about your sexuality! About everything and anything! You put this distance between yourself and people! You've been doing it this whole conversation! I mean, do you know even know what it's like to be genuine?! How could you when you're a different you with all the different people in your life! I mean do you even actually love me?!

LIZ: Hope... (*She hesitates and tenses up*) Of course I love you! You know that!

HOPE: ... How do I know if you're being genuine with me... If you can't even be genuine with yourself? *(This hits Liz hard, she is speechless. Hope shakes her head in disbelief and grabs the suitcase. She starts to walk off.)* You know what, I'm just gonna go because clearly you can't even try to connect with me right now so I might as well just- *(Liz grabs Hope's hand, still looking down. Hope looks at her with wide eyes.)* ... Yes? *(Liz takes a deep breath and sniffles.)*

LIZ: ... How do I know people will like the real me? How do I know **you'll** still love real me...

HOPE: ... You won't! It's a leap of faith Liz! A leap off of a big scary cliff where you can't see the bottom and you're afraid of heights! And it's terrifying and it sucks and you'll hate it for the entire fall but... At least you'll have leaped instead of just standing still... Right? *(Liz looks around, paranoid. She sighs and looks down silently. Hope sighs disappointed. She goes to leave but then thinks for a moment. She walks back to Liz and lets go of her hand.)* ... Come on. We're going to cheer practice.

LIZ: ... But-

HOPE: It's okay! We can say I'm your camp friend or something. Cousin! Whatever!

LIZ: But-

HOPE: I'll sit in the bleachers and then after we'll go to a coffee shop or something, out of town of course!

LIZ: But...

HOPE: What? What's wrong?

LIZ: ... But I didn't take the leap of faith... I just... I just stood there.

HOPE: Yeah well... Who says you can't be nudged off that big scary cliff by your supportive and loving girlfriend? Am I right? *(Liz smiles and wipes her eyes.)* But once we get to that coffee shop, I want to know everything there is to know about this cheer thing! And everything else you've been keeping secret!

LIZ: Okay! Geez! You make it sound like I'm some super villain spy!

HOPE: Ooh, that would actually be a very hot hobby for you to have.

LIZ: Hotter than a cheerleader girlfriend? *(Liz grabs Hope's hand. Liz smiles. Her eyes widen.)*

HOPE: Oh my God! I'm dating a cheerleader! *(Liz laughs.)*

LIZ: Ay! Lower voice! Remember! *(Liz rests on Hope's shoulder.)*

HOPE: Ah! Right sorry! *(Whisper yelling-)* I'm dating a cheerleader! *(Liz laughs at full volume.)*

LIZ: You're such a dummy.

HOPE: Yeah. Your dummy. *(They stop walking. Liz smiles at her and they both laugh. They walk off together, arms around each other. Light fade, transition and we move to...)*

## SUPER!

*It's 12am on a Sunday night in a suburban neighborhood. Lights up on the home office of a middle-class home. On stage is a young man in a trench coat, pacing the room anxiously. This is GREG, a nerdy but kind-hearted doofus. He walks backwards into the room. BEN, his sensible best friend steps on stage concerned and tired.*

BEN: Greg?

GREG: Ben! Hey! You're here!

BEN: Yah, I just let myself in I hope that's cool.

GREG: Yah! Yah man no problem! Take a seat! *(Ben sits down on the chair behind him, looking around the room concerned.)*

BEN: Yah... So, what's up buddy? Haven't heard from you in a while and then just a phone call at twelve in the morning! How's everything after the-

GREG: Oh, I'm great! Well, me and Jill are kinda fighting, she's sleeping at her parents. But other than that, great yah!

BEN: Uh cool buddy... So, what's with the creep coat buddy? *(Greg chuckles, he puts his hands on each side of the trench coat, ready to disrobe.)*

GREG: You're about to find out! *(Greg starts to pull the trench coat open, Ben quickly objects, turning the other way and covering his eyes. Greg's enthusiastic demeanor is replaced with concerned confusion.)*

BEN: Ah! Woah! Buddy!

GREG: What? What?!

BEN: I don't- I'm not trying to- I don't need to see->

GREG: Oh my God- Ben I have clothes on under this!

BEN: ... You do?

GREG: Yes! Jesus! I'm not trying to... I've met your wife many times!

BEN: ... Right! Right. I was just... Sorry. *(Ben turns back toward Greg, head hung in shame.)* But in my defense, you called me to your house at twelve am and you're wearing a trench coat.

GREG: It's fine buddy. Definitely not the tone I was aiming for, my bad! Besides, you're not my type anyway.

BEN: Okay well, hurtful.

GREG: Now... Are you ready?

BEN: ... I guess yeah. Bring it on. Worst case scenario is already out of the way.

GREG: Great! Now get ready because what I'm about to show you is one hundred percent classified! Got it?

BEN: Yes! Just do it already! I wanna go home! Despite your recent firing, some people still have to teach on Monday dude.

GREG: I wasn't fired I was forced to quit! It's different! Shush! Sit! *(Ben rolls his eyes and sits in the chair behind him. Greg turns around.)* Prepare your mind to be blown! I present to you- *(Greg whips around and pulls open his coat, revealing a full body black spandex suit with a large G on the chest. Greg is esthetic. Ben is silent.)* Greg Man! Before you ask, yes I am married to that name and will not change it! *(Ben is stunned in silence.)* Well?! What do you think?! *(Greg transitions into a heroic stance.)*

BEN: I... Don't get it. What is this? *(Greg slumps in disappointment.)*

GREG: What? Dude! Spandex, letter on the chest, fashionable cape like trench coat?! This is gonna be my new job!

BEN: ... You're gonna be a French fashion designer?

GREG: Wha- No!

BEN: Okay good cause you are not cut out for that world buddy-

GREG: A superhero idiot! I'm gonna be a superhero! *(There is a long moment of silence until finally Ben bursts out in laughter. Greg is not amused. Ben suddenly notices this, and his laughter quickly stops.)*

BEN: ... Oh my God you're serious.

GREG: Heck yeah, I'm serious! Isn't it awesome?! *(Greg starts to punch and kick the air very seriously.)*

BEN: I- This is a dumb idea.

GREG: Maybe with that mindset!

BEN: You can't be a superhero Greg!

GREG: Why not?!

BEN: It's illegal for one!

GREG: What!? No, it isn't!

BEN: Uh, yeah! Vigilantes are against the law!

GREG: Okay clearly you weren't listening because I'm going to be a superhero! Not a vigilante! Not illegal!

BEN: Still illegal! Same thing!

GREG: No dude they're different trust me! I'm talkin superheroes! Like Superman or Spiderman! With superpowers and stuff!

BEN: But you don't have superpowers.

GREG: Okay then I'll be more like Batman! Or Daredevil!

BEN: Those are vigilantes!

GREG: No, they're superheroes!

BEN: They're not mutually exclusive! I- okay! Even if. This was a thing that was allowed by the law... What would you even be doing?

GREG: Superhero... Stuff... Superhero Stuff Man!

BEN: Like fighting criminals in the street? Like stopping armed robberies? Like risking your life every day?!

GREG: Yeah! All that stuff!

BEN: All that stuff is insanely dangerous dude!

GREG: I know! And that's why I want you... To be my sidekick!

BEN: ... What?!

GREG: My sidekick! I know this stuff is dangerous, but you'd be out there with me! We'd have each other's backs!

BEN: ... Greg this isn't-

GREG: How long did we work with each other slash been the best of all best friends?

BEN: I-... I don't know three years?

GREG: And in those three years did I ever ask you to do something that was ridiculous, or I wasn't one hundred percent sure of?

BEN: What? Yes, many times! -

GREG: Doesn't matter! Cause I'm serious about this! Just imagine it dude, me and you! On the streets! Keeping people safe! *(Ben is completely enraptured in thought. He looks up at Greg and takes a deep breath.)*

BEN: ... This is a bad idea man.>

GREG: I knew you wouldn't get it!

BEN: I'm sorry! It is! And you know it is!>

GREG: Oh please!

BEN: Listen man... I know that when you got laid off. It sucked. I get that! But you can't go around in a costume punching goons because you miss teaching!

GREG: I- Wha- I'm not becoming a superhero because I miss teaching!

BEN: Then enlighten me because clearly, I'm missing something! Why in the world would you want to be a superhero?!

GREG: I- ... I don't know dude! I just... I gotta! *(Greg sits.)*

BEN: Why?

GREG: It's just... I have to do something man! And not because I miss teaching, I didn't even really like teaching! I just... At least teaching let me make a difference you know? Ever since I was a kid and I read my first superman comic I've always wanted to be somebody's hero... I just want someone to look at me and think the world of me if that makes sense? And teaching worked for me cause those kids did! And for a while it was fine but... It wasn't what I needed... I need this Ben. I need to know I'm making an impact on this world! I just... Need to know I matter...

BEN: ... Greg. You're still a hero to those kids! You got laid off but that doesn't mean they forgot you! Lawrencetown isn't the same without you and everybody knows it! You've made an impact! *(Greg is silent and somber.)* And man...

You're a hero to me!

GREG: I... That's not what I meant. That's not the point-

BEN: Wasn't it? *(There is a long silence. Greg goes to leave.)* ... I- ... I care about you man. A lot of people do... But I'm not gonna help you. Not with this. *(Ben walks out of the room, not looking back. As Greg spins around in his chair and closes his trench coat, the sounds of sirens can be heard. He takes a deep breath and closes his eyes. Light fade, transition and we move to...)*

## ONLY FOOLS

*It's 10am on a Wednesday in a suburban neighborhood. Lights up on a middle-class kitchen with at least a table and a counter. From off stage a girl dressed in hip clothing walks into the room, she lets out a tired sigh, this is STAR. Following quickly behind her is her exasperated father JOHN. John is not happy.*

JOHN: This isn't a conversation Star! You know what you're doing and it's gotta stop! I mean, you're ruining your own future! (*Star drops her backpack and sighs defeated.*)

STAR: Okay! I'm sorry!

JOHN: You're not sorry! You just want me to stop talking, I know your games!

STAR: Dad, I don't even understand what you're so mad about! What did I even do!

JOHN: I- Are you serious?

STAR: Yah! What's the problem!

JOHN: The problem is that every other day for the past month you've been calling me from the nurse at school over and over, claiming you're so sick until I finally agree to pick you up and the moment you get into the car you're perfectly fine! You should be in school right now young lady and I've clearly been enabling you! It stops now!

STAR: Oh. That.

JOHN: Yah! That!

STAR: ... But I am sick!

JOHN: Really?

STAR: Yes!

JOHN: Really?

STAR: Dad yes! (*John folds his arms and stares at her. Star slowly raises her hand to her mouth.*) ... Cough.

JOHN: You just **said** cough!

STAR: I- That's- But that's not the point-

JOHN: That's exactly my point! (*Star sighs.*) Do you want me to send you back to public school? Lawrencetown is still an option young lady! Do you want that!

STAR: I mean... No! But-

JOHN: How are you going to get into a good college if you get your dad to let you skip school every single day!

STAR: I don't even- It's not like it's affecting my grades that much! I'm a solid B

plus student still!

JOHN: Probably because you aren't there to fail any tests!

STAR: ... Whaaaat?

JOHN: And it doesn't matter if your grades are fine because your attendance is horrible! You could lose credit for the whole year Star! The entire year!

STAR: Wha- I- It's not like- Who cares you know?

JOHN: ... Who cares?!

STAR: I mean-

JOHN: You should care! Internships care! Future employers care! Colleges care!

STAR: You didn't go to college!

JOHN: That's not the point! You have to care!

STAR: I care! It's just. I don't really! Recently!

JOHN: Don't back sass me young lady!

STAR: I'm not back sassing! It's just that... School's just... *(She struggles to find the words, she is clearly hesitant to bring something up.)*

JOHN: ... School's what?>

STAR: I don't know, just, I've been thinking and-

JOHN: Is there something going on at school?>

STAR: Not exactly just-

JOHN: Is someone bullying you? Are you avoiding them?>

STAR: No, I'm not being-

JOHN: Star if someone is bullying you tell me and I can help!

STAR: No one is bullying me dad!

JOHN: Then what in the world is wrong!>

STAR: It's just that-

JOHN: Just talk to me!

STAR: *(Screaming)* Well I'm trying to John! *(John's eyes widen in astonishment, Star quickly realizes what she's done and takes an awkward step back.)* Ah. Uh... Sorry.

JOHN: Do not raise your voice at me!

STAR: Yes! My bad.

JOHN: I'm dad to you! Sir if you're not careful!

STAR: Yes. I'm sorry. Won't happen again dude- Dad! ... I'm sorry... *(Star looks down ashamed.)*

JOHN: Well... Good! ... Now, what's wrong with school?

STAR: It's just... School's just... *(She is still hesitant.)*

JOHN: Babe, you can talk to me!

STAR: It's just... It's Absurd! Or whatever.

JOHN: ... What?

STAR: The concept of school! It's ridiculous! After you get past fifth grade they



run out of actually necessary things to teach you, so they just shovel nonsense into your brain, so you get so confused and stressed that you don't notice that it's all just to distract you from realizing it's all just nonsense! Instead of learning things that I could use in my real life we have to learn the area of a circle, the proper way to use MLA format! The fifth battle in the second French revolutionary war that was a direct result of kind Frenchy the fiftieth whatever whatever whatever! Like! Who cares! It just... It doesn't matter and // it makes me so depressed to-

JOHN: It does matter! It's education! You learn it and get through it, so you can get into a good college and then get a good job and then-

STAR: Okay bam! Problem solved! I'm not even going to college so it's fine!

JOHN: Um, yes you are?

STAR: No, I'm not! It's not necessary for the profession I'm going into so whatever!

JOHN: Oh? And what is it you've suddenly decided you want to do with your life Mrs. "School Is Absurd"?

STAR: I'm going to be an actress! (*John is stunned. Terrified. There is a silence.*)

JOHN: ... An actress?

STAR: Yes. And I know, I know that you have a weird relationship with the acting industry, but the apple doesn't fall far from the tree here Dad! You were really good, and Mrs. G says so am I and-

JOHN: Mrs. G?

STAR: The drama teacher! And she really thinks I can really go somewhere if I actively pursue this and... And it makes me happy! It makes me like really happy! And school is just so draining and soul crushing every day! And... And so Mrs G's been giving me lessons! And-

JOHN: Wait. You've been taking acting lessons? Without telling me?

STAR: I... Yes?

JOHN: ... No.

STAR: ... What?

JOHN: No. I forbid it.

STAR: ... What? You can't just-

JOHN: Too late. I forbid you from letting you ruin your life. Sorry!

STAR: Dad!

JOHN: You don't know what you're signing up for and you won't until it's too late! I've been apart of that world Star! I know how this ends! I've seen hundreds of young actresses who were told they "Were really good!" and "If they just perused this full time!" And spoiler, it never works out for those people!

STAR: I- Dad this is what I want to do!

JOHN: I- You- Ugh! Star! What happened to my little girl who wanted to grow up to be a neuroscientist? Or the first woman president!

STAR: Ugh! I also wanted to be a mermaid dad, you still holding on to that one too? I'm not that little girl who's so excited to go to kindergarten in her little mermaid backpack and her Ariel dress anymore!

JOHN: You loved that movie...

STAR: I still do! But right now, I'm Ariel you're Poseidon!

JOHN: What does that even mean?

STAR: You're like! An ocean tirant or whatever! And you're trying to control me into not making my own decisions!

JOHN: Your own decisions?! I- Ariel married a man who she met for two seconds when she was sixteen! And he wasn't even the same species as her! Poseidon was just being a good dad!

STAR: Wha- Who agrees with Poseidon?!

JOHN: Dads!

STAR: I- Whatever, that's not the point! But will you just listen so I can make my case and-

JOHN: I will not! Not listening! Sorry!

STAR: Oh my God-

JOHN: Not. Listening!

STAR: Oh my- Can you please stop acting like a child! (*John's eyes widen in astonishment. But Star doesn't back down. There is a silence.*) I know that you lost a lot because of how your career ended and I get it! But I'm good at this dad! I have a future in it. I mean you named me Star for God's sake! So... So, you can support me in this. Or you can let me do this on my own... But I'm doing this.

JOHN: ... I'm sorry but no. I refuse to encourage a decision that will ruin your life. You're going to go to school tomorrow, you're going to get good grades and get into a good college and have a successful life!

STAR: I... I don't understand why would you want me to do something with my life that doesn't make me happy!

JOHN: (*Outburst*) Because I know better than anyone that always pining after something is better than living with the knowledge that even your dreams won't make you happy! I **won't** let you end up with my life! I won't let you end up like me! (*Both of them are immediately sobered by this statement. There is a long silence.*) ... You're just like me. Always have been, and... People like us... We have a curse, Star. We just can't be satisfied. No matter what you do, no matter what you achieve... You'll never be happy. And neither will I. It's just how we are... And that's not what I want to tell you that's what I have to tell you.

STAR: ... Maybe. But I have to try... You of all people should know... We have to try. (*Star struts out of the kitchen and off stage, the sound of a door slamming can be heard, and John falls onto his chair, burying his head in his hands... Lights fade, transition and we move to...*)

## GIBBERISH

*It's 8am on a Sunday in a somber section of a suburban neighborhood. Lights up on a quiet cemetery with a bench and a few graves, the only person on stage is JOE, dressed in a nice black suit, staring at the grave bellow him. He sighs and starts searching in his pockets to no avail. From off stage a woman in a nice black dress walks towards him slowly. This is ALIVIA. He doesn't notice. She reaches him and stands directly next to him. Joe finally finds what he's looking for, a pack of cigarettes.*

ALIVIA: ... Hey. *(Joe breaths out and looks up to the speaker, his eyes suddenly widen with surprise. He quickly throws his cigarettes away, embarrassed.)*

JOE: Alivia! Hey! I- You- ... Hi!

ALIVIA: Those things will kill ya you know.

JOE: I- Yah... I just-

ALIVIA: What? Too soon?

JOE: ... Um. Kinda?

ALIVIA: ... You look good Joe.

JOE: Thanks. You too. *(The two smiles at each other. There's a small silence.)* ...

Liv... I'm so sorry for your-

ALVIA: Oh, please don't say I'm sorry for your loss. I've heard it a thousand times today and the words are kinda starting to sound like gibberish. You know when you say something over and over again, like house? And eventually it doesn't even sound like house. It just sounds like... A word! Just a pure, meaningless word! It's been that all day.

JOE: ... Well. It's good to see you haven't changed much.

ALIVIA: ... I didn't think you'd come.

JOE: ... He was my best friend Liv.

ALIVIA: Can you still be best friends with someone you haven't talked to in twenty years?

JOE: ... I mean. I hope?

ALIVIA: Well. I'm glad you're here.

JOE: ... Really?

ALIVIA: Yah. I mean. You're a jerk for leaving and I will be yelling at you for it for the next forever! But right now, let's just be glad. Okay? *(Alivia leans on Joe's arm.)*

JOE: ... Okay. Fair enough.

ALIVIA: So, tell me about yourself. How've you been for the last twenty years?

JOE: Liv we've seen each other before twenty years ago!

ALIVIA: Yah! For like two seconds ten years ago at some college reunion! I want the real stuff!

JOE: Okay more like two hours five years ago!

ALIVIA: Shush your face and entertain me with stories!

JOE: I mean okay but-

ALIVIA: And not the Facebook stuff either! I stalk your Facebook all the time. I want the real stuff! Joe unfiltered.

JOE: Well. I don't know if you'll want to hear it. It's not very interesting to be honest.

ALIVIA: Well I've been waiting twenty years to hear it! So. No pressure.

JOE: Yah, no pressure! (*Joe rolls his eyes and sighs.*) Alright. Um. Well, like I said. Not much to tell. Me and Sarah didn't work out. But that's just because I constantly make bad decisions that hurt other people. (*Alivia laughs.*) No big deal though. I got a dog! His names Rosco! Oh, and I finally finished that novel I started freshman year so. Onto the sequel, right? (*Alivia laughs. She needed a laugh.*) ... I'm sorry I feel like I'm boring you-

ALIVIA: No! This is fascinating! I wish I had popcorn!

JOE: Oh my God I could so go for some popcorn right now.

ALIVIA: Right?! God, why don't they give out popcorns at funerals?

JOE: I think they traditionally do kettle corn at funerals actually.

ALIVIA: Oh, gross never mind then! (*They both laugh.*)

JOE: How are you though? All things considered.

ALIVIA: You know. Pushing forward through it... It's hard! But. You push forward.

JOE: What's that thing Jesse would say? That expression he liked?

ALIVIA: The play on two wrongs don't make a right?

JOE: Which one's that?

ALIVIA: Two house fires don't make a sprinkler system but three sure warrants it?

JOE: No, the other one.

ALIVIA: ... Oh! Forward and through! Gotta move forward and through...

JOE: Right! Forward and through. Words to live by...

ALIVIA: Yah...

JOE: ... How are the kids? How are they dealing with it?

ALIVIA: Bobby's angry a lot. He always was but more so now. And I think Jonathon's too young to really understand yet... We're moving school districts soon so. I doubt that'll help anything. At the very least I heard Lawrencetown's got great guidance counselors!

JOE: I didn't know that guidance counselors could be anything other than the worst.

ALIVIA: Heh. You're still funny... I'm glad you're still funny.

JOE: ... Liv, I just... Jesse was a great man. And I'm so sorr-

ALIVIA: Hey! What'd we say. No sorrys! Come on! I can push forward through a lot, but I can't push forward through pity.

JOE: Right. Right. Okay. I'm sorry... Wait I mean I'm not sorry. I am but I-Ugh. (*Alivia laughs sadly. She is silent, Joe takes a deep breath.*)

ALIVIA: ... Jesse would have been really happy you came you know.

JOE: Really? Why's that?

ALIVIA: ... Well. He thought you hated him.

JOE: ... What?

ALIVIA: Yah. He never said it out loud but. That's what he thought. Sometimes I figured you hated both of us.

JOE: I... I didn't. I never did.

ALIVIA: Well when you start dating your ex's best friend and he goes radio silent I guess it's easy to make assumptions.

JOE: I didn't go radio silent, I just... Needed some time! You two were the ones who moved to Michigan without saying anything!

ALIVIA: Joe we moved two years after we stopped talking... We thought you wouldn't even want to hear it.

JOE: Well I did! Want to hear it I mean! And it hurt that you guys just... That you just left!

ALIVIA: Then why didn't you say something!

JOE: I don't know! I just. I wasn't okay! You and Jesse were my best friends in the world, you were both my best friends! And I just. I thought when you said "Take a break" ... That break would eventually end, like breaks tend to do... But then it didn't. And it kept not. And then you and Jesse and... Then you moved... And you moved on...

ALIVIA: ... I'm sorry. We should have tried harder.

JOE: Both of us should have... But at the same time. I don't think either of us wanted to.

ALIVIA: What do you mean?

JOE: I think it was messy. And it was scary. And to touch it would have been a lot of work. And I don't know if any of us had the energy for that work after how it all ended.

ALIVIA: ... No. Probably not.

JOE: You know...? I've never really found what we had again. Not with Sarah even. Just... Just you.

ALIVIA: ... I guess in a certain way neither did I.

JOE: ... Did Jesse make you happy?

ALIVIA: ... Yah. He did. As much as anyone can make anyone else happy. He did. And I miss the hell out of him...

JOE: ... So do I. *(The two stare at each other. Joe puts his hand on Alivia's) ...*

*Alivia- (Suddenly Alivia kisses him. After a passionate moment- Alivia pulls away quickly.)*

ALIVIA: I... Joe I'm sorry, we shouldn't have just-

JOE: Run away with me.

ALIVIA: Joe-

JOE: We can go pick up your kids right now and just start driving!

ALIVIA: Joe no, that's-

JOE: I love you Liv. I've never stopped loving you-

ALIVIA: That's not true-

JOE: It is! I love you Liv and-

ALIVIA: Please stop saying that-

JOE: And I know you love me to!

ALVIA: Joe! ... Please! Please.

JOE: ... Look me in the eyes Liv. Look me in the eyes and tell me you don't feel the same way that I do... I don't think you ca-

ALIVIA: I don't love you. (*Joe reels back.*)

JOE: ... I- Liv-

ALIVIA: I don't love you. And I haven't for twenty long and happy years.

JOE: ... But-

ALIVIA: No buts Joe! I don't love you! And you don't love me either.

JOE: No, liv, I do! I do-

ALIVIA: No. You don't. Not like how you think you do. I think you've just been saying it to yourself for so long that... That eventually it turned into gibberish, you know? You kept telling yourself you loved me so much until that sentence just didn't even have any meaning to it! It just became a bunch of words.

JOE: ... No! No! I know what I want! I know I know what I want! And I want you Liv! I just need to hear you say you want me and then. And then we can be happy and-

ALIVIA: You don't Joe! And I don't!

JOE: (*Hysterical*) Alivia I love you! Please! Please just say you love me please! (*Alivia looks down.*) ... Please...

ALIVIA: ... I think you should leave.>

JOE: Alivia wait->

ALIVIA: Thank you for coming.>

JOE: Alivia I love you!>

ALIVIA: But I should get back to the reception so-

JOE: I'm sorry! Alivia I'm sorry. Okay I'm sorry, just... Don't make me leave. Don't make me go back to that empty house... Please...

ALIVIA: ... I'm sorry... I don't care where you go but... You can't stay here... (*Alivia hangs her head and starts to walk away. She stops when Joe calls to her.*)

JOE: ... I'm sorry! I just... I just want to be happy...

ALIVIA: ... Then push forward. Forward and through. It's the only way to live... (*Alivia walks off stage. Joe sighs, he turns to the grave and stares at it for a moment. Suddenly he spots where he threw his cigarettes and picks them up. He examines them, takes a deep breath.*)

**THE END**

(*But it never really ends.*)

## **PROPERTY LIST**

- 2 Vanity Mirrors
- Hairbrush and make up stuff
- Cane
- Garbage Bag and Cups
- 2 Mugs
- Flashcards
- Laptop
- Book
- Apron
- Notepad and Pen
- Bench
- Newspaper
- Suitcase
- Duffle bag
- Trench coat (And black body suit but I put that in costumes instead.)
- Cigarette box
- Tombstone
- Multiple cellphones

## **SOUND EFFECTS**

Tropical: Crashing waves and seagulls

Welcome Back: Audience clapping, Audience laughing

Long Distance: Ringing Bell

Super!: Sirens

## NOTES ON THE PLAY

### On the play:

Recently I told my therapist that I wish I had been recording all my therapy sessions this whole time. Not because I would want to look back on it and see how I've grown, but because I thought it would have made an at least mildly interesting documentary. My point is that... Well I don't really know my point. Just thought my willingness to share such a thing to make anything at all was relevant somehow. I don't really know how. Whatever. Moving on.

I've been asked multiple times during the writing of this play "Oh? What's it about?" and each time I was asked that I answered "It's about being a bad person. Or I guess, attempting to be a good person, but failing." And I think that sentiment still holds true. That is what this play is about on a base level and if someone was to ask me what it was about right now I would still say that same thing. But there's a lot more than it's about that you can only really glean after finishing the play. It's about self-hatred. It's about not understanding why people could ever like you. It's about loving people who are bad for you just so you have love at all. It's about being a fraud and that being okay. It's about regretting your decisions. And it's about coming to live with all of it. But most of all, and I know this sounds cliché but bear with me, **it's about being human.**

Life is not black or white. People are complicated. And sometimes people you hate are just sad souls, and sometimes people you love are toxic to you. And you can be both to other people!

### On the characters:

If you've ever met me (And have had a conversation with me that wasn't me just being stupid.) I think it's quite apparent that I selfishly put at least a bit of myself in every character in ON BEING GOOD. And maybe if you know me you might even see yourself in one of the characters, and that could very well be because that was intentional! My point is, these characters, in my opinion, are real people. With real problems and real personalities. And they have fears that stem from somewhere in their pasts and will affect their futures. ON BEING GOOD is no more a comedy or a drama than real life is. You don't wake up one day and that day's a drama day, and then the next day you wake up and it's a comedy day. Levity and laughter are woven into our lives because we need it and so do each one of these characters.

But I think, even if you've never met me or our lives are miles apart and drastically different and you have your own internal struggles I could never even comprehend, I think it's not hard to see yourself in a lot of these characters still. Everyone is an artist with their own craft. Whether it's writing, or directing, or acting, or painting, or music, or managing, or cooking, or exceeding at sales, or being a good son, or raising children, or



whatever! We all have a craft and we're all artists in our own way. And this is a play about artists, trying to craft themselves into people they like. And this is a play **for** that same group of people.

On the arc of the pieces:

Each play in ON BEING GOOD can stand alone as its own experience but together they're able to form a hypothetical emotional journey that spans an entire life.

"Talking to Yourself" is the I'm-going-to-need-to-fight-to-be-happy-aren't-I? part.

"King of The World" is the Oh-God-I've-hurt-so-many-people-to-find-love-and-happiness part.

"Tropical" is the Maybe-love-just-isn't-an-option-for-me part.

"Welcome back" is the And-maybe-being-good-isn't-what-leads-to-happiness part.

"Sequential" is the What-if-being-happy-and-loved-isn't-something-I-should-be part.

"Long Distance" is the Trying-to-love-someone-without-loving-myself-first part.

"Super!" is the Okay-but-if-this-doesn't-make-me-happy-what-even-will? part.

"Only Fools" is the Nothing-will-make-someone-like-me-happy-and-now-I'm-negitively-impacting-others-oh-great part.

"Gibberish" is the But-maybe-I-could-have-been-happy!-If-I-just-made-better-choices!-Right? part.

## NOTES FOR DIRECTORS

### On the play:

ON BEING GOOD is kinda hard to direct, it's a lot of different plays with a lot of different complicated problems. It's very important to remember there's no character that is a bad guy. Every character is the main character and should be developed as such.

### On rehearsals:

Making sure the actors know their lines early will give them the best opportunity to play with each line and make them their own.

Side suggestion: I think having each of your actors take the Myers Briggs 16 personalities Test *as the character they are playing* in the play could be very helpful for a deeper understanding of said character.

### On transitions:

Make sure the transitions don't let the audience rest too long. They should only have a moment to process the ideas of the last scene and how they could relate to it before being jolted right into the next scene. Abrupt and terrifyingly silent.

## NOTES FOR DESIGNERS

### On the set:

There are quite a few different locations in ON BEING GOOD, but all are achievable given a few chairs, small tables and a couch (Except of course for specific props like the vanity mirrors and the multi-used counter.)

### On costumes:

The people in ON BEING GOOD are mostly middle class and dress fairly normal. Except for of course the specified costumes. Which are numerous as a matter of fact. So here goes:

- Talking to Yourself: Two matching dresses.
- Tropical: A half destroyed suit and a stained wedding dress.
- Welcome Back: Two dressy suits.
- Sequential: A waiter's uniform.
- Long Distance: Workout clothes.
- Super!: A black jumpsuit.
- Gibberish: A black suit and a black dress.

## NOTES ON SPECIFIC PLAYS

*(Note to director and actors: These are my personal views on the character. Obviously, I wrote the play and I guess I have some say in who these characters are but anything not on the physical page of the script is entirely up to interpretation and your own artistic vision. These are suggestions, but they are not law. Create your own character. Put yourself in this character. This play works best when you are able to connect with these characters and if you are able to do that with what I wrote, excellent, but if you have to add your own spin, be my guest. So, um... Here's some notes I guess!)*

### **Talking to Yourself:**

I liked to refer to The Girl and The Reflection as Maria and *Mirria* but that's stupid so pretend like I didn't say that. What I really love about this scene is it is a good way to visually show the battle within each character that is silently going on within the rest of the show. Everyone battles with self-hatred, especially artists, and everyone involved in this production is an artist. This is the scene that I encourage the most for the actors and the directors to play with, it is very intricate and very complicated, and the actors involved will not only have to be able to sync up their movements but their opinion of the character, because at the end of the day this is one woman's conversation with herself. The only thing I would like to insist comes across in this scene that The Reflection is a predator, a parasite of sorts. She feeds off of The Girl's fears and insecurities to stay alive, and that's her main goal. She just wants to survive.

### **King of The World:**

I think Arin has always thought he was a bad person. I'm not sure if he really is, but he's definitely always been suspicious. I think he never really understood how he got to where he is when what he believes about himself is true and he's been searching for confirmation on this for a while. And then, on the opposite side, I think Natalie is a good kid, she's smart and kind and empathetic and she's much more mature than she seems. But she's angry! Life doesn't seem fair right now and it kinda isn't, so in a fit of angry determination she set off to Arin's party to get some nice cold revenge. But she's a good kid. And anger fades. And she couldn't bring herself to do it.

### **Tropical:**

I originally conceived this scene as a science fiction short film, and actually have a version written like that (It is much more of a bummer.) I imagined a world where population control was the world's most pressing issue, and thus the government set up a system where the only people legally allowed to have children are married couples, and couples can only marry if they survive on a deserted island together, and I guess in a sense it's still a test of a relationship, but I digress. In short, it was quite different. I'm not sure why I'm telling you this, just to give an insight into my process I guess. But the one thing that stayed the same during all of this was the characters. Debra is smart, bossy and

snooty and Miles is funny, absent-minded and immature. They do not mix well and deep down they know it. These two are just kids who made a bad decision. And they made that decision for a lot of reasons, because it was what society said to do, because neither wanted to admit they didn't want it, and because they both are very lonely. And in the end it's better to be with someone who you hate than someone who might end up hating you.

The names of the characters also have some meaning behind them. They are a reference to my favorite movie, Baby Driver. The main character Baby, later revealed to be named Miles, falls in love with a woman named Deborah who talks about the Beck song that spells it Debra. I used these names because one of the movie's major themes is that living in fantasy world is not sustainable, and depending on your interpretation of the movie, that also applies to Baby and Deborah. A major criticism of the film was how little time it took for the two to fall in love and how it seemed unrealistic, but this kind of love only adds to the theme that this is all a fantasy. I think this theme applies to the scene as well. Finding your true love is not something that is statistically possible in my opinion and Tropical has that same opinion. Love itself is a fantasy and living in a fantasy world is not sustainable... But yeah, it's a Baby Driver reference is my main point.

### **Welcome Back:**

For the actor of Tyler: In my mind Tyler remembers how he treated James from the beginning, he is just assuming a level of professionalism will be in place while the cameras are on. Maybe he is even planning on apologizing afterwards backstage. But it comes out in the moment and he is caught off guard and years of regret pour out into him on live television no less!

### **Sequential:**

Although I think Eric's problems with his fraud complex really dominate this scene, I think the much more interesting character here is Meghan. Meeting your heroes is always a risky gambit because you really don't want them to be jerks and you have this image in your mind of how they must be so mature and larger than life because they're your heroes! But Eric is not. He's just a guy who got lucky and has his own insecurities and problems. And when someone like Meghan, whose life has been hard and challenging and hopeless meets the only person who has ever given her hope and they're just as lost as her... That's kinda soul-crushing to her. As it would be for anyone in her shoes I think. I mean, having heroes is a risky gambit.

### **Long Distance:**

This scene is the last one I wrote for the play and was actually written a bit later than the rest of the play. I was unhappy with one scene and I felt I needed something a bit more uplifting at this point in the play.

When I wrote this, I was going through a time of a lot of insecurities. I had convinced myself no one would ever love me for who I am because of a break up. I realized though that it wasn't that I, myself, am unlovable, it was the persona I was putting on for this girl I was seeing. We all wear masks, specific one's for specific people, it's a good way to protect oneself. It is not, however, very helpful when you are trying to find genuine connection with another person. I thought my experience of being so used to pretending to be someone else you can't fully connect with the one person you are supposed to was quite interesting and created Liz to express and discuss this idea.

Liz is paranoid and secretive and comfortable with her life. But Hope wants a deeper connection and Liz doesn't know how to handle one of her worlds colliding into another. But comfortable doesn't always mean happy. And Liz wants to be happy, with Hope specifically.

The aptly named Hope is excitable and funny and just wants to connect with this person she has found herself loving. And when going gets tough, Hope might think to leave, but she is far too loving to let a relationship die over some baggage.

### **Super!:**

This is the scene that introduces the idea of effecting others, or leaving some kind of legacy, that persists on through the last section of the play. It's almost like a mini arc at the end of the play!

Super! Is the part when all you want to do is effect someone else in a meaningful way.

Only Fools is the part when you realize that maybe your effect on other people could be extremely harmful. And that's terrifying.

And Gibberish is the part when you realize maybe effecting people isn't something you can control. You always will so make the most of the effect that you can make.

Greg was a teacher, taking pride in effecting those kids lives, and now all he wants is to make an impact on a fleeting world. In my mind, Greg's problem is that he's utterly and completely afraid of death, and he's found no way to cope with that. He's completely obsessed with making an impact and mattering because he's scared of the day when he won't be around to insist that he does. His fear is the most primal and the most insanity-inducing of everyone in the play in my opinion and he should be portrayed as such. Ben on the other hand is someone who's always been an enabler every time Greg has done something insane he helps, or he fixes it because it's his automatic response. But things have only been getting worse for Greg and Ben can see he's spiraling. When you train to become a lifeguard, they tell you that there are some people you shouldn't even try to

save because all they'll do is drag you down with them. (Or so I've heard.) And Ben won't be dragged down any longer.

### **Only Fools:**

Again, this scene only furthers our "Effecting others" mini arc mentioned in the last scene's notes, this one is the most vital to that arc though. The idea that your effect on others will only hurt them is a sentiment that I think you can see through the rest of the play and this is when we express it and fully realize it.

I am bit embarrassed to say this conversation was inspired by a real one that I had not too long ago. Not with my parents of course, they're wonderful. Personally, I identify more with John. John sees a lot of himself in his daughter. And that scares him. Because just like many characters in the play before him, he hates himself. And he has been trying all of Stars life to change Stars trajectory for the better. But Star was born curious. And she always did and always will ask questions and want to experience more! And despite her father's best efforts, she is following in his footsteps. For better or worse.

One specific note for the actress playing Star: By the line "It doesn't matter anyway! School's just...", you have made the decision that you are going to tell your father about your decision to pursue acting, and you know that he won't respond to it well, and you're scared, but you are hopeful he will see your side. It is only at the line "Maybe. But I have to try..." does that hope finally disappear.

### **Gibberish:**

There's a great The End Of The F\*\*\*ing World quote that I think is relevant here, it goes "It's much easier to think that someone's the answer if you haven't seen them for years." Both Joe and Alivia feel that way about each other, but for different reasons.

Both of these characters are raw and they both just want someone to love in this moment. Alivia just lost the love of her life, her partner of twenty years and the father of her children. But she acts strong because that's all she has to cling onto right now. And she needs it. And Joe not only just recently lost a long-time partner when he separated with Sarah, but he also just lost his chance to ever gain closure on an important relationship in his life. He doesn't know where his life is headed right now, and he just wants assurance that wherever it ends up it'll be okay. But no one can give him that.

Both of these characters minds are spinning and both of them are focused on one real question. Where would I be if things ended differently. And for a while they assume the best, they create a fantasy. But fantasies are not sustainable. And they soon realize what really would have happened if they didn't make the choices they made. They wouldn't have learned a damn thing.

## THANK YOU!

This brings me to the end of writing this play. I would like to sincerely thank you for making it this far and I genuinely hope that I was able to not only entertain but connect with you in some way with each scene. This was a new experience for me and I quite enjoyed it!

My special thanks are mostly the same as my dedications, but I'll list them again just for the fun of it:

Special Thanks To:

Julia Gaudio

Sarah Giuliani

Samantha Kahn

And LHS

-

---

To close, here's some other stuff that inspired this stuff. Check it out! Or don't! I'm not the boss of you:

**-Movies:** The Iron Giant, Life Is Beautiful, Heathers, Eternal Sunshine of The Spotless Mind

**-TV:** Bojack Horseman, You're the Worst, American Vandal, The End of The F\*\*\*ing World

**-Music:** Vienna – Billy Joel, Desperado – Eagles, Wish You Were Here – Pink Floyd, Bring It on Home to Me – Sam Cooke, Evil – Stevie Wonder

**-Short Films:** Thunder Road (2016), Spider (2007), Bao (2018)

**-Comics:** Scott Pilgrim, Spider-Gwen Vol1, Saga, Y The Last Man, Runaways

