

THE PARAGON JOURNAL

SPECIAL ISSUE - AUGUST 2016



THE
PARAGON
JOURNAL

JOURNAL OF CREATIVE ARTS

Warning: Some published pieces may contain graphic language, violence, and/or nudity. We are sorry if this may cause any discomfort. Consider this to be the only warning, and we hope that you enjoy reading this issue.

The Paragon Journal: Journal of Creative Arts- Special (4th) Edition 2016

Cover Art courtesy of Kyle Hemmings - Pink Dress

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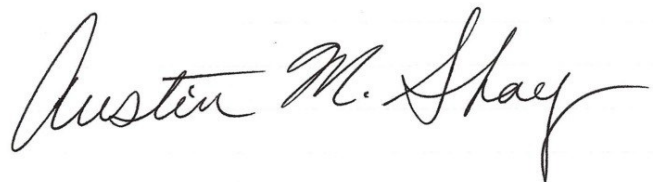
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Want to be published? Submit your work to the Fall 2016 edition of The Paragon Journal. The Fall 2016 edition deadline is September 18th. Include your name, and genre of your work in your submission email to submissions@theparagonjournal.com.

PARAGON JOURNAL

Editorial Statement

The Paragon Journal has decided to broaden our horizons by accepting almost anything that is considered creative. This issue is going to put a spotlight on seven playwrights who have submitted to our magazine. After the release of the third issue, we have received a huge influx of play submissions and we decided that it was time to showcase a few now, and save a couple for the upcoming Fall Issue of the magazine. We are deeply pleased with the quality of work that we are receiving and can not wait until the readers have a chance to see the Fall Issue, but in the meantime we give you seven plays that have peaked our interest, appealed our emotions, and challenged our views. We hope that you enjoy this Special Edition of *The Paragon Journal*.



-Austin Shay

Editor-in-Chief, The Paragon Journal

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Give Me To The Wind To Take Away

By: Michael Tooher

Page: 1

Virginia Beach Incest Time Machine

By: Bryan Stubbles

Page: 9

Restoration/Conservation

By: David Miller

Page: 52

Drinks on Me

By: Prince Duren

Page: 65

Gifts

By: Ivan Faute

Page: 82

To Be Safe

By: Louisa Strothman

Page: 97

Interview with Drew Gasparini

By: Austin Shay

Page: 112

Give Me To The Wind To Take Away

By: Michael Tooher

Location: Avin Prison, Tehran, Iran.

Abstract: This is a true story. The moment of judgement for Reyhaneh Jabbari, a young Iranian woman who was executed in October of 2014 after 7 years of torture and imprisonment for killing the man who attempted to rape her.

Cast List: 3 men, 1 woman

Reyhaneh (24, female)

Defense Attorney (Male, 20's - early 30's)

Prosecutor (Male, 40's - early 50's)

Judge (Male, 60 +)

The Islamic Republic of Iran.

Avin Prison, Tehran.

The Supreme Court of Cassation.

RETHANEH stands downstage center, in black, wearing a head scarf, her fingertips covered in dirty bandages. Off stage left stands the DEFENSE ATTORNEY looking grim. Offstage right the PROSECUTOR, looking smugly proud. A drum is heard softly, tolling.

The PROSECUTOR looks off stage

PROSECUTOR

Rise.

The JUDGE enters. He stands center, elevated on a riser.

Pause.

JUDGE

(monotonously)

In the matter of the appeal of the woman Reyhaneh of the family Jabbari for her conviction on the charge of the murder of ...

DEFENSE ATTORNEY

He tried to rape her!

PROSECUTOR

She is a murderer.

JUDGE

...Morteza of the family Sarabandi.

PROSECUTOR

An upright man, a doctor, a trusted member of our intelligence service.

DEFENSE ATTORNEY

A sex criminal who attempted to drug and rape a nineteen year old.

Pause.

REYHANEH

I was sitting in a café discussing interior design with a client on the phone when he came over and spoke to me. He introduced himself as Dr. Sarabandi and said he needed design work for his office as soon as possible. He asked me if I could go with him right away...

JUDGE

It is the finding of the Supreme Court of Cassation of the Islamic Republic of Iran...

REYHANEH

Like a fool, I went with him.

PROSECUTOR

Chaste devout women do not go off with strange men.

(Beat)

Whore.

DEFENSE ATTORNEY

She is from a poor family.

REYHANEH

We needed whatever money I could bring in.

(Beat)

He drove me to a ramshackle house, a hut really. And when we went in, I knew something was wrong. He locked the door and tried to make me

drink this liquid. Then he placed his hands around my waist and tried to pull me to the ground. He said...

PROSECUTOR

A tissue made of lies.

REYHANEH

“No one would ever believe you over me.” he said. When he tried to put his mouth on me...

JUDGE

That the verdict of guilty...

REYHANEH

I stabbed him in the shoulder with my penknife and ran away.

PROSECUTOR

She left him there to die slowly of his wound.

DEFENSE ATTORNEY

It was self defense!

PROSECUTOR

There is no self defense under Sharia law.

JUDGE

...is upheld.

REYHANEH

I was arrested and tortured under questioning.

(She looks at her hands. Then simply.)

They took my fingernails. One by one.

PROSECUTOR

Lies. This is a political murder pure and simple. You were not harmed.

DEFENSE ATTORNEY

She fought for her honor.

REYHANEH

I could not have lived with the shame of rape.

(Beat)

As soon as I arrived at the Police Headquarters three large men were waiting for me in a small room. As soon as I entered, they handcuffed me to a chair and made me sit on the floor. They took turns screaming, "You think you are smart? People more important than you have been broken here!" I could feel something on my back and my skin, swelling, getting ripped. I felt a burning sensation and screamed until my ears hurt from the sound. I refused to confess so eventually they took me somewhere for interrogation where I saw a 12 or 13 year old girl hanging naked from the ceiling by her wrists. She was pale, her lips were cracked. She was whimpering.

(Pause)

The interrogator sat across from me and said that today or tomorrow they would go get my little sister. He referred to her by name: Badook. "It is her turn," he said. "She is frail, thin... How long do you think she will last hanging like this one?" He began telling me in detail what he was going to do to my little sister.

(Beat)

I signed whatever they put in front of me.

JUDGE

You are to be taken her to a public place...

PROSECUTOR

Yet there was still a chance you might live. If you hadn't told the entire world your lies...

DEFENSE ATTORNEY

The truth.

PROSECUTOR

If you hadn't prostituted yourself to the West for attention and shamed the memory of Dr. Sarabandi in front of the world, his family might have forgiven you and taken blood money instead. But since you have shamed them so cruelly...

JUDGE

...where you will be elevated by a crane mechanism fastened to your neck, there to be left...

DEFENSE ATTORNEY

What else was there left to do? There is no justice here.

JUDGE

Until the breath leaves your body. May God in His wisdom grant you peace.

The drum stops.

The JUDGE exits and the PROSECUTOR follows, smirking. The DEFENSE ATTORNEY remains, head bowed as REYHANEH speaks.

REYHANEH

(To The audience as if to her Mother)

Dearest Mother, dear Sholeh, don't cry for what you are hearing. This world did not love me. And now I am giving in to it and embracing the

death.

(Beat. Then angrily)

But fear not, because in the court of God I will charge the inspectors. I will charge the trial judge, and the judges of the Supreme Court that beat me up when I was awake and did not refrain from abusing me. In the court of the creator I will charge all those who have afflicted me. I will charge all those that out of ignorance or with their lives wronged me and trampled on my rights.

(Beat. Then calmer)

Dear soft-hearted Sholeh, in the other world it is you and me who are the accusers and others who are the accused. However, before my death I want to ask something from you, that you have to provide for me with all your might and in any way that you can. In fact this is the only thing I want from this world, this country and you. I know you need time for this. Therefore, I am telling you this part of my will sooner. Please don't cry. Just listen. I want you to go to the court and tell them my request. I cannot write such a letter from inside the prison so once again you have to suffer because of me. It is the only thing that, if even you beg for it, I would not become upset although I have told you many times not to beg to save me from being executed.

(Beat. Then urgently)

My kind mother, the one more dear to me than my life, I don't want to rot under the soil. I don't want my eye or my younger heart to turn into dust. Beg so that is arranged that as soon as I am hanged my heart, kidney, eye, bones and anything that can be transplanted to be taken away from my body and given to someone who needs them as a gift. I don't want the recipient to know my name, buy me a bouquet, or even pray for me. I am telling you from the bottom of my heart that I don't want to have a grave

for you to come and mourn there and suffer. I don't want you to wear black clothing for me. Do your best to forget my difficult days.

The stage darkens as the sound of the wind is heard. A single light pointing down on REYHANEH starts to brighten. REYHANEH looks up into it.

The sound of the wind intensifies. The stage is black except for the single light.

REYHANEH (cont'd)

Give me to the wind to take away....

The sound of the wind intensifies.

The light fades on a three count.

The wind is the last to fade.

Curtain.

Virginia Beach Incest Time Machine

By: Bryan Stubbles

Summary: At a dysfunctional family reunion, Joanie and Luz smoke hashish and are whisked back to 1955 where their Gramps is the hottest thing on the market.

Setting: The von Forellenkirchen family reunion, Virginia Beach, present - also the 1955 reunion, Virginia Beach.

Characters:

JOANIE von Forellenkirchen (college age) - NorCal gal. Berkeley student. From San Mateo. Disappointed in the mega-wusses who pass for men at Berkeley. Cousin of **Luz**.

LUZ von Forellenkirchen (college age - 30s) - SoCal gal. Straight outta LA. Works in advertising. Disappointed in the neutered males LA has to offer. Cousin of **Joanie**.

REX (20s) - Virginia Tidewater native. A “dude.” Bro. Brosky. McTool. Useless eye candy. Cruises the family reunion for dates. Fifth cousin of **Luz** and **Joanie**. Not a von Forellenkirchen.

VERN von Forellenkirchen (20s) - Virginia native. Actually **Gramps** in 1955. Badass. Korean War vet. May or may not have killed people. Tough. Rides a hog. Disrespectful to women. The antithesis of 2016 Berkeley and LA boys.

GRAMPS von Forellenkirchen (80s) - see above, but in 2016. More cranky and could care less.

JOANIE and LUZ stand drinking beer.

JOANIE

I'm gonna find a guy I fit with...perfectly.

LUZ

Not here you won't, cousin...once I found the word milquetoast in the dictionary, it was my loser boyfriend.

JOANIE

There's so many fakes at these family reunions.

LUZ

I feel like I'm not even related to half of them. I came all the way from SoCal for this?

JOANIE

I had to leave San Mateo.

LUZ

Jesus. Look who's coming.

JOANIE

Just when you thought it was safe to be a von Forellenkirchen.

ENTER shirtless REX, with a pronounced Tidewater accent.

REX

Hey cuzzes-es. How long's it been? Too long, right? Don't you worry none. Sexy Remy is still available.

JOANIE

That's heartening.

REX

And like the Roosevelts, we - y'all and I - are so far removed from each other, we could be married and not have goofy kids.

LUZ

You put a lot of thought into this.

REX

I wrote a paper about it at TCC. Tidewater Community College.

REX (cont'd)

I didn't use your real names or nothin'.

REX points.

In the paper, you're Luz and you're Joanie.

JOANIE

Those are our real names.

REX

Well you know it's been so long I last saw you two. You can use my paper as a reference.

LUZ (to
JOANIE)

I'm sure Berkeley is in dire need of such a study.

REX

Y'all changed a bit since the last reunion. Filled out quite nicely.

LUZ

Are we sandbags?

REX

Nah. You look like womenses now.

(looks around)

Hard to believe we've been having family reunions on this very spot since 1818.

LUZ and JOANIE start to EXIT.

REX (cont'd)

I just picked up some hashish from a guy on base.

THE WOMEN stop. REX takes out a zip-loc baggie with TWO SPLIFFS. REX hands them the spliffs. And a lighter.

JOANIE

Looks enlightening.

REX

I already smoked today's quota. Your gramps is looking for you.

LUZ

Gramps von Forellekirchen? That old codger?

JOANIE

Last time I saw him he was dementia'd out - still fighting in Korea.

LUZ

(imitating
GRAMPS)

"Where's my foxhole? Where's my foxhole?"

REX

He is a huge dick.

JOAN-

IE (imitates
GRAMPS)

"I knew this broad in the war." And he's got that thing on his face.

THEY light up.

REX

If you lay down, the high is much stronger. The clouds paint pretty pictures. Gotta run.

EXIT REX.

LUZ

Get hit on at your own family reunion. Good riddance.

JOANIE

Gross.

JOANIE and LUZ lie down.

LUZ

You ever huffed hash before?

JOANIE

No.

THEY smoke.

LUZ

Man, the sky is getting dark.

LIGHTS DOWN. LIGHTS UP. LUZ and JOANIE curled up like potato bugs (aka roly-polys). ENTER VERN, leather jacket.

VERN

Hey ladies! You broads hungover?

VERN yanks them both up. VERN shirtless under jacket.

LUZ

Like a hashish hangover.

LUZ and JOANIE are very wobbly. THEY hang onto his arms.

VERN

I'd give you a spin on my chopper. But you dames seem -

LUZ

Are you Marlon Brando?

VERN

He's just an actor. I'm the real deal.

LUZ and VERN look around.

VERN

He's just an actor. I'm the real deal.

LUZ and VERN look around.

LUZ

Where the Hell are we?

VERN

Virginia Beach, baby! It was Virgin Beach till I got here. Ride hard or die hard. That's what I always say.

LUZ

You're dressed kinda weird.

VERN

If it's a capital crime to be weird in 1955, then string me up.

JOANIE

You're different.

VERN

Reckon I give a rat's ass what some broad thinks?

JOANIE

No. Actually I don't.

VERN

Ride or -

LUZ

"Die hard." We get it.

VERN

So which do you chickadees do?

LUZ

Excuse you?

VERN

Vern. Vernon. Like Mount Vernon. Who wants to mount Vernon?

JOANIE

That better be the name of your bike, mister.

VERN

Ava's my bike. I ride her like Sinatra rode -

LUZ

Okay. We get you're crass and evil. You asked what we do. I work as an advertising assistant in LA. Um, Joanie here is at Berkeley.

VERN

Couple brainiacs. But what I meant was, do you ride hard or die hard?

JOANIE

Our intelligence may threaten you.

LUZ

Nobody's mounting Vernon today. Joanie...Virginia Beach looks kinda big, even in 1955. I'm gonna go exploring.

VERN

Be careful. These family reunions can be suspect. There's always some creep named Rex trying to get a chance. Watch out.

LUZ

I'll find us some ice cream.

EXIT LUZ.

VERN

You look sad.

JOANIE

Cool as a cucumber.

JOANIE looks at his face.

JOANIE (cont'd)

Wow. You got scars.

VERN

Well, took a Commie bayonet to the face.

JOANIE

Can I touch it?

VERN

Sure baby doll.

JOANIE touches it.

JOANIE

That's kinda sexy.

VERN

That's not all that's sexy on me.

JOANIE

So you been in a real fight?

VERN

That Red? Blasted him. I killed North Korean Reds, Chinese Reds and once I fired my rifle at a MiG and brought down a Russky Red.

JOANIE

You're so strong.

VERN

They call 'em Soviets.

JOANIE

And smart. You're nothing like the boys at Berkeley.

VERN

That's because boys at Berkeley have no penises.

JOANIE giggles.

VERN (cont'd)

Ma'am.

Kisses her hand.

VERN and JOANIE start to make out.

LIGHTS DOWN. Audience can't see
VERN and JOANIE.

VERN (cont'd)

Where's my foxhole? Huh?

JOANIE

Right here, baby.

Moaning and laughter. LIGHTS UP.

JOANIE and VERN laying on the
ground. ENTER LUZ.

LUZ

Cousin. Cousin.

No answer. LUZ kicks JOANIE.

JOANIE

What the Hell?

LUZ

How could you do this to me?

JOANIE

To you? You wanted ice cream. I wanted the shagging of my life.

JOANIE looks down at her ice
creams.

JOANIE (cont'd)

We both go what we wanted!

LUZ

With Vern? He's a Neanderthal! And you've totally ruined this for the
Bechtel Test.

JOANIE

Oh shut up. You were going on about "milquetoast" in the beginning.

LUZ

He's not even a boy or a man. Or. I don't know. I'm just really mad at
you.

Spits on JOANIE.

JOANIE

We're cousins. It's not like I'm your girlfriend.

LUZ

You would think that, NorCal skank!

VERN gets up, EXITS.

JOANIE

Please don't go.

(to
LUZ) You made him leave.

LUZ

You rode hard. Now prepare to die hard!

LUZ on the attack. Each throws a right
cross. They knock each other out.
LIGHTS DOWN. LIGHTS UP. JOANIE
moans.

JOANIE

Luz?

LUZ mumbles.

JOANIE (cont'd)

I'm sorry.

LUZ sits up.

LUZ

I think it was just a hashish dream. That we both shared.

JOANIE

Yeah. And you should be happy you didn't get any Vern action.

LUZ

Mount Vernon?

JOANIE

'Cause he's probably a relative and that would just be gross.

LUZ

Totally.

JOANIE

We don't have any relatives here with bayonet scars on their face do we?

LUZ

Something happened to Gramps' face.

JOANIE

I always thought it was a birth mark.

LUZ

Let's not dwell on it... How was it?

JOANIE

I don't kiss and tell.

LUZ

Guys Joanie's never told me about before: that surf stud in Malibu, that really smart linguist back in Salt Lake, that President of Panama, that Cambodian Elvis impersonator ---

JOANIE

Okay. Okay! Remember Rex? He said Gramps was a huge dick...that Vern guy, who totally isn't Gramps von Forellenkirchen, - well, let's just say isn't a huge dick.

LUZ

But he is...

JOANIE

No. He had a huge -

LUZ

Oh, my God!

JOANIE

Even though it was a dream I still feel kinda -

LUZ stares. THEY TURN. ENTER
GRAMPS wearing the same leather jacket.

GRAMPS

Hey, you skunks. What're doing at this reunion?

JOANIE

What have I done?

GRAMPS

I'll tell ya whatcha done...you made things confusin' for your ma.

JOANIE

That was just a dream old man...

GRAMPS

And so was you.

GRAMPS lowers his jacket. Bare skin. Scratch scars on his back.

GRAMPS (cont'd)

Ain't no Red poked me in the back with a bayonet. That right there's the mark of a real fighter. A von Forellenkirchen.

LUZ

Scars are sexy.

GRA

MPS (points at
JOANIE)

She thought so.

JOANIE

I'm gonna throw up.

JOANIE starts to run away - LUZ
grabs her.

LUZ

You said "huge", right?

JOANIE

Yeah, totally.

EXIT JOANIE. OS sounds of vomiting.

JOANIE (cont'd)

Gramps. Let's sit here on the beach.

GRAMPS

Sixty years ago, you were so jealous.

LUZ

I just didn't see how progressive you were.

GRAMPS

That Joanie was a wild one.

LUZ

Don't forget, I'm a von Forellenkirchen, too.

LUZ and GRAMPS make out. LUZ sees fresh claw marks on his chest. SHE pushes him away.

LUZ (cont'd)

Who made those?

OS REX.

REX (OS)

Mister von Forellenkirchen!

LUZ

Rex! He's not even a real von Forellenkirchen!

GRAMPS

I needed someone to pass the time with until I found you again. Sixty years of loneliness hurts a man.

LUZ

That's so sweet.

LUZ kisses HIM. They make out.

LIGHTS DOWN.

LUZ (cont'd)

She was right. You aren't a huge dick.

CONSIDER SUBMITTING TO THE 5TH
ISSUE

DEADLINE: SEPTEMBER 18TH, 2016



RESTORATION/CONSERVATION

By: David Miller

Characters

SIMON GARFIELD, 25

ALICE ASHFORD, 23

JAMES BRITISH, good looking

Time & Place

The workspace of a map restorer/conservationist. The present.

(Two map conservators at work. They work in very close quarters. The lighting is tightly focused on the work that they do—the restoration of illuminated manuscript-like maps. Goldleaf, delicate work. They work side-by-side on high stools and work at high desks like they are from the Middle Ages or like Bob Cratchit's high desk in A Christmas Carol. That kind. The room is housed above a very, very old library that houses very old manuscripts. It's probably in England. But these two are American.

A long silence as they work.)

SIMON

So you've never been to the Grand Canyon then?

ALICE

No.

SIMON

But you'd like to.

ALICE

Yes, yes.

SIMON

"when work allows... "

ALICE

(With a smile) Yes—

SIMON & ALICE

—“when work allows...”

(Another moment.)

SIMON

Sometimes it seems like it goes on forever.

ALICE

...?

SIMON

The work. The work that we do.

ALICE

Yes.

SIMON

(after the skip of the beat)

Sometimes I like that. Sometimes I like that quality about time. For keeps going.

ALICE

Sure.

SIMON

No, I mean. I don't mean that time keeps going. I mean, I know that time keeps going. I mean, sometimes I like that the work seems to be, well, timeless.

ALICE

This room is conducive to that sense of timelessness. No windows. No clocks. A lot of silence. And *(she points to the manuscripts)*.

SIMON

Yes, these.

(They work.)

SIMON

What is it that you say that you do?

ALICE

You are asking what I do?

SIMON

No, No. Ha ha. That would be something, wouldn't it. "What is it that you do?" Like some awkward opening line. And yet all this time and we have been working. Together. On the same project.

ALICE

Right. I guess that would be funny.

SIMON

Yes. Funny. (*Awkward moment.*) I mean when you go out. When you go to parties or out with your friends or your whoever-it-might-be. In your life. They say what do you *do*?

ALICE

I am a conservationist.

SIMON

And they understand that?

ALICE

No, not always. But usually people are more concerned about telling you what they do.

SIMON

That's true.

ALICE

And, to be honest, I don't go out much. ...only...

SIMON & ALICE

“When work allows.”

(A shared smile.)

SIMON

But when they do, when they do want to know?

ALICE

I will add "maps" and see how that goes. I conserve and restore maps.

SIMON

I see. Well, if I was one of those people I would love to know what you do.

ALICE

That would be a pretty short conversation now wouldn't it?

SIMON

Yes, I suppose it would. Awkward. You don't say pocket maps?

ALICE

Not if they don't ask.

SIMON

I would ask. I would ask you what you do, and why do you do what you do. That's maybe what I would ask. Then. If it turned out we did the same job... (*Awkward moment. Then suddenly.*) Do you like wine?

ALICE

I do.

SIMON

Nice.

ALICE

You too?

SIMON

Yes. I don't know much about it. But. I think that I like it. Or I know that I like it, but I don't know what I like, I guess.

ALICE

(direct)

I like Malbec.

SIMON

Noted.

(Moment. Simon prepares.)

SIMON

Could you ever see yourself doing anything else?

ALICE

I haven't tried, I suppose.

SIMON

Larger scale perhaps?

ALICE

No. I prefer what's small. The Drake Silver Medallion is my favorite. To wear the globe. To wear the path, to wear the circumnavigation of the globe and it's *(gestures)* this big. Or this tiny, really.

SIMON

Sure.

(A moment, shorter and more fraught than before.)

SIMON

It's my last shift.

ALICE

Before...?

SIMON

Last shift. New assignment. So.

ALICE

Oh. Last shift...

SIMON

Hereford.

ALICE

Where?

SIMON

The Hereford. I am working on it. Hereford Mappa Mundi.

ALICE

Oh.

SIMON

Yes.

ALICE

That's quite...

SIMON

...large I know. 158 cm by 133 cm. 52”” in diameter

ALICE

Yes.

(Beat.)

ALICE

When I was little, I don't remember how old, father told me, “Alice, the world is your oyster.” The world is your oyster. He was so sincere. So earnest. I thought it must be something profound that he was telling me. But I didn't understand what it meant. So I pictured the world in an oyster. Little. And then I imagined how little we must be if the world was actually size of an oyster. After that, whenever I would see maps, I would try to fit them, in my imagination, to the size of a little oyster. And then my imagination made it even smaller when later I learned that pearls came from oysters and so I pictured the world size of the pearl. It must've been around the same time that I learned that the world *was* round, or at least *understood* it—maybe I had learned it before, but I now understood that the world was round. I saw globes and some maps splattered across these globes. Painted on these globes. On these pearls. *(A small moment)* The delicate nature of these pages, of these maps. Their small size, yet significant impact on their peers and on history. On us.

SIMON

It is fascinating. Small pages. Small images.

ALICE

Smaller the map. The more fascinated I've become. I became, what some people say is, obsessed.

SIMON

What would *you* call it?

ALICE

I don't know. Full of feeling. For maps. For the world. For the mapmakers. Who try to make sense of it. How the world fits on the pearl. On a little pearl. So that's why, I guess. That's why I do what I do. I know you didn't really ask why, but...

SIMON

I'm not really good at asking.

ALICE

I just wanted to tell you. In case I didn't have a chance again.

SIMON

There's another spot open. On the team. The Hereford team.

ALICE

Oh.

SIMON

I know it's not your thing. The larger scale. I understand. But.

(A brief moment. A knock at the door and then JAMES enters. He's British. And good looking.)

JAMES

Oh. Right. Hello then. I thought I was working with only one colleague.

SIMON

What are you doing?

JAMES

Don't start till tomorrow, technically, but wanted to get the lay of the land. Thought you'd be gone by now, so.

SIMON

I don't leave till. (*Checks watch.*) Right now. Usually.

JAMES

Right. Well, would you mind terribly much? If I checked it out.

SIMON

No. No. (*Awkwardly moving past JAMES to the door in the cramped quarters.*) So, Alice. I will. It's been very good working with you.

ALICE

You too—

JAMES

Alice! Yes, of course. Saw the two of you and couldn't remember who it was, my new colleague. Pleasure to meet you. (*Shakes hands and takes a seat.*) Close quarters, eh?

ALICE

Yes.

SIMON

Well. Then. I will be going then. I'm off. Goodbye.

JAMES

ALICE

Right.

Goodbye, Simon.

(SIMON exits. A moment then ALICE goes back to her work, end of the day cleaning up. JAMES examines the tools, checks drawers.

JAMES

Small quarters here, eh?

ALICE

Yes.

JAMES

Small quarters for small maps.

ALICE

Yes.

JAMES

Don't suppose we would need more room for what we do.

ALICE

That's true. *(A moment.)* Maybe I need some more room.

JAMES

I am so sorry, here, I can slide over a smidge—

ALICE

No, no, I'm sorry—that's not what I meant.

JAMES

...?

ALICE

I meant. In life. Or. Well, just that maybe I need to expand the possibilities. Branch out. I've always worked on a small scale. I think that it may be time to make a change. Excuse me.

(ALICE wriggles past him.)

JAMES

Of course, of course. Have a good night then.

ALICE

Good night.

(Lights fade out. Time passes. Lights come up on JAMES and SIMON. In the cramped quarters. They work. Then, after a strained moment JAMES strikes up conversation.)

JAMES

So she took another job, eh?

SIMON

Yes.

JAMES

What's she up to now?

SIMON

She's working on the Hereford Mappa Mundi apparently.

JAMES

Ohhhh, now that's a larger scale, isn't it?

SIMON

It is. She requested it. Specifically.

JAMES

And you...?

SIMON

I requested that I be returned... Though this is not what I had in mind...

JAMES

Right.

*(JAMES goes back to work. SIMON stares out. Lights fade to black.
End of play.)*

Drinks on Me

By: Prince Duren

CAST OF CHARACTER

GARY- 50, office worker

JACK- 40, bartender

LOLA- 30, working girl

TIM E

Present

PLACE

Bar

AT RISE: A bar room, couple tables, and stools. On stage, JACK a bartender, laid back, a really cool guy . HE'S cleaning the bar, singing to HIM SELF, occasionally looking at LOLA sitting alone at a table. LOLA is a gorgeous woman, oozing sexiness, wearing a red skirt and heels. SHE'S sipping on wine glancing at JACK. Enter GARY a lonely office worker, a hopeless romantic, looking for love in all the wrong places.

JACK

Tough day?

GARY

Sits at the bar slouching over.

Day. Month. Year. All tough.

JACK

A drink or two will set you straight.

GARY

Gives JACK a credit card.

One is plenty for me.

JACK

The customer is always right.

GARY

You're my kind of guy . Since we're starting a nice relationship, I'm Gary.

JACK begins mixing drinks

JACK

Jack.

THEY shake hands.

GARY

Nice place. Ever have any trouble?

JACK

Jerks try to push their weight around. I call M r. Smith and M r. Wesson.

JACK pours the drink.

GARY

Downs drinks with quickness.

Whew! That's some strong stuff.

JACK

I got something a little weaker. It goes down smooth and has a sweet taste.

GARY

One drink is all I can handle. I'll take the check now.

JACK

Are you sure?

GARY

Yeah, I need to be on my way home.

GARY attempts to leave.

JACK

You seem like a nice guy. This drink is on the house.

GARY

That's really nice of you, but I can't do it. I'm running late and I should be moving along.

JACK

It's not often I give out free drinks. How much time does it take to have one more drink? I would consider it an insult if you didn't accept my offer.

GARY reluctantly sits down.

GARY

One drink won't hurt.

JACK

That's the spirit. To show how much I like you, I'll have a drink too.

JACK pours the drinks.

GARY

Afterwards, I have to be on my way.

JACK

Fair enough. Never had to bribe a customer. I'm used to kicking them out.

GARY

Drinks.

That was great.

JACK

Even better the second time around.

GARY

I'll have to say no.

JACK

Fair enough.

GARY begins to leave but notices LOLA.

GARY

Holy moly . Who is that? Never seen a woman so beautiful.

JACK

That's Lola.

GARY

M oving closer
to JACK. Lola? That's the most beautiful name I've ever
heard.

JACK

Go over and talk to her. She'll enjoy your company . M ight even bright-
en her day.

GARY

She'd laugh me out of this bar. Not adding that to my list of problems.
Besides, I need to be going.

JACK

Gives HIM a drink

Drink this. It'll relax you enough to make the move.

GARY

I really shouldn't. Like everything else, I'll chalk this one up as a loss.

JACK

C'mon man. Initiation of conversation is half the battle. What's the worst she can say?

GARY

No, is pretty bad to me.

JACK

Take a chance. You never know what could happen.

GARY looks over at LOLA but quickly turns away.

GARY

She's just so smoking hot. If God made anything better, he'd kept it for himself.

JACK

Sitting here talking about it won't accomplish anything.

GARY raises HIS glass to LOLA and she does the same.

GARY

Did you see that?! She wants me bad. I can feel her vibes from here.

JACK

She doesn't usually show interest in most guys. If I were you, I'd see what's there.

GARY

Drinks.

You only live once.

JACK

That's the spirit!

GARY

I'm working on liquid courage alone.

GARY timidly walks towards
LOLA.

JACK cheers HIM on.

JACK

(Whispering)

Gary. Gary. Gary.

GARY stands at LOLA's table.

LOLA

Suga, you going to sit or stare? Either way, I'd appreciate if you decided pretty quickly.

GARY slowly sits.

LOLA (cont'd)

Move in a little closer. I won't bite unless you want me to. Name's Lola. What's yours, Suga?

GARY

Gary.

GARY wipes HIS face,
takes deep breaths, and
loosening HIS tie.

LOLA

Hunnie child, you gonna have to get a grip. Take a sip of this drink.

GARY

That's good. Thanks, Miss Lola.

LOLA

Lola would be just fine. No need to put more years on me than I have. You're pretty cute.

LOLA seductively rubs HIS leg
with HER foot.

GARY

That feels mighty nice. What am I doing? This is too good to be true. Thanks for the drink.

GARY begins to leave.

LOLA

You just like all the rest. Why do I do this to myself? Just once, can I meet a nice guy? Go on leave.

GARY

Didn't mean to hurt your feelings. Nice gal like you don't want someone simple.

LOLA

It's rude to drink and run. I'll sit alone, with no one to talk to, drinking my sorrows away .

GARY

Maybe one or two drinks will be okay . How's that?

LOLA

Suga, I knew there was something special about ya'. Just relax and enjoy.

GARY

We're gonna need some help with all these drinks.

LOLA

Suga, that's nothing. Drinking really gets a bad rep . To me, it helps ease the mind, body, and soul. Besides, when you drinking with someone it helps the cause.

LOLA gestures to JACK to
bring more drinks. .

GARY

Whatever you just gave me was amazing. What's it called?

LOLA

It's called "Sweet Seduction." Ingredients are a secret. I only drink the best of best. None of that cheap bull you were drinking over there. If you wanna taste greatness, it comes with a price.

GARY

After the day I've had, a few drinks will do me good.

LOLA massages GARY'S shoulders.

LOLA

Tell Lola all about it.

GARY

Just no excitement. Everyday is the same. Nothing out of the ordinary.

LOLA

Hunnie, all that's about to change. I have just what you need.

GARY

You'd be wasting your time. Beat. I shouldn't be here.

LOLA

You're a man and men drink. Nothing wrong with that.

THEY raise THEIR glasses.

GARY

I'll drink to that. I haven't had this much fun in a long time. Getting older is good, but it's so uncomfortable.

LOLA rubs HER body.

LOLA

Suga, it might be snow on the roof, but there's fire in the furnace.

GARY pushes the drinks away. HE'S showing signs of being drunk.

GARY

I should really slow down.

LOLA

Don't worry Lola is going to take real good care of you.

GARY

Sounds good to me.

JACK brings the drinks to the table. HE gives GARY a bill.

LOLA

Put all this on my tab.

JACK

Will do. I'll be at the bar if you need me.

GARY

I don't feel right with you paying. The least I can do is pay for my own.

LOLA

You're such a cutie pie. You'll have your turn to repay me later. Lola always collects on her debt.

GARY drinks quickly.

GARY

I can definitely drink to that. On that note, let's keep it coming.

GARY gestures for more drinks.

LOLA

It's about time you started to relax. I was getting worried about you.

GARY

Oh yeah, I'm relaxed. It's all because of you.

LOLA

Suga, it was in you the whole time.

GARY

Yeah, maybe it was. How about another drink?

LOLA

Sounds good to me. I'm starting to feel a little tipsy . Alcohol makes me do wild things.

LOLA seductively rubs HER body, moans, and runs HER fingers through HER hair. GARY'S eyes and mouth are wide open.

GARY

I could really get used to a place like this.

LOLA

Hey suga, I gotta go. Here's my address, so we can party later. Give me a few minutes to freshen up.

LOLA whispers in GARY'S ear, kisses HIS cheek, and walks towards the door. SHE blows kisses and waves to GARY as SHE exits. GARY jumps up and down with excitement.

JACK

I see it went well.

GARY

It was amazing.

JACK

The only thing left is to finish what you started.

GARY

Exactly. I've got to come to this place more often.

JACK

My doors are always open.

GARY straightens HIS clothes.

GARY

How do I look?

JACK

You're ready to take the world by storm.

GARY spins around.

GARY

I feel like a new man. Lola has done something to me and I like it.

JACK

She sure has done a number on you. I saw you two touching and rubbing on each other. For a minute, I thought about turning this place into a hotel.

GARY

It did get kind of wild. I'll never forget this day for as long as I live.

JACK

I'm sure you won't.

GARY

I owe it all to you.

JACK

I didn't do anything. You had this inside of you all along.

GARY

Thanks to Lola.

JACK

She is one of a kind.

GARY looks at HIS watch, shakes JACK'S head, and walks towards the door. JACK stops HIM and gives HIM a second bill. GARY rejects the bill and attempts to leave. JACK places a gun on the bar.

FADE TO
BLACK.

Gifts

By: Ivan Rodden

Cast:

OLIVIA – a woman in her late teens/early twenties

AILEEN – a woman a few years her senior and her half sister

Setting

Living room of a poor middle class family. There is a bar in the back with cheap gin and some glasses, perhaps an old bottle of Wild Turkey.

SCENE ONE

OLIVIA sits on a chair center stage playing a guitar. She is concentrating on a paper in front of her picking out a simple tune. She is trying to compose but isn't very good. She picks out a few notes and stumbles, tries to return to the phrase but cannot. Keeps trying.

AILEEN enters and clomps across the floor. She marches to the bar and as noisily as possible pours herself and large glass of cheap gin. Aileen watches OLIVIA from behind for a moment. OLIVIA is oblivious to her and continues trying to compose.

AILEEN

What is it?

OLIVIA considers ignoring her but thinks better of it.

OLIVIA

A song.

AILEEN

I imagine.

OLIVIA

I'm writing it.

AILEEN

A song. You're writing.

OLIVIA

Yes.

OLIVIA continues to pluck and sing a few words under her breath. AILEEN watches.

AILEEN

What for?

OLIVIA

Can't I just write a song?

AILEEN

Olivia, in all the years we have had the pleasure, I have never known you to do something "just because."

OLIVIA

Well, this is.

AILEEN

(More to herself.) Bullshit.

AILEEN refreshes her drink whether it needs it or not.

OLIVIA tries to continue.

AILEEN

What are the words.

OLIVIA

I haven't decided.

AILEEN

What?

OLIVIA

I haven't finished them. I want to do the music first. And don't you think that's enough gin for tonight.

AILEEN

I'll let you know when I've had enough gin for the night.

(Pause.)

AILEEN

(Conciliatory) I thought you had to write the words first?

OLIVIA

Not always. It's not a rule.

AILEEN

Isn't it?

AILEEN snatches the paper from OLIVIA.

AILEEN

(reading) You are as rare as the moonlight.

Gone for a time and then

return. Like a star in the sky

You return after the dark time-

This is about him, isn't it?

OLIVIA

It's really not for you to take my things, Aileen.

AILEEN

It is when you're a fool.

OLIVIA

I prefer not to talk to you like this.

AILEEN

In what way, little Olivia? Do you mean when I'm drunk? Or when I'm being honest?

OLIVIA

When you start calling me names.

AILEEN

Good enough.

You are not a fool, you are doing something foolish.

OLIVIA

A welcome home party isn't foolish.

As soon as the words are out of her mouth, OLIVIA wants to snatch them.

AILEEN

A party? A *welcome home* party... I told you there will be no such thing in this house for that man.

OLIVIA

I misspoke.

AILEEN

I don't *want* him here.

OLIVIA

I didn't mean party.

AILEEN

This isn't his *home*.

OLIVIA

I meant just a welcome back, a welcome back time –

AILEEN

He is not welcome here.

OLIVIA

It is still his house.

(Beat.)

AILEEN

You think he's different, don't you?

You think prison had some...rehabilitive effect on him.

He attended those counseling sessions and he confessed his sins and he asked all the other prisoners and the doctors and maybe even the preachers – oh you know he asked the preachers too – what must I do to be forgiven? They probably told him. They probably laid it all out in a step--□ by--□ step plan. Twelve of them even. And then, oh daddy, daddy, daddy, welcome home to the... the household that you have so graciously allowed your children to live in. This wonderful gift you have granted them so they do not become helpless, homeless orphans. Take your place as the head of the table. We embrace you into the bosom of your family –

Only you probably shouldn't say "bosom" because you never know where that might lead.

OLIVIA

Shut up, just shut up. You're just drunk. This isn't your house. It's his. He didn't give it to you, he just let us live here. And now he's coming home. Yes, home.

AILEEN

Daddie's little girl does have some spirit after all. You didn't get that from him. Must have come from your own momma then.

OLIVIA is silent and stiff. AILEEN returns to fill her gin glass again. She crumples the lyrics into a ball before throwing them at OLIVIA and exiting.

SCENE TWO

A few days later, morning. There are some cups strewn about. OLIVIA'S guitar sits leaning against the chair. AILEEN enters, her hair pulled back and obviously hung over. She surveys the room in disgust. She tries the bar but the bottles are all empty. She checks for the remains in the cups, finds a bit, sniffs and drinks. She finds another cup and cradling it, walks toward the chair only to hit the guitar. She grabs the guitar in a sudden rage and lifts it over her head to smash it against the table, stops, reconsiders, falls into the chair.

OLIVIA enters and pauses when she sees her half--□sister.

OLIVIA begins to clean up.

AILEEN

Don't.

OLIVIA

I don't mind.

AILEEN

Don't.

OLIVIA continues.

AILEEN

(shouting) Don't!

OLIVIA, unsure of her self, drifts.

AILEEN

Are you staying?

OLIVIA

What?

AILEEN

Are you staying? Here in this house? With him?

OLIVIA

Where would I go?

AILEEN

Anywhere.

OLIVIA

You're leaving.

AILEEN

Is that a question.

OLIVIA

No.

AILEEN

Is that a question.

OLIVIA

No.

AILEEN

Yes, I am.

OLIVIA

Where?

AILEEN

Anywhere.

OLIVIA

Good.

AILEEN

What?

OLIVIA

Good.

I don't want you here, Aileen. He doesn't want you here either. You're negative.

AILEEN

Negative?

OLIVIA

Yes. What you said the other day.

AILEEN

Which part?

OLIVIA

People *can* change. They can make changes. Just because you don't choose to believe that it doesn't mean...

AILEEN

I'm listening, Olivia. Tell me what changes he's made.

OLIVIA

I don't know yet. He hasn't hardly been home.

AILEEN

Maybe he went to twelve step.

OLIVIA

Maybe he did, Aileen, maybe it helped him, but you are ready to...

AILEEN

Yeah, I am.

OLIVIA

You're small minded, Aileen.

AILEEN

And you're childish.

OLIVIA

I'd rather be childish.

AILEEN

Well, you've succeeded.

SCENE THREE

A few days later. OLIVIA back in the chair and picking at her guitar. AILEEN enters with a suitcase.

AILEEN

Guess I'm ready.

OLIVIA

Ok.

OLIVIA

Another song.

AILEEN

They take awhile I suppose.

OLIVIA

Where are you going?

AILEEN

Not sure long term, but Tommy said I could stay with him a few days.

OLIVIA

That's nice.

AILEEN

Yeah, he's a nice guy/

(Beat)

I'm not saying goodbye.

OLIVIA

I'm not going anywhere. I know where Tommy lives.

AILEEN

I don't mean you.

OLIVIA

Oh.

AILEEN

I don't see the point. I mean it's the reason.

OLIVIA

You have to do what you have to do.

AILEEN

I suppose so.

OLIVIA picks at the guitar and AILEEN
hesitates.

AILEEN

It's not you.

OLIVIA

What isn't?

AILEEN

My leaving. It doesn't have anything to do with you. (pause) Just him.
(pause) I just want you to know that. Ok?

OLIVIA

Ok.

OLIVIA picks at the guitar.

AILEEN

What are you working on?

OLIVIA

Just a song about a girl.

AILEEN

Oh yeah. What's her problem, a boy?

OLIVIA

No. Herself.

fin

To Be Safe

By: Louisa Strothman

ACT I

SCENE I

Lights up on Ana sitting at a kitchen table down stage left with an ashtray next to her. She lights a cigarette.

Candace enters and looks at Ana. She takes her shoes off. They make eye contact for a moment and Candace starts breathing very deeply. She drops her eyes and runs across the room off stage. Ana continues smoking. Off stage running-water is heard. Candace comes back on with her face red and wet from having washed it. She walks and stands next to the table facing away from Ana.

CANDACE

When'd you get home?

ANA

2:30

CANDACE

Oh.

ANA

Where'd you come from?

CANDACE

Erin's.

ANA

Oh.

I didn't realize you were still seeing her.

CANDACE

Um, yeah.

We got back together last week.

ANA

Oh.

CANDACE

Yeah.

She took me out to dinner tonight.

ANA

Where?

CANDACE

What?

ANA

Where'd she take you to dinner?

CANDACE

Y'know Areggio's? On Fulton.

ANA

No.

CANDACE

It was real nice.

Candace leaves the room and the audience hears water running again. She comes back with a glass of water. She takes a sip and puts the glass on the table. She sits down across from Ana and they're both looking out.

CANDACE

I had the chicken parmesan.

ANA

What?

CANDACE

At the restaurant.

And after we went to her place.

ANA

You didn't stay the night?

CANDACE

No, not tonight.

SCENE II

Lights down stage left. Lights up on a futon upstage right.

Erin is in bed. Candace crosses and get's in bed beside her. Erin has her arms crossed behind her head, her pillows propped up. Candace sits with her fingers crossed.

ERIN

That was good.

CANDACE

Yeah, I guess.

ERIN

You guess.

CANDACE

I mean yeah.

ERIN

I'm not good enough for you?

Erin moves her arms and turns to face Candace who flinches.

ERIN

Are you scared of me?

CANDACE

No.

ERIN

Good.

Erin turns back.

CANDACE

I think I'm going to go.

ERIN

You can stay.

If you want.

CANDACE

That's okay.

ERIN

I'll call you a cab.

CANDACE

That's okay. It's a short walk.

ERIN

No, I want you to be safe.

CANDACE

Okay.

Candace crosses down center in front of the bed. In the background Erin picks up the phone and dials.

CANDACE

She wants me to be safe. She takes care of me. I live in a dangerous neighborhood, and she makes sure I get home okay. She calls me sometimes to check on me. She wants me to be safe. Sometimes when she's hitting me I believe I can't feel it. She likes it too. I want to do that for her. She works all day and she needs a release. She wants me to be safe. She's a good person. She has a kid. All the money she makes goes straight to that little girl. She takes care of her. And me. She wants me to be safe. I've always kind of liked bruises. When I was little they made me look tough. My brother would look at me if I had a few scrapes. He never saw me as strong. The best I could ever do was maybe scrappy. I wasn't worth the time of day for him though. I was just another mouth to feed when he couldn't even take care of himself. Just a nuisance. He always had more important things to think about. Erin thinks I'm strong though. She knows I've been through a lot. And she listens to my problems. Ana says she doesn't love me because if she loved me she wouldn't hurt me. But Ana doesn't see that Erin needs me. I'm strong for her. And she cares. She wants me to be safe.

SCENE III

Lights up on the kitchen table where Ana is still sitting. Candace crosses and resumes the position she was in before.

ANA

So why didn't you stay?

CANDACE

I have to be at the restaurant early tomorrow. I told Charlotte I'd work brunch.

ANA

Makes sense.

CANDACE

And it's too hot to share a bed tonight. My body has expanded to twice its size.

ANA

Ha.

That's the truth.

CANDACE

Yeah?

ANA

I didn't mean it like that.

CANDACE

I know.

How was work?

ANA

More of the same.

CANDACE

So no storytellers?

ANA

One guy kept asking me how it was for me.

It's strange when they think I do it because I like it.

CANDACE

Yeah. Yeah.

ANA

It's a way to make money. You know that.

CANDACE

I know.

Ana walks in front of the table. In the back four people come in with ski masks covering their faces and stand behind the table with hands by their sides. Other than the masks they're wearing only underwear.

ANA

I'm in control. I started in this business when I had absolutely nothing. No. Not nothing. I had my body. And I sold it. Some people call me a slave. They think that that word makes them care about me. But I don't need it. I run my own show now. I don't owe anyone anything. That's more than a lot of people can say. I don't have anyone to pay back. I was thirteen and on the street. I remember my mother laughing in my face as she threw me out when I couldn't bring home enough money for rent. I got thrown out because I couldn't take care of my mother the way she was supposed to take care of me. So then I learned to take care of myself.

Ana picks up her pack of Marlboros and pulls one out light it.

I still take care of myself. My mom kicked me out that was the first time I learned how to love. Jo found me on the street trying to light my pipe and she said "Girl, whatchu you doing with that crack? That ain't gonna fix anything. You gotta warm place to go?" I said no and she brought me back to her apartment and wrapped me in a blanket and gave me the first real food I'd eaten in weeks. A few weeks later she told me if I was gonna live with

her I had to start working. She didn't know how old I was. I've always been old for my age. I said I was seventeen. I remember the first man she sent me to. She told me he was a stand-up guy and if he did anything to hurt me she'd tear him limb for limb. The first time a man hit me I came home to Jo crying. I couldn't feel the cigar burn on my thigh because that was some rich guy's kink. Because she felt it. I showed her the bruises and she kissed them one by one. That was the first night we spent together. And then it didn't matter about the burn. She found him. And I never had to go back to his ugly hotel room with the sweaty bed and the scratchy sheets.. She kept me safe. That night was the first time I made love. She stroked my hair and held me after. I had stopped shaking. And my heart-beat slowed down. I stopped shaking.

The people in the back exit. Ana returns to her seat and Candace enters and resumes her position.

CANDACE

I was thinking.

There might be an extra opening at the restaurant that you could take. Dani's thinking about leaving.

ANA

Ok.

CANDACE

You could take it if you want.

ANA

I don't.

CANDACE

I know.

ANA

I pay for this apartment.

CANDACE

I know.

ANA

I keep food on the table.

CANDACE

I know.

ANA

I got you back on your feet when you—

CANDACE

I'm grateful.

I'm sorry.

I'm worried.

ANA

Don't be. I'm not in danger.

CANDACE

I know you can take care of yourself. I just also know there are always risks. You know my momma died of AIDS when I was a little girl. And she would come home with all these bruises on her neck and arms.

ANA

I don't have bruises.

CANDACE

I know. It just scares me.

ANA

Candace, don't talk to me about bruises.

Candace massages her neck and turns away from Ana. As Candace sits in her chair, she draws her knees to her chest and wraps her arms around them. She cocks her neck and holds it there breathing into the bruise. Ana turns away from the audience to face Candace directly.

SCENE IV

A door is slammed off stage and Erin enters. She's pointing at Candace. She does not move. Ana turns to face Erin and stands up.

ERIN

I need to talk to Candace.

ANA

I ain't leaving.

ERIN

Fuck it. You can watch.

Ana sits down and lights a cigarette. Erin crosses behind the table and drags Candace by the arm so she falls out of her chair.

ERIN

You fuckin steal from me?

*Erin kicks Candace in the back. She tries not to react.
She drags her arm up gets his face really close to hers.*

CANDACE

No.

ERIN

You fuckin did. I got up to check my stash and there were three bags missing.

CANDACE

I didn't.

Erin pushes her back to the ground. She kicks her again.

ERIN

You cunt-ass lying bitch.

ANA

You said talk.

ERIN

This is not your problem.

ANA

I'm just saying.

ERIN

You can leave if you don't want to be here.

She turns back to Candace who is clutching her stomach on her side.

ANA

I ain't leaving.

ERIN

Alright then. *She turns back to Ana and starts walking toward her arm raised.* Fuck, you, bitch messed up my thought.

As Erin says this, Candace runs for Ana and trips Erin from behind. She hits her head on the chair going down and lies on the floor unconscious. Ana throws her still lit cigarette on the floor and she and Candace run stage left out the door. The door slams and the audience here a key turn in the lock. The set is cleared.

SCENE V

Two chairs and a table are brought on with menus. Candace and Ana enter and sit. The radio plays in the background.

FEMALE ANNOUNCER

This just in a townhouse in East New York burned to the ground early this morning. The firemen who arrived at the scene said the building was already engulfed when they got there. The whereabouts of the tenants are still unknown but the remains of one person were found in the basement apartment. Sources are unsure of what started the fire, only that it began—

The radio fades. A waitress comes to take Candace and Ana's order.

WAITRESS

Well g'mornin' y'all. Can I startcha off with some coffee?

ANA

Yeah, that'll be great.

WAITRESS

And are you ready to order or will you be needing a few?

ANA

Can we have another minute?

WAITRESS

Absolutely!

The waitress leaves and re-enters with coffee and mugs. She pours it out.

WAITRESS

It sure is a beautiful morning. Wasn't expecting that sunrise after a stormy night. Very calm. Peaceful. A fresh start. Go ahead, take a look.

The waitress exits again and Ana and Candace look out the window. Ana grabs Candace's hand.

ANA

She's gone.

CANDACE

She just wanted me to be safe.

ANA

No she didn't.

CANDACE

That was our home.

ANA

No it wasn't. It was the place she beat you.

Our home is just us. We can take it anywhere.

CANDACE

I'm scared.

ANA

Good.

CANDACE

I want to be safe.

Ana takes Candace hand and they look back at the sunrise. Lights down.

Interview with Drew Gasparini

By: Austin Shay

Bio: Drew Gasparini is a thrilling young musician equally committed to forging a new sound in the intersection between theatre and pop, to nurturing the next generation of artists, and to throwing one hell of a party. Drew is an award-winning musical theatre composer and lyricist, a musician and songwriter, a comedian, and a teacher.

As a musical theatre composer:

Named one of Playbill.com's "Contemporary Musical Theatre Songwriters You Should Know," Drew is currently developing a number of new stage musicals including a commission for Warner Bros. Theatre Ventures, an adaptation of the film *It's Kind of a Funny Story* for Universal Stage Productions (music & lyrics, book by Alex Brightman), an adaptation of the Newberry Award-winning children's book *The Whipping Boy* (also with Brightman), and *#UntitledPopMusical*, a wholly-original piece that shines a spotlight on our celebrity obsession (music & lyrics, book by Michael Kimmel). *Everything in its Place: The Life and Slimes of Marc Summers*, a one-man-show starring Marc Summers written by Brightman with music by Drew, premiered at Bloomington Playwrights Project in April 2016. Other full-length musicals include *Crazy, Just Like Me* (book, music & lyrics; 2011 New York Musical Theatre Festival "Best of Fest" winner and runner-up for "Best Book"), *Make Me Bad* (also with Brightman; world premiere April 2015 at Bloomington Playwrights Project), and *Turn of the Screw* (also with Kimmel; commissioned by Fordham University, 2012 workshop at Lincoln Center). Drew was a contributing composer for the fictional musical Hit List on the NBC television series "SMASH", for Oxygen's "The Next Big Thing" (on which he could also be seen and heard), for the children's cooking program "Monica's Mixing Bowl", and for the popular one-woman off-Broadway show *Hot Mess* in Manhattan ("The Text Message Song").

"The Music & Lyrics of Drew Gasparini" was presented at Lincoln Center in 2015 and at the Kennedy Center in 2012, and Drew's unique brand of musical theatre concerts are performed regularly to sold-out houses around

the world. Drew is an alum of the BMI Lehman Engel Musical Theatre workshop and his sheet music is available for purchase at www.NewMusicalTheatre.com, where he is a top-10 best selling artist.

As a musician and songwriter:

Drew grew up in a house filled with music and has been performing with his sisters Kasie and Chloe since they were all in diapers. In October 2015 the three siblings decided to make things official, launching the band **SAINT ADELINE** with musician Justin Goldner. Their unique brand of folk-pop has quickly won over hearts, landing them gigs from NY to Nashville to London. And Saint Adeline's first EP, which is produced by Goldner, will be released in Fall 2016.

When he isn't writing and recording with his siblings, Drew can often be found sharing the stage with his friend and collaborator Louis Sacco, performing re-interpretations of jazz standards under the banner **LOUIS & DREW**.

And Drew began his career as a solo singer/songwriter playing all over the country and sharing the stage with artists such as Jason Mraz, Third Eye Blind, and the Plain White T's. Winner of the 2006 John Lennon Songwriter's Award, he has released four albums over the past decade: "**Small Thoughts** (EP)", released in 2005; "**Overboard** (EP)", released in 2008; "**Drew Gasparini Band**", released independently in 2012 (a compilation of songs written while under development with Sony Records); and "**I Could Use A Drink: The Songs of Drew Gasparini**", released by Broadway Records in 2013, showcasing Drew's unique hybrid of pop and musical theatre and featuring vocals from some of Broadway's hottest young stars. "I Could Use A Drink" spent 5 weeks on the top 100 iTunes charts. The Houston Press has described Drew's music as "deftly captivating with lyrics that pulse with vibrant poignancy and appealing wit." Drew is signed with Razor & Tie Music Publishing, and is currently working on his next album.

As a comedian:

The (M)orons are Alex Brightman (*School of Rock*, *Matilda*), F. Michael Haynie (Peter Pan Live! on NBC, *Wicked*), Andrew Kober (*She Loves Me*, *Les Miserables*), and Drew Gasparini. Four talented friends who write and perform together as a comedy collective. Their brand of humor is ridiculous, grotesque, irreverent, debaucherous, and laden with fart jokes. **THE (M)ORONS HAPPY HOUR**, a variety show best de-

scribed as The Rat Pack meets "Jackass" (with music), debuted in December 2014 at the Slipper Room, a burlesque club on Manhattan's Lower East Side. The gents are developing a TV pilot and beginning to plot their next live show. www.WeAreTheMorons.com @WeAreTheMorons

As a teacher:

Drew is as committed to nurturing the next generation of performers as he is to showcasing his own work. He has been invited to lead master classes at schools across the country, including Boston Conservatory, The Growing Studio, PACE University, Cap21, and A.C.T. in San Francisco. His class format is designed to offer a safe environment for students to learn from Drew and from one another, and focuses on topics from song selection and interpretation to conquering fears and building a career.



Austin Shay (AS): Growing up in a musical family, did you always know that you wanted to continue the tradition?

Drew Gasparini (DG): My parents never forced us to be musical or to play or write music. But it was really easily accessible for us. The house was full of musical instruments of all kinds and when there was down time in the house, I would always start fiddling around on one of the guitars or the drums or pianos. We love music. I don't know that being a musician was considered a tradition in our household, but the option was always there.

AS: Did you have a lot of chances to express your musical talents growing up North of San Francisco?

DG: The Bay Area is ripe with culture. It was easy to find kids who loved to sing and dance and act and play in a band - and because of the amount of accessible opportunities there were, it was hard to *not* find a place to sing or perform.

AS: How did you end up in New York City?

DG: By accident kind of. When I was 19 years old and living in LA, I wrote a musical. I had been writing songs since I was 12 but this was my first full length musical. I submitted it to the New York Musical Theatre Festival. My show didn't make it to the festival, but they wrote me a hand written letter back saying that they think I have what it takes to make it as a composer in NYC. So I moved to New York weeks after that and here I am, almost 10 years later, writing Broadway musicals for a living. Pretty cool. Glad I took their advice.

AS: How did you feel when you first heard one of your songs performed by someone other than your siblings?

DG: The feeling was so big in my head. It was so explosive and rewarding when I heard someone other than me or my sisters sing my music. To this day it's still an overwhelming feeling of "I can't believe someone is singing something I wrote!" I pinch myself everyday. It never gets old.

AS: Having your songs performed at 54 Below must be an exciting experi-

ence. Do you ever just need the reminder that you are successful? I don't want to make it sound like you aren't humble, but sometimes we all need a reminder.

DG: I don't really let my own ego ever get in the way. 54 Below is a venue in NYC that, for whatever reason, has allowed me to bring my brand of live music to life. They are so welcoming there. It's nice to be a part of what is currently a big staple in the NYC world and in the theatre world. I'm very lucky to have the support of the people at 54 Below, the singers who join me for these shows, and more importantly, the audience. Theatre crowds love laugh and cry and at 54 Below at my shows, these crowds shake the joint dancing with us. It's a great time. What a lucky turd I am!

AS: What is it like to work with your sisters in your band?

DG: It's the most "no duh" idea we've ever had. We'd been singing our whole lives and we'd begun writing, and my sisters are both AMAZING writers, so with our forces combined we always feel like we are bringing our childhood to the stage. It's really fun sharing my family with the world!

AS: I am assuming your family is very supportive. Do your sisters help you with whatever you need?

DG: I have the most supportive family ever. My brother and sister-in-law and my parents all support everything we all do from CA, and the sisters are here with me in NYC and it makes it easy to just be there for one another. But even from across the country, the rest of the family is the most amazing ever. It's a gift to have the support I do coming from my family.

AS: Many of our authors and artists are afraid of rejection or failure, what could you tell them about rejection or failure?

DG: It's a good thing. Failure is a good thing. You can't learn if you don't fail. It's impossible not to fail. The music business and the theatre business are always so rapidly moving and evolving that it is near impossible for anyone to be an expert in them. If you fail, you'll know right away if

you are able to get up and try again or if it's going to be too much. If you think you still have some fight left, then take your time to learn, grow, and get better and smarter, then show the world what you got. ALWAYS make sure that whatever you do, it's YOU. "Your" style is what makes it interesting, not that you are trying to be what you think anyone else wants you to be. Be you. Be you, loudly and proudly.

AS: Did you ever think of giving up? If so, when?

DG: Never giving it up. This is my passion. I do this for free most of the time. So no. I would never give up writing or performing or feeling the need to let people know how important art is. Never stop once you get going. Retirement isn't the same in this world. You're an artist. The world needs you more than you realize.

AS: Writing music and plays is a challenging thing to do, but how do you stay so positive in continuing your work?

DG: I stay so positive because I'm actually doing it. It's easy to smile everyday when you get up for work and your work is sitting in a room and having an idea that's never been had before everyday. Sure, it's a lot of pressure to think of something *new* everyday, but the thrill of seeing it come to life is so rewarding that I smile at the long game.

AS: Do you feel any pressure to continue producing such epic scores with the success of your previously released material?

DG: The only pressure I feel comes from me. I always want to not just be better, but to always find something new about what I do to incorporate into what's next. Theatre, and writing... evolutionary art forms. It's exhilarating trying to keep up with it!

AS: What projects are you currently working on?

DG: I'm currently writing a musical commissioned by Warner Bros, as well as a commission by Universal (which I'm writing alongside by best friend Alex Brightman). I'm also in the midst of adapting the novel *THE WHIPPING BOY* (again with Brightman) into a musical. On top of that,

I'm writing a TV pilot with Brightman and Julia Mattison that I'm really excited about, I continue to write songs for TV and such with my publishing company Razor & Tie, and I'm playing all over the place with my band Saint Adeline because our debut EP comes out this fall! Lots always happening. That's the way I like to keep it!

CONTRIBUTORS

Michael Tooher - His full length works include *The Trees of the Methodists* (2013 Winner, Cambridge School at Weston Playwriting Prize.) and *Hangman*. His full length comedy, *Iceland*, was a featured play in Penobscot Theatre's 2012 Northern Writes Festival, was named best play from Maine in Portland Stage's 2010 Clauder Competition and was a featured play in the 2011 Maine Playwright's Festival. It was first produced by Broom Street Theatre in Madison, Wisconsin in 2012. In August of 2013 he returned to BST for a full production of his black comedy *The Waiting Room*. His comedy, *Pudding*, was staged there in July 2015.

His tragedy, *The Perfect Sameness of Our Days*, was a Play Lab play in the 2014 Great Plains Theatre Conference. It won the 2012 Hidden River Arts Playwriting Award and was read at the 2013 Shubin Festival in Philadelphia.

His 10 minute plays have been performed all over the country. Future readings and productions include his comedy *The King Comes Here Tonight* which will be produced as part of King of Crows IV in 2016.

Michael was the Artistic Director for the 2014 Maine Playwrights Festival and he is a founding member of Crowbait Club and its notorious Theatre Death Match. (thecrowbaitclub.org / FB: Crowbait Club)

He lives in Portland, Maine with one wife, one son, and three outrageously spoiled cats.

Bryan Stubbles - is a Utah-born and raised, playwright and screenwriter. He has a BA in Film Studies from the University of Utah, and he spent

most his adult life living abroad. His films have been produced in three countries.

He currently has a residency at Sugar Space in Salt Lake City and will have one at Grunewald Guild in Washington State this autumn. His short plays "The Noose" and "Brine Shrimp Gangsters" will premiere at the Great Salt Lake Fringe Fest in July. "Brine Shrimp Gangsters" will be published by Smith & Kraus as part of their "50 Best 10 Minute Plays of 2017."

He is a guest blogger for the New York-based theatre blog Crazytown: <http://www.crazytownblog.com/crazytown/noir-around-the-world/>

His hobbies include history, languages, volunteering, jogging, travel and cooking.

David A. Miller - is playwright, director and educator whose recent plays includes *Mystic in the Savage State* (developmental workshop with Strange Sun Theater), *The Flames* (The Collective's C10: Comedy) and *Semi-Permanent*. Other plays include *Truth, Dare, Kiss, Kill or Marry* (produced as part of TinyRhino, Brooklyn, NY), *Journeyman of Breuckelen*, and *A Lesson in Art*. David is former Artistic Director of The Artful Conspirators and currently a resident director with Amphibian Stage Productions (Fort Worth, TX). He teaches performance at Bloomsburg University. www.mrdavidamiller.com

Prince Duren - is originally from Itta Bena, MS. He is 2009 graduate of Jackson State University with a degree in Mass Communications and English. While in college, Prince was a member of MADDRAMA Performance Troupe, an on campus organization that explored African American theatre as a cultural art form. Under the mentorship of its Founder and Artistic Director Dr. Mark Henderson, Prince went on to earn his Masters of Fine Arts in Playwriting from the University of Arkansas. He has written several stage plays with many receiving local and national recognition. His play "The Verdict" and "The Girl Next Door" both received awards from the Mississippi Theatre Association. He is recipient of the Lorraine Hansberry award for his play "Delta Secret" from The Kennedy Center for

American College Theatre Festival. His list of published plays include: "Delta Secret", "Like Fine Wine" and now "Drinks on Me" . This fall, his published book "The Road to Your First Play" will be released. His published essay "Identifying the HBCU Graduate and HBCU Experience" can be found in The HBCU Experience Book. This past spring Prince was part of the Southern Writers' Project with Alabama Shakespeare Festival. Prince is currently Professor of Playwriting within the Department of Speech Communication and Theatre at Jackson State University. He is also the currently President of the National Association of Dramatic and Speech Arts. Prince is Godly thankful for his 3 year marriage to Alicia Duran.

Ivan Faute - drawing on his interests in fabulism and the power of transformative narrative, Faute's fiction and drama exploits form, language and genre to be experimental, accessible and playful. A graduate of The Program for Writers at the University of Illinois at Chicago, his prose has appeared in *Harpur's Palate*, *Other Voices* and *The Louisville Review*, as well as a chapbook published by RockSaw Press. Many of his plays have been produced at the Art of Adaptation Festival in Chicago, the New York International Fringe Festival and the North Park Playwright Festival in San Diego. Faute currently lives in Portsmouth, Va. and is a lecturer in English at Christopher Newport University.

Louisa Strothman - is one of those NYC transplants who is writing, directing and producing. Currently she is coproducing a documentary theater piece showcasing stories of young people who have had court involvement to raise the age of criminal responsibility in NY. When she's not writing and rewriting, she is pursuing a degree in sociology from The New School, and always looking for new stories.

Kyle Hemmings - has art work in *The Stray Branch*, *Euphemism*, *Up-pagus*, *The Bitchin' Kitsch*, *Black Market Lit*, *Red Bird Press*, *Snapping Twigs*, *Convergence* and elsewhere. He loves pre-punk garage bands of the 60s, Manga comics, and urban photography/art.

Austin Shay - is a currently studying English at Penn State. His previous publication history includes *From the Fallout Shelter*, *Komorebi*, *Zaum*, and *The Burg*. He is originally from a small town in Western Pennsylvania but relocated to Middletown, PA to attend school.

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