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Disposable Boys: Emotional Location as Applied to the Experience of a Contemporary Theatrical Audience

Kevin R. Elder

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Kevin R. Elder

Candidate

Theatre & Dance

Department

This dissertation is approved, and it is acceptable in quality and form for publication:

Approved by the Dissertation Committee:

James Linnell, Chairperson

Matthew McDuffie

Gregory Moss

Brian Herrera

DISPOSABLE BOYS

by

KEVIN R. ELDER

DISSERTATION

Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the
Requirements for the Degree of

Master of Fine Arts

Dramatic Writing

The University of New Mexico
Albuquerque, New Mexico

May 2013

**EMOTIONAL LOCATION
AS APPLIED TO THE EXPERIENCE OF
A CONTEMPORARY THEATRICAL AUDIENCE**

by

KEVIN R. ELDER

M.F.A., Dramatic Writing, University of New Mexico, 2013

ABSTRACT

This essay is informed by my evolution as a dramatic writer. Along with developing a definition and understanding of the term “emotional location”, this essay will explore the growth of my work, and how it relates or differs in form and structure from the theatrical texts of Bertolt Brecht, the directorial and devised techniques of Jerzy Grotowski, as well as the theoretical performance analysis of Aristotle’s *Poetics*. The essay will also highlight the intellectual questions that have shaped my thinking, and by extension, the creative work that I have produced while participating in the M.F.A. program. My work will primarily be evaluated through the description and understanding of how drama creates specific emotional locations for the audience. The analysis of my creative evolution occurs particularly through investigating the success, failure, and the identification of emotional context in the work I have generated while participating in the M.F.A. program for Dramatic Writing.

Part I of this essay will construct a definition of emotional location as it originally applied to my work as a theatre deviser, and how the definition has been altered through my studies in the Dramatic Writing program. This stage will also discuss the benefits of the storytellers concern and interest in a modern audience’s emotional engagement to live performance, and how a revised investment in these theories benefit dramatic writing as a whole. Finally, this stage will also contextualize the idea of emotional location within modern dramatic structures as a parallel to traditional Western story-telling elements presented in Aristotle’s *Poetics*.

Part II will describe the various tactics analyzed by drama theorists and used by successful directors to solicit an emotional response from an audiences. This will be achieved by reviewing the

philosophical approaches and work of Bertolt Brecht, specifically a scene from *Mother Courage and Her Children*, which was written during, and greatly influenced by the political maelstrom of World War II, This stage will also dissect the techniques and physical methods developed by the explosive Polish director and theatre practitioner, Jerzy Grotowski. Part II analyzes both influential theatre directors and their individual theories, definitions, and ways of approaching emotional location as a viable tool in audience engagement.

Finally, Part III begins by addressing the timeline of my own work and the significant moments throughout my M.F.A studies that greatly shifted my understanding of how emotion can play a role in performance. Page III concludes by further analyzing my recent work in terms of the tactics and approaches I took in order to craft the plays. This analysis in Part III will look specifically at my attempts to implement the concept and practice of emotional location in my devised work *Lullabies for my Father* (2010), as well as my attempt at a more traditional approach to playwriting in *Wrecking or How Boys Love* (2011), and the hard lessons learned in part from attempting to combine the two traditions in *Disposable Boys* (2012). Each section will also examine how I understand the particulars that both led to success and failure within each of the plays examined.

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FORWARD

Prior to my acceptance to the Dramatic Writing program at the University of New Mexico, my background as an artist was in devised theatre as both a writer, director, and performer. Over the course of the past three years, my identity as an artist has shifted dramatically, parallel to the experiences I received during the MFA program. Admittedly, I began the program with convictions I believed would not alter, no matter the classes or professors my writing would be scrutinized through. Now that I am nearing the end of the Dramatic Writing program, I must admit I was wholly wrong in my assumptions; I am a dramatically different artist today because of the M.F.A. program.

Not only has my work within the program matured, but the understanding of my previous work and the decisions I made within that work has deepened and become more articulate. *Lullabies for my Father*, a devised performance I will address later on in the essay, is the only performance that I began to work on before I began the program, and finished during the second semester of my studies. Several thoughts, experiments, and theories I had been developing in *Lullabies* and my previous devised theatre, particularly in the realm of creating emotional context for the audience, are still of great interest to me in my current artistic work. However, the experience gained during the past three years has given me a variety of approaches to continue the experiments, as well as a stronger understanding of how to communicate what I had been attempting to do with my earlier theatrical performances. The challenges I created for myself, as

well as the challenges presented to me by various mentors and colleagues, have given me a new sense of wonder for the possibilities of dialogue and character driven theatre. Playwrights I had written off as tedious and at times even boring, have become the theatre artists I currently respect at the highest level.

For years I avoided realism and naturalism, and drew my inspiration from magic realism, expressionism, absurdism, and image based storytelling. While these approaches to theatre maintain the same validity for me as they once did, my recent work has been noticeably transformed in terms of how I approach the craft with a greater understanding of traditional techniques, using character and dialogue to create action, solve problems, and most of all create emotional locations as a way to further engage and deepen the relationship between the performance and the audience.

INTRODUCTION

Many of the most commonly recognized assertions on the craft of playwriting, within the context of the Western theatrical performance, dissect the drama first in terms of plot structure. From Ancient Greek philosophy in Aristotle's *Poetics*, to the Neo-Classicists and *Freytag's Pyramid*, the theatre world has always been consumed with the order to which a story is told. Although character is often a close second to the theory of what makes a good play, rarely have the well recognized theatre theorists strayed from the structure of plot being the essential element of communicating a story.

These assertions play into the assumption that communicating story is the most important goal that exists for a theatrical performance. While Aristotle, Freytag, and a majority of the Western playwriting philosophers address the importance of an audience's experience during a theatrical performance, this essay highlights a central reason for theatrical storytelling as emotional location, an audience member's emotional experiences that occur throughout various moments of the performance. This essay makes the assertion that simply communicating a story effectively through performance is not enough; the success of a theatrical performance is gauged by the audience's ability to be emotionally altered throughout, no matter what structure of storytelling is used.

Although emotional location is a term that I have come to define as it applies to my own work and my own critiques of the theatre and performance, the actual concept is not particularly new as it relates to storytelling in performance. How to create a unique emotional or intellectual space for the audience has been dissected, developed, and deconstructed for nearly as long as stories have been told. However, the artists and theorists discussed in this essay approached the concept in varying ways, and received varying insights depending on where their focus was applied. These theorists and artists have been influential towards the particulars of my own work. My personal philosophy and theatrical constructs have been intertwined and often in reaction to the assertions of the same theorists and playwrights.

PART I: EMOTIONAL LOCATION

It was in 2004 when I first came across the term “emotional location”, it was not in an article about theatre or performance, but in an article about popular rock and electronic music. In an interview with the experimental pop-musician, Bjork, a *Rolling Stone* article had quoted her as talking about understanding her music in terms of where the audience was located emotionally, whether through the arc of an entire album, a song, a verse, or even as minute as a single line. Until I read that article, I had never been asked, nor asked myself, to consider how the audience might be emotionally engaged at any given moment, and how those emotions may shift as the story unfolds. It had never occurred to me that the act of storytelling through performance could be so closely tied to the concept of leading the audience into feeling something.

THEORIES IN A NEW LIGHT

Perhaps Aristotle’s thoughts around catharsis (the only time he mentions an emotional response from the audience in *Poetics*) are true. However, my

initial (and very much unproven) theory after reading the Rolling Stone article was that catharsis was simply an emotional shift within a long line of emotional locations that an audience was asked to experience throughout the entirety of a theatrical performance. Up until that point, I had unquestionably accepted that the time for the audience to experience an emotional shift was only just before the closing moments of a performance. Transferring the term “emotional location” to a theatrical mindset, from Bjork’s original application in music, had a dramatic and almost immediate effect on the way I analyzed performance. Emotional location quickly became a term I used when discussing my own work with actors and audience. For the first time, I had found new language and an identifiable method in which to develop story in terms of what the audience may be experiencing; a language and method that felt uniquely my own.

It would be another eight years until I learned the similar and more widely used Performance Studies term “affect” during a graduate class focused on everyday performance. The concept of affect, within the boundaries of *The Performance Studies Reader*, had brought to light, within the analysis of my own work, a definition and lens in which to evaluate the way I had been approaching the craft of storytelling as performance.

I was immediately drawn to the concept of affect, and Performance Studies in general, in part because of the similarities to my background in devised and ensemble performance, but also because I had been immediately reminded of that *Rolling Stones* article from so many years ago. I was quickly

thrust into the mind frame that allowed me to think about storytelling in performance with a heightened regard to how an audience experiences the story within an emotional construct. It is important to note that never once up to this point had I studied the importance of an audience's emotional response with regard to performance. It was not something discussed by my directing or writing teachers of the past. As a director or actor it is considered near blasphemous to discuss emotions in terms of individual performance, and was therefore never related to any lesson I took part in as a student of the craft.

For the purpose of this essay and the exploration of my own work, the term "emotional location" is used to express a time frame of varying lengths in which the playwright has attempted to create a specific emotional response for the audience through the use of various and intentional tactics. Though similar, the term "affect" is used throughout the essay as a way to define the moment in which an audience shifts from one emotional location to another, again through the use of craft, tactics, and techniques of the playwright. While one can never be certain of the specific response of an audience or individual audience members, the playwright does have the ability to anticipate emotional location and affect through an understanding of how certain aspects of dramatic writing may be interpreted by the audience.

ORIGIN STORIES – THE POETICS

Though presented under different names and definitions, emotional location as a concept can be traced as far back as Aristotle's *Poetics*, the earliest surviving work of dramatic theory. *Poetics*, thought to have been written around 335 BCE, is still an effective example when discussing the western world's understanding of how an artist can evoke thought and an emotional response in a skillful manner. While there are earlier examples of dramatic writing's use of emotion as a way to engage an audience, being the earliest known record of dramatic theory, Aristotle's *Poetics* seems to be particularly fitting to help extrapolate upon the use of emotional location and affect in theatrical performances.

THE SIX ELEMENTS

Even today *Poetics* is considered one of the most comprehensive studies of dramatic structure and storytelling, despite it being written 2500 years ago. Aristotle names six principals that he considered to be the most important elements to the structure and creation of a play. (He specifies tragedy, though one can see the application to most forms of storytelling.) He begins with plot, arguing it as the most important of the six.

Again, if you string together a set of speeches expressive of character, and well finished in point of diction and thought, you will not produce the essential tragic effect nearly so well as with a play which, however deficient in these respects, yet has a plot and artistically constructed incidents (Aristotle 6).

His argument is that the most “essential tragic effect” will be best produced through a well constructed plot. While this may or may not be true, as many have deconstructed since *Poetics* was first written, one can recognize that Aristotle is referring to the ability for the drama to engage the audience in a manner that creates the most tragic effect. Aristotle asserts that a major purpose of the Tragedy is to provide an emotional release or purge for the spectator through catharsis (Aristotle 5), and in order to achieve this “tragic effect” a well constructed plot is necessary. The emotional release he speaks of is relatable to the idea of affect, where as the “artistically constructed incidents” become the vehicle to which the play creates emotional locations for the audience.

The second principle Aristotle highlights as an important element is character. “Thus Tragedy is the imitation of an action, and of the agents mainly with a view to the action” (Aristotle 6). While Aristotle doesn’t go into greater depths at this point, one can see the simplicity of his argument. Who better to be a vessel to the action of the play, as those who are closest to the emotional conditions that the plot delivers? Again, many have dissected his ranking of character within the construct of a play, but it is undeniable what character carries throughout the play for an audience. The playwright’s ability to create characters that are fully realized, motivated, and most of all identifiable as human, with human conditions, has the great ability to capture an audience’s attention, and lead them into an internal response that further presses the

audience into feeling or thinking that an idea presented is as the playwright has suggested.

The application of character as the embodiment of emotional location can be used to great effect with regards to how a play is received by an audience. It becomes an even more useful tool in theatrical performance when the characters begin to take on identities that an audience can relate to and identify with as a reflection of themselves. It is one thing for a modern US audience to watch King Oedipus suffer as he removes his eyes as self punishment, it is quite another to watch the fall of a desperate Willy Loman, a man not so different from many of today's audience members. The freedom for playwrights to present characters that mirror the station of an audience doesn't appear in dramatic structure until much later, but as the concept becomes the norm, it is evident that identifying principals are important, if not necessary, to the contemporary audience's ability to experience emotional engagement with the drama.

One could make similar arguments for use of emotional location in the remaining four principals: thought, language, music, and spectacle. However, like Aristotle, this essay chooses to focus on the first two as most important to the ways in which a playwright can attempt to engage the audience emotionally in order to effectively craft a performance. Though it is important to note that the element that has changed most significantly since the writing of *Poetics* is spectacle. Aristotle claims spectacle as something that "depends more on the art of the stage machinist than on that of the poet" (Aristotle-7). This assertion was

true of his time, but has adapted significantly over the past 2500 years. While the building and specific design of the spectacle still may often reside in the machinists realm, the idea of the spectacle is often imagined or created by the modern playwright. Sarah Ruhl's adaptation of *Eurydice*, employs the use of rain inside of an elevator during a particular scene. Many of the journalistic critiques of various productions of Ruhl's play note the rain as a particularly magical and exciting moment (as if an audience had never seen rain on stage before), and that this moment was incredibly effective for various audiences. The principle of spectacle is not presented here because it weighs heavier than the remaining three principals, but because the concept of spectacle have greatly expanded the experience of a modern audience.

Spectacle has become an element that is widely adopted by contemporary theatricians, and is responsible for performances that Aristotle could never have predicted. Although I personally find them emotionally void, groups such as Cirque De Soliel use spectacle in remarkable ways that many audience members describe as an experience of complete wonder and delight. These performance events of grand spectacle, that have only in recent history become accessible to contemporary audiences, may show a greater understanding of the human capabilities. However they do not alter the understanding presented by Aristotle as to what allows an audience to make a deep emotional connection with theatre performance.

PART II: THOSE THAT WERE HERE BEFORE

Bertolt Brecht was a successful playwright and theorist long before he was acknowledged as a successful and influential director. He was manipulative with his personal relationships, as well as in the productions of his plays, in order to be granted access to direct his own work. As a producer he was known to hire directors for his productions, only to quickly join the rehearsal process, fire the directors, and take over the work himself. Earlier in his directing career Brecht lost the trust of his actors due to his volatile temper and the expression of his needs through anger, volatile yelling, and on more than one occasion he threatened physical violence (Jones 85). Despite his aggressive and disturbing approach to directing, his ability to create emotional moments during the performance through both visual means and through dialogue, only served to strengthen his abilities as a playwright.

BRECHT AND COURAGE

Bertolt Brecht had a unique and specific approach to theories and application of playwriting, as well as direction, and especially how the two worked together. In Jones' book, *Great Directors at Work*, Jones describes a particular epic scene from *Mother Courage*, in which Katrin is on a rooftop waving mallets above her head and beating on drums in order to warn the villagers of the recently arrived soldiers. On stage, below Katrin, stands the lieutenant, as well as several other soldiers, intent on stopping Katrin's drumming. The scene calls

for chaotic energy, while simultaneously calling on specificity from the language and the sound of the drum beats. Of course a playwright can imagine and write a scene of this nature without embellishment. However, the clarity with which Brecht is able to write the scene, including how the rise and fall of the chaos emphasizes Kattrin's dialogue and action, lifts the important moments that are woven throughout.

Having both the understanding of the craft of playwriting and the craft of directing, Brecht is able to create a scene that explodes with chaotic energy, filling the audience with those same emotional responses, while simultaneously highlighting important moments of character and story structure. The script of *Mother Courage*, the "drum scene" especially, is written more like an orchestral score than what one recognizes as a modern play, each soldier like a crashing cymbal, every character with their solos and their moments of pianissimo. Brecht manipulates the characters on stage, and in turn is able to inspire a deep empathy in the audience. The audience is privy to Kattrin's strength and ideally recognize that same strength within themselves. Those who do not personally identify with the character are at the very least rooting for her to succeed and become invested in her journey because of it. This action further raises Kattrin's character above the soldiers, pushing the audience along with the crashing chaos of the scene, and throughout the play until the end.

BRECHT'S PHILOSOPHY AS APPLIED

Brecht's work serves as an example of how in a well crafted moment, precision within the text and staging, can be used to provide an emotional location for the audience. Not only is Brecht successful in achieving a sense of chaos and danger for the audience, but he is able to use those particulars to further the empathy towards a character and drive the play itself into creating a more enriching investment for the audience in relation to the storytelling overall.

Remarkably, the effective results of Brecht's work is in direct opposition to his philosophical beliefs towards what the theatre should accomplish. Brecht believed that his audience should see the theatre as a theatre, the stage a stage, and the actors as merely actors. He worked extensively with exposing the mechanics of the performance, as well as constantly sabotaging his theatrical moments in effort to keep the audience from being transported. (Grotowski, who will be discussed later, refers to these same exposed mechanics with use of the Polish word "brudy", which translates in English to "dirt". Though Grotowski's use of the technique is different from Brecht's.) No matter what Brecht did in order to present his performances as intellectual experiences, he was unable to escape the aspects of emotional engagement inherent to live performance and storytelling. Perhaps Brecht succeeded in keeping his audiences always aware of the position of their chairs, or the temperature of the room, but his intentional use of space, character, and language were crafted in such a way that, despite

his best efforts, audiences still came to understand Brecht's performances through a lens of emotional engagement.

Following this line of thinking around Brecht's intentions, the question becomes, can a performance communicate with intellectual purpose without somehow triggering an emotional shift within the audience? This essay argues that a performance is highly ineffective in communicating on an intellectual level without first engaging the audience within an emotional context. However, the reverse does not apply, as it is possible to place an audience in an emotional location without engaging them in a way that triggers an intellectual response. This question presupposes, in the Aristotelian tradition, that intellect itself is separated from emotion – the distinction between *logos* and *pathos*. The Cartesian logic, and the lineage of modern thought has made this distinction more tangible. However, there are other manifestations of the relationship between intellect and emotion that require further attention.

GROTOWSKI

The second proposition, that one can connect with performance in an emotional state without being engaged through intellectual analysis, has been proven quite effectively through the work and experiments of Jerzy Grotowski. A Polish theatre artist, Grotowski's work reached its highest point of influence during the 1960s and 1970s. Though Grotowski was heavily influenced by Brecht, and held many of the same beliefs towards alienation of the audience, it

is where Grotowski strayed from Brecht that best highlights the ability of his work to bring about an emotional response in both actor and spectator through the use of physical approaches and techniques.

EMOTIONAL LOCATION AND GROTOWSKI

Grotowski trained extensively in physical capabilities of the performer and approaches to performance, through his studies within Indian performance, he developed a form of ritual performance that was thought to have the ability to tap into archetypes of the human condition. The ritual theatre approach was said to have evoked extreme emotional responses from an audience without using any form of text or vocal communication. His approaches came from a deeply theoretical and intellectual place, however the result of the ritual theatre techniques were seldom communicated directly to an audience. The audience was able to be placed in emotional locations without their use of intellectual analysis.

Grotowski further developed his theories by analyzing theatrical approaches of many different cultures and locations. His quest to find physicality that communicated emotional context to an audience is what eventually lead him to study the ancient Greek culture. It is within this culture and arts that he found more of what he considered to be a direct form of non-verbal communication. Grotowski and his group studied the human forms on vases and other artistic artifacts. By recreating the images within the performer's bodies, as well as

introducing traditional music of the area, Jerzy Grotowski again felt as though he had found archetypes that could cross the borders of language and intelligence in order to evoke a deep emotional experience from any audience.

PART III: SIGNIFICANT MOMENTS, OR THE GREAT SHIFTS

The work of a playwright can often be isolative, and many playwrights, successful or otherwise, choose to articulate their craft in ways that keep them removed from the actual business of making theatre. Unlike any other role in the theatre, a playwright can find success with very little communication or collaboration. They are able to find inspiration through a myriad of individual experiences, as well as draw on conversations overheard in public spaces. Unlike the director who requires collaboration and communication to achieve their goals, those defined as only playwright can create their worlds in near vacuum like conditions. No other theatre artist can exist as a recluse and still find success within the craft. However, there is an argument to be made towards the playwright who ventures from the safety of their isolated rituals, and joins in the community as director, actor, or designer. It can be particularly beneficial for a playwright to have an understanding of how an actor approaches a character and language, and how a director approaches the communication of not only character and language, but also the theatricality of the storytelling.

THE FIRST TWENTY YEARS

My professional background before entering the Dramatic Writing program at UNM was, as I mentioned in the foreword, primarily focused on devised theatre and the dynamics of working within a group. I had begun acting at the age of ten, participating in children's theatre, as well as taking an intensive workshop at the Theatre in the Round in Minneapolis, MN. I stayed on the path as a performer until I reached the age of nineteen and first read *True and False* by David Mamet. His book was incredibly influential for me as an actor, but it also began to make me consider the roles of the theatre and where I felt my talents would be best utilized. Even at the age of seven I was telling stories, creating characters to make my brother's laugh, and directing small skits in the basement. While this origin story is not particularly unique to my childhood, it was the extent to which I would pursue my understanding of perfection at the time, and the creative spirit I forced upon my brothers and neighborhood performers that had me marked as a storyteller at a young age.

DEVISING AND DAVID MAMET

There is a particular passage within David Mamet's, *True and False*, where Mamet makes a rather bold statement. Even at the age of nineteen, I felt the statement was pretentious and flat out misguided. Mamet explains that a good script does not require good actors, good designers, or even a good director. If the play is well written, then all an actor needs to do is read the lines

they are given (Mamet 32). Besides the fact that this statement is insulting to the years and years of craft that actors, designers, directors, and other theatricians give their tireless effort to learn, it portrays a kind of isolation and lack of understanding towards the theatre and performance as a whole. Although there are examples of plays that are written expressly to be read as one might a novel or a poem, the great majority of plays are only fully realized within the context of the performance. My experience as a devised theatre maker, and the necessity to not only get along, but listen to the ideas of the ensemble, has given me a greater appreciation for the work of each artist within the process. There is no performance without the actors, the directors, and the designers. In the same vein, my plays are completely meaningless without these individual pieces, and just as, if not more importantly, with the existence of the audience. The audience is what takes the isolated and deeply personal experience of writing a play, and turns it outward into a shared community experience. Whether the audience deems the play successful or not is second to the act of being a participant to the experience of live performance.

LULLABIES FOR MY FATHER

The devised theatre performance, *Lullabies for My Father*, began its creation before I entered the Dramatic Writing program. However, the final phase and subsequent world premiere occurred towards the end of my studies in the first year. It was during this time, when my past experience began to intersect

with new philosophies, and in many ways a new artistic identity, that my attention to affect and the use of emotional location as a kind of structure began to develop. I was devising *Lullabies* with an ensemble while simultaneously working in isolation as a playwright. The nature of the performance as well as the process, demanded that *Lullabies* avoid what is commonly understood as storytelling structure. It was as far from Aristotelian principals as it could be, while still maintaining the form of a theatrical performance. However, the creation of *Lullabies* ran parallel with my new ventures into western story structure, and I began to consider how I might create something reflective of a plot structure but by only using an emotional journey for the audience. The end goal being that the audience would be transformed, would have felt like they had been on a kind of journey with the content, but would not have received the story arc in the traditional sense.

THREE PART PROBLEM

While the production was successful in some important ways, there were three particular instances in which my abilities were unable to accomplish goals I had set for myself. (An experience I have become more accustomed to over the last three years.) For one, I was unable to truly articulate and craft the emotional journey I sought for the audience. The theatrical performance carried many intense emotional experiences (especially with the content being about the idea of “fatherhood”), however I do not believe that the emotional journey carried the

same satisfaction as a more plot and character driven play. My understanding became that without a recognizable element, be it Aristotelian or otherwise, the audience was not open to receive the emotional locations as I had set out to portray.

WHEN IT IS NOT ENOUGH

The second way that the production was ineffective was reflected within my own concerns of forcing the audience to experience affect and particular emotional locations too often and for too long of a duration. Because I was concerned with an emotional arc throughout the process, I became concerned with presenting emotional aesthetics that would require the audience to invest more than is typically asked in performance. The structure was created around a longer story broken into three pieces and placed at the beginning, middle, and end of the performance. The story was about a father dying of cancer, it was specific with regards to how this father wasted away and contained grotesque details of his illness that were upsetting to much of the cast and the audiences invited to the first work demonstration. As the process continued for another year, I began to put into place several scenes and elements that were intended to release pressure, and pull the audience away from an emotional response. My fear of upsetting the audience eventually pulled me away from what had been working in the first place, and I ended up with a performance that would bring the audience close to a moment of emotional connection, but then pull them away

into something else. This left the performance in a kind of emotional limbo that did not directly affect the audience.

DANGEROUS TECHNIQUES

Finally, and possibly the largest problem with *Lullabies* was a technique I had learned of most often referred to as “Verbatim Theatre”. The basic principal of Verbatim Theatre is that all of the text is taken from interviews with real people about real experiences. Anna Devere-Smith is one of the artists most often given credit for developing this technique, and many of her performances are devised through a process similar to how I developed *Lullabies*. Where I strayed from Smith’s techniques, is with regard to a precision within the text. The interviews taken for *Lullabies* used every “uhm” and “uh”, every switch in thought, and perhaps most detrimental, I tried my best to have the actors copy the tone and delivery of those who were interviewed. Ultimately what that created was a sense of hyper-realism that simply was not translated to the stage. No matter how unique or interesting the interviews were, and no matter how skilled and dedicated my actors were, everything had been limited to a flat and often confusing quality. The limitations I placed upon the performance, long before it had been developed, created intense barriers for the performers and audience alike. The quality we look for in a good actor was nonexistent due to arbitrary restrictions that ultimately led to a performance that could not allow the audience

to emotionally engage with the material. For a subject with an emotional impact like “fathers”, it fell short time and time again.

Despite the difficulty and failure of the experiments I used with *Lullabies for my Father*, it was instrumental in laying the ground work for future projects. The experience of emotional structure I began to develop for myself became heavily influential towards the works that immediately followed; *Wrecking, or How Boys Love* and *Disposable Boys*.

WRECKING, OR HOW BOYS LOVE

Before I began to work in earnest on *Wrecking, or How Boys Love*, it is important to note that at the time I had only recently been introduced to more traditional ways of structuring dramatic writing. Through lessons in screenwriting, dramatic writing courses, as well as courses on theatrical history, I was introduced to several ways in which to think of the craft of playwriting. With a clearer understanding of an inciting incident, how to frame dramatic questions, rising and falling action represented within *Freytag's Pyramid*, and how to effectively thrust my characters towards a crisis moment, I had begun to digest the tools necessary to crafting a story that could expand through the use of creative ideas, while simultaneously fit within a specific framework that has been proven for centuries upon centuries. I was finally beginning to except that structure was not an enemy of my creative process, but in fact by placing trust

within the boundaries, I was able to understand and articulate the writing choices that I normally would attribute to instinct.

Heavily influenced by these playwriting and screenwriting techniques, I was excited to embark on what for me was a new approach to dramatic writing; an approach I would have certainly rejected outright in my past theatrical work. Being inspired by a new understanding and appreciation of an old and proven craft, I resolved to craft a drama that would follow a traditional model of play construction similar to the realistic dramatists of the late 19th century. It was this self imposed challenge during the beginning of my second year in the M.F.A. program that led me into writing *Wrecking, or How Boys Love*.

EMPLOYING TRADITION

Though the final structure of *Wrecking* deviates from the structure I had set out to imitate from the beginning, *Wrecking* does makes use of several widely understood techniques and traditional models found within storytelling. The use of character and plot are specific towards creating pathos and empathy within the audience. The main characters in *Wrecking* are brothers that formed a unique and nearly indestructible bound due to their parent's abandonment of the brothers while they were young children. *Wrecking* uses the family dynamics to help the audience identify with common relationship dynamics, such as brothers, mother and son, etc. A large portion of the audience has experienced troubling situations with their parents or siblings, and although the situations presented in

Wrecking are unique, the intentions and protective qualities portrayed in the characters can be identified and related to by a large portion of today's theatre goers. The play attempts to lead the audience into certain emotional locations by presenting recognizable relationships that the audience is able to identify with, while simultaneously providing the space necessary to imagine themselves in a similar situation. This also creates a way for the audience to enter the privacy and secrets of the family, as well as a path of understanding as to why the siblings choose to follow the actions presented in the play.

The use of family dynamics is not a particularly inventive way of engaging an audience, but it is effective nonetheless. One only needs to read Arthur Miller or Tennessee Williams to understand the impact a play can have by presenting identifiable relationships. *Wrecking* uses similar dynamics in order to draw the audience into the story and have them experience the suffering and pain of the characters. The experience shared with the characters of *Wrecking* further supports the depth at which emotional location can provide a transformative experience for an audience.

BREAKING SELF-IMPOSED RULES

Wrecking was an interesting challenge for me as a newly defined playwright. Throughout the first year of the program, I had attempted to hold tight to the philosophies and approaches that I had learned from the eight years between undergrad and graduate school. My default reaction to problems or

conflict within my work had always been to use theatrical, spectacle, or absurdity to find solutions. With *Wrecking*, I made a conscious decision to write what could be easily identified as a contemporary play. I leaned heavily on the theories I spoke of earlier, as well as Aristotle, and Linnell's *Walking on Fire*, in order to craft the entirety of the play. At the time, it was the most challenging piece I had ever been a part of creating.

The self-imposed rules of playwriting made it so that I could not fall into my old habits related to problem solving. I had to step back and survey the characters and their actions, find ways through dialogue and language to solve the issues that were presented. It took longer to write than I was normally accustomed to, and created frustrations I had never faced before. However, by the end of the process, I had written the type of play I had never once considered writing in my past experiences. I was able to use the same techniques that had been used by my new found idols such as Tennessee Williams, Harold Pinter, and Sam Shepard, in order to engage the audience in ways that felt genuine, as well as, identifiable. The plays and playwrights I had disregarded as dry, predictable, and even boring at times, were now showing me a path to a kind of writing that was not only satisfying to myself as an artist, but also emotionally satisfying for a wide range of audiences. *Wrecking* may not be an incredibly marketable piece of theatre, but through study of the craft and a particular attention to where the audience was emotionally engaged at any given moment, it became the most marketable and far reaching of any of my work to date.

DISPOSABLE BOYS

Disposable Boys, my most recent play, is about two brothers looking for a way to escape their drug addled father and the trailer park where they were raised. The play explores the effects of class, gender identity, and calamitous drug addiction on the integrity of one American family. Each of the elements addressed within *Disposable Boys* was chosen with the idea of emotional location in mind, though not all assisted were beneficial to the goals I had set out to accomplish with the play. When I first began writing *Disposable Boys*, I was interested in using tools from my past experience in devised theatre, as well as the lessons I had learned throughout my work on *Wrecking*. My initial thoughts were around continuing to explore the qualities of family dynamics from a place of realistic and identifiable burdens, while also allowing for the play to have moments of heightened spectacle and theatricality. Without looking into the specific details of each moment, I feel a general success in accomplishing that particular goal. However, it is within the analysis of the details that the play reveals how the challenges I had set up to achieve ultimately led to the glaring problems that still exist within the script today.

My decision to use a twelve year old boy, Tysen, and his seventeen year old brother, Kyle, was based around the attempt to immediately create empathy within the audience. My use of the two boys, who are rough around the edges and severely lacking in terms of education and emotional stability, was in an effort to create protagonists that could be identified as being too young to truly

control their own lives. The first act is a series of terrible events or reveals that unfold in order to show the kind of dire situation the brothers live in on a daily basis, and that no matter how much they want to control their own lives, they are beholden to their abusive and drug addicted father. Even as the audience begins to see how Kyle adopts his father's destructive behavior, through violent outbursts and the initial stages of drug use, there is an understanding that he doesn't know anything else and is therefore less culpable for his actions. Ideally the audience forgives him for each clear mistake, while fearing that if he doesn't stop, he is certain to end up like his father. This becomes an important emotional engagement for the audience to experience in Act 1 because the play relies on that connection to exist at the beginning of Act 2.

ARMING EMOTION

A similar technique is used for Tysen in the first act of the play. Though Tysen does very little in the way of mirroring his father or his older brother, the play ideally lays out several questions for the audience that work as hooks in an attempt to keep them engaged with the characters and the play as a whole. One of the largest questions repeatedly presented around Tysen, is that of his sexual or gender identity. The harsh and offensive language that both Tysen's father and older brother use against him, carries with it a direct heterosexism. While the language they use can be written off as simply how the characters speak towards

one another, the action of the play underlines the confusion that Tysen experiences as a boy coming into puberty.

The language, although most likely distasteful to much of the audience, transforms into a signal when paired with the ways in which Tysen behaves when thinking he is alone. The blatant homophobia of Tysen's family, juxtaposed with his choice to apply make-up and dress in women's shoes, heightens the audience's emotional connection and sympathy with the boy. It is one thing for the audience to witness a boy suffer with a family that verbally and emotionally abuses him, yet it becomes quite another to have Tysen possibly identify with the meaning behind the verbal assaults.

“GOOD IDEA SYNDROME”

While these two examples are not the only concepts within the play that are effective in terms of emotional location, it is perhaps more important to address where the play currently fails to reach my own standards and the potential I imagine *Disposable Boys* has in being a successful piece of dramatic writing. After all I had learned from my experience writing and rewriting *Wrecking*, I am perhaps most disappointed at how clearly my failures are reflected in terms of the structure and craft I attempted to implement within *Disposable Boys*.

The largest problems that still exist within *Disposable Boys* all stem from my attempt to communicate too much within the framework of one story. The overloading of communication is not only found within the realm of the social justice issues presented, such as economic instability, gender identity and the

concept of a binary gender spectrum, and the disease of addiction, but also the over communication is easily identified within providing too much information that led to a soft resolution at the end of Act 1.

My early attempts at constructing Act 1 had always included the death of Dennis, father of the two teenage boys. Dennis' death was intended to be seen as a major event that would thrust the two brothers into Act 2, leaving the audience to wonder what would happen next. Unfortunately, that event seems to do almost the opposite of my intentions. Instead of being a hook that makes the audience return from intermission to see what happens next, it more likely reads as a major event that pushes the boys towards a climax and ultimately a resolution. The audience has little reason to return to their seats knowing that the largest and most destructive obstacle in the life of these two young boys, their father, has been eliminated. Though much of Act 1 has been rewritten in attempt to create a stronger impulse that would convince the audience to return for Act 2, it still cannot compete with the power that was infused within Dennis or the resolution that reverberates for the audience through his death.

The second large barrier I created and have yet to find a convincing way through, is the fifteen year gap in time that exists between Act 1 and Act 2. While Act 2 has gone through several complete rewrites, the reasons behind my choice to use a fifteen year time frame occurred to me between finishing the first full draft and beginning the second draft which included a complete rewrite of Act 2. The first draft of *Disposable Boys* had only a six year time frame happening

between the two acts. After the hearing it read, I feared that with only six years between acts, a director or production team would be enticed to simply use the same actors for Tysen and Kyle in both Act 1 and Act 2, as well as casting both roles at an age range somewhere in between the acts and then asking the actors to play younger in Act 1 and older in Act 2. It seemed to me that if I were to give this opportunity to a director, it would certainly be done at some point. Instead of taking that chance, I created a 15 year age gap between the acts, hoping to force any future production into casting separate actors for Tysen and Kyle in each of the acts.

While this larger age range may have saved a production problem I foresaw, it created an even larger issue for me to combat. The question became, now that I had two different actors playing the same role in two different time periods, how could I quickly convince the audience to transfer the empathy and attachment that was gained in Act 1 for the character of young Kyle, into Act 2 when Kyle is not only a grown man now, but also played by a completely different actor? While one could certainly connect the two Kyles on an intellectual level, it is the emotional leap that I am unconvinced an entire audience will make and still maintain the full force of emotional connection that was crafted and delivered in the first act. The reason I have only addressed the effect time has on the relationship between the audience and Kyle, is because although his age shifts between the acts just as Kyle's does, Tysen has an entirely different set of circumstances that create an entirely different problem.

Before considering the emotional leap the audience would have to make with Kyle, in the earlier drafts of the play I was deeply concerned with the same kind of exchange that needed to happen with Tysen. Not only does Tysen, like Kyle, have to be fifteen years older and played by a different actor in Act 2, but Tysen has the added difficulty of being a Transgender woman, with a completely different name, who has had the entire transformation occur in the fifteen years that take place between Act 1 and Act 2. While Act 2 has always been straightforward within the first five pages and directly addressed Tysen's transformation into Sophie, the same question existed. How do I transfer the identity, emotional context, and empathy towards a twelve year old boy into that of a twenty seven year old woman?

The way I attempted to solve this particular problem was by inserting Sophie into Act 1 as a kind of imaginary friend that operated as a defense for Tysen and his gender confusion. It was important to the function of Act 2 that I did not reveal that Sophie is the older Tysen, but instead protected the secret from the audience. By having Sophie behave in a way that was reflective of the mother Tysen never had in Act 1, yet still maintain the qualities of her character portrayed in Act 2, there is little reason for the audience to guess the true nature of Sophie and Tysen's relationship. Though I was initially excited by the idea of inserting Sophie into Act 1 as Tysen's friend that no one else in the family could see, it only slightly solved the problem of emotional context, while creating several new problems for both acts.

LIFE'S SECOND ACTS

Disposable Boys currently exists with two future possibilities, neither of which give me any solace or comfort in my abilities as a playwright. The first possibility is that I continue with the two act structure as it is, continue to rewrite pages throughout the upcoming rehearsal and performance process, and hope that by the end of the Words Afire 2013 production, I have a play that I find pride in, or I at the very least have a road map showing me how to get there. The risk in moving forward with that strategy is the real possibility that I cannot craft *Disposable Boys*, with the current elements, into the play I believe it can be. The second option, one that I nearly decided to choose on several occasions during my most recent rewrite of Act 2, is to simply cut Act 2 entirely, add pages and rework parts of Act 1, and rely on the current false resolution that already exists with the death of Dennis. This option, although most likely easier, is less interesting to me because it would most resemble a play or story that an audience has already experienced. The transgender elements, as well as the flash forward presented in Act 2, are the concepts that I find most unique about the play, as well as my feeling that those ideas define *Disposable Boys* as dramatic writing that wholly belongs to my voice and experience as a playwright over the past three years in this program. The easiest thing to do would be to simply get rid of Act 2, so for the time being I have chosen to keep both acts and find a way to make it work within the confines of my abilities as a playwright.

CONCLUSION

The phrase “everybody wants to be fooled”, the source unknown but often misattributed to PT Barnum, is a fairly accurate way to consider the pleasures of the theatre. There are a myriad of reasons for an audience to spend time experiencing live performance. Though theatre perhaps has seen its heyday and over the century had its popularity wane, there are millions of people who still take part, as theatricians or audience, in a form of performing arts that has existed in the western world for over twenty-five hundred years. Film and television has taken a large amount of attention from what used to be the people’s entertainment, yet somehow live performance continues to enjoy the benefits of a willing audience.

So what is it that theatre provides that film and television do not? It cannot simply be the emotional engagement, as film provides a similar connection and can be as successful if not more successful depending on the two pieces being compared. A common argument towards theatre’s unique qualities stems from the creation of community that exists within every performance. However, people watch television together all the time; audiences gather to view movies in several hundred seat theaters. So it also cannot be as simple as sense of community.

One of the few things theatre can provide, that other mediums of storytelling cannot, is how it interacts with one’s imagination. Theatre is to film, as the novel is to poetry. Even with the most naturalistic of plays, there are several moments when the audience is asked to forget, or in Brecht’s case remember,

that they are in a large room together, watching dramatic writers, actors, directors, and designers, employ a craft that has evolved and taken many shapes and forms over the past thousand years. Like poetry, there are many spaces where the audience is asked to fill in their own understanding of the story, and reveal their own emotional complexities. Not all playwrights are concerned with how emotional location works within the structure of their plays; the beauty of the craft allows one to focus in on a vast amount of possibilities. Even Aristotle chose to address the emotional context as “catharsis”, but did not address the points before and after that could provide emotional context for the audience. Empathy becomes the playwrights greatest tool for reaching an audience, whether acknowledged or not.

Perhaps storytelling has always had a dual function. At once it is meant to communicate ideas, but equally, it seems that storytelling has always been used to evoke an emotional response from the audience. My current understanding of my own work has interpreted emotional location at a place of high priority. My process as a playwright not only focuses on the elements articulated by Aristotle so many years ago, but more so on the ability to provide an audience with an emotional experience that is new and at the very same time familiar.

This understanding, as it relates to the craft of dramatic writing, is a far cry from my old habits and approaches to devising theatre. Now that I am able to pull back the curtains of a great play, and put aside the conditions used to create an emotional location for the audience, I can recognize a simplicity within the craft.

Whether I give attention to the use of rising action, or how a reversal recognition leads to the crisis moment, I have a clearer understanding that the essential quality found in great drama simply boils down to: a good story that is well told. That's all it takes. It's really that simple - and to think it only took me three years to learn.

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DISPOSABLE BOYS

A PLAY IN TWO ACTS

BY

KEVIN R. ELDER

Elder.kr@gmail.com

CHARACTERS

TYSEN: male, 12, small, feminine, struggles with issues of gender identity.

SOPHIE: Transgender woman, 27, feminine, the future self of TYSEN.

KYLE (YOUNGER): male, 17, TYSEN'S brother, tough, angry, protects his brother.

KYLE (OLDER): male, 32, SOPHIE'S brother, angrier, a mirror image of his father.

DENNIS/DAD: male, 30s, father to the boys, addicted to meth, isolated and broken.

CLAIRE: female, early 20s, selfish, extreme issues with sexuality and addiction.

NOTE ON CASTING:

The part of DENNIS and KYLE (OLDER) should be played by the same actor

ACT I - SETTING:

Outskirts of a rural Midwest town.
Inside a run down, double-wide, trailer home.

ACT I - TIME:

The beginning of the twenty-first century.

ACT II - SETTING:

Outskirts of a rural Midwest town.
Inside the same run down, double-wide,
trailer home, though aging is implied.

ACT II - TIME:

Exactly fifteen years after the end of ACT I.

NOTE ON LANGUAGE:

A slash (/) represents where the next line of dialogue begins.

An ellipsis (...) represents a short pause, but no shift in thought.

A dash (-) represents a quick shift in thought.

A “Beat.” is a pause of varying length, followed by a shift in thought.

ACT I.

SCENE 1.

(Lights slowly fade up on the inside of a dilapidated, indecent, double-wide, trailer home. With stains on the wall, the home is grimy and abhorrent.)

(Lights up on TYSEN, who is laying on the floor. After a moment, the bedroom door opens. TYSEN quickly sits up.)

(DENNIS enters loudly, beer in hand. He flops on to the couch.)

(TYSEN slowly gets up from the floor and tries to climb into his father's lap.)

(DENNIS jerks and tosses TYSEN to the floor.)

DENNIS

Damnit Ty! Get the fuck off me. You're too old for this shit.

(TYSEN lays still with his eyes closed.)

TYSEN

(to himself)

Ice cream... pineapple... snowflakes... mascara...

DENNIS

Jesus. Don't know why you insist on actin' like a little faggot all the time--
Where's your brother?

TYSEN

School probably.

DENNIS

Still?

TYSEN

Think so. It's only noon.

(TYSEN gets up from the floor and sits at the tiny table near the kitchenette.)

DENNIS

You don't go to school no more?

TYSEN

Uh, yeah, well Mrs. Gitzen, she uh, she said I could come home, plus there's no homework or anything.

DENNIS

Right. Yeah. Okay.

(Beat.)

TYSEN

Hey, Dad?

DENNIS

What?

(Beat.)

DENNIS

Hand me the box, would ya?

(Although the small wooden box is within DENNIS' reach, he holds out his hand and waits for TYSEN to retrieve it for him.)

DENNIS

Give it here.

(DENNIS snatches the box from TYSEN'S hands.)

TYSEN

Ouch. Owe.

DENNIS

Oh, stop it. You're such a baby.

TYSEN

It hurt.

(DENNIS swings an open hand at TYSEN'S head. TYSEN barely dodges the half-hearted attack and falls back on to the carpet.)

(DENNIS focuses on the wooden box as TYSEN slowly spreads out on the floor and lays as he did at the beginning.)

TYSEN

Dad.

(DENNIS pulls a long stemmed glass pipe from the box, shows a slight smile, and fishes out a butane lighter from the wooden box.)

(TYSEN places both hands over his mouth and nose and clamps down hard just as DENNIS raises the lighter to the bulb of the glass pipe.)

(As DENNIS flicks the lighter, the lights go black, and all that can be seen is a small glowing orb.)

(The orb appears to float slowly across the room, then the glowing orb disappears, leaving the stage in darkness.)

SCENE 2.

(Lights up on the same trailer home.)

(TYSEN sits on the couch, upside down, with his head hanging over the lip. On the other side of the couch, right side up, is seventeen year old, KYLE.)

KYLE

Cartoons or People's Court?

TYSEN

Cartoons.

KYLE

You're such a baby.

TYSEN

Am not.

(Beat.)

TYSEN

Kyle? Where d'you think Mom is now?

KYLE

Ummmm. I don't know, actually. Probably California.

TYSEN

Nooo. You said New York City yesterday.

KYLE

Airplane, dummy.

TYSEN

California.

KYLE

Los Angeles. I bet she's getting a job as an actress. Like a movie star, you know?

TYSEN

Yeah.

KYLE

Sure. I mean, she's real pretty, and I bet she was doing all kinds of great stuff in New York, but you know, there's a lot more movies and stuff in Los Angeles. So probably that's where she had to go.

TYSEN

Can't remember what she looks like anymore.

KYLE

God you're such a fag.

(KYLE reaches into his pocket and pulls out a well-worn photograph.)

See?

KYLE

Can I hold it.

TYSEN

Wash yer hands first.

KYLE

I did!

TYSEN

No you didn't. I just saw you picking your butt.

KYLE

I don't. I didn't pick my butt!

TYSEN

Whatever, babies have dirty hands. Just wash em', then you can hold it. But only for ten seconds.

KYLE

Okay.

(TYSEN slides off the couch and walks quickly to the little kitchenette on the far stage right side. He runs his hands under the sink and then quickly wipes them dry on his jeans.)

(TYSEN shows his hands to KYLE. When KYLE is satisfied with the inspection, he hands the photo to TYSEN.)

Ten seconds.

KYLE

Thirty!

TYSEN

Ten, nine, eight...

KYLE

TYSEN

Come on, please?

KYLE

Seven...

TYSEN

Okay, fine, okay, okay! Just please start over?

KYLE

Fine. Ten... Nine...

(TYSEN tries to memorize everything in the photo.)

(KYLE counts the rest in his head, and after a full ten seconds, snatches the photo out of TYSEN'S hands.)

TYSEN

That wasn't ten! That was like five!

KYLE

More like fifteen. You don't even know how to count.

TYSEN

Yes I do. I just. Kyle. Can I please see her again?

KYLE

No!

(KYLE shoves the photo back in his pocket.)

KYLE

If you just wait, she'll send for us. Seriously, you always worry too much. She'll get famous and super rich, then we'll move to California with her. Live in a fuckin' mansion or whatever.

(TYSEN tears up.)

KYLE

Stop crying.

TYSEN

I'm not crying.

KYLE

Ha! Look at your eyes. You are too crying.

TYSEN

Fuck you, faggot!

KYLE

Okay, alright! Settle down, Ty. Seriously. I promise you. I promise-promise that she's gonna come get us. Like soon. Like pretty soon. Promise-promise.

TYSEN

When though?

KYLE

I don't. I don't know.

(Beat.)

TYSEN

How far is California?

KYLE

Pretty far.

TYSEN

But like how?

KYLE

Okay. Um, you remember when we went to Grandma Cindy's?

TYSEN

Sort of.

KYLE

Well, California is like nine-hundred times as far as Grandma Cindy's house.

TYSEN

No, fer real, how many miles is it?

KYLE

Mine as well be like a million.

TYSEN

So... pretty far then.

KYLE

Yeah, like, really far.

TYSEN

We'll never leave this stupid trailer.

KYLE

Just be patient. We'll get outa here.

(Lights fade.)

SCENE 3.

(Lights up on the double-wide.)

(TYSEN is laying on the floor admiring the over-sized pair of FANCY high heeled shoes he is wearing. He twirls his foot in the air. SOPHIE is kneeling nearby.)

SOPHIE

They look very nice on you.

TYSEN

Think so?

SOPHIE

Absolutely.

TYSEN

I know it's gay. And wrong... But I really like em.

SOPHIE

Well, the color doesn't highlight your eyes very well, but we can forgive that.

(SOPHIE winks and smiles at TYSEN who wears a look of shame.)

SOPHIE

Oh, honey, it's not wrong. At all. Trust me, you'll grow into them.

(KYLE enters through the screen door and watches his brother with disgust. Busy looking at the shoes, TYSEN doesn't notice his brother.)

(Although she is in plain view, KYLE doesn't see SOPHIE. With an elegant concern, SOPHIE backs up and disappears.)

(KYLE stands for a moment.)

(KYLE darts across the room, rips one of the shoes off of TYSEN'S foot, and begins to beat him with it. It is violent, but there is still a "sibling" quality to it.)

(TYSEN eventually gets away from his brother's strikes.)

TYSEN

Stop! Stop. Okay. Stop.

KYLE

What the fuck is wrong with you?

TYSEN

Nothing. I was just playing.

KYLE

Wanna know why everyone fucking hates you? Why you get the shit kicked out of you at school, and from Dad, you wanna know?

(TYSEN is silent.)

KYLE

People would leave you alone if you stopped being such a fucking weirdo.

TYSEN

I know. I just.

KYLE

Where'd you get these?

TYSEN

The trash.

KYLE

God. You're so stupid. You're digging out girls shoes from the trash? They stink.

TYSEN

They're mom's.

KYLE

No they aren't.

TYSEN

Uh-huh.

KYLE

Oh yeah-- how do you know?

TYSEN

I remember from before.

KYLE

Shut up. You were just a baby.

TYSEN

I wasn't a baby. I was like six.

KYLE

You can't remember her face, but you can remember what shoes she was wearing six years ago. You're such a shit liar.

TYSEN

Okay, fine.

KYLE

Why do you do shit like this?

TYSEN

I don't know.

KYLE

You know it doesn't make it easy on me. I have to defend your stupid ass almost every day.

TYSEN

I don't even go to school anymore.

KYLE

Doesn't matter. Those kids don't care. They don't forget all the dumb shit you do all the time. You have a stupid memory, but they don't. If those guys saw you laying around in fucking girl shoes, they would break in here and beat the living shit out of you. Not to mention Dad. What do you think he'd do?

TYSEN

Nothing -Dad doesn't even notice shit. He doesn't even /care what I do.

KYLE

/Uhh, I think he'd notice you prancing around like a little fairy.

TYSEN

Wasn't prancing.

KYLE

Whatever.

(Beat.)

TYSEN

There's more.

KYLE

What?

TYSEN

There's more'a mom's stuff. From the trash.

KYLE

Like what?

TYSEN
Make-up.

KYLE
Oh great. You gonna put that on?

TYSEN
No! Fuck you.

KYLE
Don't you dare.

TYSEN
There was a picture.

KYLE
Liar.

TYSEN
Cross my heart.

KYLE
Hope to die?

TYSEN
Yep.

KYLE
Swear to god?

TYSEN
Yeah. S'in my pocket.

(TYSEN pats his pocket, mockingly.)

KYLE
Lemme see.

TYSEN
Nope.

KYLE

Let me see!

TYSEN

No, it's mine.

KYLE

Give it.

TYSEN

You got your own.

KYLE

Ty? Fucking give it to me.

TYSEN

No.

KYLE

Now!

TYSEN

Maybe if you wash your hands first.

KYLE

Ty.

TYSEN

It's mine, and, and -You didn't even want stuff from the trash, so too bad!

KYLE

Stop fucking with me you little faggot freak. Give it to me now.

(KYLE violently grabs TYSEN by the shirt and holds a fist out as a threat.
TYSEN flinches.)

TYSEN

Okay! Okay! You can have it.

(KYLE aggressively searches through all of TYSEN'S pockets, but doesn't find anything. KYLE looks at TYSEN with disdain.)

KYLE

You are such a little shit. You don't have shit. Those aren't even Mom's shoes.

(Beat.)

KYLE

You better get rid of those before he gets home.

TYSEN

He's not coming home.

KYLE

He sure as shit is, and when he does, he will beat the piss out of you for those shoes. At least hide 'em real good.

(Beat.)

TYSEN

Kyle?

KYLE

What?

TYSEN

I'm super hungry.

KYLE

Wull what-- You didn't eat anything?

TYSEN

What would I? Nothin' to eat.

KYLE

You ate those crackers?

TYSEN

That was two days ago.

(Beat.)

TYSEN

I tried some of Bucket's food.

KYLE

You ate dog food?!

TYSEN

Just a little. Kyle, I'm really hungry.

KYLE

Fuck, Tysen. Don't eat dog food. It's not good for you.

TYSEN

Tastes really bad.

KYLE

Yeah, idiot. It's for fucking Bucket, not for people. You're so retarded, I swear.

TYSEN

Well I'm fucking hungry!

(Beat.)

KYLE

I know... I know. Just, just hold on.

(KYLE exits into the bedroom area, and reappears moments later holding a Snicker's bar.)

KYLE

I've been savin' this.

TYSEN

Can I have some?

KYLE

Yeah, dummy that's why I got it.

TYSEN

It's not His?

KYLE

No, it's mine. Here.

(KYLE opens the candy-bar wrapper. He tears off a small piece and pops it in his mouth. KYLE hands the rest of the candy-bar, which is significantly larger, to TYSEN.)

TYSEN

We can split it.

KYLE

Naw, I'm cool.

TYSEN

No, here.

KYLE

I ate at school... It was awesome. Big pile of french fries and two bacon cheese burgers and a huge piece of chocolate ice cream cake. So, you know, I'm not really hungry.

TYSEN

Okay. Thanks, Kyle.

(TYSEN hugs KYLE, and KYLE allows it, but he does not hug TYSEN back.)

KYLE

Okay, that's long enough -Just eat the candy already.

(TYSEN methodically bites small pieces from the candy-bar. He savors the taste. It is clearly the only thing he has eaten in a while, and he knows he may not eat again anytime soon.)

(Lights fade.)

SCENE 4.

(Lights up on morning in the mobile home.)

(DENNIS is laying on the couch, his wooden box open on the floor. KYLE and TYSEN enter. They fall silent and still when they see their father.)

TYSEN

He looks dead.

KYLE

You're so dumb. He's sleeping.

TYSEN

I didn't think he slept ever.

KYLE

Well not a lot, that's for sure.

(TYSEN suddenly gets a mischievous look on his face.)

TYSEN

What if we did the pee trick?

KYLE

What?

TYSEN

Where we put his hand in a glass of cold water and it makes him pee.

(KYLE laughs loudly and then quickly tries to recover.)

KYLE

You're fuckin' insane. Tysen.

TYSEN

It'd be funny though huh? To see Dad in pee pants.

KYLE

Until he murders us. Ha. Might be worth it though.

TYSEN

Should we?

KYLE

Shhhh. Fuck no, come'on. He's gonna be really pissed if we wake him up.

TYSEN

I'm not afraid of him.

KYLE

Yes you are.

TYSEN

I'm not.

KYLE

You're afraid of cockroaches, .

TYSEN

No I'm not -I think cockroaches are cool. I'm not scared of any bugs.

KYLE

Well a bug can't beat the shit out of you like he can.

TYSEN

Okay fine, wull let's go then.

KYLE

Okay, yeah. Go outside.

(TYSEN doesn't move.)

KYLE

Go outside. I'll come in a minute...

TYSEN

What are you gonna do?

KYLE

Going to the bathroom. What, you wanna see my cock, you little freak?

TYSEN

Gross.

KYLE

Get out!

TYSEN

Okay, okay.

(TYSEN exits as quietly as possible.)

(KYLE walks to the wooden box. He pulls out a very small plastic bag with powder inside. He licks his finger and sticks it in the bag. KYLE then puts his finger into his mouth and sucks on it. He replaces the bag and quickly exits.)

(Lights shift.)

SCENE 5.

(Lights up on TYSEN sitting at the small table that is covered in various types of make-up. SOPHIE holds a mirror up for him to see.)

(TYSEN admires himself in the mirror. SOPHIE sets it down.)

SOPHIE

Here.

(SOPHIE begins to apply a ruby red lipstick to TYSEN'S lips.)

SOPHIE

How does it feel?

TYSEN

(muffled and barely audible)

It feels okay.

(SOPHIE finishes applying the lipstick.)

SOPHIE

Now rub your lips together. Like in the movies... There. Beautiful.

(SOPHIE holds the mirror up again.)

(TYSEN smiles at SOPHIE with a deep sense of pride. We may notice that this is the first time we have seen TYSEN smile.)

Sophie? TYSEN

Yeah? SOPHIE

When will you come back again? TYSEN

I never left you. SOPHIE

Wull, I know, but when Kyle... TYSEN

Kyle. He... He loves you, he does, and he's trying to protect you. But, that. That doesn't mean he's always right. SOPHIE

Oh. TYSEN

Beat.

Can you... Will you do the eyes for me? TYSEN

(SOPHIE smiles.)

Of course, Ty. That's the best part. SOPHIE

(SOPHIE picks up some eye liner, inspects the tip, then moves in close to TYSEN'S face.)

(Lights slowly fade.)

SCENE 6.

(Lights up on KYLE sitting on the couch in the double-wide).

(DENNIS immediately enters through the front door, carrying a paper bag filled to the top with grocery items. He sets it on the counter and begins to unpack.)

DENNIS

Here. Come take this to the bathroom. Tysen!

TYSEN (O.S.)

Yeah, Dad?

DENNIS

Come grab this stuff!

KYLE

You got toilet paper?

DENNIS

Yeah. We got company tonight.

(TYSEN enters and sees the bag full of stuff and is stunned.)

DENNIS

Well don't just stand there.

(DENNIS throws the toilet paper at TYSEN and he barely catches it.)

DENNIS

Bathroom.

(TYSEN disappears with the toilet paper, and quickly reappears without.)

You boys want some breakfast?

(The boys are stunned as DENNIS pulls some cheap cereal and milk out of the bag, followed by some disposable plastic bowls and spoons.)

TYSEN

Wow. Thanks Dad.

KYLE

Yeah, thanks.

DENNIS

Well dig in.

(TYSEN rips open the box, has trouble with the plastic bag inside, and accidentally spills cereal on the floor.)

DENNIS

God damn it. Every time. I try to do something nice, but you little shits screw it up! I'm so.

(Beat.)

DENNIS

Guys, I'm trying to change a few things, okay? I've been sick, but I'm going to get better.

TYSEN

Sorry. I'm sorry. I'll clean it up.

(TYSEN falls to the floor to quickly pick it up. Dennis regains his composure.)

DENNIS

Ty sen. Hey. It's okay. It's just cereal. It's dry. Here, I'll open the milk. Grab yourself a bowl, Kyle, don't want to miss out on all this good food. A friend from, I'm trying to get better. For you guys. And a friend who is helping me is coming by. That's all.

KYLE

Yeah, okay.

DENNIS

Here ya go. Now go sit on the couch and eat. Try not to spill, Ty.

(The boys do as their father says. When they are both settled on the couch, and only the crunching sound of cereal being eaten can be heard, DENNIS positions himself between his two boys and puts his arms around them.)

(The strange show of affection is not lost on the brothers, but KYLE has an especially difficult time with it.)

DENNIS (CONT'D)

So things are gonna be different. Okay? I'm gonna get a job today, er soon. -And, ah, you both gotta be goin to school every day too. School's important.

TYSEN

I don't really like school anymore.

DENNIS

I don't care. We're gonna be a new family now. I threw out the wooden box, all of that shit, I'm getting clean. Everything'll be different. Better.

TYSEN

You swear?

DENNIS

Yeah. I swear.

KYLE

Like last time, I bet.

DENNIS

Not like last time. This really is different. I, I know what I have to do.

KYLE

Oh, so like the other times before that?

(KYLE gets off the couch. DENNIS tries to grab him, but he gets away.)

TYSEN

Kyle, don't.

DENNIS

Listen, this shit ain't easy, you know? Taking care'a you two. Without your god damn mother around. My dad would'a -Trust me, you got it easy. And I'm the dad and you're the fucking bratty kid. So you'll do what the fuck I tell you.

KYLE

I'm not a kid! I don't have to listen to your bullshit anymore.

DENNIS

Oh he's all grown up. Okay. Yeah, alright. Well. Until you start paying for your own ass to live here, I don't care how big you think you are.

KYLE

I'll just leave for good.

DENNIS

Bullshit.

KYLE

I will. Watch me. I'll go live with Mom.

DENNIS

Ha! Yeah, okay. Great. Fine. You go do that. Say hi to the worms for me -You and yer mom, that's a pair. Me and Tysen'll just be a little happy family. You're just another mouth that we don't need, right Ty?

TYSEN

Don't go.

DENNIS

Fuck it. Let him run away. You're a man now, right? You don't need him changing your little poopy diapers.

TYSEN

Fuck you.

DENNIS

Ooooooh, so you're all grown up too? Fuck it. You want to eat cereal? You want food around?

(DENNIS slaps the bowl out of TYSEN'S hand, spilling milk and cereal on the floor.)

TYSEN

Stop!

DENNIS

If you two are so grown up, maybe you can deal with all this shit yourself! Get off my fucking couch. You can sit on the floor like a baby.

(DENNIS easily pushes TYSEN to the floor.)

KYLE

Don't touch him!

(DENNIS stops suddenly and glares down at KYLE while TYSEN squats low to the ground with his arms covering his head.)

(While still maintaining eye contact with KYLE, DENNIS kicks TYSEN lightly but intentionally, knocking him over.)

(KYLE launches at DENNIS, but is easily thrown down to the floor next to TYSEN. DENNIS has made his point quickly and efficiently. He shakes his head in disgust at his two boys on the ground.

(DENNIS turns and exits out the screen door.)

(The boys stay where they are, fearing their father's return. They speak quietly.)

KYLE

You okay?

TYSEN

Yeah. You?

KYLE

He can't hurt us. Don't worry.

(DENNIS returns carrying the wooden box.)

DENNIS

Get out.

KYLE

Suck my dick!

(DENNIS stays calm. He is no longer interested in them.)

DENNIS

Get out. Both of you. Go play outside.

KYLE

You can't even be nice, a good dad, for like ten seconds.

DENNIS

I'll be nice when you're not such a little prick. Go the fuck outside.

(TYSEN gets up and begins to walk towards the door.)

TYSEN

Kyle, come on.

(KYLE follows after his little brother. They exit.)

(Without much thought, DENNIS opens the box and begins his old routine. There are a few brief moments where he appears to question what he is about to do. But habits take over and he puts lighter to pipe.)

(As lights fade, we see the same glowing orb from earlier. Again it seems to float across the room, this time almost dancing.)

SCENE 7.

(Downstage of the room, a very small amber light appears over KYLE, who is sitting on a rusted, old, lawn chair.)

(Upstage on the couch, under a similar amber light, SOPHIE and TYSEN sit together, quietly giggling and playing some kind of game throughout.)

(At the moment, KYLE'S brain seems to be a bit faster than his tongue.)

KYLE

My mom was a really great lady. Really great. Well, I mean, you know she had problems, I guess. Like any one. Right? But she was always nice. Loving even. Boy, she really loved Ty though. I mean she loved me too, I know that, but she and Ty were really close. She thought he was , I don't know. She knew he was sensitive, I guess. We all did, from when Ty was even a baby. He was always sensitive. It sure gets me in shit at school and stuff, but he can't help it. He was born that way, I think. My mom bought him a doll for christ's sake. What fucking dumbass kid, wants a girls doll when he is like four, or whatever. Maybe, maybe some kids do, I don't really know, I didn't. So that really stuck out to me, even though I was like seven or whatever.

But my mom, she was so sweet to Ty, she always babied him, and like, well just treated him kinda like a prince or something. But he was throwing this big fit at Walmart, just kicking and screaming for this little doll.

(Kyle laughs to himself.)

KYLE

It was a black baby, a little black baby doll. I don't know, that was funny to me for some reason.

The whole time Tysen is just freaking out, being a total shit head, my mom is trying to calm him down, handing him baseball gloves and shit. Monster trucks. Like pretty expensive shit, that I know we probably couldn't afford. Every time she hands him something other than this black baby wearing a pink bib, or whatever, everything she gives him, baseball gloves and whatever, he just chucks it across the store. Like all the way down the aisle. Kid didn't give a fuck who saw or what they might say. He was in a full on fit. He had lungs back then. He's all quite and shit now, but when he was a baby, he could scream bloody murder.

Finally though, I mean I guess she just didn't want him to hurt like that anymore, Mom finally, she just reached up and pulled that little black doll down. It was a pretty crap doll, as I remember, but she pulled it off the shelf and gave it to him. And he lit up like a fucking TV. He just smiled all big and those huge tears still on his face. God, it was like. I don't know, cause I know Mom didn't want to give it to him. I was old enough to know that Dad was gonna have a fucking hard (sic) attack about that fucking doll. But she did it. Mom paid for it and some Newports. Weird. I remember she bought Newports. Maybe not Maybe I made that up, or cause she always smoked Newports.

That's usually what I smoke if I can grab some easily. I guess I don't really care. Cigs are cigs anyway. But Newports remind me ah Mom a whole bunch.

The doll didn't last long. Ty hid it from dad for a long time. But I was still a kid too, back then, you know, and I didn't really understand shit and I was already tired of getting beat on cause Ty wouldn't be a fucking man about anything. Not man. I mean, he was like four or five or whatever, but he was still a little baby doing girly crap all the time. It wasn't like I was trying to hurt Ty or Mom or anyone, but a few weeks after that time at Walmart, Ty found his black baby all torn up and fucked up, like hair pulled out and covered in marker and dirt and shit. I don't even remember doing it, that's funny, cuz I really don't. But I'm sure I did. I fucked that doll up pretty good I guess. And I remember, when Ty found it he was literally heart broken, like super sad and shit. Then like, well my Mom, sweet as can be really, she asked me if I fucked this doll up, Wull she didn't say fuck, but you know, like did I mess Ty's black baby all up. And I was all, "No. I didn't. But I think He-man did". (Kyle laughs.) I mean, you know, that's what I said, which is pretty fucking funny to me now, but I'm sure I was just trying to cover my ass. We had like a few He-Man toys and whatever. But I was like, "He-Man beat up Ty's little black baby". It's all child abuse and shit. But you know, like, whatever, I was a kid, and, and that's like. Wull that's like, what... I knew... at the time I guess.

(Beat.)

KYLE

Pretty fucked up, kinda, or you know. But that's totally what me and Ty knew. Just like fighting and shit being broken and all that. Fucking weird. I don't even know why I remembered that story, I was talking about my Mom and, you know, I guess. It just came to me I guess. Being a kid is fucking hard though, I never want to be like that again.

(The light goes out on KYLE. The light above SOPHIE and TYSEN lingers for a few moments. By now, TYSEN is laying his head in SOPHIE'S lap.)

(Lights shift.)

SCENE 8.

(Lights up on the living room of the double wide trailer.)

(DENNIS is sitting on the couch watching the television. The glow of the television illuminates the room.)

(TYSEN enters from the offstage bedroom.)

DENNIS
Go to bed.

TYSEN
Yeah, but/

DENNIS
What did I say?

TYSEN
Wull I can't sleep.

DENNIS
Did you try laying down and closing your eyes?

TYSEN
Dad. I'm serious.

DENNIS
That makes two of us.

TYSEN
But you never sleep anyway.

DENNIS
And you sleep all the fucking time. What's your point?

(TYSEN timidly walks towards the couch and sits down at the furthest point possible; he is out of his father's reach.)

(They sit and watch TV in silence.)

TYSEN

(In reference to the television show)

They're doing it, huh?

DENNIS

What. No, they're wrestling.

TYSEN

Right.

(Beat.)

DENNIS

How do you know about "doing it"?

TYSEN

School.

DENNIS

You don't go to school.

TYSEN

I did.

DENNIS

You're ten.

TYSEN

I'm twelve, Dad.

DENNIS

You don't act it - Sides, that's too early to learn 'bout sex.

TYSEN

Wull they taught us in like fourth /grade.

(DENNIS is restless.)

DENNIS

/Ty. Go to bed.

TYSEN

Nooo. I don't /wanna.

DENNIS

/Why do you have to whine all the time?

TYSEN

I dooon't.

DENNIS

Even there. Just then, you were whining. You're like a baby all the time. Or a little girl. It's yer mom's fault.

(KYLE enters through the same bedroom door. He stands quietly in the shadows, barely illuminated by the flickering television. He watches.)

TYSEN

She was a good mom.

DENNIS

And how'd you remember, dummy? Huh?

TYSEN

I can remember. I'm not that little.

DENNIS

You don't remember shit.

TYSEN

Kyle told me.

DENNIS

Sure he did. Told you everything, yeah? She was a piece of shit, Tysen. She left us. She left me. She needed a little vacation away, from you especially. If she was so fucking great, where'd she go? Huh?

(TYSEN considers whether he should simply stay quiet.)

TYSEN

California.

DENNIS

Ha! California? Perfect. You little retard. You're so fucking stupid sometimes. She didn't go to California, go to some fucking great place. That bitch is not coming back.

(Beat.)

DENNIS

You need to wise up, Ty. This idea your brother gave you, this perfect family you could have had, this perfect life. You're gonna be waiting a long time.

TYSEN

Yes she, she's coming to get me. And you'll be sorry cause you'll be all alone with nobody. Just you and your stupid drugs and this stupid house in this stupid faggot trailer. I'm getting out. You're just mean, and pissed off cause nobody even loves you like mom.

(Beat.)

(DENNIS sighs.)

DENNIS

(Calmly.)

Come here.

TYSEN

No.

(DENNIS calmly reaches out for TYSEN, but TYSEN quickly dodges DENNIS' hand.)

(KYLE continues to watch without being seen.)

DENNIS

Just come here, Ty.

TYSEN

No.

(Seemingly defeated, DENNIS stares straight ahead. Exhausted from lack of sleep, his mind goes somewhere else.)

(TYSEN notices KYLE and is startled. Before TYSEN can make a sound, KYLE places a finger against his lips and motions for TYSEN to stay quite about his presence.)

TYSEN

Hey dad? ...Dad!

(DENNIS is thrown back into reality.)

DENNIS

Jesus! What the fuck!?

(Beat.)

(DENNIS slowly gains his composure.)

DENNIS

Sorry. I didn't.

(TYSEN is thrown by his father's apology.)

TYSEN

I thought you... thought you were having like a hard attack or somethin'.

DENNIS

No, no, I'm fine. I just. Listen. Ty. You're just a kid. You don't need all this. You and your brother. It wasn't supposed to be... Come here.

TYSEN

No.

DENNIS

Just. Please?

(KYLE carefully takes a few steps into the room, hands balled into fists.) (Ty sen sits next to his father.)

(DENNIS places his arm around TYSEN's shoulders..)

DENNIS

I'm sorry. Really. I didn't - Your mom, she, uh, she really ...

(DENNIS can not complete his thoughts. He pulls TYSEN in a little tighter.)

(KYLE quickly snatches the wooden box off the coffee table and launches it towards DENNIS. It flies right over DENNIS' head and crashes against the wall.)

(DENNIS' eyes snap open with alarm and looks in the direction of the crashing sound. He sees his box on the floor. His eyes dart over to KYLE, who is standing upright and scowling.)

(DENNIS jumps to his feet and sends a shocked TYSEN tumbling to the floor.)

(DENNIS and KYLE stare at each other.)

(Beat.)

(DENNIS bends down towards TYSEN to help him up.)

DENNIS
I didn't mean to /hurt...

KYLE
/Get up, Ty.

DENNIS
I'm sorry. I didn't/

KYLE
Get up.

(TYSEN begins to stand. DENNIS steps towards him to help. KYLE screams.)

KYLE
Don't fucking touch him!

DENNIS
Tysen.

KYLE
Get away from him. Right now. Tysen. Come here. Don't listen to that piece of shit. He's a faker.

(TYSEN looks up at his dad, then over to his brother. He doesn't know what to do.)

(DENNIS stands in silence. He looks at KYLE for a few moments, then looks down at his feet. It is clear that he has given up.)

KYLE

S'okay. Come here.

(KYLE gestures for TYSEN to come to him. TYSEN slowly raises to his feet, looks at his dad, then walks over to KYLE.)

(KYLE puts his arm around his brother but continues to stare down DENNIS.)

KYLE

You did enough already. You don't get to be a dad anymore. Put yer arm around him and shit. He doesn't need you -we don't fuckin' need you.

(Beat.)

KYLE

Go get high and leave us the fuck alone. Come on, Tysen. We're going to bed.

TYSEN

I'm not tired.

KYLE

Just lay there and close your eyes. You'll fall asleep.

(KYLE looks at his father.)

KYLE

If he touches you again, I'll kill that fat fuck.

(KYLE walks TYSEN through the bedroom door. They exit.)

(DENNIS turns towards where the wooden box is laying on the carpet. He slowly walks towards it and bends down to pick it up.)

(Lights shift.)

SCENE 9.

(Lights come up on the trailer home. It is now just a bit more trashy, with beer bottles and some random women's clothing lay ing around.)

(KYLE and TYSEN come out of their bedroom door. They begin to survey the mess. SOPHIE follows behind them.)

TYSEN

You think Mom's home?

KYLE

Shut up, your gonna wake the old man. It's not Mom, that's for sure. She wouldn't wear trashy shit like this. Eww, this is like hooker shit or whatever.

TYSEN

(to SOPHIE)

Wull who's is it?

SOPHIE

Ha. Don't look at me, little man!

KYLE

I don't know. But it ain't Mom, that's for sure.

TYSEN picks up the bra.

KYLE

Why don't you put it on, see if it's your size?

TYSEN

Fuck you.

(SOPHIE looks slightly disappointed.)

KYLE

I'm just playing. Don't be a baby about it.

TYSEN

I wasn't.

(Beat.)

TYSEN

You think this lady will be our new Mom?

KYLE

No way. Whoever this is will probably not ever come back. Here, help me pick all this up.

TYSEN

There any more cereal?

KYLE

He fuckin' threw it all away. He's such a dick. Tried to fish it out of the trash, but it's all gross and covered in shit or whatever. Asshole. There was still like half a box or whatever. Come on, Ty. Would you help me already?

TYSEN

Okay, okay. I just.

KYLE

What?

TYSEN

Nothing.

KYLE

Whatever. Hand me that.

(They do their best to tidy the place a bit. It looks marginally better. SOPHIE helps, but still KYLE doesn't ever notice.)

(KYLE opens the little refrigerator.)

KYLE

Ha, asshole forgot to throw out the milk. Turn on cartoons or whatever it is little kids watch.

TYSEN

People's Court is on. We can watch that?

KYLE

Sure, sure.

SOPHIE

I like cartoons better.

(TYSEN and SOPHIE sit on the couch.)

(KYLE pours the last of the milk in a disposable bowl. He smells the milk and makes a bit of a face. KYLE digs around in a cardboard box of plastic cutlery and pulls out a spoon.)

KYLE

Last one. It's just milk, but you gotta eat something.

(KYLE hands the bowl of milk to TYSEN.)

KYLE

Pretend you're a cat or something.

(TYSEN smiles. He starts to spoon the milk from the bowl into his mouth.)

(KYLE sits on the other side of TYSEN. He puts his arm around him and the three of them watch television for a while.)

KYLE

Gimme a spoonfull.

TYSEN

Tastes kinda bad.

KYLE

Tastes better than dirt, I bet.

TYSEN

Yeah, a little I guess.

KYLE

Is it sour?

TYSEN

A little.

KYLE

Well, just eat what you can.

(They watch television while TYSEN tries to stomach the rotten milk.)

(KYLE gets up and digs through his Dad's wooden box. He pulls out a small bag that contains some white powder. KYLE flicks the bag a few times and then shoves the it into his pants pocket. He sits back down next to TYSEN.)

KYLE

That'll teach him.

(KYLE notices that TYSEN is looking at him with concern.)

KYLE

Just don't. Don't worry. I'm not even gonna. Ty. Just watch the TV, okay?

TYSEN

Yeah, okay. I do like this show.

(The living room lights dim along with the light from outside the window. The flickering light from the television set illuminates the three of them as they watch People's Court.)

(With his hand in SOPHIE'S, TYSEN leans his head against KYLE and falls asleep.)

(Lights shift.)

SCENE 10.

(Early morning. The lights slowly raise on KYLE. DENNIS is laying on the couch, motionless.)

(TYSEN enters and notices KYLE staring at their father.)

TYSEN
What?

KYLE
I don't think he's...

TYSEN
Is he...?

KYLE
Been like this since yesterday, Ty. That shit isn't good.

TYSEN
He's done that before. Lots of /times. Right?

KYLE
/Yeah. But. I don't. Not like.

TYSEN
He's breathing still.

KYLE
No. He's not.

TYSEN
Is... he...?

KYLE
I think so.

(A very long silence.)

TYSEN
Should I be sad?

KYLE
Yeah. I guess.

TYSEN
I'm not.

KYLE
Me either.

(Beat.)

TYSEN
What're we going to do?

KYLE
It's pretty bad, Ty. I won't lie.

(Ty sen quickly exits into the side room. Kyle stays staring at his lifeless father.)

KYLE
Ty? Come back - Ty!

(TYSEN reappears with a small and worn out Spiderman sleeping bag and a pair of brown boots.)

KYLE
What are you doing?

TYSEN
Getting my stuff. I'm ready, like you /said.

KYLE
/No. Just. Stop. I need to think.

TYSEN
Am I in trouble? - I didn't do anything. I didn't even - you just told me. Kyle, I don't want to go to jail.

KYLE
Hey. You got to do everything I say. Okay?

TYSEN
Okay.

KYLE

It's gonna get bad. But you're gonna be fine. Someone will come to take you. To, to, to go somewhere. To live somewhere else. You understand?

(KYLE begins to look around the room. He finds a full plastic garbage bag, empties the trash on to the floor, and begins to fill the bag with a few of his things, a pair of sneakers, a shirt, etc.)

(KYLE tries to pull the ratty sleeping bag out of TYSEN'S hand.)

TYSEN

No! I don't want to go somewhere else.

KYLE

I know, I know.

TYSEN

What about Mom? What if she comes back and we aren't here any more?

KYLE

She's not coming back, Ty.

TYSEN

But you said!

(KYLE pushes TYSEN hard. He falls on top of DENNIS.)

KYLE

Stop! Stop crying. You need to be a man now. Just stop being such a freak.

(TYSEN jumps up.)

TYSEN

Fuck you!

KYLE

I'm trying to help you.

TYSEN

You're a freak!

(Beat.)

TYSEN

You always yell at me.

KYLE

I know. I'm sorry. I just. I yell when I'm scared, that's all.

TYSEN

You're scared?

KYLE

Yeah, a little.

TYSEN

I want to go with Mom.

KYLE

I know.

TYSEN

She's not coming back?

KYLE

Well she is... Just not for a little while longer.

.

TYSEN

She doesn't love us, huh?

KYLE

Tylen, you need to listen.

TYSEN

Okay.

KYLE

Some people are going to come, and. Take you somewhere else. It'll be nicer, /for real.

TYSEN

/But what about - wull where're you /going?

KYLE

/Don't let anyone ever fuck with you. Ever again. Okay?

TYSEN

You're not coming with?

KYLE

No - That's what I'm trying to. I can't protect - I can't come with you.

TYSEN

You have to!

KYLE

I can't!

TYSEN

But. How come?

KYLE

Remember when those ladies came to talk to us before? Like a bunch of /months ago?

TYSEN

/The one lady you called a bitch?

KYLE

No. God. The time Dad put us in those stupid clothes and those ladies came to talk to him and made you draw stupid pictures or whatever?

TYSEN

Yeah.

KYLE

Those ladies will come get you. But they won't take you if I'm here. I'm older, you know, and they, I mean, if I'm with you, then they'll just throw us in Juvy. Like prison for kids.

TYSEN

I don't want to go to Juvy.

KYLE

So that's why I have to leave first. Okay? I'll leave, then I'll call the cops to come over here.

(TYSEN pouts.)

KYLE

The cops aren't going to mess with you. I promise. They'll call the ladies, and they'll come, and feed you, and like probably right away.

TYSEN

I'm rully hungry right now.

KYLE

As soon as they get here -They'll give you all kinds of food. You'll probably be a total fat ass by the time I can come get you.

TYSEN

But when?

KYLE

Probably later today or tonight. You'll probably be eating at like a Waffle House or something in a few hours.

TYSEN

Noooo. When will you come get me?

(Beat.)

KYLE

Soon.

TYSEN

Like a couple days?

KYLE

I'll come get you out as soon as possible.

TYSEN

Where you going?

KYLE

Just a friends house or something.

TYSEN

Who?

KYLE

This guy from school. -Don't worry, Ty, Seriously. I'll be okay and so will you. I promise. Promise-promise.

(Beat.)

KYLE

And don't touch him or anything. Seriously. Finger prints, or whatever.

TYSEN

I won't touch him.

KYLE

Okay. Good.

TYSEN

But, if /they try to...

KYLE

/Just leave him.

(KYLE grabs the wooden box.)

KYLE

I got to get rid of this.

TYSEN

Don't.

KYLE

I'm gonna throw it away. I can't leave it here. It'll get you in trouble.

(KYLE pulls a small bag full of powder out of the wooden box and puts it in his pocket.)

KYLE

What?

TYSEN

That's what killed him.

KYLE

No. Well, kinda. I mean, I think it was a lot of things. Just. Don't worry about it, Ty. I said I'd take care of it. Okay?

(KYLE snaps the wooden box shut and tosses it in his garbage bag.)

(KYLE begins to put on his shoes.)

KYLE

Okay. Just stay here and wait, just be really nice, and don't get all weird on /them either.

TYSEN

/I'm not gonna/

KYLE

/And for real, remember what I said yesterday.

TYSEN

Kyle. I'm really scared.

KYLE

Don't be. Be tough.

TYSEN

But I am.

(KYLE puts his hands on TYSEN'S shoulders.)

KYLE

We both have to grow up now. We have to, it's time to be men -We're the good guys. Remember? We can't rely on anyone else. Just you and me now.

TYSEN

Like always.

KYLE
Like always.

TYSEN
You'll come get me.

KYLE
I said I would.

(Beat.)

(TYSEN hugs KYLE.)

(KYLE leans over and kisses TYSEN on the head. They hold each other for a moment longer.)

KYLE
I love you, kid.

TYSEN
Like Mom?

KYLE
Even more than Mom.

(Beat.)

TYSEN
Love you too.

(KYLE breaks away and turns the television on. He punches TYSEN on the arm.)

TYSEN
Owe. Fuck.

KYLE
Sorry. I just.

(Beat.)

KYLE

I better go.

TYSEN

Okay.

(KYLE grabs the trash bag and exits.)

(Moments later, KYLE enters.)

(KYLE pulls the photograph out of his pocket and holds the it out to TYSEN.)

TYSEN

Kyle?

(The screen door slams behind KYLE as he exits.)

SCENE 11.

(TYSEN is now alone with the body of his dead father.)

(TYSEN takes a look at the photograph and kisses it before carefully placing it in his pocket.)

(TYSEN stares at the door. He looks back at his dad, then tries to focus on the television. Moments later he stands up quickly and walks to the kitchen area.)

(He opens a cupboard under the sink. TYSEN pulls out a trash can and a few dusty cleaning supplies. He continues to dig until he pulls out a cardboard box that was hidden back behind everything.)

(TYSEN moves the box to the middle of the living room and opens it carefully.)

(Music begins to fade up slowly. It is the sound of an acoustic guitar. Melodic. Almost familiar.)

(SOPHIE enters.)

SOPHIE

You okay?

TYSEN

I dunno.

SOPHIE

Here, let me help you.

(SOPHIE takes the box from TYSEN and sets it in the middle of the living room.)

(Out of the box, TYSEN reveals the pumps from earlier. He puts them on his feet over his socks, and then reveals a small make-up kit and a bra. SOPHIE lays the items out in front of TYSEN.)

(TYSEN, with terrible coordination tries to put the bra on over his shirt. He quickly takes off the women's shoes, and removes his socks. SOPHIE helps him along the way. TYSEN relinquishes control, and they dress him together.)

(TYSEN puts the pumps back on and SOPHIE roles the socks into two balls. TYSEN places the balled up socks into the bra. He moves his shoulders back and forth to get a sense of how it all looks.)

SOPHIE

That'll work for now.

(The music continues. Lights shift dramatically and suddenly, as TYSEN, with a surprisingly melodic and beautiful voice, begins to sing. Quietly at first, but there is a slight confidence that can be heard between shaky notes.)

TYSEN

You think I'm pretty without any make-up on
 You think I'm funny when I tell the punch line wrong
 I know you get me so I let my walls come down, down...

(For those that know, it is clear that TYSEN is singing a slower, new arrangement, of Katy Perry's *Teenage Dream*. TYSEN sings with innocents and zero irony. It soothes him.)

(TYSEN carefully puts make-up on as he continues to sing.)

TYSEN

Before you met me I was alright
 But things were kinda heavy, you brought me to life
 Now every February you'll be my Valentine, valentine...

(Soon SOPHIE joins in, she also has a crystal clear alto voice that weeps with melancholy.)

TYSEN AND SOPHIE

Let's go all the way tonight
 No regrets, just love
 We can dance until we die
 You and I, we'll be young forever

(The song stops for a few moments. TYSEN stands up having now been transformed. He has a new confidence. The music begins again, a little louder, but that same single acoustic guitar.)

(TYSEN looks back at his lifeless father, looks at SOPHIE, then turns back to the audience and they begin to sing again, with more energy and tempo.)

TYSEN AND SOPHIE

You make me feel like
 I'm living a Teenage Dream
 The way you turn me on
 I can't sleep. Let's run away
 And don't ever look back
 Don't ever look back

My heart stops when you look at me
 Just one touch, now baby I believe
 This is real. So take a chance
 And don't ever look back
 Don't ever look back

(As the song continues, TYSEN becomes active, with well choreographed dance steps. Under different circumstances, the choreography would appear sexy and a bit risqué. SOPHIE stops singing and watches with pride.)

(TYSEN sings much of the rest of the song by himself with a beautiful voice and well executed choreography.)

(Towards the end of the song, the tempo slows. As the guitar sound disappears, SOPHIE joins in again, she and TYSEN sing the end of the song a cappella. It contains the same sincerity that was constant throughout.)

TYSEN AND SOPHIE

I might get your heart racing
 In my skin tight jeans
 Be your Teenage Dream tonight
 Let you put your hands on me
 In my skin-tight jeans
 Be your Teenage Dream tonight
 Tonight, tonight, tonight, tonight, tonight, tonight

(The lights shift from the “performance” to a more natural look. It has become late. The sun is setting. The television continues to flicker.)

(TYSEN and SOPHIE sit down on the floor, silently watching the television for a moment.)

(A long beat as time passes)

TYSEN

Sophie... Could you be my mom?

SOPHIE

Oh, sweetie. I can't. I'm sorry.

(Beat.)

(Lights fade until only the flickering television lights the room.)

TYSEN

Why not?

(SOPHIE stares at the small boy in poorly constructed drag and smiles with a sad compassion.)

(LOUD KNOCKING.)

(TYSEN, in a trance, doesn't look away from the television.)

(KNOCKING again.)

(SOPHIE stands up, and TYSEN follows her. Both look out into the future before them. TYSEN timidly grabs SOPHIE'S hand. SOPHIE leans over and kisses TYSEN on the forehead, and returns to looking out.)

(TYSEN has a look of bewilderment, but SOPHIE smiles at what she knows will come to pass.)

(More knocking.)

(Blackout.)

END ACT I.

ACT II.

SCENE 1.

(Act 2 begins in the same double-wide trailer. Fifteen years have passed.)

(Lights come up on the living area of the double-wide. It is mid-day. KYLE, is laying on the couch in the same shape and position that his father was in at the end of ACT 1.)

(Near KYLE is a metal tin, full of his meth gear. KYLE slowly sits up and is hit with an uneasiness.)

(There is a quiet tapping sound coming from the other side of the screen door.)

(KYLE, alarmed, looks towards the door. He quickly closes the metal tin and slides it under the couch.)

KYLE

Uh, come in.

(He stands, wipes his hands down his shirt, and tries to straighten out his clothes as best as possible.)

(SOPHIE enters and stands near the door.)

SOPHIE

Kyle.

KYLE

Ty sen.

(SOPHIE runs towards KYLE and hugs him tight. KYLE is stunned. Slowly he lifts his arms to embrace her.)

(They let go, but KYLE is still out of sorts. SOPHIE is full of a nervous excitement.)

SOPHIE

It's Sophie now, but don't worry about -You must have gotten my letter. I mean, obviously. Otherwise, that was a really good guess. Kyle, I am so happy to see you. I know this must be strange, really weird, after all -oh my god, I'm crying /already, it isn't...

*
*
*
*

KYLE

/It's fucking weird as shit.

SOPHIE

Yeah, of course. Sorry, I cry. Really easily. Hormones...

(Beat.)

(SOPHIE grabs the hem of her dress and displays herself.)

SOPHIE

Crazy, right?

(KYLE starts to say something but stops.)

SOPHIE

I guess I should have, I don't know. It has been fifteen years. Too /long, Kyle.

KYLE

/And now you're a fuckin' chick. You don't even look like yourself. It's just.
/Hard to believe.

SOPHIE

/Well, to, to be fair, you don't look much like yourself either. Kyle.

(KYLE laughs and relaxes a small amount.)

KYLE

Yeah. I guess not.

SOPHIE

You look just like... dad.

KYLE

/Fuuuuuck ooooooff, Sophie.

SOPHIE

Well, at least you called me Sophie.

KYLE

Yeah, okay. I. Yeah.

(Beat.)

(SOPHIE tries to touch KYLE's stomach. He flinches and backs up. SOPHIE tries to laugh off the tension.)

SOPHIE

Seriously though, do you eat anything?

KYLE

I don't really, I mean, it's not /much of a...

SOPHIE

/Let me make something for you.

(SOPHIE walks over to the small, old, refrigerator and opens it. It is near empty..)

KYLE

No, it's not a big deal. I'm not really /hungry.

SOPHIE

/Don't know what I expected to find in there. Not everything can change.

KYLE

Been enough changes.

*

(SOPHIE opens the small cupboard. She pulls out a can of pineapple cubes.)

SOPHIE

Pineapple?

KYLE

I don't. I'm not real hungry. Just. /Leave it alone.

(SOPHIE starts to rummage around the kitchen.)

SOPHIE

/Well, here, let me just. Do you even have a can /opener in here...

KYLE

?LEAVE IT THE FUCK ALONE.

(Beat.)

(Beat.)

SOPHIE

Kyle. /I...

KYLE

/Yeah. I guess I did pick up a few /traits from the old man.

SOPHIE

/I didn't realize. I mean, I had no idea.

KYLE

It's fine. Not a /big deal. Really.

SOPHIE

/I didn't mean anything.

KYLE

You can't just show up here after fifteen years -You wrote a fucking letter? I hadn't heard from you in, forever, and two months ago you write me a letter. Telling me. Like just. You're a fucking *girl* now, you wear /dresses and shit?

*

*

SOPHIE

/Maybe I should /just...

KYLE

/You're supposed to be my fucking little brother. Not some cunt -some dolled up faggot. You don't know shit about shit. You don't look anything like -You're not my little brother.

(Beat.)

(Stunned, SOPHIE drops the can of pineapple on the floor. She darts across the room to her bag and swings it over her shoulder. There is a brief moment of masculinity amidst the otherwise hyper-feminine appearance of SOPHIE.)

(As SOPHIE crosses in front of KYLE to get to the screen door, KYLE grabs her by the arm and stops her.)

SOPHIE

Don't!

(KYLE lets go immediately.)

KYLE

I'm sorry. I'm. Sorry. Please, don't go. I need. Please. Just -I didn't mean any of it, I just. This is really. I'm trying. My best, I really /am. It's Fucking hard.

SOPHIE

/I know... I know it's not easy. I'm sorry too. But you can't say that /shit to me.

KYLE

/I know, I know...

I'm, I came back though, Kyle. I came back for you. To help you. /In whatever way you need.

KYLE

/I don't need your help. /I'm good.

SOPHIE

/Okay.

KYLE

Fuckin' /golden, actually.

SOPHIE

/Then, let me get to know you again, at least. And, and you can get to know me as I am now? Who I am now. I'm really not that different.

(KYLE gives her a questioning look. SOPHIE smiles.)

SOPHIE

Okay, I look different. But inside, I'm, I'm still that kid. And you're still my older brother.

KYLE

But you're not my younger brother.

SOPHIE

I *would* prefer "sister".

(Beat.)

KYLE

Gotta go.

SOPHIE

What -why?

KYLE

Meeting somebody. It'll be half hour or whatever No /big deal.

SOPHIE

/No, I'm sorry. I didn't -What/ about...

KYLE

/Just this guy, Don't worry about it. Seriously, I'm not mad. I wanted you to
come. I did. I'm... Ahhh, yeah. It's weird, sure, but, but we'll figure it out. Right?
Yeah. So. Oh, here, you'll sleep in my room. Our, our, our old room. Cleaned it a
bit. And, I'm here, on the /couch.

*
*

SOPHIE

/But what about... /I mean, I just got here and everything.

(KYLE reaches under the couch to grab his metal tin. He shoves it into a worn out
backpack and throws the backpack over his shoulder.)

KYLE

/How long are you here? I mean, you can stay as long as you want and everything.
A week, or, how long /you think?

SOPHIE

/A couple days. I have this, ah, it's like an audition or whatever. Singing thing. On
Monday, If that's okay? Two days. I'll just be here through tomorrow night,
/leave in the morning.

KYLE

/Yeah, yeah, as long as, just whenever you want to stay til.

(Beat.)

KYLE

You okay?

SOPHIE

Yeah, I guess, I just/ feel like...

KYLE

/Seriously, I'll be gone half hour. Tops. Don't worry about it. Just watch TV or
something. Go lay down or change or whatever.

(KYLE walks towards the screen door and opens it.)

SOPHIE

Kyle!

(Beat.)

SOPHIE

It's good to see you.

(Beat.)

KYLE

You too. Ty. Er, Sophie, or whatever. I don't care -I'm just glad you're here.

(As KYLE begins to exit, he turns back to SOPHIE and smiles warmly.)

KYLE

Don't worry! You still worry way too much.

SOPHIE

(Half-smiling)

I told you, I'm really not that different.

(KYLE exits. The screen door slams behind him.)

(SOPHIE looks around as the silence settles into the room. She picks up the can of pineapple and sets it on the counter.)

(SOPHIE stands still for a moment, breathing in the room where she grew up. The lights shift slightly as TYSEN enters. SOPHIE smiles when she sees him.)

TYSEN

You came back!

(TYSEN gives SOPHIE a big hug.)

SOPHIE

I did... And so did you.

TYSEN

I never left. -You wanna watch TV or something?

SOPHIE

Yeah, okay.

(TYSEN leads SOPHIE to the couch. They sit as TYSEN pushes a button on the remote. The Television turns on and they watch for a moment.)

TYSEN

What's it like?

SOPHIE

Being back here?

TYSEN

Nooooo, no, just like, gettin' to be what you wanna be?

(Beat.)

SOPHIE

It's, ah. Perfect. Actually.

TYSEN

Why're you so sad then?

SOPHIE

I didn't realize how much it was going to cost me.

(Lights shift.)

SCENE 2.

(A small cool light appears above KYLE.)

(KYLE is hunched forward in a chair.)

KYLE

I didn't really believe it at first. I mean, shit, I hadn't even heard from the kid for like nine years or whatever. When he turned eighteen. She. God. I hope I can get used to that. If it was anyone else, I'd probably punch him in his faggot face -but I'm really trying with her. Sophie. I guess part of me believed it -he signed the letter "SOPHIE slash TYSEN". So, I mean, obviously the kid is trying too. *

(Beat.)

KYLE

I had no idea before, but there are like a shit ton of videos and stuff online, guys turnin' into girls, or whatever, not transforming. But, what's a you call it. But shit, like trannies, all over the internet with these youtube videos and shit, talking all kinds a crazy about their voices and how to do make-up. *

(Beat.)

KYLE

That's actually when I first saw him as Sophie. On a fucking youtube video. Fuck. Right? It was fuckin'. Fuck. And the surprising thing, i mean to me anyway, was that she actually looked happy. Not at all like Tysen as a kid, I didn't even realize at first that it was him. It didn't look like him. I mean, it looked like a straight up girl. Not all of them are so, good at looking like a chick, still look like dudes faking it or whatever. But like, it must be hard, to go to all that trouble. I mean, some of em' cut out their Adams-Apple. Some do. That's serious shit,. You don't do that for fun.

(Beat.)

KYLE

Seriously. I couldn't watch any of them for long, cause it was too fucking weird. But there was one, one of em', no music, just Sophie singing. Crazy thing, like people were watching them, like a ton of hits or whatever, like thousands on some of her videos. Most of the comments, of course, were what you'd think, you know. Guys being really shitty, talking all kinds'a faggot shit. It's just fucking still all weird. *

(Beat.)

KYLE

I really wish it wasn't though.

(Beat.)

KYLE

The thing is, it still didn't prepare me at all for when she showed up. I wanted things to be easier for the kid. Didn't want him to have so much pain... Can't be more painful than all this.

(The lights shift.)

SCENE 3.

(Lights up on the double-wide. Early morning.)

(KYLE enters through the screen door and begins looking for something. He is lifting couch cushions and opening cabinets. He is full of a synthetic energy.)

(SOPHIE enters, having just woke up.)

SOPHIE

What time is it?

(KYLE keeps searching.)

KYLE

I dunno. Nine?

(SOPHIE looks at her cellphone on the counter.)

SOPHIE

It's only seven.

KYLE

Huh.

(Beat.)

SOPHIE

What are you looking for?

KYLE

Oh nuthin'. Thought I. Just. I thought I had some...

(He continues to look.)

SOPHIE

Kyle. What? You thought you had what?

KYLE

Oh.

(KYLE stops searching.)

KYLE

Sorry. I, uh, I was pretty sure I hid some cash around here. Shit. Guess not.

SOPHIE

You need some money?

KYLE

Yeah. Not much. I'm supposed to get a check today. Mail hasn't come yet. I could get you back.

SOPHIE

How much?

KYLE

Check's fer like a hundred. Some yard stuff. Weeks ago. But, I only need like fifty.

SOPHIE

Okay. Yeah, no problem.

KYLE

Thanks.

(SOPHIE opens the refrigerator.)

SOPHIE

Well let me make some breakfast for us, then I'll get you some cash.

KYLE

I'm not too hungry.

SOPHIE

Oh, okay. Well there's nothing really here anyway. Just like old times.

KYLE

Yeah, well, I didn't really know how long you were gonna stay or anything. *

SOPHIE

S'okay. We can go grab something. Lemme get dressed. *

KYLE

Actually, got a buddy, outside, waiting for me.

SOPHIE

Oh.

KYLE

Yeah.

(Beat.)

KYLE

I gotta pay this guy back and do a few errands and shit. Probably only an hour. Then we could go eat or whatever.

SOPHIE

Oh, okay. Kyle. You... You o/kay?

KYLE

/Yeah, yeah, yeah. No problems, really. Just, this guy, you know, and a buncha, just a lotta shit goin' on right now.

SOPHIE

I see. And. You, ah, you need the money right now?

KYLE

I'll pay you back later, for sure. Easy. Soon as /check.

SOPHIE

/Yeah. Okay.

(SOPHIE disappears into the bedroom. Moments later she reemerges with her purse and pulls out a very feminine wallet.)

SOPHIE

How much?

KYLE

Like sixty?

(SOPHIE pulls some bills out of her wallet and hands them to KYLE.)

SOPHIE

Here's two-hundred.

KYLE

What? No, I don't. I don't really need this much.

SOPHIE

Just take it, Kyle. S'okay. I'm doing okay.

KYLE

Can't even pay all this back /very quick.

SOPHIE

/Really, it's o-kay. Consider it for room and board. For the weekend. I want to help.

KYLE

You sure?

SOPHIE

Sure. -Maybe you could bring back something to eat?

KYLE

Oh yeah, yeah, no problem.

SOPHIE

Okay. Remember I got to go tomorrow morning, er afternoon probably. I could push it a little. I want to see you though.

KYLE

See?

SOPHIE

More than that, Kyle. I. We. You know. It's just you've been running around and every thing.

KYLE

Yeah, sorry, but I'll pay you back soon though. I'm not some charity /case, or anything.

SOPHIE

/Of course not. I don't even care about that. Just want to spend some /time together.

KYLE

/Sure, sure. Of course. -ah, better go. Roy's waiting -my buddy, he's probably totally pissed by now.

SOPHIE

Okay, well go then. I'll uh, I'll see you when you're back.

KYLE

Yeah, um, give you a call on my way back? I'll pick somethin' up or something. Yeah?

SOPHIE

Sounds good.

(Beat.)

KYLE

S'it weird, being back and all uh that?

SOPHIE

(smiling)

Feels kinda like I never left.

KYLE

Uhg, don't say that.

SOPHIE

Was just kid/ding.

KYLE

/Yeah, okay. See you in a bit then.

SOPHIE

Oh. Okay, alright.

(KYLE exits.)

(Sophie watches him leave, stands for a moment, then begins to clean up the mess that KYLE made.)

SCENE 4

(Later that day. The living room is empty.)

(The screen door opens and in bursts CLAIRE. She's been burning at both ends for the last few days, she is high on crystal meth.)

CLAIRE

Kyle? You dumb fuck, I'm back! -need a place to crash for a couple days. Hey fucker!... Kyle?

(SOPHIE enters from the back room.)

SOPHIE

Uh, hey. Kyle's not here.

(Beat.)

CLAIRE

You're shittin' me.

SOPHIE

No, really. He's, he's not here. Not sure when -he said he'd be back a few hours ago, but, obviously, /well. Anyway...

CLAIRE

/I'm gone for two weeks and he already has some dumb gash moving in? That's fucking just like /that fucktard.

SOPHIE

/Oh, no, no, ha, I'm just, I'm his, his sister.

CLAIRE

Oh, yeah, okay! Me too, bitch -I'm his sister too. We're a real close family. You /ever heard of kissing cousins?

SOPHIE

/No, really. He's my brother, anyway I'm only here for another /day or so.

CLAIRE

/Holy shit. You. You're his "sister"? You're the, the, the. Oh my god -shit.

(Beat.)

SOPHIE

Oh. Yeah. He, uh told...

CLAIRE

Yeah, totally. I mean, you know. He told me. He uh, uh month ago or something, whenever your letter -holy shit -didn't believe him actually. -Fuckin' a, girl, you look just like a chick -er, woman - or whatever. But, wow, fuck -you're actually a dude, right?

SOPHIE

No, not /really.

CLAIRE

/Wow. Can I hug you?

SOPHIE

Uh. Sure, uh okay.

(CLAIRE hugs SOPHIE in an awkward way.)

CLAIRE

You're tits feel super real.

SOPHIE

They are.

CLAIRE

Oh, no wonder. Anyway, here, here have uh drink with me. Gotta cheers this shit for sure. First time for everything.

(CLAIRE pulls vodka out of her bag, finds cups, and pours vodka in each while she speaks.)

CLAIRE

Is it weird? It's weird, right? Fuck, I can't imagine. I've always wondered. I mean, shit, I don't know a lot of fags or /anything, but really.

SOPHIE

/I'm not gay actu/ally.

CLAIRE

/Oh, no, no, I'm not against em, like I don't hate em er you er anything. Just uh, growing up around here and shit You just, I mean, YOU know, right? Not a lot of homos around. I guess is what I'm sayin'.

(CLAIRE shoves the cup into SOPHIE's hand.)

SOPHIE

Oh, well like I said, I'm not gay, and I'm not much of a drinker either.

CLAIRE

Shut the fuck up and have a drink with me.

SOPHIE

Yeah, okay.

CLAIRE

Sorry. It's shit. But whatever.

SOPHIE

No, no, it's fine.

CLAIRE

You ready to get fucked?

SOPHIE

Uh...

CLAIRE

Fucked up. We're gonna party tonight, you, me, and your shitty brother if he ever shows up -I was in a fucking detox for the last two fucking weeks. Ugh. Fucking assholes. Fuck, fuck, fuck! He's probably already replaced me with some cunt. But whatever, this pussy always gets him coming home! You know? Oh, ha, guess not. Or, well, um, maybe -do you?

SOPHIE

Um, I mean, not with. It's kinda /hard to, I don't know.

CLAIRE

/Sure, sure. Yeah, of course. Yeah. Never mind. But you should show it girl, seriously, you are a little piece of ass. Seriously. Even though you're kinda old or whatever Not old-old, but. You know, but whatever. I'm sure it's all kinds of weird.

SOPHIE

Ha. Yeah. It is.

(KYLE enters from the screen door. He sees the two women and stops.)

CLAIRE

Baby boy!

(CLAIRE runs and jumps into KYLE's arms.)

KYLE

Claire... Hey Sophie.

SOPHIE

Hey. Claire and I. We were... just getting to, we just met.

KYLE

Oh. Okay. Claire, Claire, please. Stop. Can I put you down? Seriously. Otherwise I'm gonna drop you. On accident. Not cause, anyway.

(KYLE sets CLAIRE down on her own feet.)

(CLAIRE slaps KYLE hard.)

CLAIRE

You're such a fucker.

KYLE

The fuck did I do?

CLAIRE

Nothing.

(She kisses KYLE deeply. SOPHIE looks away.)

(Beat.)

CLAIRE

Know what we're gonna do now?

(Beat.)

CLAIRE

Get. Fucked. Up, obvi. -but first, you'll have to give your big brother and I a few minutes.

(CLAIRE grabs KYLE's hand and begins to lead him towards the bedroom.)

KYLE

Claire. Let's just.

CLAIRE

What? I've been missing for two weeks. Out of my mind.

KYLE

Yeah, I know baby. And, and I'm glad, I'm, it's good to see you and all. Well my - Sophie's only here til tomorrow. Right?

SOPHIE

Yeah, but really, I /don't...

CLAIRE

/She doesn't care. I just got back.

KYLE

Wull I just.

CLAIRE

Fuck you, Kyle, I've been waiting all day to find you and get your little, piece of shit, pinprick inside me. -seriously, she doesn't give a shit, Right? So don't bullshit-excuse-me.

KYLE

God you're fucking tweaked.

CLAIRE

And you;re not? Fuck you. Perfect timing if you wanna know.

KYLE

Yeah but how many dicks you have to suck to get that high?

(CLAIRE attacks KYLE. He defends himself for a few moments and then retaliates with as much force. They are brutal towards each other. There is a strange mirroring of one of the fights in Act 1.)

(The fighting leads them to the floor and just as quickly as the fight began, it transforms into them grinding and making out. It is as sexy as grotesque and goes a little further than one would normally anticipate on stage.)

(SOPHIE looks for something to do in the kitchen area.)

KYLE

Okay . Stop . Claire. Okay ! Jesus.

(They get up.)

KYLE

Just. Give me a minute, okay baby? Just a minute.

CLAIRE

I'm timing you, you dumb fuck. Any longer and I'll stab you in your fucking chest.

KYLE

Come on.

SOPHIE

I don't think she's kidding.

CLAIRE

You're little sis knows what's up.

KYLE

Okay, okay. One minute. Please.

CLAIRE

Don't fuck with me, you fucking faggot. (To SOPHIE) No offense.

SOPHIE

None taken...?

(Claire disappears into the bedroom.)

KYLE

Sorry.

SOPHIE

Don't apologize. Really.

(TYSEN enters but no one notices.)

KYLE

Okay. But really. She won't hang around long tonight. We'll get to spend time together -and tomorrow before you leave, of course.

SOPHIE

Is she even legal?

KYLE

Yeah, of course -I'm pretty sure she is. Fuck. I'm sorry, Sophie, really. I really. I wanna see you, and hear about your life. Just. I mean, my shits all, you saw Claire. She's. She'll freak out if I don't go in there.

SOPHIE

Yeah, of course. Don't get stabbed over me, by any means. So just. Go, uh, *go get her*. I guess.

KYLE

It won't be long.

(SOPHIE laughs.)

KYLE

Shut up. Ha. I mean, I *could* -but I won't make it drag on or anything. Sorry. God, sorry, this is so weird.

SOPHIE

Pretty much everything has been. Since I got back.

KYLE

Yeah, totally. I know, I know. Sorry. Tonight and tomorrow, will just be us. Promise.

SOPHIE

Sure.

(KYLE exits.)

(SOPHIE notices TYSEN.)

SOPHIE

Hey you.

TYSEN

He's like Dad now, huh?

SOPHIE

Seems like it.

TYSEN

You feel any better since coming back?

(TYSEN lays on the floor. SOPHIE slowly follows suit.)

SOPHIE

Maybe. I guess... not really. I did. But. I dunno, I thought maybe I could come back and either things would be way different, or I could at least help him, like he uh, uh helped me. Us, I mean. He saved our life, you know?

TYSEN
Yeah. A buncha times too.

SOPHIE
Yeah.

TYSEN
He knows you love him.

SOPHIE
I don't know if he can feel anything right now.

TYSEN
Like Dad?

SOPHIE
Yeah. Like Dad.

(Beat.)

TYSEN
Ooh. Snickers ice cream.

SOPHIE
Oh, good one. Ummm, snowflakes.

TYSEN
Mascara.

SOPHIE
Cherry Lip gloss.

TYSEN
Ummmm. Toilet paper!

SOPHIE
Naw, that should be a given, don't waste a wish for that.

TYSEN
Do you think he'll be okay?

(Beat.)

SOPHIE

I don't think I'm strong enough, Ty. Feel like after tonight I really got to get out of here. -feel like I am already slipping. That girl is no good. None of this, though, none of it is any good for him. I need him to leave with me, I can't stay here *and* help him too. I can feel it all sinking back in. The, the, the...

TYSEN

You'll come back though, right?

SOPHIE

I don't know.

(TYSEN sits up.)

TYSEN

Wull what about me?

SOPHIE

Oh honey, you'll always be with me. I couldn't forget you if I tried.

(Beat.)

TYSEN

How about... a kitten.

SOPHIE

Good one.

TYSEN

And pineapple.

SOPHIE

Oh, oh that's easy. I actually found some earlier. You want some pineapple?

TYSEN

Yeah.

SOPHIE

You got it.

(SOPHIE gets up and pulls out the can of pineapple and begins to open it.)

(Blackout - Music BLARES.)

SCENE 5

(Late night in the trailer. The light has harsh angles, shadows, and present an aesthetic closer to moments with the glowing orb than anything else we have seen. The television flickers for the first time in ACT 2. The feel is familiar and haunting.)

(SOPHIE sits on a metal folding chair. KYLE sits on the couch with CLAIRE. They are all drinking alcohol, and SOPHIE looks as if she's had a bit more than she is used to - Though not wasted.)

(After a moment, CLAIRE gets up and walks towards SOPHIE.)

(They all have to yell over the music in order to be heard.)

CLAIRE

You ever been with a woman?

SOPHIE

Uh...

KYLE

Leave her alone.

CLAIRE

Fuck off, I'm not even talking to you, Grandpa Softie.

KYLE

It's not my-God. Fuck!! I'm all fucked up. Speed Cock is a real thing, you know - not like /I was trying to...

CLAIRE

/Usually it works the other way, dumbfuck.

KYLE

Whatever, just. Just leave my sister alone.

CLAIRE

Come on Sophie, get loose. I like this side of you. You ever sleep with girls before, you know, *snip* *snip*?

SOPHIE

Yeah, uh, I did. Not like, all the way, or anything. /But I did get close to a few.

CLAIRE

/All the way? All the way? Ha! Holy shit your whole family is so fucking prude, it's hilarious -So you never fucked proper then? You never stuffed your fat dick inside some girls little fucking tight little pussy?! /'All the way.'" Ha. You two are fucking perfect for each other. Two tin cans in a trailer park.

KYLE

/Get off it, Claire. Just...I don't. Just stop!

(CLAIRE sits on SOPHIE's lap and grinds on her.)

CLAIRE

This do anything for you, baby? Does it get your little fake clit all hard?

(SOPHIE is too shocked to respond. KYLE gets up and storms into the kitchen area where his metal tin is sitting wide open.)

KYLE

You're such a fucking bitch -fuck all a this shit.

(KYLE digs around in his tin and fixes a SHOT, business with the spoon, rubber hose, and needle. This is the first we have seen of meth use that is beyond the smoking and theatrical glowing orb. This is real, and dirty, and dangerous.)

CLAIRE

You're gonna slam it? At least fix me up too.

KYLE

Yeah, yeah, yeah.

CLAIRE

Whatever happened to ladies first...

KYLE

If I went by that shit, I'd still have to offer it to Sophie before you.

(Claire pouts in silence for a moment while KYLE plunges a needle into his arm.)

(Silence and stillness as KYLE's back straightens slowly and his eyes subtly widen. Then, just as he feels the powerful rush of the drug hit him, SOPHIE turns to him and...)

SOPHIE

Yeah, okay.

(Beat.)

KYLE

What?

(KYLE pulls the needle out and "cleans up".)

SOPHIE

I said okay. I'll try it.

KYLE

Ha. Ha.

SOPHIE

Seriously.

(Beat.)

SOPHIE

Not like with the needle or anything, but, I'd, I mean I'll smoke some with you.

CLAIRE

Oh my god. Ha, Oh my god. I LOVE your fucking, faggot, sister so much right now.

(CLAIRE kisses SOPHIE on the mouth. It is aggressive but doesn't linger.)

(KYLE is losing himself.)

KYLE

Ty sen, come on. You don't have to /do any of this shit.

CLAIRE

/I'll fix that shit -No, I got it. I love gettin' spun with a crystal virgin.

(CLAIRE quickly grabs the metal tin away from KYLE and puts tiny crystal shards into the bowl at the end of the familiar glass pipe.)

(CLAIRE brings it over to SOPHIE who doesn't appear quite as brave as she had hoped.)

KYLE

You don't have ta... whatever, or anything really. You don't.

(SOPHIE snaps back at KYLE with sarcasm.)

SOPHIE

Why? Is it bad for me? Sure seems like a great idea, right. It's a party, right? Me, you, your *wonderful* little girlfriend, /all of us in this fucking trailer...

CLAIRE

/Oh. Thanks. That's so sweet.

SOPHIE

I mean, what the fuck Kyle. Can *I* not handle it? Or is it just that I can't handle it as well as you. Or Dad? He was a pro -never let him down.

(Completely unaware of the siblings discussion, CLAIRE takes a hit. There is no orb, only pipe and smoke. She blows out smoke.)

CLAIRE

Oh, make sure you don't start inhaling until you see the smoke start to swirl.

KYLE

Do whatever the fuck you want, Ty.

CLAIRE

I'll hold it for you cause you gotta keep turning it and shit, otherwise it gets all fucking /burnt and fucked.

(CLAIRE brings the pipe closer to SOPHIE's mouth. The lighter is ready in CLAIRE's other hand.)

SOPHIE

/I don't know what else there is to do, Kyle. You tell me.

(Beat.)

KYLE

Take a hit.

CLAIRE

You ready? Come on, come on.

(SOPHIE looks straight at KYLE.)

SOPHIE

Yeah. Only if big brother says it's okay?

KYLE

Fuck'f I care. You're all grown up.

CLAIRE

You're going to fucking love this -I'm so spun right now.

(SOPHIE hesitates just long enough for KYLE to notice.)

KYLE

Me too, baby.

(KYLE and CLAIRE kiss in what could only be described as a "disgusting display of uncomfortable affection". KYLE breaks away suddenly.)

KYLE

If you're gonna do it, do it! I know they cut your balls off and everything, but for fucks sake be a man about it for once!

(Beat.)

SOPHIE

Cheers. To you and Dad.

KYLE

Welcome home, kid.

(CLAIRE smiles and lights the bottom of the glass orb while holding the pipe up for SOPHIE. KYLE appears defeated as SOPHIE leans in towards the pipe.)

(Beat.)

(SOPHIE pulls away quickly and stands up.)

SOPHIE

You're an asshole.

KYLE

Like always.

(Beat.)

(KYLE and SOPHIE stare at each other for a moment.)

CLAIRE

Oh my god! I looove this fuckin' sooong!

(CLAIRE runs over to the shitty stereo and turns it up. She dances aggressively back towards SOPHIE. She yells over the music.)

CLAIRE

So Ms. Sophie, you gonna get spun or what?

KYLE

Claire, turn that shit down!

(CLAIRE ignores him and begins to dance again, KYLE turns off the music. He sits at the table - effected by all the drugs.)

CLAIRE

You're such an old man. You gonna hit this shit or what, sister?

SOPHIE

Oh, ah no. No, no. I, uh. It's already getting late. I'll have another drink -I got this singing audition thing tomorrow, need to be awake, /and alert and everything.

*

CLAIRE

/That's what this fuckin' glass is good for yo! Shit. Look at me. Do I look awake and alert? I could sing the shit out'a some shit.

*

SOPHIE

I believe it.

(CLAIRE laughs.)

CLAIRE

Aaaaah look at your dumbass brother! He's fucking so tweaked. Holy shit. Kyle. Kyle! What the fuck, man?

KYLE

Give me a second.

SOPHIE

You sick?

KYLE

I mean, not. Not really. Just fuckin'.

(KYLE exhales loudly. His eyes are like saucers.)

CLAIRE

So, what's. -What's it for, like, reality television or some shit? You gonna live in a house with a bunch of Mexicans /or whatever?

*

*

SOPHIE

/No, no. Not at all. No, nothing like that. It's just a singing thing. I mean it's basically like ah, I don't know. But it's not for Television or anything. Not a big deal.

*

*

CLAIRE

Of course it is. I wish I could sing.

*

SOPHIE

I'm sure you can sing something.

KYLE

She really can't.

Thanks. CLAIRE

Well? KYLE

Please sing for us! CLAIRE

(SOPHIE laughs.)

Seriously! You can think of it as practice or whatever. You gotta practice before the audition anyway, right? CLAIRE

*

...Yeah. I. Well, I guess so. SOPHIE

I fuckin' love you! So let's see it then. CLAIRE

Uh, I'm not gonna just, sing. Here. SOPHIE

Why not - You're so perfect. KYLE

Come on, Please? CLAIRE

*

How bout this. You do your little drag show for us. And I'll go stay at your place for a while. KYLE

*

(Beat.)

Really? SOPHIE

KYLE

Yeah. I mean, a change might be good. Not for like a month, or forever or anything. But yeah, a week, or whatever.

CLAIRE

Better not be for a month.

SOPHIE

A week? Yeah, okay. I'll do it.

*

CLAIRE

Seriously.

(SOPHIE looks at KYLE. He nods.)

SOPHIE

Yeah.

CLAIRE

Hell yeah. Okay. You stand over there, and me and fuckface will sit at the table. And like, judge you. Oh. I don't mean like that. Like judgey or, you know. But still do it like you're really trying out and everything.

SOPHIE

Yeah. Just. Give me a second. Okay, um...

(SOPHIE stands in front of KYLE and CLAIRE. She takes a deep breath.)

(The lights shift a small amount.)

SOPHIE

God. I feel so stupid. Okay. Hello. My name is Sophie, and I will be.

*

(CLAIRE laughs.)

KYLE

Next!

(CLAIRE hits KYLE on the arm.)

CLAIRE

No, sorry. Don't listen to him. Go on. We want to hear you.

SOPHIE

One week.

*

KYLE

I said I would.

(Beat.)

(SOPHIE begins to sing. Throughout, CLAIRE listens closely, while it appears that KYLE is hardly paying any attention.)

SOPHIE

SONG

SONG

SONG

(After the verse, SOPHIE pauses.)

(KYLE takes a hit from the pipe.)

KYLE

You know, Sis. I'm not so sure a week is going to do me much good.

SOPHIE

You /said you.

KYLE

/It's not so bad here, is it Claire?

CLAIRE

This trailer's a piece of shit.

KYLE

Yeah but see, Sophie, she thinks she can save me. Don't you?

(SOPHIE stares.)

CLAIRE

Fuck that! He doesn't need your help. You don't need help. Do you, baby? You got me already.

KYLE

How bout this.

(KYLE gets up from the table and stands in a more dominate position in the room.)

KYLE

Maybe. How 'bout take off your shirt and sing again.

SOPHIE

Fuck you.

KYLE

Just take off your shirt and I'll *happily* stay with you for a fuckin' month. I promise - promise.

(Determined, SOPHIE quickly removes her shirt and throws it at KYLE's feet. Without looking at either KYLE or CLAIRE, she sings again.)

SOPHIE

SONG
SONG
SONG

(CLAIRE claps.)

CLAIRE

You sound awesome. That was fun, but I need another drink!

(CLAIRE starts to get up.)

KYLE

No. I'm not satisfied.

SOPHIE

Kyle.

KYLE

Take off your jeans.

CLAIRE

What the /fuck?

SOPHIE

/I'm not going to do this shit /anymore.

KYLE

/Yeah, you are.

(SOPHIE reaches for her shirt. Before she can grab it, KYLE steps on it.)

(Beat.)

KYLE

Do you really want to *save* me?

SOPHIE

This isn't fair.

(KYLE shrugs.)

(Angry now, SOPHIE takes off her jeans. She does her best to cover herself a bit. With some effort she begins to sing again.)

SOPHIE

SONG/

(One line into the verse, KYLE cuts her off.)

KYLE

No, no, no! You know what? Fuck this. It's still not right - You're going to have to lose somethin' else for me to just leave everything I've ever known. Leave the trailer, leave my sweet little Claire. It's /a pretty big deal.

CLAIRE

/Jesus. You're fucked in the head. Sophie, hey, just forget it. I got another shirt in my bag that you /can borrow.

KYLE

/Sit down, Claire! This is family shit.

(CLAIRE, shocked at KYLE's demand, sits down quickly.)

CLAIRE

Yeah, I know, cause that's your fucking little sister!

SOPHIE

You don't have to do this.

KYLE

Neither do you.

SOPHIE

Can't we just leave? Burn it all to the ground?

KYLE

You don't even have to sing. Just take off your bra.

(SOPHIE shakes her head.)

KYLE

So you're not going to help me? You're gonna just leave me here to die?

SOPHIE

This isn't going to fix anything.

KYLE

How 'bout a little sacrifice for your older brother?

SOPHIE

I'm sorry all that happened, Kyle. I /really am, but I can't.

KYLE

/Oh, great, you're sorry. That makes everything all better, doesn't it? I didn't even want you to come back! I already got you out of this shit hole.

SOPHIE

I had to. I couldn't leave you here like this!

KYLE

You weren't supposed to see any of it. You got saved. -Supposed to have a good life. Grow up, get married, to a woman. Have kids and shit!

SOPHIE

You can have all that.

KYLE

It doesn't work that way, Ty. Look at me! I'm a piece of shit junky - you see that now? I'm just like the old man. There's nothing left of me to save.

SOPHIE

He died, Kyle, he ODeD, right here, on that same fucking couch. He's been dead for fifteen years -Don't you see? He was, when he died we were set free. It was an accident, an incredible accident -it gave us both a chance, Kyle!

KYLE

That *accident* set you free. It gave you a chance -Someone has to pay for all that old shit. It doesn't just go away.

SOPHIE

But why?

KYLE

Because it wasn't an accident!

(Beat.)

SOPHIE

Oh.

(Beat.)

KYLE

I'm sorry. I can't do this.

(KYLE heads towards the screen door.)

KYLE

You have to save yourself this time.

(KYLE exits.)

(SOPHIE puts on her jeans and picks up her shirt. She then looks at CLAIRE, who is still in a stunned silence.)

(SOPHIE watches as CLAIRE picks up the meth pipe and inspects it with disdain.)

(It looks as if CLAIRE may smash the pipe on the ground, but instead she flicks the lighter and takes another long hit.)

(Lights shift as the glowing orb dances.)

SCENE 6.

(Morning in the double-wide.)

(SOPHIE is sitting on the couch with a blanket wrapped around her. TYSEN sits quietly on the couch next to her. He's almost invisible throughout the majority of the scene.)

(KYLE enters through the screen door.)

You're up.

KYLE

Never went to sleep.

SOPHIE

Me either. Obviously.

KYLE

(Beat.)

Claire left?

KYLE

Yeah.

SOPHIE

She'll be back.

KYLE

SOPHIE

I'm sure.

KYLE

I know she's really... but she's pretty much all I got.

SOPHIE

You have me.

KYLE

We both know that's not true. Anyway. You should probably go, huh? Get to your thing.

SOPHIE

Yeah, I guess I should.

*

(Beat.)

KYLE

Don't blame yourself. I was dead before all of this, probably even before Dad - The only way to get you out of this life was to put it all on me. Fuck, all I ever wanted was for Mom to come save us, take us outa here.

SOPHIE

But, but you knew that would never happen. Even back then.

KYLE

Yeah.

SOPHIE

I'm scared, Kyle.

KYLE

Me too.

SOPHIE

You're my brother. Nothing changes that. I love you, fer saving me, fer giving me a chance. I'd be dead by now. For sure, the old man would have beat me to death, or those kids would of chased me down, hung me on a fence post, you changed everything.

(Beat.)

(SOPHIE walks to her purse and pulls the old photograph out. She hands it to KYLE. He smiles.)

SOPHIE

It took me a while, but I eventually figured out that this wasn't mom. I assume you always knew.

KYLE

Yeah. I was gonna tell you, but figured we really needed it.

SOPHIE

Well. It's yours again. But you better wash your hands first.

(They smile sadly at each other.)

KYLE

I'm sorry I've always been so shit to you.

SOPHIE

It's okay.

KYLE

I just need to believe I did at least one good thing in my life.

SOPHIE

You did, Kyle.

(Beat.)

SOPHIE

It's still just you and me.

KYLE

Like always.

SOPHIE

Like always.

(SOPHIE hugs KYLE. He doesn't respond. SOPHIE exits with her belongings.)

(KYLE stands still for a moment. He quickly walks to his metal tin and snatches it up. He stares at it.)

(The lights shift, leaving Kyle slightly illuminated upstage, and TYSEN lit warmly downstage.)

SCENE 7.

(The stage is split in two. It is a bright and warm day downstage, out front of the double-wide trailer. It is a cold night upstage where KYLE is on the couch with his metal tin.)

(TYSEN is looking at a pornographic magazine and singing quietly to himself.)

(YOUNG KYLE, from ACT 1 enters carrying an open can of pineapple, and two paper plates. In the back pocket of his jeans are two plastic forks.)

YOUNG KYLE

Hey fag, whatcha got there?

(TYSEN holds the magazine out to YOUNG KYLE.)

TYSEN

Found it in dad's room.

(YOUNG KYLE laughs.)

YOUNG KYLE

Ha. You stole Dad's porno. He's gonna be pissed though if he finds out.

TYSEN

What's it for?

YOUNG KYLE

For jerkin' it.

TYSEN

What?

YOUNG KYLE

Never mind, fucktard. You'll figure it out someday.

(Beat.)

TYSEN

I think she's pretty.

YOUNG KYLE

Jesus, Ty. What the fuck is wrong with you?

TYSEN

Nothing!

YOUNG KYLE

Hey, Tysen, come here.

TYSEN

You want to see?

YOUNG KYLE

I've seen it already.

TYSEN

Oh.

YOUNG KYLE

Here.

(KYLE hands a paper plate to TYSEN. TYSEN holds the paper plate while KYLE pours some pieces of pineapple on to the plate. KYLE pulls the plastic forks out of his pocket and hands one to TYSEN.)

TYSEN

Where'd you get it?

YOUNG KYLE

Doesn't matter.

TYSEN

Did Dad give it /to you?

KYLE

/Naw, not exactly. Don't fuss about it all -just eat it. You're hungry, /right?

TYSEN

/Yeah, /starvin'.

KYLE

/Okay, then shut up and eat.

(KYLE pours the rest of the can, significantly less than what he gave TYSEN, on to his own plate.)

(The brothers eat quietly for a moment.)

TYSEN

You see that?

KYLE

What?

TYSEN

It's snowing.

(Small snowflakes slowly begin to fall from above.. It is sparse, but noticeable.)

KYLE

Huh.

(The brothers watch the snow for a short time.)

(TYSEN places his empty plate on the ground, and holds out his fork to try and catch a snowflake. When he finally catches one, he places the fork in his mouth and lets the snow melt.)

(KYLE smiles and joins in the activity. There is a strange and rare peace.)

(After a while, KYLE picks up his plate of pineapple and pushes what's left onto TYSEN'S plate.)

(It continues to snow throughout the scene.)

YOUNG KYLE

Okay. Ty, Finish your pineapple.

TYSEN

But I already /finished all mine.

YOUNG KYLE

/Just eat it, okay. I don't want you eating stupid Bucket's food /any more.

TYSEN

/I only did it like, two times.

YOUNG KYLE

I don't, just, Tysen, just don't even...

(TYSEN finishes the pineapple.)

TYSEN

I like the snow better.

YOUNG KYLE

Ty, just listen. Okay. So... I know, I know that sometimes I'm kinda mean to you, or whatever, call you names and stuff.

TYSEN

And you punch me.

YOUNG KYLE

I know, I know. Just. -Thing is. I don't try to be mean to you. Not that I. I just, I'm trying to make you stronger. Or be more of a man or something.

(Beat.)

YOUNG KYLE

I don't mean any of it. You know that?

TYSEN

Yeah, I guess so. But, if that's what it takes, I don't even, I don't really want to be a man then.

YOUNG KYLE

Ha, okay, sure, but just remember, or I don't know. No matter what, you're always my brother. Even if Mom never comes to get us outa here, even if Dad goes totally psycho or... goes away... or whatever, you know. Is gone.

(Beat.)

YOUNG KYLE

I'm your big brother, and I won't let anyone fuck with you. Like ever.

TYSEN

Sure. Okay.

YOUNG KYLE

You gotta be ready for anything. Like anything. Yeah?... Come here.

(TYSEN approaches KYLE.)

YOUNG KYLE

God. Put the fuckin' plate down, idiot.

(TYSEN puts the plate on the ground and his fork in his pocket. KYLE grabs him and hugs him tighter and longer than ever before. When he finally lets TYSEN go...)

YOUNG KYLE

It's gonna get all kinds'a fucked up around here for a while. I just want you to know that I won't let you get stuck, or, you know, get hurt.

TYSEN

(inspecting his shoes)

Okay. Jeez.

(KYLE's demeanor shifts.)

YOUNG KYLE

Whatever Just so you know. That's all.

(KYLE begins to walk offstage.)

YOUNG KYLE

Anyway, you can go back to jerkin' it now.

TYSEN

I wasn't jerkin' it!

YOUNG KYLE

Yeah, ha. Okay then. It's probably the only normal thing you've ever done.

TYSEN

I'm normal.

YOUNG KYLE

No, Tysen, you're nowhere near normal. But, it's okay. Really. Don't worry about all that right now. You don't have to be normal.

(KYLE exits.)

(TYSEN takes out his fork and wipes it on his shirt. He begins to try and catch snowflakes.)

(Music fades up.)

(Lights slowly fade out.)

END PLAY