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Fadeaway

Leslie Eskeets

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FADEAWAY

by

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B.A., Theatre, Occidental College, 2007

DISSERTATION

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Requirements for the Degree of

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FADEAWAY

by

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ABSTRACT

This essay will explore questions related to the role of the supernatural in relation to Navajo identity, the role of magic realism within Navajo storytelling and discuss my approach to Dramatic Writing. I will analyze my play *Fadeaway*, a Navajo love tragedy that focuses on domestic violence, taboos and witchcraft within the Navajo Nation.

The Navajo Nation is located in the Northwest corner of New Mexico spilling across the state lines of Colorado, Utah and taking up one-fourth of Arizona. The outskirts of the Navajo Nation are known as the “checkerboard area”, patches of land are owned by State Government and the Navajo Nation. Gallup, commonly referred to as “The Heart of Indian Country”, is a town where domestic violence and alcoholism are prevalent. According to the Navajo Times, tribal police responded to 4,851 domestic violence calls in 2010, and these are only the cases reported. The Navajo Nation does not consider domestic violence to be a crime. This is a result of the way that privacy, violence, and authority are conceived of within Navajo culture. The historical implications are significant, including the history of displacement and exploitation of Navajo people. The impact of these factors has a profound effect on the way people report violence, and how stories are told to account for the full breadth of these tragedies.

How does one tell stories about traumatic events in the Navajo tradition? What is the role of the supernatural in these events? The first part of this essay will investigate the influences of Navajo storytelling and magic realism that are rooted in Navajo folklore and myths. The second part will place this storytelling in the context of trauma enacted in history, exploring how systemic poverty plays a role in domestic violence. Finally, this essay explores how these investigations impact the understanding of myself as a Navajo Writer and my developing approach to dramatic structure.

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Introduction

What does it mean to be a Native American writer? This is the overall question of this research and one I have found myself coming face to face with while in this program. I grew up on the outskirts of the Navajo Reservation in Gallup, New Mexico. I come from a broken home; as a small child I was a witness to domestic violence and alcoholism. My mother took my siblings and I away from the chaos and moved to the city of Albuquerque. I hardly spoke any English but soaked it up like a sponge. I am what is known as “Urban Native”; adjusted to life in the city but still longing to return home to the Reservation (often referred to as the ‘Rez’). My Mother tells me it’s because she buried my umbilical cord at my Grandma’s house, a part of me will be there forever.

I haven’t written anything involving Navajo identity until recently. To be honest, I’ve been avoiding it the way I’ve been trying to avoid the title of the “Native Writer” because with this comes a huge responsibility to represent my family and my people. Who am I to speak for a whole Nation about our beliefs and our stories? What do I have to offer the universe of storytelling and more specifically Navajo Storytelling?

Even though I avoided these questions my first two years, the supernatural world has had a heavy influence on my writing. My last play, *Half Empty*, was about a young girl named Alley Young who’s drinking problem causes her to spin out of control and fall into another dimension where a handsomely dangerous skeleton named Belvedere reigns. This play went through several revisions and was meant to follow the myth of Persephone and Hades as well as deal with themes of unconditional love, alcoholism, sibling rivalry and death. Needless to say, that was too much for one little play. Belvedere and The Chorus of Skeletons were supposed to symbolize addiction and the shenanigans

that often accompany being under the influence of booze. For all my strides to mold this play into what I wanted it to be, I now realize that my attempts were very selfish. I've been told before that we all bring our own baggage to our work and that was certainly the case with *Half Empty*.

My journey as a new playwright has led me to this point and I have come to believe that I need to give my voice to the Navajo people who feel they cannot or are too scared to tell their stories. Many Navajos do not favor discussing the events that have happened (and are happening now) on the Reservation, and this even includes myself. I notice that I get very uncomfortable when people ask me about life on the Rez. I attribute this to many people in the United States that associate Native Americans with alcoholism, suicide and domestic violence. While these are all stereotypes of Navajos, the increasing number of these statistics is heartbreaking.

As I take on the title of the "Native Writer" as part of my overall identity, I have come to realize that displacement figures largely into the construction of Navajo identity. The movement of Native people from their lands is one of the most important things that are constantly reproduced in Native performances. "Reservations were not only an attempt to separate Indians from the white settlements of the early United States, but also to impose European philosophies and world views [...] the most devastating effect was the colonial administration's belief that there could be a clear delineation between land and culture" (James 8).

Having grown up in the city, Navajo history and storytelling was not often (if at all) taught in the classroom. My mother encouraged my siblings and I to read books on the subject but when I was younger, I didn't understand the importance of learning about

my culture. Now that she has moved away, I am constantly calling her with questions on which books are the best for this research. While reading about the history of Reservations, I discovered that the Cherokee Nation went to the Supreme Court to fight for their land and won their case but President Andrew Jackson forced them off their land despite their efforts. Natives were herded like cattle to unknown lands. The colonial encounter is another feature of Navajo identity. Not only were Navajos displaced, but then they were institutionalized by the United States government. To this day, my Grandma refuses to talk about her time in boarding school. I have attempted to ask her but tears swelled up in her eyes and I am immediately reprimanded for being disrespectful.

I've recently watched a documentary called *Miss Navajo* (2007) which follows the contestants in 2005 as they go through the various trials to claim the title and crown as their own. One of these trials involves butchering a sheep and preparing a meal for the judges. Former Miss Navajo from 1977-78, Marilyn Help Hood, recalls her experience while she was a child in the boarding schools as a threat to losing her language and culture. She states:

They told us, they said, you can't speak the Navajo language you only have to talk English. And if we were caught talking Navajo they would actually make us wash out our mouths with soap or they would do it or sometimes we would have to scrub the floor with a toothbrush. A lot of it has to do with the boarding school where our traditional teachings were taken away. There are a lot of our people that do not want to teach their children because for fear that they might be punished for it too [...] A Language can be lost within 20 years. If a Language is lost, a culture can be lost.
(Miss Navajo)

After watching this documentary I had such an emotional response to the stories that each woman shared. I've always had a desire to relearn my language but now I feel that I need to in order to preserve my culture for future generations.

Many Native Writers write about the Reservation because Native identity is still largely affiliated with the connection to land, which is why displacement is such a traumatic feature. The Rez has become it's own character because of the struggles Natives have faced to re-claim it. "Many authors describe the landscape as beautiful and sacred, but the stories they tell aren't necessarily happy and serve as a powerful contrast to the background" (James 7). The works of Sherman Alexie are an excellent example of this:

Alexie's work explores the complexity of Indian identity and how it cannot be neatly divided into categories and framed in arbitrary boundaries, which the US government has always relied upon when dealing with Indian matters such as land rights and blood quantum. Alexie manipulates the very landscape that he creates in novels and poetry in order to get across how the 'reservations of the mind' is a dynamic terrain, not a place where characters only feel boxed in and helpless (James 4).

When I entered this program, I was asked if I had read any of Alexie's work, at the time I was only familiar with *Smoke Signals* (1998) which is based on his book *The Lone Ranger and Tonto Fistfight in Heaven*. Victor Joseph and Thomas Builds the Fire travel together to pick up the ashes of his father. During their journey it is revealed that Victor's Dad abandoned his family when Victor was ten years old. My Mother was a single parent for many years so this movie struck a nerve with me. In the end Thomas is asked to tell a story. He leaves the audience with this thought:

How do we forgive our fathers? Maybe in a dream. Do we forgive our fathers for leaving us too often, or forever, when we were little? Maybe for scaring us with unexpected rage, or making us nervous because there never seemed to be any rage there at all? Do we forgive our fathers for

marrying, or not marrying, our mothers? Or divorcing, or not divorcing, our mothers? And shall we forgive them for their excesses of warmth or coldness? Shall we forgive them for pushing, or leaning? For shutting doors or speaking through walls? For never speaking, or never being silent? Do we forgive our fathers in our age, or in theirs? Or in their deaths, saying it to them or not saying it. If we forgive our fathers, what is left?

(Smoked Signals)

My biological Father never came to visit us and refused to pay child support, I don't think he even knows I am trying to get my Masters degree. In *Fadeaway*, Jason Black's Father is also not in the picture and when he was all Jason can remember is him being violent towards his Mother. His unhappy childhood later affects his view of love and relationships.

Alexie's book, *Reservation Blues* also confronts many of these issues. A Native band leaves the Spokane Reservation in order to seek fame and fortune. However, this decision is greeted with a lot of animosity by fellow tribe members. The band departs for New York only to come face to face with racism and many other different hardships which make them return to the Rez in a matter of days. They are not welcomed back with opened arms which causes one of the band members to end his life.

Fadeaway addresses different views of the Rez; Jason feels that he is stuck, he can't leave because he thinks if he does the ghost of his sister will disappear. And leaving a place he's known his whole life scares him. On the other hand, his girlfriend, Kai Yazzie, can't wait to explore life outside the small town of Gallup. She lived in the city with her Mother, Sharon Yazzie, but after the death of her Grandpa she returned to help her Grandma cope. Grandma Yazzie has seen many things in her lifetime and will never leave the land and home she loves so much. Sharon also returns to the Rez after she graduates in order to help her people. However, because of her education many people

think that she is a snob. Their views on the Rez and of culture develop wedges between all of them. "Separation from culture, family and land doesn't necessarily occur from being off the reservation or from a lack of knowledge about tribal heritage; it can also happen within the boundaries of the reservation" (James 33).

This play presented many struggles because it is based on a family tragedy that occurred several years ago. On June 5, 2006 my cousin, Brooke Spencer was stabbed four times by her former boyfriend, Phillip Notah on the front porch steps of our Grandmother's house. Phillip was arrested hours later in his home after trying to end his own life. Brooke was air lifted to a hospital in Phoenix, where she died two days later. This terrible tragedy devastated my family and shocked the small community of Gallup. Again, I had to face the pressure of representing my family and the Navajo culture but also, the pressure of sharing my testimony of a traumatic event. In my first attempt to tell this story, I wrote it from Kai's perspective but this proved to be fruitless and trite. I did not want to write a "victim" play especially since the main character in *Half Empty* made herself into a victim and blamed her alcoholism on others rather than dealing with it. I would constantly lose the play after Kai gets killed, there was no ending. I wanted this play to be scary and a very real portrayal of things that happen in a domestic violent relationship.

As a child witnessing these sort of acts, I believed that's how love worked; I would fall in love, the guy would hit me and say awful things, leave then apologize and we would pretend like nothing happened. Years later, I found myself in such a relationship. I was engaged to a man that would belittle me and at times become physically violent. I never said anything to any of my family members or friends and the

abuse continued until one day I got the strength to end our relationship. This is not always the case for many women. I needed to dive deep back into those feelings when I was in such a relationship. But the harder challenge then became telling the story from Jason's point of view. Could an audience like the protagonist if he is violent towards women? For a long time, I didn't like Jason and this was clear in many previous drafts. I needed to put my feeling aside and focus on his story. Domestic violence awareness is something I hope this play will promote.

This essay tries to pull together the concepts of the Navajo Writer and Navajo identity to explain certain storytelling practices on the Rez. Like many other cultures, I was raised telling ghost stories, tall tales and Navajo mythologies. Too often, this was discounted as having less value. However, this essay is going to explore how using the supernatural serves as a way of testifying to the great difficulties and the traumatic events that Natives struggle with. This is how Native Writers, even when taken away from the Native land, learn to express the unique features of our identity and culture.

Magic in Storytelling

Navajos are believed to be very superstitious but are not comfortable discussing many of these superstitions. Bulow notes that “One of the criteria of folklore is that it exists in variations. This is true of all oral traditions. Different medicine men tell even the best-known stories each in his own way” (4). This opens up Navajo mythology to several different interpretations. These mythologies are intended to produce a Navajo Creation Story, but again, they are all significantly different. One scholar describes the fundamental differences between creation myths as an effect of improvisation: “Many [stories] began with the words, ‘In the beginning, when the world was new...’ Others started with, ‘At the time when men and animals were all the same and spoke the same language...’” (Newcomb xxii). In order to create something, one must have the power to evoke it as a speaker, a trait that is common in oral traditions all over the world. This, however, does not mean that similarities are not present. One thing that these adaptations have in common is the involvement of witchcraft. “[The] First Man and [The] First Woman began the practice of witchcraft according to the Navajo [Creation] story, though in those days it was only practiced against enemies of the people” (Bulow 45). Due to these roots in witchcraft, a large variety of taboos have been spread from generation to generation.

While the majority of taboos are considered to be common sense, they are also an attempt to give daily prescriptions for life and living to people. “Others are indications of the Navajo’s awe and respect for nature and natural phenomena. Some have their origins in the sacred myths, legends and tales that are part of the healing ceremonies” (Bulow 3). Together, these mythologies are ways for people to learn how to respect nature, to teach

one another to believe in the sanctity of the Earth and of the bodies that are connected to that Earth. The following are a few taboos that express these prescriptions:

Don't mention a dead person's name. The ghost will come visit you-- it will bother you.

Don't take things that belonged to a dead person. The bad spirits will get after you

Don't go into a graveyard or walk on a grave. The evil spirits will bother you (Bulow 46).

When I was sixteen, my Grandpa committed suicide and after the funeral, my Grandma collected all of his belongings and burned them. I didn't understand why but my Mother explained that it was necessary so his spirit could be at peace. Beliefs, such as these, have been passed down from Elders, mainly to terrify children into behaving but once an Elder is questioned about the origin of certain beliefs, the child (or adult) is immediately chastised and accused of being disrespectful. Thus, the use of the supernatural, and the fear inspired by the supernatural becomes a powerful teaching tool. This suggests that people learn best when they are inspired to learn – and fear, awe, and terror are inspirational.

Therefore:

The principle reason that so little is known of Navajo witchcraft is the extreme reluctance of the Indians to discuss the matter [...] On the one hand, if other Navajos learn that a certain man or woman has discussed the subject, that person is by that very fact open to suspicion of knowing too much, i.e. of being a witch (Kluckhohn 9).

This also suggests that Navajo culture encourages people to be skeptical of language and the way that language reports the truth. In other words, a person who claims to “know” a thing or how a thing came to be (i.e. in Creation myths), is assuming that all possibilities of the truth are already known. Navajo tradition, like many oral traditions express a profound distrust for this type of thinking. These traditions choose to remain agnostic about any “final version” of the truth.

Being a witch implies that one is not human, that they have special knowledge and that this knowledge is either dangerous to humans or comes from an act of being immoral. Being accused of witchcraft is not taken lightly among the Navajo people mainly due to witches being heavily associated with the idea of death and the supernatural, such as ghosts and skin-walkers. “The phobia of the dead is well-known, but the attitude toward death has hardly been analyzed” (Reichard 40). My Grandma is convinced that “the people on the top of the hill” are witches and when we drive by their house she ducks down in the car so they can’t see her. In *Fadeaway*, Grandma Yazzie has heard Jason and his family are witches when she questions him about it he is taken off guard.

Sharon: I’m trying to figure out what a person like you is doing with my daughter?

Jason: A person like me!?

Kai: Mom!

Grandma Yazzie: Are you a witch?

Kai: Grandma!

Jason: A what?!

Grandma Yazzie: Are you?!

Jason: No. I’m not a-- witch. Warlock?

Kai: Wizard.

Jason: Wizard?

Grandma Yazzie: Skinwalker.

Jason: What?! NO!

Grandma Yazzie: You have sweaty palms!

Jason: Huh!?

Grandma Yazzie: Means you have something to hide!

Sharon: Oh give it up Mom. This guy is too stupid to be a witch.

Kai: No he’s not! Wait--

Jason: I’m not a skinwalker. Is that what you meant by “a person like” me?!

(Eskeets 68)

The accusation of being a witch on the Rez is very serious. It’s incredible how gossip in a small town spreads like wildfire, which is a whole other essay topic in itself.

Witches are known for making potions out of people's skin, bones, nails and hair. Once they obtain any of these items from a victim, they have the ability to cast spells upon you. However, witches also believe that "pieces of a dead skin-walker are more powerful than pieces of an ordinary body" (Langley 47). Skin-walkers and Ghosts are very terrifying elements of Navajo Mythology. In most cases, a Skin-walker is a medicine man that (has joined the dark side) and has killed a member of his own family, usually a sibling or child. "Witchery is most often learned from a parent, a grandparent or a spouse, but a spouse also often remains ignorant that the partner is a Witch" (Klucholhn 15). Since witches roam around at night, it is important to keep regular appearances during the day. "But at night [he] transforms himself into the shape of an animal [...]" Only the most powerful Medicine Men have the knowledge to accomplish this shape shifting" (Langley 46). Note that all of these mythologies share a common trait: they all deal with manipulating the human body.

A skin-walker is the ultimate form of mimesis, the ability to take on someone else's form is not only horrific to the Navajos but to most of the general population. Cinema, particularly the slasher genre, has made millions off the threat of skin-walking; *Texas Chainsaw Massacre* (1974), *Invasion of the Body Snatchers* (1956), *Silence of the Lambs* (1991)... to name a few.

Students of folklore or early literature recognize in the slasher film the hallmarks of oral story: the free exchange of themes and motifs, the archetypal characters and situations, the accumulation of sequels, remakes, imitations. This is a field in which there is in some sense no original, no real or right text, but only variants; a world in which, therefore, the meaning of the individual example lies outside itself" (Clover 190).

The monsters in horror films mimic each other and in doing so point back to the original terror of not being who one really is. Connell notes that Freud believed that mimesis was

a way for the subconscious to cope with various forms of trauma. In this regard, things that copy or mimic the human body are ways for the human mind to process complex concepts like death. Therefore making the skin-walker the embodiment of death having the ability to traumatize others (the same as cinema monsters have done for years).

Michael Taussig, in his book *Mimesis and Alterity*, suggests that cultures tend to use mythology to create alternate versions of the real world so that they distance themselves from historical trauma. This is consistent with the Navajo desire to respect the human body and the sanctity of the relationship between knowing the world and respecting the world. The witch and the skin-walker, then, become creatures that can provide people with the distance necessary to tell a story that is too close to them. This distance also creates hope that the victim will overcome the monsters by either escaping or fighting. However, the victim will never be the same after this encounter.

In *Fadeaway*, Jason Black is haunted by the ghost of his dead sister, Emily. Her spirit is connected to a bracelet that Jason stole from her coffin before she was buried. As mentioned earlier, “Don’t take things that belonged to a dead person. The bad spirits will get after you” (Bulow 46). By keeping the bracelet Jason has unknowingly wished evil on himself. Emily slowly begins to unravel Jason’s sanity leading to horrific consequences. This theme has deep roots not only in Navajo mythology but also in magic realism.

The term *magic realism* refers to works of art that incorporate magic as a part of its constructed reality. Thus, this mode of expression bends the view of reality, allowing different forms of expression the opportunity to emerge as a perceived part of our social realities. Durix asserts that, “much use has been made of the term ‘magic realism’ to refer to texts which introduce an important ‘imaginary’ dimension into the ‘realistic’

evocations of the worlds” (80). In literature, the main pioneers of this literary mode include Gabriel Garcia Marquez, Toni Morrison, Alejandro Carpentier, and Salman Rushdie, “[whose] celebrated phrase ‘the empire writes back’ sums up this new-found assurance which is beginning to be rewarded by some of the most prestigious literary awards” (Durix 4). Rushdie’s phrase demonstrates the sense of rebellion many post-colonial writers take into their writing space.

Every artist writes partly out of a desire to complete himself/herself through the creation of his/her imagination and sometimes in order to foster changes in the society around. [...] Often their own past has been eclipsed or devalued and they need to reclaim their personal image of it before they can be comfortable in their fictional world.” (Durix 12)

Writers often use magic realism as a way to “reclaim” that image as well as to symbolize ideals or struggles of Indigenous cultures. For example, magic realism is “one of the best-known forms of [...] generic hybridity” (Durix 188). Hybridity is used in stories to express what occurs when two cultures collide. For example, in Navajo mythology, a skin-walker has the ability to wear another person’s skin. This implies that the person beneath the skin and the skin itself have merged as some form of hybridity. In literature, the “stealing of skin” can be used as a metaphor for the stealing of one’s identity. The skin-walker, while supernatural, is not supernatural in the context of most stories in which it is told. It serves to enhance the very real problems that occurred during the conquest of indigenous peoples. It is a complex metaphor to express the very real anxiety of stolen identities. Thus, the generations that follow will now be able to testify or tell a story about the way things were because the witness of that time has been traumatized by colonization.

In another sense, “Magic realism may owe as much to surrealism and to the European learned tradition than to ‘traditional cultures’. It may pander to the tastes of Westerners eager to read about quaint exotic worlds” (Durix 188). The skin-walker, then, becomes an exotic story, told by *primitive* beings. In this regard, literary criticism has been careful in not reproducing the ethnocentrism of the West, but rather, to elevate the status of these figures as complex beings that represent very powerful storytelling practices by people who are neither primitive nor incapable of understanding the condition of being in poverty or being disenfranchised. Thus, storytelling (a part of our literary consciousness), can use the supernatural as a valid and relevant component of very real, powerful, social, political, and cultural commentary. This positions the role of the author not only as a vessel for our social unconscious, but also as one who selects complex metaphors to represent complex problems. In some cases though, people disregard the threat of the monster but rather, they romanticize it. Suddenly, the skin-walker is a beautiful man that uncontrollably breaks free during the full moon. Some people refuse to open their eyes to see the real horror that lies beneath.

Again, Native American mythology follows very strict rules that warn people from dishonoring the dead. One cannot bear witness to traumatic events, such as those encountered during that native colonial encounters of the 15-21st centuries. The same anxieties of being colonized has been passed down through many generations creating an unwillingness to trust any form of government therefore the oral tradition has thrived. Natives feel that through storytelling, magic realism has become the only way to testify to past and present horrors.

The Elephant in the Room

When I started this research I did not want to talk about post-colonialism but it's important because it has affected Navajo storytelling. Post-colonial theory refers to "characteristics shared by countries which, at some point in their history, suffered the imposition of an alien presented as an absolute model" (Durix 2). What has Post-colonial theory done to/for the world? "Post colonial societies often pretended to be closer to the myths of foundation of their own societies, novels in the New Literatures often refer to these original events when gods or superhuman heroes infringed the most basic rules of incest" (Durix 132). This is a way of telling the story of being colonized. The "New Literatures" of many colonized places are ways of erasing the history of those being colonized. For example, Edward Said analyzed how Orientalism was used to Westernize Asia, nearly wiping out the indigenous cultures for a flawed ideal (Sered). Speaking Native language become intensively frowned upon resulting in punishment for doing so. "Undoubtedly the systems of government which varied from indirect rule to assimilation created specific local situations. However an examination of post-colonial literatures across the language divide reveals disturbing similarities in themes, structures and in attitudes to language." (Durix 1) However, many rebelled, refusing to learn the language that was being forced upon them. "In *Decolonising the Mind*, his 1986 'farewell to English', Ngũgĩ describes language as a way people have not only of describing the world, but also understand themselves" (Margulis). Colonizers have one thing on their agenda; erase this culture. The people that were able to hold on to their culture and survive the threat of colonialism represent a form of hybridity. This hybridity was able to, in a sense, give birth to magic realism.

Magical realism is illustrated in the inharmonious arenas of such opposites as urban and rural, and Western and indigenous. The plots of magical realist works involve issues of borders, mixing, and change. Authors establish these plots to reveal a crucial purpose of magical realism: a more deep and true reality than conventional realist techniques would illustrate (Moore).

Holding on to one's creation myth is very much like the metaphor of one who is abused, as though one must revert to an origin story to believe in the very basic elements of being in order to survive. Any act of violence serves this purpose. A person who is violated will revert to the basic acts of survival – breathing, feeling nostalgic about innocence. All of these are tools used to forget or avoid thinking about an act of violence. Colonization is an act of violence, and thus, can be seen as the social, political, and cultural circumstances that produce trauma in these societies.

The Navajos and the Jews have suffered a great deal. Both were taken from their homes and placed into camps where an unspeakable amount of torture took place. After this terrible ordeal, the survivors were sent home. Most people have a basic knowledge about the Long Walk and the Holocaust. They have been examined in various forms both in academic research and popular recollections. Several sources have chronicled the atrocities of the Long Walk to Bosque Redondo, which refers to the collective efforts to ethnically cleanse the Navajo nation in the mid 19th century. "It is very important to examine the history of the reservation system when discussing the real and imagined spaces because it continues to live on in the works of Native authors" (James 12). For instance, the book *A Navajo Legacy The Life and Teaching of John Holiday*, brings to light several different stories about the Navajo culture. In one section he describes different hardships his elders faced during the Long Walk, which is referred to as the "Fearing Time". His translator writes:

This collection of stories has been passed down from one generation to the next. One unique feature is that the stories are all connected as one family's experience. Each has differences, but they all share the common theme of perseverance through trials, dependence on the Holy Beings and ceremonies, and the necessity of being resourceful. The primary persons remain faithful in their trials and are rewarded by guardians or opportunities that lead to their freedom. Evil, on the other hand, is punished, so that good prevails- a common theme in many cultures' traditions that assures compliance and continuance (Holiday 175).

In each different story, John asserts that supernatural forces were at work during the Fearing Time. One story is about his Grandmother escaping from her captors and praying to different animal spirits to help her find safety. In each case, the spirit intervened and protected her. However, she wanted to be with her people because nearly all of them were being held in Fort Sumner. She ended up returning to them but she was happy.

Elders who chose to discuss the Fearing Time express:

During this time, bread was all they ate, and they were closely guarded by the calvary. Some of the elders were shot and killed because they were sick, old, and treated like dogs. Women were also mistreated, with many becoming pregnant with babies for the white men and Mexicans. [...] There were others taken elsewhere who never returned (Holiday 189).

John explains that when the people were released from Fort Sumner, they were warned never to return by the medicine men. It was a place of unspeakable pain and torture. Several years later, tribal officials returned and in doing so, John believes that is the cause of much corruption within the Navajo government. Whether or not this is true remains to be seen but one can argue that Navajos use magic realism in the retellings of the Long Walk as a way to seek comfort from the horrible truth that no one did come to save them. They were on their own. This can also be theorized as why domestic violence is on the rise in the Navajo Nation. Once someone has experienced abuse, they want it to stay in an exiled-like state rather than report it, especially since their ancestors never wanted to testify. The fear of being heard has been passed down through several

generations. This in many ways is connected to the power struggle encountered during the conquest of Native lands, first by Spaniards and other Europeans and then by Americans. In *Fadeaway*, the victim doesn't tell anyone that her boyfriend has become abusive because she feels ashamed and scared. She prefers to be silent about it and lock it away inside herself. But mainly, she is in disbelief that it happened.

The book *Testimony*, gives several different personal accounts about the suffering of the Jews while in concentration camps. In one account, an older woman recalls four chimneys catching on fire during the uprising of Auschwitz. However, it was dismissed as inaccurate due to historians revealed that only one chimney caught on fire, not four. This is storytelling because the number of chimneys burning is a detail of the emotional horrors this woman faced. During a car accident, it is hard to recall everything that has happened because both drivers are suffering from traumas' instant impact.

Fort Sumner and the Holocaust have become part of our historical consciousness. "[However] historical evidence to the event which constitutes the trauma may be abundant and documents in vast supply, the trauma- as a known event and not simply as an overwhelming shock- has not been truly witnessed yet, not been taken cognizance of" (Felman 57). But many survivors do not want to testify about the trauma they suffered.

[Witnesses of] trauma on some level prefer silence so as to protect themselves from the fear of being listened to- and of listening to themselves. That while silence is defeat, it serves them both as sanctuary and as a place of bondage. Silence for them a fated exile, yet also a home, a destination, and a binding oath. To not return from this silence is rule rather than exception (Felman 58).

For this reason, it is difficult to say that we actually have or for that matter can ever truly have a deep chronicle of major traumatic events. This becomes the fundamental qualities of trauma theory. When trauma, small or large, occurs, it changes the ability for one to

see, understand, and report what has occurred. This is what makes knowledge in relation to trauma particularly problematic. Trauma prevents one from speaking the truth to an issue. Hence, it is a strong way of looking at the contemporary problems that currently plague Navajo life and culture. They are, in effect, a form of trauma that has been perpetuated by a long line of historical traumas. This is where magic realism comes in to fill the gaps of memories. The truth of the event is too horrific to tell outright, magic realism serves as a medium between the truth and the supernatural therefore enabling a person to “tell the truth but tell it slant”.

Felman asserts that there are several types of testimony which depends on the witnesses “imperative to tell” or the “impossibility of telling”. The first refers to survivors that have a deep need to re-tell their story so much that they became connected to it for continuing survival. Since stories of the Long Walk have been passed down, retold and changed throughout the years, this type of testimony can be applied to Navajos that remain firm in the discontent with people of White or Mexican descent. Even though the animosity is justifiable, that amount of negative energy eats away at someone’s core, quite possibly making them turn towards alcohol or violence. The second refers to survivors that would prefer to remain silent and in doing so create their own prison in which memories of the event constantly torments the individual. This eventually will cause them to question their own reality. Some Natives like to be known as the “strong silent type”, however, if the stories of their ancestors remain untold, does that mean they lose part of their identity? Natives and storytelling go hand in hand. True, some stories are better left untold which is how magic realism helps the truth or untruth. Thus narratives, especially fictional ones, became a way to testify when there is not a witness.

Those narratives that employ the supernatural have a particularly strong way of providing testimony.

Conclusion

Working on this essay hasn't been the easiest experience and of course I am not going to have all the answers but this is what I have to add to the conversation. The oral tradition which is heavily observed by the Navajo people has been greatly affected by the trauma of post-colonialism. I will never know what it was like for Navajos before they were placed on the Rez but the trauma of being displaced allowed the creation of monsters such as skin-walkers, ghosts and witches which have influenced my writing. These supernatural figures enable the storyteller to be transgressive and recuperative, maintaining the same desire of wanting to return to the normal. But like the victim in popular horror films, normalcy will never again be achieved because their eyes have been opened to the disastrous ways of humankind which was claimed to be for the sake of progress.

I am still discovering what it means to be a Native Writer but I know that the supernatural world has played a huge role in grounding me in dramatic structure. My former ambivalence about being a Native Writer has made me come face to face with two different types of taboos. First, spiritual taboos, which in the beginning of this research, I wasn't sure why I couldn't ask the questions I needed to be answered. This presented conflicts in my desire to write and learn about death because it is such a forbidden topic within my culture. This is difficult because I have always been morbidly obsessed with skeletons, zombies and vampires in literature and cinema. I am actually in the middle of writing two different screenplays about the zombie apocalypse. I've been raised to believe that I am not supposed to ask these sorts of questions because it is disrespectful but the rebel in me cannot resist. The afterlife is the ultimate unknown and if I want to

write about a possible future with bodies at unrest or spirits around us that can communicate, who am I hurting? Is it truly disrespectful for me to be curious about these sorts of things?

Second, it has been very hard for me to write about violence against women and alcoholism. I've been called a timid writer because I have avoided these subjects. For example, in *Half Empty*, I tip toed around the real issues within the play and this was also obvious in the first couple of drafts of *Fadeaway*. I recall when I set out to write this play, it was about a girl who wakes up in a hospital and doesn't remember how she got there. In order to re-claim her identity, she had to find her soul. She is guided through a magical world with the help of a coyote, who is considered a prankster in Navajo mythology. The second draft took place in a circus with the girl (who at this point still didn't have a name) as the main attraction and the coyote as the Ring Master. Through many revisions and lots of wasted paper I have reached what it is now, a Navajo love tragedy about a guy who doesn't know how to love.

After the Reading Series in November, one of my friends who is half Navajo pulled me aside and asked me if I was ready for other Natives to be angry about what I wrote. She explained that she thought others would be very upset that the main character is abusive, drinks and suicidal. At first I was taken aback but when I thought about it, this is exactly the response I wanted. I suppose I could have written something more politically correct but then how is that giving my voice to people that have been silenced by violence? I don't want to be a politically correct writer; I want to be a controversial one.

Even though the Rez has become a symbol of oppression for Natives, it is always going to be the place I consider home. It's a place where magic is still part of everyday life. *Fadeaway* is a play about people who live in a world where folklore is alive and it is what I have to offer the world of Native storytelling. In the process of writing this play, I have learned so much about my abilities as a writer as well as my culture. I'm not sure if I would have ever learned about the things I have presented in this essay if it were not for this play. This essay has become my attempt to understand my cultural place as a writer.

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Fadeaway

A Play in Two Acts

By Zee Eskeets

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Characters:

JASON BLACK, 17- 18, a lonely boy that tries to fill the void with his idea of love but darkness constantly creeps in through the cracks.

KAI YAZZIE, 17- 18, Jason's girlfriend. Known as "One of a Kind". A star.

EMILY BLACK, ghost of Jason's younger sister. Use to getting what she wants.

SHARON YAZZIE, 40s, Kai's Mother. Well educated, strong Native American woman. After obtaining her PhD, she teaches at the UNM branch in Gallup, NM.

GRANDMA YAZZIE, 60s? (Unknown. She states when she was born, snow as on the ground) Kai's grandma. Feisty old lady. Loves margar-eats. Sometimes speaks in broken English as many Elders do on the Rez having never been properly "assimilated".

SHERMAN BEGAY, 40s, the Voice of the Navajo Nation. It's as if he is everyone's own private radio DJ.

Setting:

The Playground of Dreams in Gallup, NM (Act I: Scenes I, II, IV. Act II: Scenes I, II, IV and VI, VII)

Don Diego's New Mexican and American Foods in Gallup, NM (Act I: Scene III)

Grandma Yazzie's House, built by the Government in the 1970's, located a couple miles outside of Gallup, NM (Act II: Scene III and V)

Time:

The weird sense of time every small town has, slightly stuck in the past with the present steadily passing by.

Act I

Scene I: Boy Meets Girl (Mid Summer)

A playground containing a swing set with three swings, a wooden bench and a wooden jungle gym with castle tops sit center stage. A small basketball court next to it. Jason Black, 17, sits alone on a bench looking at the dimly lit playground. The sound of children's laughter echoes from the wood but the playground is empty. Jason draws on the bench with a Sharpie. Music from KTNN plays through a small radio beside him. He occasionally fiddles with the dials to get a clearer sound. He also listens to the cars drive by on I-40 wishing he could be a passenger. In the distance, a train engine screams as it gets closer and passes. He pushes a small stone around with this foot. After the amusement of the stone has past, he takes a silver bracelet with turquoise stones from his pocket. He turns it over in his hands.

Jason

This isn't a story that begins with "Once Upon a Time"... to be honest, I'm not even sure what kind of story it is. Love? Tragedy? Is there a difference? All I know is it keeps repeating in my head over and over and over n over. It's driving me insane. Was it a dream or one big cloudy memory? Filled with things that happened, didn't happen or could've. Maybe it started here. Maybe. Yes. About a year ago, with this, with her.

Lights come up on the playground. A girl runs through the wooden maze. Her long hair flies carefree in the wind. This is Emily Black. She runs from the castle to the swings and hops into a swing.

Jason

That's Emily. Em. My little sister. I would take her here when things at home-- I didn't want her to see those things. Not like I did. I put my hand over her eyes but she could still hear the sounds of Dad yelling and Mom crying. Every time Dad hit Mom, I saw white. Quick flashes of bright white... like lightening. The anger swelled up in my chest like a stricken tree being devoured by flames but my sister's tears within my hand would extinguish the fire. I would bring her here, to dream, to play, to escape.

Emily waves at Jason, he waves back.

Jason

Seeing stuff like that makes you numb to somethings. Things that made sense in the past suddenly become as distant as a fairy tale or myth. All the things I heard growing up about death and witches, skinwalkers, *chindis*¹, whatever. Superstitions passed down from Elders used to scare us kids. Can't mourn for more than four days, can't talk about the dead. Don't touch the dead, don't take items from the coffin or else you're wishing evil on yourself. You're jumping in the fire. What does that even mean?

He holds up the bracelet.

Jason

This is Em's... I bought it outside of Earls for her birthday. It's simple but it's all I could afford. Those bitches selling jewelry drive a hard bargain. I've never seen her smile like that, I mean it's just a stupid bracelet but it's like she won the Fire Rock jackpot or something. She never took it off until... but I couldn't let it be down there with her, with her body. I knew I shouldn't have, everything inside me was screaming NO but I couldn't help myself. At first I felt like that half naked gray guy from Lord of the Rings protecting his *precious*, I mean, I even started talking to the thing, the bracelet. I guess I did it cuz I'm not really sure how to handle death. I didn't cry- I just felt like something was missing. Having the bracelet helped. Then something happened... she came back to me.

As the song comes to an end, lights come up on a large desk with radio equipment that sits downstage left. The

¹ Ghosts

Radio Announcer, Sherman Begay adjusts his large headphones as he prepares to go back on the air. He takes a sip from his water bottle. The song ends.

Sherman

Ya'at'eeh², this is Sherman Begay and you are listening to KTNN, A.M Six-Sixty, the Voice of the Navajo Nation. This afternoon at Ellis Tanner, the former Miss Navajo Nation, Radmilla Cody will be signing her new CD and the line is already down the road. Other than that traffic is looking really good, except the road closure on Aztec between 6th and 8th street. And now for the weather. It looks like another beautiful day in the Navajo Nation, nothing but Clear Blue Skies. Take it away George Strait³!

The sound of a steal guitars blares over the radio. Lights on Sherman fade.

Emily

Can you push me? Pleeaaaaaassse!?

Jason

How many times have I told you, you need to jump off the ground then kick your legs!?

Emily

I'm too small!

Jason

No you're not! Here, I'll show you. Again.

Emily

Yay!

Jason hops on the swing and demonstrates the proper kick off technique. They swing but Emily is still having some difficulties.

Emily

You're going higher than me!

Jason

² Hello

³ George Strait. "Blue Clear Sky." *Blue Clear Sky*. MCA, 1996.

Cuz you're not kickin' your legs enough. You have to kick'em! Like this.

Emily gets defeated then stops.

Emily
This sucks. New game! HIDE AND SEEK!!

Emily runs back towards the castle.

Jason
But you can turn invisible!

Emily
THAT'S CUZ I'M A SUPER HERO!

Emily disappears into the castle.

Jason
That's cheating!

Emily
(From the Castle)
Count to ten then come find me!

Jason
Not fair! (Sigh) Fine.

Jason covers his eyes and begins to count to ten. Kai Yazzie, 17, walks into the playground, her eyes immediately fall upon Jason sitting on the swing.

Jason
Ten! OK, ready or not here I--!

Jason jumps off his swing and almost runs into Kai. He's startled then freezes.

Jason
How long have you been standing there?

Kai
Not long.

Jason

See anything unusual?

Kai

Besides you playing hide and go seek by yourself? No. No, not really.

Jason

I wasn't playing with myself. Wait-- that came out wrong.

Kai

Sure it did.

Jason

I wasn't.

Kai

Uh huh.

Jason

I wasn't!

Kai

Not judging. I didn't know anyone was here. Looked empty when I drove up.

*Kai sits in a swing one away from
Jason.*

Jason

Have we met?

Kai

Um...?

Jason

I feel like I've met you somewhere but you don't look like you're from here.

Kai

I am. Been living in Albuquerque with my Mom for the past few years.

Jason

Oh, an urban Native.

Kai

Guess you could say that. Usually spend Summers here but I'm moving back in a couple of weeks. (A beat) This place still looks the same, I remember playing here a couple of times.

Jason

So besides the playground, what else brings you back to "The Heart of Indian Country"?

Kai

Funeral. (A long beat) My grandpa--

Tears suddenly form in Kai's eyes and fall onto her cheeks. Jason doesn't know how to respond but can't seem to take his eyes off her. She wipes the tears away with her sleeve.

Kai

I'm sorry. I- I don't normally cry in front of strangers, or at all really.

Jason

That why you're moving back?

Kai

Mom doesn't think my Grandma should be alone. And I agree.

Jason

She's just gonna uproot you like that? From school and friends?

Kai

Yeah. She can't move back till she's done with school but I don't have a lot of friends or anything. Plus it's Summer so I'll be matriculating at Gallup High as a Senior transfer in the Fall.

Jason

Matriculate?

Kai

Yeah, it means--

Jason

I know what it means.

Kai
Sorry.

Jason
I'm gonna be a Senior too.

Emily suddenly pops up in the castle.

Emily
What's taking so long?!

Jason
SHH!

Kai
I--? Didn't say anything...

Emily
Who's this?

Jason
Sorry. What were you saying?

Kai
Nothing.

Jason
Before the nothing.

Emily
Oh so now you're ignoring me?!

Kai
I don't remember--

Emily
FINE! I don't want to play anymore either!

Emily disappears again.

Kai
Oh! I'm thinking about trying out for the team. My Mom really wants me to.

Jason
Team?

Kai
Basketball.

Jason
Oh? You play?

Kai
Yeah. I wasn't on any team in A.B.Q but my Mom wakes me up every morning to run a mile--

Jason
A mile! That's a bit extreme.

Kai
I don't mind. Just wish it wasn't so early.

Jason
How early?

Kai
6:00 AM.

Jason
You wake up at 6 o'clock every morning to run a mile?!

Kai
Yeah then dribbling exercises, lay ups, practice my free throw and then suicides... I hate that word.

Jason
You need to tell your Mom to chill out. She sounds nuts.

Kai
She pushes me pretty hard.

Jason
Bet you're pretty good then.

Kai
You could say that.

Jason
I was on the Boys team last year for awhile. I only practiced after school though. We should play sometime.

Kai
Sometime.

And let me guess, you're smart too.

My G.P.A suggests so.

So you're beautiful, smart and play basketball-- wait, what's your name?

Kai.

Kai. You might be the perfect woman.

Hardly.

You're even a pretty crier.

Kai looks puzzled.

Some people look real ugly when they cry.

Well I guess that's a relief.

Suppose to be a compliment.

Got it. Thanks. You didn't tell me your name.

I know.

You gonna tell me?

No.

Kai

No?

Jason

Ten bucks says you wouldn't even remember it when school starts.

Kai

Probably not.

Jason

Wow. You could've at least lied to me.

Kai

What for? I might never see you again.

Jason

You know how small this place is?

Kai

Yes.

Jason

People already know about this conversation.

Kai

The other day, I took my Grandma to Albertson's for a sack of potatoes and we were there for three hours! She had to talk to everyone in the aisles! Believe me I'm aware of how small this place is.

Jason

Well let's just leave it at this-- people like you aren't friends with people like me.

Kai

Who said I wanted to be your friend?

Jason

My point exactly.

Kai

Look, I came here for some peace and quiet but obviously I'm not going to get that so I'll just--

Jason

Jason! My name is Jason.

Kai
Now was that so hard?

Jason
...No...

Kai
So why can't people like you be friends with people like me?

Jason
You know... people with a perfect life.

Kai
My life isn't perfect.

Jason
Sure sounds like it.

Kai
You don't know anything about me.

Jason
Bet you even have a white picket fence like those *biligaanas*⁴.

Kai
My Dad left my Mom--

Jason
So did my Dad--!

Kai
We live in a piece of shit apartment--!

Jason
I live in a fucked up trailer--!

Kai
My Dad's getting remarried--!

Jason
I don't even know where mine is--!

Kai

⁴ White people

AND! He has a baby on the way--!

Jason
OH YEAH?! I buried my sister last week!

A sudden pause.

Kai
Oh my god. (A beat) Is that true?

Jason
I--?

*Stunned, he sits in the swing next to Kai.
She touches his hand. Emily watches them from the castle.*

Kai
I am so sorry for your loss.

Jason
I didn't mean... that wasn't what I meant to say--

Kai
I know. You don't want to talk about it but it's all you can think about. How did she--?

Jason
Pneumonia. (A long beat) It was raining and we came here. She used to love the way the rain made the dirt smell. God, my Mom got so mad at us. "You're bringing in the mud!" That's all she cared about, the damn mud. Then Em got sick and it kept getting worse. My Mom blamed me. "You shouldn't've been playing in the rain! You should've brought her home! You were suppose to protect her! You should've done this! You shouldn't've done that!" I actually haven't seen my Mom since the funeral, pretty sure she's off drinking somewhere in the hills.

Kai
It wasn't your fault.

Jason
Yes it is. I'm the older brother! I SHOULD HAVE KNOWN BETTER! We didn't even have jackets! How could I be so STUPID!?

Kai

People get sick.

Jason

Easy for you to say, you're grandpa was old. Old people are suppose to die! It's natural.

Kai

My grandpa shot himself! There's nothing natural about that! He was like a father to me and now he's gone. I get that you're angry, hurt and confused because I'm all that too. But you DO NOT have any right to take that out on me.

Jason

I'm sorry.

Kai

(A beat) You know, sometimes I feel guilt too... last time I visited my Grandparents, I was sitting on the couch and my Grandpa Joe walked into the living room and I thought, what would happen if my Grandpa died, it was just for a second, then a few weeks later we got that call... I never should have let that thought cross my mind. My thinking it, made it happen.

Jason

What? Kai, there's no way that's possible.

Kai

I wished evil on my family.

Jason

Come on, that shit's not true.

Kai

Maybe it is... maybe it isn't.

Jason

Your Grandpa's death wasn't your fault.

Kai

If you say so.

Jason

I say so.

Kai
This whole thing has sort of made me feel numb.

Jason
The sun is setting.

Kai
So it is.

Jason
Kai...

Kai
Yeah?

Jason
I'm lonely, I'm really lonely.

Kai
Me too.

*He reaches out and touches her hand.
She looks at it then takes his hand in
hers.*

Jason
Do you want to take a walk?

(A beat.)

Kai
Ok.

*Jason and Kai exit the playground hand
and hand. Lights come back up on
Sherman.*

Sherman
Once again, this is KTNN A.M Six-Sixty and this beautiful
voice belongs to none other than Sherman Begay. I'm going
to slow it down for all you lovers out there, the old, the
new and the "please get out of my life already".

Emily comes out of the castle.

Emily
Ok! I'm done being mad at you... Jason?

*She suddenly realizes no one is there.
Sadness overwhelms her.*

Sherman

But mainly, this song is dedicated to the lovers that are right in front of each other and haven't realized it yet. Yes, ladies, I am a Romantic. And single, aaayyy⁵. This song always reminds me of my High School Sweetheart... we were young and full of hope and unaware that it wouldn't last. I was crazy for loving her.

Patsy Cline's "Crazy"⁶ plays on the radio as Sherman Begay sits back and thinks about his first love. Emily slowly returns to the castle and disappears. Sherman sighs then puts his feet up. The song plays through the black out and into the next scene.

⁵ Navajo slang for Just Kidding. Pronounced "aaaaaa".

⁶ Patsy Cline. "Crazy." *Patsy Cline Showcase*. Decca Records, 1961.

Act I

Scene II: Play Me (Months Later)

Lights come up on Jason sitting on the bench. The song fades. The playground is dimly lit.

Jason

Imma let you in on something... guys don't really talk about love or shit like that, especially not to other guys. We usually talk about how much we want to fuck them-- girls... or how hot she looked that day or how we "accidentally" grazed her tit. But when a guy falls in love... it's intense. My Dad never really talked to me about this sort of stuff, I'm not sure if he loved my mom. So I guess I never really believed in love. Sure, I've dated... there was Shelly, Shandiin, April, Courtney, Raelynn, Tanya, Trisha, Tisha, Tessa... I lost it to Tessa Tsosie when I was fifteen in her Dad's Pick-Up parked somewhere off Superman Canyon Road. That's where everyone goes to drink, park their cars and open a Budweiser while taking shots of Schnapps. My Dad use to take me over there to collect cans whenever we were down on money. Yeah, real "romantic" place to cash in your v-card. But I'm not one of those save it for a rainy day sort of guys. Always thought it was suppose to be magical, like a gnome was suppose to pop out of her vag and grant me three wishes. Anyway, after that I fucked around for a bit. Nothing else to do besides drink and hang out at the Wal-Mart. So when I met Kai it was like she brought me back to life. After our walk, she kissed me, I saw those same flashes of light but there wasn't pain in my chest it was... I'm not even sure, it was like I was breathing for the first time. She makes me feel all *somehow*. I started re-routing myself to see her at school, we'd make out during the lunch period and sometimes she'd sneak out to see me. But I didn't realize I had left someone behind. It's strange how quickly we forget. A person can be part of our daily routines but when they die... we adjust into acting like they were never there.

He takes out the bracelet. He turns it around in his hands for a minute then heads toward the playground and begins to look for Emily.

Jason
Emily! (A beat) Emily where are you? (A beat) Em?

Emily appears in the shadows.

Jason
Emily, there you are! I've been looking for you.

Emily
Have you?

Jason
Yes silly, come on.

Jason grabs her hand and tries to lead her to the swings, she doesn't move.

Emily
Where have you been?

Jason
I'm sorry, school started and I've been busy.

Emily
Busy with that girl.

Jason
Her name is Kai.

Emily
I don't care about her name. Does she know about me?

Jason
Not really.

Emily
Cause you're ashamed of me.

Jason
Stop it.

Emily
Then why not?

Jason
Maybe cuz I wanted you to meet her by yourself, I dunno.

Emily

I've seen her. I don't want to meet her.

Jason

I figured. She's meeting me here, soon.

Emily

What's happening to us?

Jason

Nothing.

Emily

I'm dead, I'm not stupid.

Jason

What do you want from me, huh? I said I've been busy, fuck! Besides it's not like you ghosts have a busy schedule or anything.

Emily

Fuck you!

*She pushes him and tries to runaway
from him. He follows her.*

Jason

Em, come on! I'm sorry. Don't be like this!

Emily

I hate you!

Jason

I met someone, can't you just be happy for me?

Emily

You're in love with her.

Jason

Not exactly. Maybe. So what?!

Emily

You don't love me anymore.

Jason

You're my little sister of course I love you.

Emily

It's not fair! I'm getting replaced and I have to watch you fall in love with someone and know that's never going to happen to me! I'm never going to grow up. Be loved.

Jason

Don't cry.

Emily

I'm stuck here. I'm alone.

Jason

Don't say that.

Emily

You made me *this* way.

Jason

No!

Emily

YOU DID THIS TO ME.

Jason

Emily stop!

*She pushes him with force and
knocks him over. Jason is stunned.*

Emily

WHY DID YOU DO THIS TO ME!

Jason

I swear, I didn't do anything. But you came back to me. I can't live without you!

Emily

TELL ME HOW YOU DID THIS.

Jason

I told you... I don't know.

Emily

You're selfish.

Jason

Yes.

Emily
Then... promise me you will never leave.

Jason
You can't ask me that.

Emily
You owe it to me.

Jason
Emily...

Emily
If you leave, I will go away and never come back.

Jason
You wouldn't.

Emily
Wouldn't I? You don't care.

Jason
Yes I do!

Emily
Then prove it.

Jason
All I wanted was for us to be happy. And Kai is apart of me now and I thought that maybe the three of us... maybe we could be--

Emily
A family.

Jason
Yes. I mean, after everything we've been through, wouldn't it be nice to be happy?

Emily
Maybe we don't deserve to be happy.

Jason
Everybody does.

Emily

A real happy ending.

Jason

Yeah you, me and Kai. Like Luke, Leia and Han.

Emily

Luke was never in love with Han.

Jason

Huh?

Emily

Obviously, I'm Leia in this situation.

Jason

No. I'm Han- wait, I'm mixed up. Point is, we're a team.
One awesome unit.

Emily

You really love her?

Jason

Yeah. I do.

Emily

Have you told her yet?

Jason

No... I probably should tell her about you first.

Emily

Don't.

Jason

Why?

Emily

Because I said so.

Jason

Fine.

*Kai enters the court with a basketball.
She dribbles the ball.*

Emily

She's here.

Jason
I have to go. I promise you we'll be happy one day.

Emily
Don't make promises you can't keep. I miss you, Jay.

Jason
I miss you too, Em.

Jason watches Emily disappear into the castle. Kai starts to shoot a couple of baskets. Jason walks over to the court.

Kai
Playing in the castle?

Jason
Huh?

Kai
I saw you over there. What were you doing?

Jason
Nothing.

Kai
Really?

Jason
Fine. I was talking to someone.

Kai
Who? I didn't see anyone--?

Jason
My imaginary friend.

Kai
You weirdo.

She tosses the ball to him then gives him a quick kiss.

Jason
Where you going, Come back here.

They kiss again.

What's with the basketball? Jason

Try-outs are in a couple of Kai weeks. I haven't really been practicing since we started seeing each other.

Oh so it'll be my fault if you don't make the team. Jason

I'm making the team, just don't want to be a benchwarmer. Kai

Pretty sure of yourself there. Jason

You haven't seen me play yet. So, I have some news... Kai

Yeah? Jason

My mom's graduating. Kai

Okay. Jason

And she's having her Grad Party at Don Diegos. Kai

Don Diegos? That's weird. Jason

It's a thing with the Yazzie women. Anyway... I want you to meet her. My grandma too. Kai

Oh. Jason

Oh? Kai

Jason

I'm not the Meet Your Parents kinda guy.

Kai
Come on, please? I feel like I'm lying to them.

Jason
How?

Kai
All this sneaking around... it makes my stomach uneasy.

Jason
How about this... we'll play for it.

Kai
Like one on one?

Jason
Yeah. Make it, take it. All shots are one point. First one to ten wins. If you win I'll meet your Mom and Grandma, if I win I get to see you naked.

Kai
WHAT?

Jason
We haven't even had sex yet.

Kai
Yeah, so?

Jason
I'm dying over here.

Kai
I don't think I'm ready for that yet--

Jason
And I don't think I'm ready to meet your Mom and Grandma--

Kai
That's different--

Jason
How?

Kai

I don't know. It's not like we haven't done anything.

Jason
I can only be on first base for so long.

Kai
Can we please change the subject.

Jason
Fine. Whatever. OK, if I win, we get to make out.

Kai
Terms of the make out?

Jason
Tongue with a gradual slide into second base.

Kai
What exactly is second base?

Jason
Fooling around with tops off.

Kai
Top off ok but bra on.

Jason
Bra on really? (A beat) Fine.

They shake hands to seal the deal.

Kai
Who's ball is it first?

Jason
Well I don't know how you play but guys usually shoot for it.

Kai
Like a free throw?

Jason
Well, usually its a three pointer... but since you're a girl, you can have it.

Kai's jaw drops slightly. He passes the ball to her. She gribbles it behind her

back then between her legs. She stops and checks in the ball at half court.

Kai

Check.

Jason bounces the ball back to her. The lights change. Kai continues to play in the background as Jason addresses the audience.

Jason

This is probably going to make me sound like a jerk, but girls can't play basketball. Seriously. Have you seen the WNBA? Yeah. So it could possibly go one of three ways...

Scenario One: I win, because I'm awesome, resulting in me *finally* touching uncharted territory with the possibility of being the first to plant my flag-- you get it. OR!

Scenario Two: She wins, yeah right, and I have to Meet The Family and that could go one of two ways...

A. I am welcomed with open arms. They call me "son" or something weird like that. We hug. Everything is grand.

B. They completely hate me and run me off with shot guns and sticks in which case I am screwed. OR!

Scenario Three: By some miracle, we tie and we are forced to leave it up to the Coin Gods to make this MOMENTOUS decision!

Wait, what's the score?

Five, zip. What the fuck! Get your head back into the game Jason! Is a GIRL kicking MY ass?! I swear, this has never happened to me before. Am I still a man!? Of course I am a MAN! How does she keep scoring?! That's it. NO MORE MISTER NICE GUY! I will win this game for all my basketball brethren!! For the sake of MY MANHOOD!!!

The lights change as Jason re-joins the game. Kai drives the ball towards the hoop but Jason blocks and steals the ball. He takes it back to the three point line and drives hard toward the hoop but Kai steals the ball, before she can head back to the three point

line Jason pushes her. She falls to the ground. Jason takes the ball and makes a shot.

Kai

What the hell?!

Jason

What?

Kai

What do you mean *what*!? You totally pushed me!

Jason

You tripped.

Jason offers to help her up. She shoves his hand out of the way and stands up.

Kai

Not even! That shot doesn't count.

Jason

It doesn't?

Kai

What, is this your first time playing basketball?! No, that was a foul!

Jason

Oh so the **Princess** fell down and it's not fair? I could've called a couple of fouls on you but I didn't.

Kai

Fine. If you want to cheat--

Jason

Cheat?! Fine. Shot doesn't count.

Jason passes the ball to her, a little too rough. She returns it with the same force.

Kai

No. It counts. I'm still going to kick your ass.

The lights change and again, Kai plays in the background as Jason addresses the audience.

Jason

I checked in the ball. Maybe the shot didn't count but it's not my fault she tripped and I needed to win this game. It wasn't about the make out anymore. Screw that. There was no way I was getting beaten by a girl. No way. I caught up to her points. Suddenly, it was nine, eight... I needed two more points to win. My ball. I dribbled twice, faked a drive toward the hoop, Kai fell for it and I stepped back at the three and-- *(does the move)* SWISH. Perfect Fadeaway jump shot. It was like all the color drained from Kai's face. She couldn't believe it. She begged me to show her my move. Like I was gonna teach her, please. The score: nine, nine. I shot the ball but it hit the rim. SHIT! Kai got the rebound, dribbled for a couple of seconds and I'll be damned- she does my move! I yelled to distract but she shoots.

Swish. The lights change as Kai collects the ball.

Kai

That's game.

She tosses the ball to him.

Jason

Are you fuckin' kidding me!

Jason throws the ball as far as he can.

Kai

Hey!

Jason

How did you--?! You beat me with my move!

Kai

Maybe next time you won't talk so much crap. You're getting the ball by the way.

Jason

I can't believe you beat me.

Kai
I'll take that as a compliment.

Jason
My pride is crying somewhere.

Kai
How about we call it a tie--

Jason
And let the Coin Gods decide our fate?

Kai
What?

Jason
Nothing.

Kai
Meaning... we both get what we want.

Before Jason can respond, Kai grabs his t-shirt collar and pulls him in for a kiss. As they make out, Jason slides his hand under her shirt. She allows it. Lights begin to fade on them and come back up on Sherman Begay.

Sherman
Ah, young love. There's really nothing greater than that. You will never ever love anyone the same way you loved your First. It makes you do and say things you shouldn't. That love you shared is new and pure and exciting. But most of all... SCARY, why you ask? Don't all good things come to an end? It truly is a Ring of Fire. But enough from me, I'll let Johnny Cash tell you folks all about it.

"Ring of Fire" by Johnny Cash⁷ plays through the black out and into the next scene.

⁷ Johnny Cash. "Ring of Fire." *Ring of Fire: The Best of Johnny Cash*. Columbia Records, 1963

Act I

Scene III: Meet the Parents (Weeks Later)

Don Diego's New Mexican and American Foods in Gallup, New Mexico. Kai, her mother Sharon and Grandma Yazzie sit at a round table booth. Sharon is wearing her graduation cap. Grandma Yazzie raises her margarita glass.

Grandma Yazzie
Here's to Sharon! *Shi yaz*⁸, I am so proud of you.

Sharon
Thanks Mom. Cheers.

Sharon raises her glass as well.

Grandma Yazzie
And to Kai! For making the Lady Bengals team!

Sharon
*Is it*⁹?!?

Kai
I was gonna tell you tomorrow.

Sharon
Tomorrow?! Don't be ridiculous! Congratulations!! Told you all that practice would pay off.

Kai
Ha! Right. The 6 AM running was the trick.

Grandma Yazzie
No it wasn't! It was the corn pollen I gave you. It was taking all those *cheiis*¹⁰ off your eyes and doing your morning blessings!

Kai
What does that even mean?

⁸ My child

⁹ Expression Navajo use instead of saying, "Really"

¹⁰ Grandpas

Sharon

There's old ugly men sitting on your eyelids holding you down so you won't be productive.

Kai

What?

Sharon

It's like saying old age wants you to get old faster. Make sense?

Kai

Kinda.

Grandma Yazzie

Where's your *friend* at Kai?

Sharon

Friend?

Kai

She means my boyfriend.

Sharon

Boyfriend!

Grandma Yazzie

Yeah her *friend*. Do I need to clean out your ears? *Jaa'ee*¹¹!

Kai

Guess he's running late.

Sharon

You knew Kai had a boyfriend?

Grandma Yazzie

(Gasp) *Is it?*

Kai

Why is everyone so shocked? Am I hideous or something?

Sharon

All those times I called, you never said anything about--

Grandma Yazzie

¹¹ Expression for not listening. Translates to Has no ears. Pronounced "Jaw-E"

OH YEAH! I member. Jameson Benally--

Kai

That's not who I'm--

Sharon

Jameson?!

Grandma Yazzie

That's what I said!

Kai

I don't even know a Jameson--

Grandma Yazzie

Good family. They cheat at Song and Dance though. I should've won it!

Kai

Won what?

Grandma Yazzie

You know, the prize! Blue bird, shortening and cash money!

Kai

Holla!

Sharon

I can't believe you didn't tell me about Jameson.

Kai

That's not my boyfriend!

Grandma Yazzie

That's what YOU said.

Kai

Jason Black. I said *Jason Black*.

Grandma Yazzie

O000ooooh.

Kai

What?

Grandma Yazzie

Nothing.

Sharon

What?

Grandma Yazzie sucks the last sips of her margarita through her straw. She pretends not to hear them.

Sharon

MOM!

Grandma Yazzie

YAH! Leave me alone.

Sharon

What have you heard about this boy?

Kai

Oh come on. It's just gossip.

Sharon

You, hush. Mom, spill.

Grandma Yazzie hesitates for a moment, then like a high school girl suddenly gives into the temptation of gossip.

Grandma Yazzie

His Mom was always outside the Wal-greens asking for money to feed her kids. But I know she used it to buy liquor. One day she was out there crying. She was telling everyone her daughter died. I tried to ignore her but she grabbed my arm. I looked into her eyes. There was so much sadness in them... No Mom should know what it's like to lose a child. No Mom. So I gave her some money and I haven't seen her since.

Sharon

That's sad.

Kai

It was a week before Grandpa--

Sharon

What about *his* Dad?

Grandma Yazzie

I dunno. She's always with someone different.

Kai
Jason said he's not around. Kinda like my Dad, huh Mom?

Grandma Yazzie
Anyway! When I got home my arm was really hurt. Then I remembered that Edna, from the laundry, told me that the Blacks are witches.

Kai
WHAT!

Sharon
WITCHES!

Grandma Yazzie
SSSSSHHHHH!!!!

Sharon
Witches?

Grandma Yazzie
Yes. You know... Skinwalkers.

Kai
Ohmygod

Grandma Yazzie
I think she gave me Arthur Yazzie.

Kai
Grandma. You've had arthritis for years.

Grandma Yazzie
Yeah but she made it worse! That's why I saw a Medicine Man.

Kai
Mom, Jason is not a skinwalker.

Sharon
Have you met anyone in his family?

Kai
Well... no, but--

Grandma Yazzie

A-HA!

Kai

You guys are being crazy! My boyfriend isn't a boy witch--

Sharon

Wizard.

Kai

Whatever! He's a good guy. Look, I'm nervous too, ok? I want you guys to like him. Please, just give him a chance? Besides, we haven't seen you in awhile Mom. Let's forget about all this, it's not that big of a deal, right?

Sharon

It just makes me wonder what else you haven't told me.

Kai

Come on, Mom.

Grandma Yazzie

What are you all worried about anyway? It's not like she's going to get knocked up like you did.

Sharon

Mom !

Kai

Grandma!

Grandma Yazzie

Don't look at me, you're the one that did it.

Sharon

Are you having sex?!

Kai

Mom, people are staring...

Sharon

Are you!?

Kai

No, alright?! I'm still a card carrying virgin.

Grandma Yazzie

They give out cards now?

Kai

No Grandma, it's just an expression.

Sharon

I wasn't sure when this day was going to come... but I think we need to have the sex talk.

Kai

Oh my god.

Sharon

When two people-- feel deeply for each other-- they want to be closer than-- than when they hold hands...

Kai

Mom, please no.

Sharon

They want to give each other a special gift.

Grandma Yazzie

Why you telling her for? You didn't listen to me when I told you.

Sharon

Because I don't want her to make the same mistake I did and ruin her life.

Kai

I ruined your life?

Sharon

No! Of course not. I just meant you're too young. And YOU never gave ME the sex talk MOM!

Grandma Yazzie

Yes I did!

Sharon

All you said was, "Guys just want to get between your legs and leave you."

Jason enters and looks for their table.

Grandma Yazzie

Well... I was right, right? They either die on you or leave. They don't want romance. They don't respect you. They want you to have their babies then disappear.

Kai notices Jason.

Kai

Jason! Hi!

Jason

Hey. Sorry I'm late. Damn truck... it's all messed up.

Kai

Jason, this is my Grandma.

Grandma Yazzie

Ya'at'eeh!

*Grandma Yazzie shakes his hand,
roughly.*

Grandma Yazzie

Sweaty.

Jason

Sorry.

Kai

And this is my Mom, Sharon.

Sharon

You can call me Dr. Yazzie.

Jason

Seriously?

Kai elbows him.

Jason

I mean, yes, of course.

Sharon

Please, sit down.

*They all shift around the table to make
room. Jason sits. It's quiet.*

Sharon

So...

Jason

...?

Kai

...

Grandma Yazzie

Anyone want Guacamole?

Jason

I'm allergic.

Kai

Are you?

Jason

Yeah. I've told you this.

Kai

No you didn't.

Jason

Yes I did.

Sharon

How long have you guys been dating?

Jason

A couple of months, right?

Sharon

And you didn't know he was allergic to avocados?

Kai

Well?

Sharon

It seems like we're all just getting to know you.

Kai

Mom.

Jason

What do you mean?

Sharon

Kai's never mentioned you before.

Jason

Really?

Kai

(To Sharon) You were away at school. (To Jason) It's not like I was trying to keep you a secret or anything. (To everyone) I told Grandma. Right, Grandma?

Grandma Yazzie

I'm gonna get the combo plate.

Sharon

No sense in being unpleasant, I suppose. So Jason, what do you do?

Jason

I-- uh, go to school...?

Sharon

Are you a good student?

Jason

Well, I-- try. I mean, "D's get degrees", right?

Jason chuckles nervously, Kai quickly shakes her head as a signal to stop.

Kai

Mom, Jason is a good student, he just needs some tutoring is all, right?

Jason

I'm not a genius like Kai but I get by.

Sharon

Has Kai told you the good news?

Jason

News?

Sharon

She got on the basketball team...

Jason

You did?!

Kai

I was gonna tell you--

Jason
Congrats babe, that's awesome.

Sharon
Have you seen her play?

Jason
We actually played a couple of weeks ago. She's good.

Sharon
Yes. Talented and beautiful.

Jason
She is quite the package.

Sharon
If she keeps on top of her grades, she will no doubt be eligible for scholarships.

Jason
Yeah...?

Sharon
You know I didn't get any scholarships because I didn't go to college right after high school. Isn't that right, Mom?

Grandma Yazzie
Aoo'¹² not until after Kai was born.

Sharon
You see Jason, I let a guy distract me. He promised to give me everything I wanted.

Grandma Yazzie
But he lied.

Jason
Damn- I mean, dang. That sucks. I'm sorry.

Sharon
And I don't want that for Kai. She has dreams beyond Gallup. Tell him.

¹² Yes

Kai
It's just a dream...

Sharon
Tell him.

Kai
I've always wanted to see the ocean. And take my Grandma there one day. She's never seen it either.

Sharon
And what else?

Kai
Maybe one day play basketball out there.

Jason
Out there?

Sharon
Los Angeles. I don't want to see her get held back like me. So I'm trying to figure out what a person like you is doing with my daughter?

Jason
A person like me!?

Kai
Mom!

Grandma Yazzie
Are you a witch?

Kai
Grandma!

Jason
A what?!

Grandma Yazzie
Are you?!

Jason
No. I'm not a-- witch. Warlock?

Kai
Wizard.

Wizard?
Jason

Skinwalker.
Grandma Yazzie

What?! NO!
Jason

You have sweaty palms!
Grandma Yazzie

Huh!?
Jason

Means you have something to hide!
Grandma Yazzie

Oh give it up Mom. This guy is too stupid to be a witch.
Sharon

No he's not! Wait--
Kai

I'm not a skinwalker. Is that what you meant by "a person like" me?!
Jason

I meant a person with no future plans.
Sharon

I have plans!
Jason

Really? Fine, enlighten us.
Sharon

Maybe Kai doesn't go to Los Angeles.
Jason

Oh boy.
Grandma Yazzie

Doesn't go?
Sharon

Jason

Maybe.

Kai

Can you guys please stop talking about me like I'm not here?

Sharon

Is this what you want Kai?! To be stuck on the Rez with this guy??

Grandma Yazzie

Wait, what's wrong with the Rez?

Jason

Yeah! You came back.

Sharon

After I got an education.

Jason

Yeah so you could wave it in everyone's face and pretend you're better than us.

Sharon

I'm not pretending.

Grandma Yazzie

Even me?

Sharon

This isn't about you. Just drink your margarita.

Grandma Yazzie's jaw drops.

Kai

Mom, you're being rude.

Sharon

ME? You bring some stranger to my Graduation dinner--

Jason

I'm not a stranger.

Sharon

And expect me to give my stamp of approval--

Jason

I thought-- isn't that the point of this--? You wanted me to met your Mom and Grandma because we're in love? That's-- that's the next step right?

Kai

Jason... I'm not--

Grandma Yazzie

Oh shit.

Jason

You're not in love with me.

Kai

Well, no-- yes, not yet-- maybe?

Jason

I get it. (A beat) I have to go.

Kai

Jason, please don't go!

Jason

I've-- I've had my fill of embarrassment for one day-- so I'm just gonna-- it was-- nice(?) meeting you guys. Bye.

Jason leaves. Kai is about to follow him, when Sharon grabs her arm.

Sharon

Sit down. (A beat) Now.

She does. A pause.

Sharon

Well, that was interesting.

Kai

Mom, please--

Sharon

Kai, he's a total loser.

Kai

No he's not!

Sharon

We're thinking about the same guy, right? Oh you mean, this was a joke and I'm on TV!

Kai

Not funny.

Sharon

That boy doesn't have a future.

Kai

You only talked to him for five minutes.

Sharon

And that's all I needed to know he's a waste of your time. You didn't even know he was allergic to avocados!

Kai

That has nothing to do with it!

Sharon

You're not in love with him.

Kai

That doesn't excuse the fact that you were completely rude to him!

Sharon

Come on Mom help me out.

Grandma Yazzie

Oh I'm sorry, I'm too busy drinking my margar-eat.

Sharon

Fine. Kai, there's a saying in Navajo- how would I say it in English? When you're with someone, you need to be careful because what you're doing effects them. It effects their minds.

Kai

Huh?

Sharon

Mom, please?

Grandma Yazzie

You hurt their mind.

Kai looks confused.

Grandma Yazzie

When the heart gets involved it clouds the brain. Your thoughts are all somehow. People hurt each other worse than any weapon. You're killing each other slowly by your actions.

Sharon

You're hurting him psychologically, in other words.

Kai

You guys don't understand. He was there for me when you were too busy to pay attention to me!

Sharon

What? That is so, so unfair.

Kai

(To Sharon) Grandpa Joe died and you dumped me off on the Rez and went back to school. (To Grandma) And you refuse to talk about what happened.

Grandma Yazzie

Because I can't... It hurts too much.

Kai

And it's suppose to be easy on me? He use to call me Angel and sing me songs while he made his jewelry. And you guys didn't think that I needed someone to talk to?!

Grandma Yazzie

Because you're not suppose to talk about it!

Kai

You even burned all of his stuff.

Grandma Yazzie

That's what you're suppose to do so the spirit doesn't linger.

Kai

Why?

Grandma Yazzie

Don't question your elders. It's disrespectful.

Kai
Well isn't that a convenient loop hole.

Sharon
Kai! That's enough. I don't want you to see him anymore.
Nothing can grow from death.

Kai
You can't tell me who I can and can't date.

Sharon
I am your Mother!

Kai
Since when!?

Kai begins to leave.

Sharon
Get back here!

Kai
NO.

Sharon
You're grounded!

Kai
Oh big fuckin' deal!

Sharon
Don't you dare walk away from me!

*Kai leaves. Sharon slams her fists in
frustration on the table.*

Grandma Yazzie
That went good.

Sharon
Mom... please. Don't.

*Sharon looks defeated, Grandma Yazzie
knows that look all too well, she sits
beside her daughter and takes her in
her arms. Sharon begins to cry. Grandma*

*Yazzie soothes her, she sings a
comforting Navajo song. Lights begin to
dim on them and come up on Sherman.*

Sherman

Yes, love is important my friends, but there is nothing like the love a mother has for her child. The bond known as Philoprogenitiveness is what makes a mother lay down her life for her child, literally but also, I don't think many of us realize the sacrifices made by our mothers to provide us a better possible future.

Grandma Yazzie

Check please.

Sherman

So this next one goes out to all my Mother listeners, especially the single Mothers, like my Mother. Mom, I know I never say it enough, but I love you. Ahehee'¹³ I hope I make you proud. I know it's cheesy but here's that song from your favorite show.

*"I'm a Survivor" by Reba McEntire¹⁴
plays over the radio. Sherman takes a
drink of water trying to hide how
sentimental he got over the air.
Grandma Yazzie continues to soothe
Sharon as the lights fade to black.*

¹³ Thank you

¹⁴ Reba McEntire. "I'm a Survivor." *Greatest Hits Vol. 3: I'm a Survivor*. MCA, 2001.

Act I

Scene IV: Fool Me Once...

(A Few Days Later)

It's almost dark. The playground is dimly lit causing the shadows to look creepy. Emily sits in the jungle gym playing with a doll. Jason enters carrying a backpack. He is unhappy.

Emily

Well look who it is, Miss Constance.

Jason throws his backpack onto a bench.

Emily

Oh no. It looks like someone needs a nap. What's that, Miss Constance? Yes, Jason is very cranky. I don't know. Maybe we should ask him. Jason, what seems to be the problem?

Jason

I don't want to talk about it.

He reaches into the backpack and pulls out a beer and a knife. He opens a beer, punctures a hole into the top, slams it then tosses the empty can into the sand.

Emily

Are you sure? Maybe me and Miss Constance can help you.

Jason

Emily. It's nothing.

Emily

Doesn't look like nothing.

Jason

SHUT UP!

Emily stops. Her eyes widen. Jason immediately feels bad.

Emily

Whatever I did, I'm sorry.

Em, you didn't do anything. Jason

Are you sure? Emily

Yes, I'm sure. I've had a bad couple of days. I didn't mean to yell at you, ok? I'm sorry. Jason

You mean it? Emily

Of course I do. Jason

Then apologize to Miss Constance too. Emily

Em-- Jason

Apologize. Emily

*Emily shoves the doll in his face.
Jason rolls his eyes.*

I'm sorry random doll-- Jason

MISS CONSTANCE! Emily

Fine! *(Sigh)* I'm sorry Miss Constance. Where did you get a doll anyway? Jason

Oh, some kid left it here. I'm done playing with it though. Emily

Emily tosses the doll into the sand. It lands near Jason. He looks down at the doll then suddenly begins to stomp on the dolls face, repeatedly. Emily watches in horror.

Emily

WHAT ARE YOU DOING!?

Jason begins to laugh sadistically, taking all his anger out on the doll. It is a laugh Emily has never heard before. Suddenly, Jason picks up the doll and rips her head off.

Emily

You broke my doll!

Jason

You said you were done with it!

Emily

I said I was done playing with it! That didn't mean I didn't want it.

Jason

Oh.

Emily

Why did you do that!?

Emily begins to cry. Jason tries to put the doll back together.

Jason

I didn't-- I really didn't mean to, Em-- Look, see, if we just pop this back on and maybe wash the shoe marks off-- oh, probably should pop her face back out-- no one likes a flat face. Get it? Instead of a long face, I-- (clears throat) Here. Almost good as new.

Emily disappears as Kai enters the playground and sees Jason with the doll.

Kai

What are you doing?

Jason drops the doll.

Kai

Is that a doll?

Jason

What's it to you?

Kai

Guess you're still mad...

Jason

Ding, ding.

Jason reaches in his bag for another beer.

Kai

What's with the beer?

Jason

Ah, let's see, my life sucks, apparently I'm an idiot loser with no future, my Mom can't afford food but there's always booze in the house, my sister's dead and my girl-- ex girl-- I don't know, whatever you are-- isn't in love with me--

Kai

That's not what I said.

Jason

Actually, I don't recall you saying much of anything.

Kai

What does that mean?

Jason

What it means, **Princess** is that you didn't stand up for me! You totally threw me under the bus and danced on my entrails.

Kai

First of all, super gross visual. Second, I didn't throw you under anything. My Mom has very high expectations of me.

Jason

And apparently, I don't make the cut. My question is, why did you put me out like that if you KNEW she was going to be a complete asshole to me?!

Kai

Me and her have an odd relationship. She tends to ignore the fact that she isn't there every single day of my life. And I did stick up for you!

Jason

Whatever **Princess**.

Kai

Stop calling me that!

Jason

Yes, your **Highness**.

Kai

Stop!

Jason

Point is Kai, I looked like a fool. Here I am throwing myself at you and you don't give a shit.

Kai

... I give a shit.

Jason

Really? Cause from my end, it doesn't look like it.

Kai

What do you want?!

Jason

I want YOU! Don't you understand that?! Princess You, Kicking my ass at basketball You. Sneaking out to see me You. YOU!

Kai

And you think I don't want you!?

Jason

Then what's the problem?!

Kai

My life is nothing but calling the shots and making them. I know the answers, I'm book smart but with you, I can't figure shit out and that *terrifies* me.

Jason

Never mind all that. What do you feel?

Kai
It doesn't matter what I feel, I need to be in control.

Jason
Fuck control! People make mistakes all the time but you have to believe me when I say that I am the right choice.

Kai
Do you think this is simple for me? There isn't an easy answer. I don't want to stay in Gallup and pop out your kids!

Jason
This isn't some stupid conquest. I'm talking about me, being in this for what it is, fucked up, insane, irrational love.

Kai
But what's the point if I'm leaving?

Jason
Are we-- are you breaking up with me?

(A beat)

Kai
I don't know.

(A beat)

Jason
I'll kill myself.

Kai
WHAT

Jason
If you end it with me, I'll kill myself.

Kai
How the hell can you say that to me?!

Jason
You don't believe me??

Kai

You know what I went through with my Grandpa Joe! How DARE you threaten me like this!

Jason

It's not a threat. I'm tired of everybody leaving me! My Dad, Emily, my Mom, now you! I don't have anything! At least this way I can prove my love to you!

Kai

All it would prove is that you're a COWARD.

He shoves her.

Kai

Don't push me.

Jason

You want somebody else, somebody the little **Princess** can bring home to her Mother.

He shoves her again this time she shoves back. He is surprised then pushes her with more force. She falls. She is stunned. He grabs her.

Jason

Because I'm not good enough for you! I'm not good enough for you to love! Because you think you're better than me! You're better than the Rez!

Kai

STOP IT! I wish I thought those things! I've tried so hard to not want you-- to get rid of you-- but I need you.

She pushes him off her.

Kai

And I hate it! I hate how you can keep declaring your love for me but not even realize how much it hurts because I DON'T WANT TO STAY HERE. You shouldn't be with me!

She jumps to her feet.

Kai

You need someone that can give you what you want.

Jason

Kai, please...

Kai

It's better if we stop this now before one of us gets hurt.
This is dangerous. Can't you feel it?

Jason puts Kai's hand on his chest.

Jason

(To the rhythm of a heart beat)
Let go (A beat) Let go (A beat) Let go.

She kisses him.

End of Act I.

Act II

Scene I: Playground of Dreams (Months Later)

The playground. Music from KTNN plays through the small radio. Emily swings, the distorted doll sits in the swing next to her. Jason sits on the bench, next to him is a backpack, he pulls out a beer. He opens the beer with his usual knife method, then carves something into the bench then set the knife aside. He drinks.

Jason

Things with Kai and I got pretty heated after that-- physically, I mean. Her virginity went from non-endangered to going, going, gone. And... well, it was *amazing*. None of the other girls I've been with had made me ever feel anything close to-- but I don't want to get all cliché-y and say that being with her was like being in heaven or none of that shit. But it was. Everything seemed to be going perfect, I mean, besides the Mother hatred. But that's normal, right? It reminded me of the Shakespeare book we were reading in English class, *Romeo and Juliet*. I couldn't understand half of what was going on, lots of "woes" and declaration of love and people getting killed, one thing was certain though, Juliet's parents hated Romeo. "From forth the fatal loins of these two foes A pair of star-cross'd lovers take their life..." It's always loins with this guy. Totally homo. Although, methinks I am a lot like Romeo, parental hatred, check. Declaration of love, check. Balcony scene, eh, not so much. Unless watching her sleep through her window counts... totally innocent though. Anyway after Kai got on the basketball team, she went from unknown Navajo to signing autographs as we walked through the Flea Market. It's like this, you know those places in the South that are all into football... Gallup is like that with High School Basketball. Can't stand in line for a Roast Mutton or a pickle flavored Sno Cone without someone asking for a picture. I ended up not making the Boys team but they sucked this past year anyway. I saw less and less of Kai as she led her team to win after win. Sex was slowly becoming a distant memory. So, instead of beating it all the time, I did this... Happy hour at the Playground of Dreams, where every hour is happy.

He laughs at this joke then drinks his beer. Emily waves at him, he raises his can to her. The song over the radio comes to an end as lights come up on Sherman.

Sherman

*Ya'at'eeh abini*¹⁵, this is Sherman Begay for KTNN, A.M Six-Sixty. Don't forget to tune in tonight to live commentary of the NMAA High School Girl's Basketball Tournament with yours truly. Let's support our Lady Bengals. And everyone making the trip to Albuquerque, it looks like there is some thunder clouds around Mt. Taylor, so drive safe. How about I play something for our Brave Warriors of the Court in hopes they will all be "meaner than a boot full of barb wire" and fly through the air with Frybread Power.

*"C'hizzi" by Vincent Craig*¹⁶ *plays over the radio when Kai enters the park. She is wearing a black and orange basketball warm up. Jason sets down his beer as Kai runs into his arms. They kiss with fierce passion as the music and lights fade on Sherman. Emily retreats into the jungle gym, occasionally watching them.*

Kai

(between kisses)

I could only get away for a few minutes.

Jason

Why?

Kai

You know. The Tournament. Bus ride to Albuquerque.

Jason

Go team, go. You nervous?

Kai

Only like yes. Everyone is depending on me. I can't even walk into Wal-Mart without an elder giving me a blessing.

¹⁵ Good morning

¹⁶ Vincent Craig. "C'HIZZI." *Song Weaver Volumes II*.

Town celebrity. Jason

Don't make fun of me. Kai

Of course not. Not of the famed Kai Yazzie, number 35. Jason

You're not cute. Kai

You know what might help with the stress? Jason

What? Kai

*Jason nods his head towards Kai's car.
She looks puzzled. He does it again.*

Please tell me you're joking. Kai

A quick stress reliever. Jason

We are not having sex in front of the playground! Kai

We could park behind the Rec Center. Jason

And not in my car. Kai

My truck then? Jason

No! Kai

Oh come on, it'll be like a good luck charm for the game. Jason

Kai

A good luck fuck.

Jason

Yes! See.

Kai

Not a chance.

Jason

We haven't had sex in weeks!

Kai

Geez, you're like one of those little humpy leg dogs.

Jason

Kai, I'm 18. I can look at a light signal and get turned on.

Kai

I'm already running late.

Jason

It'll be quick.

Kai

Now there's something every girl wants to hear.

Jason

Fine. Whatever. You know, Juliet totally put out for Romeo, days after meeting him.

Kai

Juliet was a slut. And stupid.

Jason

How dare you.

Kai

Oh shut up.

Jason

We're still going to Prom next weekend, right?

Kai

Got the dress.

Jason

What color is it again?

Kai

Pink.

Jason

Of course.

Kai

How much have you had to drink?

Jason

One, four, twenty? Just kidding. Have a beer with me.

Kai

It's 10 in the morning plus Coach would kill me if I drank before the game.

Jason

Well you can either fuck me or have a beer with me. Your choice, but I would prefer the first one.

Kai

Ha. Ha.

Jason takes out a beer and opens it for her.

Kai

I can't--

Jason

A little sip. Let's toast to your victory.

He punctures a hole in the can as he did earlier to his can.

Kai

What's that for?

Jason

To drink faster.

Kai

Oh.

Jason

Cheers! To Kai Yazzie! Number 35!

Kai

To me!

They tap their cans together. Kai takes a sip of her beer while Jason slams the rest of his, crushes the can in his hands and tosses it aside. He grabs a new can.

Kai

You're going to the tournament, right?

Jason

Of course I am babe. Wouldn't miss it. It'll be a PITT full of Skins wearing black and orange.

Kai

I-- well, I don't want you to drive if you're gonna--

Jason

Gonna what?

Kai

Please don't get drunk and not show up.

Jason

What the fuck, I've had one beer.

Kai

Well how should I know? I show up and you're drinking--

Jason

Look, look, look, I don't want to fight with you okay. I-- the beer, look, I don't need it. I don't even know why I--

Jason tosses the open beer into the sand.

Jason

I'm sorry.

Kai

Don't be sorry.

Jason

I saw the beer in the fridge this morning. Mom had another binger with her new boyfriend and I didn't want them to-- so I took it. I didn't even think about it, just took it. I was gonna toss it but then I thought-- it'd be a shame to let it go to waste--

Kai

You don't have to explain.

Jason

Yes I do.

Kai

I know you don't like to talk about your Mom.

Jason

Forget about all that. Come here, I want to taste the lips of a winner.

He grabs her and pulls her close, they begin to kiss again. Jason gropes her for several seconds then suddenly stops.

Jason

What's this?

Kai

What's what?

Jason pulls out an envelope from Kai's pocket.

Kai

Oh. That what.

Jason

UCLA? You applied? But. You said. You were going to the UNM branch.

Kai

I said I got accepted. Nothing was confirmed.

Jason

But you never denied--!

Kai

Look, I applied out of pure curiosity. It's my dream school. It's probably a rejection letter anyway.

Jason

Open it now.

Kai

What?

Jason

Are you deaf? I said, **Open it now.**

Kai

No. I don't want any distractions before the game.

Kai reaches for the letter, Jason jerks away.

Kai

Give it back.

Kai tries to grab the letter but Jason pushes her back and tears it open.

Kai

What are you doing--! Jason!

He looks at the letter then hands the mangled paper to her.

Jason

Congratulations.

She looks at the letter. Jason walks away from her.

Kai

What? "Dear Kai Yazzie, Congratulations, we are please to welcome you to the Class of -" No way. NO WAY! I got in! OH MY GOD! I got in! I have to tell my mom! She's gonna be so- oh my god! They're offering me a scholarship?! This! Is! So! Crazy!

Jason suddenly punches the jungle gym and yells in pain. Emily winces. Kai is stunned.

Kai

Jason?

Jason

Oh. I'm sorry. Did my little-- outburst finally make you notice me?! HOW COULD YOU NOT TELL ME!?

Kai

I applied to a lot of schools! I didn't think I was going to get in!

Jason

DON'T. LIE. TO. ME!

Kai

I'm not!

Jason

Of course you were going to get in! HOW FUCKIN' STUPID ARE YOU!?

Kai

Excuse me?!

Jason

Why would you do this to me?!

Kai

This really had nothing to do with you.

Jason

What.

Kai

We both know that when this started-- you knew I wanted to leave.

Jason

I thought you would change your mind.

Kai

This is my dream!

Jason

No, it's your Mom's dream.

Kai

That's not fair!

Don't you love me? Jason

Jason-- Kai

You said you needed me. Jason

I did-- I do. But we're in high school. Kai

What does that have to do with it? Jason

I'm just saying. Kai

Tell me you don't love me. Jason

Don't do this. Kai

Tell me to my face that you don't love me. Jason

This is-- look, I don't want to do this before my game-- Kai

FUCK YOUR GAME. Jason

He grabs her arms. Emily covers her eyes.

Jason, stop. Kai

Tell me you don't love me! Jason

He tightens his grip and shakes her.

Kai

Jason! That hurts!

Jason

TELL ME YOU DON'T LOVE ME!

Kai

Let go! You're scaring me!

They struggle. Emily uncovers her eyes and watches them with increased horror and fascination. After a second Jason loosens his grip and she breaks free.

Kai

What the fuck is your problem?!

Jason is quiet.

Kai

Answer me!

Silence.

Kai

Fine. Go fuck yourself.

Kai turns to leave when Jason suddenly tackles her to the ground. She screams he covers her mouth.

Jason

GO FUCK MYSELF?! GO FUCK MYSELF?! HOW BOUT THIS, FUCK YOU!! Just high school, huh? That why you want to go to college, huh? To be a WHORE! You want White guys to be inside your pussy!?!

Kai cries. He spits in her face.

Jason

WE'RE FUCKIN' DONE! DO YOU HEAR ME?! DONE! FUCK YOU BITCH!

Jason gets off of her. Kai quickly stands up and wipes the spit and tears off her face. Jason realizes what he has just done. He falls to his knees and grabs her hand.

Jason
Oh my god. I'm sorry. Baby, I'm so sorry.

Kai shakes him off.

Kai
Get away from me!

She runs to her car (offstage). Jason runs after her.

Jason
(offstage)
I'm sorry! I didn't mean it! I'm sorry! I'm sorry!

Kai
(offstage)
LEAVE ME ALONE!!

A car door slams, an engine roars to life, tires screech and the car speeds away.

Jason
(off stage)
SSSHHHHHIIITTTTTT!

Jason re-enters the park. He is upset with himself. He yells in anger. He sits on the bench and hangs his head. He tries to fight the tears but his shoulders begin to shake with grief. He covers his face and cries into his hands. Emily slowly climbs down the jungle gym and takes a seat by him on the bench. She holds him. A smile creeps across her face. Lights fade to black on the playground.

Act II

Scene II: The Game
(Later that day)

Lights up on Sherman Begay with a mobile headset and mic, downstage right. The crowd chants a Bengals cheer in the background. Lights come back up on the playground, Jason sits on the bench fiddling with the knobs on his old radio.

Sherman

Welcome back. This is Sherman Begay coming to you live from the NMAA High School Girl's Basketball Tournament, the Lady Bengals versus the Lady Eagles of Eldorado. It has been a grueling day of sports.

Emily

What are you listening to?

Jason

SHHH!

Sherman

These young ladies have played their hearts out. And it's no surprise that Senior, Kai Yazzie, number 35, stands out among her teammates as the lead scorer. However, she can't carry the team by herself. It has come down to this- 27 seconds left on the clock. The score, 63 to 65. Yes, we are down by two points and there's just enough time for one more play. After last year's loss will the Lady Bengals bring the trophy back home to the Rez or yet again, have they come so close only to let it slip through their fingers for a second year in a row?

A whistle, sounds of squeaky shoes on a waxed court are barely heard over the huge crowd's excitement.

Sherman

Alright. Number 10, Stephanie Romero passes the ball into Number 4, Tiffany Leonard. She drives in toward the hoop, wait she's passes the ball to Kai Yazzie at the three--!

Jason is on edge. Swish. A buzzer sound. The crowd erupts with noise.

Sherman

I don't believe it! I don't believe it! It's Kai Yazzie with a three point Fadeaway jump shot over Kathy Watson of Eldorado!

Jason

That's my move! I taught her that!

Jason celebrates.

Sherman

A three pointer in the last seconds of the game! We won by one! 66 to 65 is the final score. The trophy is coming home!! Kai Yazzie, you truly are One of a Kind!

Jason turns off the radio. Lights off on Sherman.

Jason

Can you believe it!?! We won! And that's my move!

Emily

How exciting.

Jason

What's wrong?

Emily

Oh wake up Jason! WE didn't WIN anything! She used you.

Jason

You're crazy.

Emily

Am I? Think about it. Your move. Your feelings. How blind are you!? Has she even once told you she loves you? (A beat) Maybe you were right to spit in her face.

Jason

NO! I never should have done that.

Emily

Your whole relationship is a joke. A long joke without a punchline.

Jason

Emily.

Emily

She used you from the moment you guys met.

Jason

That's not true.

Emily

"My Grandpa died, I have no friends, wah, wah..." Oh BOO-HOO! She fed her sorrow into you-- I know cuz you did that to me. Pretty soon you'll be all used up and who will care for you when I'm gone, my brother.

Jason

Gone? You can't leave. You said.

Emily

No I didn't. I can feel myself fading everyday.

Jason

That's not fair!

Emily

Don't make the rules.

Jason

But we're a team... like Luke and Leia.

Emily

I thought you were Han.

Jason

Never mind.

(A beat)

Emily

Forget about Kai. She's empty. She's not capable of loving you Jason.

Jason

You're wrong, she'll forgive me and come back and everything will be like it was.

“And we’ll be happy” Emily

Jason
Don’t make fun of me. We will be happy, Emily. I promise.

Emily
Oh... will we?

Lights fade to black.

Act II

Scene III: Fool Me Twice... (The Next Week)

Grandma Yazzie's house, it's old but comfortable. The wooden door has a small window with a curtain over it. The porch light shines. In front of the house is a tree with a makeshift bench underneath. Jason stands on the front steps, he is dressed in a tux with a pink cummerbund and a corsage in his hands.

Jason

I need to make one thing clear-- I'm not a bad guy. I'm not. The thing in the playground... it was like watching someone else do *that*. After seeing my Mom and Dad fight, I never thought I would ever do anything like *that*. It's in a guy's DNA to know it's wrong. So why did I do *that*? I always told Em, if a guy ever, ever does *that* to her-- he's fuckin' dead. Afterwards, I felt like kickin' my own ass... but... there was some part of me... a small, small part that thought... she deserved it. We were already arguing and she had to tell me to go fuck myself?! What the hell! And the best way I can describe what happened next is-- you know how you fill up a glass with water and it gets to the very top but it doesn't overflow? Well... she added the last drop. I didn't see red or anything, I thought, for a second, for one little second... I wanna hit her... My body reacted before I could even process that the thought was wrong... I'm not a woman beater. I'm NOT like my Dad. I'm NOTHING like him. It was... it was an accident. I hope she understands that. I need to make it right. So... I'm thinking of giving her this.

He reaches into his pocket and takes out the bracelet.

Jason

I didn't tell Emily... but she should understand, right?

Lights come up inside the house. Grandma Yazzie sits on the couch cutting a sheet of silver into circles. Kai sits next to her trying to do

*homework but failing miserably. Jason
knocks on the door.*

Grandma Yazzie

I'll get it!

Kai

I'll get it, Grandma.

Grandma Yazzie

Why? Cause you think I'm old?!

Kai

Take it away Gran.

*Grandma Yazzie puts her silver aside
and gets to her feet. She picks up a
baseball bat from beside the couch.
Jason knocks again.*

Grandma Yazzie

I'm coming, yaddilah hey!

She looks through the small window.

Jason

Hi! Is Kai here?

Grandma Yazzie

Kai! It's Sweaty Palms.

Kai

Agh. Tell him I'm not here.

Grandma Yazzie opens the door.

Grandma Yazzie

She said, she's not here.

*She slams the door and heads back to
the couch.*

Kai

Grandma!

Grandma Yazzie

What!?

Kai
You're not suppose to tell him that!

Grandma Yazzie
Well I don't know!

Kai goes to the door and opens it.

Kai
What are you doing here?

Jason
It's nice to see you too.

Kai
Jason, I haven't heard from you since-- since that morning in the park.

Jason
Yeah. About *that*. I'm really sorry. Here. This is for you.

He forces the bracelet into her hands.

Kai
A bracelet.

Jason
It was Emily's.

Kai
Oh. Jason. I can't take this.

Jason
Yes, you can.

Kai
No, I can't--

He puts it on her wrist.

Jason
It fits. I want you to have it.

Kai
Thanks?

Jason

Now that that's out of the way, you're a little under dressed for Prom but if that's what you want to wear-- fine, by me.

Kai

I'm not going.

Jason

I'll wait. Take as much time as you need to get ready. I'll chill with your Grandma.

He tries to enter the house. Kai stands in his way.

Kai

I'm not going with you.

Jason

What? Is there someone else?!

Kai

No, I'm not going at all.

Jason

But it's Prom. I rented the tux, you got the dress.

Kai

That has nothing to do with it!

Jason

Can't we please put this *little* fight behind us.

Kai

I'm shutting the door now.

Jason

Kai, please! I'm sorry!

Kai

You made me feel worthless.

Jason

I didn't mean to lose my temper.

Kai

Look what you did to my arm.

Jason

It wasn't me.

Kai

You didn't even come to the game.

Jason

Don't be upset.

Kai

You can't just show up at my house with gifts and think it makes everything ok! It's never going to be ok between us!

Jason

I said I was sorry. Can't you see how hard this is for me? The Game. The winning shot. My Move! There's even going to be a Parade?!

Kai

Okay, the Parade is a bit over the top.

Jason

Everywhere I go, it's Kai Yazzie this, Kai Yazzie that. Oh you're Kai's boyfriend? That's my new name. "Kai's boyfriend". And it's like everyone is completely surprised that you're my girl and this fuckin' game and your fuckin' UCLA letter is making it all the more obvious. It's being rubbed in my face.

Kai

I'm not rubbing anything in your face.

Jason

Not on purpose.

Kai

You're acting like this is my fault.

Jason

Well it's not all mine either.

Kai

But it doesn't change the fact that you ruined everything. Taking me to Prom isn't going to fix anything.

Jason

Completely cutting me off isn't going to fix anything either.

(A Pause.)

Jason
Tell me what you want and I'll do it!

Kai
Fine. You can start by leaving me alone.

Jason
Talk to me!

Kai
You're the last person I want to talk to right now, I need to think about all of this.

Jason
There's nothing to think about, if we love each other then we should be able to get through this. We can work this out.

Kai
I don't know if I want to work it out.

Jason
... what are you saying?

Sharon enters the living room. She spots Grandma Yazzie eavesdropping.

Sharon
Mom... what are you doing?

Grandma Yazzie
SHHH!

Sharon
Are you--

Grandma Yazzie
(whispers)
Lower your voice!

Sharon
(whispers)

Are you spying on them?!

Grandma Yazzie
(whispers)

Of course not!

Sharon
(whispers)

What's going on?

Grandma Yazzie
(whispers)

Sounds like Sweaty Palms is getting the boot. And thank goodness. I don't trust him.

Kai
I'm not saying anything... I just need time to think.

Jason
You can't do this to me, I was there for you!

Sharon walks over to the door.

Grandma Yazzie
(whispers)

What are you doing??

Sharon
Kai? Is everything okay?

Kai
It's fine Mom. Jason was just leaving.

Jason
Please, talk to me.

Sharon opens the door wider.

Sharon
Hi Jason.

Jason
Sharon--er, Dr. Yazzie.

Sharon
You're all dressed up.

It's Prom. Jason

Prom's tonight, Kai? Sharon

Yes. Jason

I don't want to go. Kai

Oh? Sharon

I feel sick. Kai

Sharon
Then we better get you to bed. We have an early morning tomorrow for the parade. You heard of that right?

Jason
I heard.

Sharon
Well...

Jason
Well.

Sharon
Have a good night Jason.

Jason
But--?

Kai
Good night.

Jason
(A beat) Good night.

Sharon closes the door. Jason squeezes the corsage in anger. He exits.

Sharon

That boy cannot take a hint.

Kai starts crying in the doorway.

Sharon
Shi yaz, what's wrong?

Kai
I don't want to talk about it.

Sharon
Kai--

She touches Kai's arm.

Kai
Ow.

Sharon
Did he hurt you? Is that what the bruises are from?!

Grandma Yazzie
That's it. Where's my gun!

Kai
No! No guns. I got those from the game.

Grandma Yazzie
He's never laid a hand on you?

Kai
Never.

Sharon
You swear?

Kai
Yes. (A beat) Mom... this is going to sound really weird
but... can you hold me?

Sharon takes Kai into her arms. Before Kai can stop herself, tears stream down her cheeks. Grandma Yazzie watches Kai with growing concern. Sharon soothes Kai with the same comforting Navajo song in Act I, scene III. Lights dim on them and come up on Sherman

Sherman

Parents, it's important to be involved in your kids lives. The world is crazy and we don't always see the dangers in front of us until it's too late. Demand to know what is going on. Too many kids today are running around with backwards thoughts. Stealing money from their Elders, getting fake IDs, drinking at Sammy C's and then driving. (Gasp) *Ee'ya*¹⁷! Kids, talk to your parents. I promise, it's the cool thing to do. And I don't know why but I feel like this song is appropriate, here's the Judds everybody.

*"Mama He's Crazy" by the Judds¹⁸ plays
as the lights fade.*

¹⁷ Navajo expression for Scary

¹⁸ The Judds. "Mama He's Crazy." *Wynonna & Naomi*. RCA Records, 1963

Act II

Scene IV: Lucid Nightmares (Later that Night)

Sherman enters from the curtains. He is dressed as a younger Bob Barker from the Price is Right. He carries the same skinny microphone. As he enters, an "APPLAUSE PLEASE" sign pops out. Sherman waves to the cheering crowd.

Sherman

Welcome to A Journey Into the Lovers Dream! Oh, thank you! Thank you! Now let's meet our contestants; Jason Black, Emily Black and Kai Yazzie! Here is the first scenario.

The curtains lift up revealing the playground. Sherman exits as a mirror ball appears from the sky. Suddenly the playground is illuminated with a thousand and one white Christmas lights. Prom music plays in the background. Emily appears in the Castle wearing a beautiful gown. She looks like a Beauty Queen from Toddlers and Tiaras, attempting to look older but still a child. Jason enters he watches Emily gracefully descends from the Castle as if in a trance. They meet in the middle of the playground. He slides Kai's corsage onto her wrist, she pins a boutonniere on his tux. They begin to dance like two professional ball room dancers that have been partners for life.

Jason

I screwed up.

Emily

Shh... this is our place... Just us.

Jason

Of course. "Forever Trust In Who"¹⁹--

Emily
We Are And Nothing Else--

Jason
Matters".

Emily
There you are. Come back to me my darling boy. My brother,
my love.

Jason
I'm here.

Emily
Are you? Ever since Kai came into our lives, it's been
nothing but chaos. And I'm losing you.

*A light appears in the background, Kai
is dressed in her Prom dress. She is
gorgeous.
Jason eyes immediately meets Kai's. She
wears the bracelet. Emily notices her.*

Emily
Jason. Look at me.

Jason
She came.

*Jason rips the corsage off Emily's
wrist.*

Emily
Stop it, Jason! Come back to me, my brother!

Jason
She's Leia, I'm Han. You're Luke.

¹⁹ The song lyrics in this scene are from "Nothing Else
Matters" by Metallica.

Metallica. "Nothing Else Matters" *Metallica*. Elektra Records,
1991.

Emily
No, no, no! I'm Leia!

Jason
You need to let us go, Luke. Let us be happy.

Emily
What about being a family?!

Jason begins to walk away, Emily pulls him back.

Emily
You said, you couldn't live without me!

Jason pushes her off him.

Emily
Don't leave me!!

Jason
You've served your purpose in this trilogy. Now comes new episodes. Different adventures. A new love is blossoming.

Emily
But "Life is ours--"

Jason
No. You're dead, Emily. I release you. Be at peace.

Emily cries, her make up runs. She disappears into the castle. Jason reaches Kai. He gets on one knee.

Jason
Your corsage, my Lady.

Kai
It's squished.

Jason throws it over his shoulder, reaches in his pocket and pulls out a long balloon. He makes a flower, Kai shakes her head. He makes another one. She sighs. He makes another and another until Kai smiles.

Kai

That one.

Jason twists the flower into a corsage and slips it onto the wrist without the bracelet.

Kai

Beautiful.

Jason

Does this mean?

Kai

I'm not leaving.

She takes out the UCLA letter and rips it in half. It falls to the floor. Jason lifts her up and swings her around.

Jason

I love you, I love you, I love you.

They kiss. Sherman Begay pops out of the castle.

Sherman

And this year's Prom King and Queen are... Drum roll please...

A sign pops out saying "DRUM ROLL PLEASE".

Sherman

Jason Black and Kai Yazzie!!! COME ON DOWN!

A spot light shines on them. They are stunned. Jason pulls her toward the castle where Sherman crowns both of them.

Sherman

Our winners today get a life time supply of BLUE BIRD FLOUR!

The "APPLAUSE PLEASE" sign pops out again.

Sherman
Congratulations, Congratulations! Let's bring out the family of the proud winners!

Sharon enters dressed as Darth Vader without a helmet and a kitten face mask. Grandma Yazzie follows dragging a skeleton behind her. She eats a Sno Cone.

Sharon
Jason, my king! I will make you fry bread forever!

She bows.

Sharon
Bow to our king!

She pulls Grandma Yazzie down with her. She drops her Sno Cone.

Grandma Yazzie
Aw.

They stand.

Sharon
We are so happy to welcome you to the family!

Kai
Jason, this is my Grandpa Joe.

She points to the skeleton.

Grandma Yazzie
Me and your Grandpa are filled with nothing but pure joy and mutton stew. May the future road ahead of you be paved with blue corn mush and kneel down bread. I pronounce you Man and Wife.

Sherman
What are you waiting for son? Kiss your bride!

They kiss. Kai screams in pain.

Jason

What's wrong?!

Kai lifts up her dress and a baby doll falls out. Kai is horrified. The "APPLAUSE PLEASE" sign pops out again. Sharon, Grandma Yazzie and Sherman join the applause. Jason picks up the baby in awe.

Jason

We're a family!

Kai

The Price is wrong.

Sharon

Being a mother is the best thing that's ever happened to me!

Kai

I don't want kids.

Jason

We made a life.

Sherman

Kai Yazzie, you have just won our biggest Showcase in A Journey Into the Lovers Dream's history!

Kai

This isn't my dream!

Jason

Yes it is!

Kai

It's YOUR dream!

Kai rips the crown off her head and throws it aside. The world begins to crumble.

Sherman

And now folks, scenario the second.

Kai

Shut up!

*Kai grabs his mic, breaks it in half
and throws it at him.*

Sherman

NNNOOOOO! I'm melting! Melting!

Sherman disappears into the floor.

Kai

Mom, take that off.

Sharon

INSOLENT CHILD!

Sharon smacks Kai.

Sharon

I was only hard on you cause I love you.

Sharon bursts into tears and exits.

Grandma Yazzie

I miss my Sno Cone.

*Grandma Yazzie swings the skeleton over
her shoulders.*

Kai

Be careful!

Grandma Yazzie

Don't worry. I call him Chevy. Like a rock.

*Grandma Yazzie spits in her hand and
fixes Kai's hair.*

Grandma Yazzie

Stop hurting his mind.

Kai

I never meant to.

Grandma Yazzie

Do we ever?

She walks over to Jason and takes the baby doll, she exits.

Jason

You're leaving.

Kai

Yes.

Jason

Can I have this dance?

Kai

I don't look before I leap.

Jason

"So close no matter how far..."

Jason holds out his hand. Kai takes it, Jason spins her into his arms. They dance.

Kai

"Couldn't be much more from the heart"

He kisses her, it's a good-bye kiss. Kai starts to cry.

Kai

I did care for you. You believe me right?

Jason

New episodes. Different adventures. Roll credits.

Kai

You... understand?

Jason

Playground of Dreams, right? Our place. "And Nothing else matters".

Jason takes one last look at her then disappears into the shadows. Kai picks up the torn UCLA letter. Ocean waves crash on the rocks in the distance.

*Tears of happiness steam down her face
as she takes a deep breath.*

Kai

Salty air.

*Emily emerges from the ground behind
her. Make up smeared on her face. She
spots her bracelet on Kai's wrist, her
eyes turn deadly.*

Emily

That's mine.

*Kai is startled. She sees Emily for the
first time.*

Kai

Who are you?

Emily

Who?!

A crazy laugh escapes Emily's lips.

Emily

I'm the person you took everything from!

*Suddenly, Emily jumps on Kai and tries
to choke her.*

Kai

Get off of me!

Emily

DIE!

*As the girls fight Sherman steps back
on stage with his microphone, that is
held together with a band-aid.*

Sherman

And that's our show! Sherman Begay here, reminding you to
help control the pet population. Have your pet spade or
neutered. Good bye everybody!

*Sherman waves to the crowd as the
"APPLAUSE PLEASE" sign pops out again.
Music swells as the lights fade to
black.*

Act II

Scene V: Never Leave Me
(A few nights later)

Jason looks shifty. He carries his backpack over one shoulder and walks straight up to Grandma Yazzie's door and knocks. Pause. He knocks again. Kai answers and quickly steps outside and closes the door behind her.

Kai
Shhh... my Grandma's sleeping. You know how she is with her guns.

Jason
Hey you called me, member?

Kai
Yeah. I- I had this weird dream the other night.

Jason
Must be going around.

Kai takes a seat on the makeshift bench.

Kai
I think you should sit down.

Jason
No. Kai. Let's not make a big production out of it.

Kai
What are you--?

Jason
I'm not an idiot... you told me ever since-- since we started. You don't want to stay here.

Kai
UCLA called... they wanted my answer.

Jason
We don't have to talk about it.

Kai
But I want to tell you--

Jason
I don't want to hear about it.

She takes the bracelet off and hands it to him.

Jason
No. Keep it.

Kai
I don't think I should--

Jason
It's yours.

Kai
It doesn't feel right.

Jason
I want you to have it... to remember me by.

Kai
Ok.

She slips it back on. He sets his backpack down and sits beside her. She holds his hand. He smiles at her. They gaze up at the stars. Jason pulls Kai in for a kiss. The door opens. Kai pushes Jason away, slightly embarrassed. Sharon stands in the doorway.

Sharon
It's getting late.

Kai
I'm sorry Mom. I'll be in, in a minute.

Sharon
Okay. Just checking.

Sharon goes back inside the house.

Jason
She really does hate me, doesn't she?

Kai
No she-

Jason
She didn't say anything to me.

Kai
It's because your trying to corrupt her only child. Tisk, tisk.

Jason
We're in front of your house.

Kai
Hey, you're lucky I even decided to see you tonight.

A beat. Jason pulls out a beer and his knife from his backpack. He opens it with the usual routine. He fidgets with the knife.

Kai
I should go.

Jason
I just got here!

Kai
I don't want to hang out with you if you've been drinking!

Jason
I brought enough for both of us. Every bon voyage has some form of booze. (A beat) Come on...this might be our last night together.

He opens one for her.

Kai
Only one.

Jason
One and done, Princess.

She takes the beer. They drink in silence.

Jason

Can I ask you something?

Kai

Of course.

Jason

Did you ever love me?

Kai

Why are you asking me this?

Jason

It's a yes or no question. Because if you do then you would hear me out. I know you have the world at your feet and you can go anywhere you want. But I can't.

Kai

What do you mean?

Jason

I'm not going to graduate.

Kai

I told you to get tutoring!

Jason

That isn't the issue. My point is, College and living in a big city is not ever going to be in the cards for me. So I'm asking you... would you please stay for me. For our future. For our happy ending. And I will make it my mission- my life's purpose to give you everything. I'll bring you the ocean!

(A beat.)

Kai

Jason, if I could... if things were different...

Jason

Come on, Kai. Wait for me. Then maybe we can go to college together.

Kai

I was offered a full ride scholarship.

Jason

So?

Kai

That's not just something you give up!

Jason

You're smart and talented, you can get those back. Please, wait for me.

Kai

Why don't you come with me?

Jason

What?

Kai

Come with me.

Jason

I can't.

Kai

Why?

Jason

I can't leave Emily.

Kai

Your sister? What does she have to do with this--

Jason

I just can't ok! She'll go away and never come back. Just like everyone else!

Kai

What?

Jason

NOTHING!

Kai

I'm going inside. You're scaring me.

*Kai stands up, Jason pulls her roughly
back down.*

Jason
I'm not done talking to you!

Kai
Ah!

Jason
What's the real reason you want to go to college so badly?
Is it to get away from me??

Kai
No!

Jason
Why do you want to leave me?

Kai
I don't but can't you see what a wonderful opportunity this
is for me? My Mom never got a scholarship to be in school,
she had to take out loans and they took years to pay off.

Jason
We're not talking about your Mom.

Kai
Why are you acting like this?

Jason
You want to fuck other guys!

Kai
What?!

Jason
Can't stand the Rez uncut cock so you're looking for a
sliced one.

Kai
Did you really just say that to me?

Jason
You heard me.

Kai

You are such an asshole!

Jason

And you're fuckin' slut!

Kai

Take this back, you crazy piece of shit.

She puts the bracelet on the bench between them and stands up again, Jason tries to grab her but she pushes him off. She walks quickly to the door. Jason follows her, the knife still in his hand. Kai almost opens the door when Jason stops her.

Kai

Get away from me.

Jason

I didn't mean that. I'm sorry!

Kai

I don't care! I can't keep doing this with you. It's over Jason.

Jason

Please don't leave me! Kai, I love you.

Kai

I don't love you.

Jason

Don't say that!

Kai

Leave me alone!

Jason

BUT I LOVE YOU!

Suddenly Jason stabs Kai above the heart. She doesn't have time to react when Jason stabs her again next to her right breast.

Jason

I LOVE YOU! I LOVE YOU!

Kai is stunned but flings open the door. Jason stabs her in the back. Kai screams.

Kai

MOOOOOM!

Jason

I LOVE YOU!

Jason realizes what he's done. He grabs his backpack and the bracelet and runs away. Kai falls on the door steps.

Kai

He stabbed me, he stabbed me! Jason stabbed me.

Sharon appears in the doorway only to discover Kai in a bloody mess.

Sharon

Oh my God! OH MY GOD!

Black out.

Act II

Scene VI: One Happy Family (Later)

The playground. Night. The moon light illuminates the wooden structure. Jason runs into the playground. Blood has stained his shirt, hands and the bracelet. He is shaking.

Jason

EMILY! EMILY!

He looks around desperately.

Jason

EMILY! I NEED HELP!

She is no where to be found.

Jason

EMILY!!

Jason falls to his knees, taking several staggered breaths to calm himself. Emily emerges from the shadows. Jason notices the blood on his hands.

Jason

What have I done...

Emily

Jason.

Jason

Em! I fucked up, I fucked everything up!

Emily

We had to. We had to do it.

Jason

What?! I don't understand! What have I done!? Emily!

Emily

This is the only way we could be a family.

Jason

A family?!

Emily

This is the only way we could be happy.

Jason

What have I done, what have I done?!

Emily

You said this is what you wanted.

Jason

Not like this!

Emily

She was going to leave Jason. She was going to leave you.

Jason

Oh my god, oh my god!

Emily

Now we can all be together...

Jason

We're never going to be together!

Emily

Yes, we can.

Emily produces the same knife used to stab Kai.

Emily

You have nothing else to live for.

Jason

How did you get that!?

Emily

Secret.

Jason

Stop messing with me!

Emily

You've been a bad boy. It's time to redeem yourself.

I killed her! I killed her! Jason

Sirens are heard. Police lights flash.

Do it before it's too late! Emily

Emily forces the knife into his hands.

We are waiting for you! We will finally be happy. Together. Forever. Emily

Voice of the Officer
(offstage through a blow horn)
Sir! Drop the weapon!

This was the answer. Jason

Death is always the end. Emily

Jason holds the knife.

Voice of the Officer
Put down your weapon!

Jason looks at Emily.

We will finally have a family. Jason

Voice of the Officer
If you do not drop the weapon we will be forced to take action!

Jason
Kai... "Death hath suck'd the honey of thy breath"... I will lie with you soon.

Jason raises the knife, choosing a warrior's death. A gun shot rings out

*and hits Jason in the shoulder. He
falls to the ground.*

Jason

Emily?

Emliy

You failed.

Jason

EMILY! Help me!!

*Emily looks at her brother with empty
eyes then returns to the castle and
disappears.*

Jason

EMILY!

Lights fade to black.

Act II

Scene VII: Solace
(Three Days Later)

Lights come up on Sherman Begay.

Sherman

A couple of weeks ago I gave my broadcast on the Lady Bengals game... it's with a heavy heart that I give this news to you, my listeners... Kai Yazzie, number 35 was murdered by Jason Black three days ago. He was arrested hours after the incident, trying to end his own life. Services for Kai Yazzie will be held at Sacred Heart Cathedral on Saturday morning. I-- am truly at a loss for words. I don't even know how to express the remorse I feel for the Yazzie family. Kai Yazzie was a hero to this town... Here is a clip of an interview I took with her moments after the game...

Lights up on Kai Yazzie, the same place Sherman Begay was during the game, downstage right. She is excited. The crowd is the background celebrates.

Kai

Holy crap! Sorry. I really can't believe-- did that really just happen?! I'm in-- is someone going to wake me up soon?!

Sherman talks to her from his desk but it's the same as if he was there (Or can be an actual recording).

Sherman

Then we are all having the same dream! A record scoring game for you, Miss Kai and M.V.P. to top it off! How does it feel to be YOU right now?!

Kai

Ehhh--- Stunned! It's really-- I'm-- I can't even begin to explain! But it wasn't just me, my teammates are amazing and of course we wouldn't be here without Coach Lomasney.

Sherman

Terrific! Is there anyone you want to give a special thanks too?

Kai

My Grandma, for always supporting me. My Mom, for pushing me so hard. And-- my boyfriend, for giving me the Fadeaway. I couldn't have done it without you.

Sherman

Thank you Kai Yazzie and Congratulations!

Kai

Thank you Sherman. My Grandma loves your show.

Sherman

Well bless her heart. And now, a word from our Sponsors.

Sherman Begay clicks the "ON AIR" sign off and sighs. Grief slowly overcomes him. Lights up on the playground. It's quiet. Jason enters and takes the same seat on the bench as he did in the beginning of the play. He draws on the bench with a Sharpie. He takes out the bracelet from his pocket.

Jason

So was this a love story or a tragedy? A dream or a memory? My story or hers? One that you will forget over dinner or after reading it in the Navajo Times or seeing it on the Channel 4 News? I don't know. But the luxury you have is forgetting... blood is on my hands, even though soap and water have washed it away, I will never be cleansed. So... am I a bad guy? Who can be the judge?

He turns the bracelet over in his hands.

Jason

Sometimes I think that if I close my eyes and count to ten, I'll wake up and it'll be a dream.

He closes his eyes and begins to count as Kai steps into the playground, dressed in the same outfit as she began the play. When he reaches ten, he opens his eyes and notices Kai.

Jason

How long have you been standing there?

Kai

Not long.

Jason

See anything unusual?

Kai

Besides you playing hide and go seek by yourself? No. No, not really.

Jason

I wasn't playing with myself. Wait-- that came out wrong.

Kai

Sure it did.

Jason

I wasn't.

Kai

Uh huh.

Jason

I wasn't!

Kai

Not judging. I didn't know anyone was here.

Kai walks toward the swings. Jason joins her.

Jason

I'm sorry.

Kai

I know.

Jason

So what do you want to do?

(A beat.)

Kai

Can you push me? Please?

She smiles. He returns the smile and does so. The lights dim as if the sun was setting, crickets are heard. Cars drive by on I-40, a train engine screams as it gets closer and passes. Lights fade to black.

End of Play.