

THE ZOOM PLAY THAT GOES WRONG

by

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HONORS THESIS

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DEDICATION

To the 2020 Texas State BFA Acting Company, my professors and my family:
thank you for being there, always.

ABSTRACT

“The Zoom Play That Goes Wrong” is a full-length satire written to be performed in an online medium and taking place during the COVID-19 pandemic. A play within a play, the show features a group of undergraduate and graduate students attempting to put on a modern version of the classic “Romeo and Juliet.” However, during the live streamed performance, everything that can go wrong, does. The use of comedy in this piece is meant to examine the struggles that the theatre community has faced during the pandemic through a more relatable perspective, particularly the difficulty of shifting performances from the stage to an online format. From simple video lag to “Zoom bombing,” the cast and crew of “Remy and Jules: A Modern Verona” attempt to overcome a multitude of both technical and personal obstacles that are ubiquitous in the new world of Zoom plays. Through this piece, I aim to shine light on the firsthand experiences of the theatre professionals that have been forced to adapt to a stageless reality through a comedic lens. This thesis is inspired by “The Play That Goes Wrong” by Henry Lewis, Jonathan Sayer and Henry Shields, as well as my personal experience in Zoom productions during the pandemic.

Characters

Remy: He is our “Romeo.” However, the “actor” portraying him thought the performance was another day and is late— and stoned.

Jules: She is our “Juliet” and our “control-ling” character. She is type A and a teacher’s pet. She is not shy about addressing the incompetence of others.

Merk: He is our “Mercutio.” He is working off of a tablet and is still trying to figure out how to use it.

Tim: He is our “Tybalt.” He is forced to perform in a “public” space, and it is noticeably awkward. (The actor should create the atmosphere of being in a public space while not actually being in a public space, for safety reasons. They should be accompanied with a mask.)

Director: This is her vision. She will do anything for the show to go on, even if that means taking over for whoever or whatever she has to. She is on the edge of a breakdown.

Stage Manager: She is trying her best to keep everyone on track, including the director. She is mechanical and doesn’t have time for BS.

Veronica: She is not an actor in the show but makes a surprise appearance during the performance. She is Remy’s girlfriend.

We open as audience members enter the Zoom room. We feel the buzz of the actors getting ready as they speak to each other, ignoring the audience members. Only the director has her camera on.

DIRECTOR

Okay, is everybody set?

JULES

I'm ready; do you need our cameras on?

DIRECTOR

No, leave them off for now. Everyone else, how we doin'?

Merk turns on his camera but is muted. We can see him talking to the director, but obviously can't hear.

DIRECTOR

Merk, you're muted, and your camera is on.

Merk quickly turns off his camera and unmutes himself.

MERK

Crap, sorry, sorry. My computer crashed, so now I'm having to use my brother's tablet, and it's all weird. I'll have it figured out before we go- sorry, sorry-

DIRECTOR

It's fine. Tim, are you good?

TIM

(Whispering and muffled)

Yeah, I'm here.

DIRECTOR

What? Can't hear you very well, Tim.

*Tim turns on his camera.
He is wearing a mask.*

TIM

I'm here, I'm in the library. Roommates are being loud, so I had to leave. Sorry.

DIRECTOR

Um, well- is there anywhere else you can go where we could hear you better?

TIM

I'm working on it, I'm on a waiting list for a study room.

DIRECTOR

Okay, well try to get someplace before your lines come up, okay?

*Tim gives a thumbs up
before turning off his
camera.*

DIRECTOR

Okay, well, I think that's everybody... Remember to turn off your non-video participants, and we need to be sure to tell the audience members to do that too-

A message comes up in the "chat" from the stage manager saying something along the lines of "Remy isn't here."

What? Where's Remy? Has anyone heard from him?

Jules turns her camera on.

JULES

I tried to text him to run lines earlier and never heard back from him. I even opened a private Zoom room, but he never showed up.

DIRECTOR

Can someone call him? We're about to have to let people in from the waiting room.

Jules waits a moment before turning her camera off. Another message comes into the chat from the stage manager. "Audience members are already in the room. They were scheduled to be

*admitted at exactly (insert time of performance.)”
The director doesn’t notice as she is attempting to call Remy.*

(On phone)

Remy, I swear to God. Pick up, pick up, pick UP.

Jules turns on her camera on.

JULES

Uhm, (insert Director’s name). You might want to read the chat.

DIRECTOR

What?

JULES

(While forced smiling)

People are in here.

She does a little wave to the audience members, clearly proud of herself for noticing them before the director did.

DIRECTOR

Oh, shi-

She stops herself and turns on a smile, trying to regain control of the situation. Jules’ camera gets shut off as she is

still smiling and waving at the audience. We can assume the stage manager has done this.

Hello, everyone. We are so thrilled that you were all able to join us for our virtual production of *Remy and Jules*, a *Modern Verona*. Unfortunately, we are experiencing some technical difficulties- you know Zoom- and will not be starting for another few minutes. Feel free to mute your computer or step away or whatever until we give you a cue to come back.

A new message from the stage manager appears in the chat. "What kind of cue do you want to give them?" The director reads this out loud, half to herself.

"What kind of cue do you want to give them...?" Well, I don't know, (insert Stage Manager's name). Can we do like a banner or something? Like neon so they'll notice?

Another message comes into the chat from the stage manager. "Okay, I'll come up with something."

Jules sends a message into the chat. "I can help if you need me to!"

Another message from the stage manager. "I've got it. Thank you."

Another message from the stage manager. "I've also just texted and emailed Remy and left him a voicemail."

DIRECTOR

Okay, has Remy texted anyone back? Do any of you have his roommates' numbers?

All of the actors type into the chat that they haven't, or that they don't.

DIRECTOR

Jesus. Okay.

She checks the time.

We're already ten minutes over. I'll just have to read for him until he gets here. (Stage manager's name,) can you read the stage directions?

*A message from the stage manager in the chat.
"Yes."*

Okay... Okay! Give them the cue to come back please.

The stage manager shares her screen to show a neon sign stating, "COME BACK". It looks as professional as neon can.

Okay! Hello again, everyone. Thank you so much for coming today. Our entire team has worked very hard to make this play come to life, as much as it can under the circumstances. So now, without further ado-

Suddenly, Remy enters in the "room" and is very noticeably high, whatever that looks like. He is licking Cheeto dust off of his fingers.

Remy, thank God.

REMY

I'm so sorry, I think I read the call sheet wrong. I totally thought this was tomorrow. My bad, totally my bad.

Jules chats: "Nice of you to finally show up. I texted you like eight times."

Remy chats: "Oh my god Jules it was a mistake. I'm here now."

DIRECTOR

(Perkily, as she knows they're being watched)

It's all good, you're here now! Go ahead and turn off your camera for me.

Remy turns off his camera.

(To audience)

So, as I was saying, without further ado, we present to you
Remy and Jules, a Modern Verona!

She shuts off her camera. "Modern" music starts playing. The tackier, the better.

Jules turns on her camera and is looking off in the distance with an extremely dramatic air. The music fades.

She breaks from her "trance" and begins to put on makeup. She smudges mascara on her face, pretty noticeably.

JULES

Ugh, Tim! Are you still here?

We barely hear Tim's muffled voice coming from off camera. We cannot understand what he is saying. Neither can Jules.

Tim? Tim, if you're still here, I can't hear youuuuu.

Once again, we hear Tim attempt to reply, but his voice is still muffled.

Tim, I still can't hear you! Maybe if you came into the room and brought me a Q-tip, I could!

Tim turns on his camera. He is still masked and walking with his computer in his hands. He holds up a Q-tip, not looking at the camera. He looks around to make sure no one is around and pulls down his mask a smidge. He is clearly just saying the lines to get them out. He continues walking during the scene.

TIM

I got it right here! I'm right here. What's the problem, Jules?

He puts back on his mask. Jules is very clearly irritated but tries to stay in character.

JULES

I was just *saying* that I needed a Q-tip because I've gone and totally messed up my makeup for the dance tonight. It's so not Insta-worthy right now.

TIM

(Rushed and muffled)

What? You're not supposed to be going to the dance tonight. Your parents would flip out on you- like- majorly, Jules!

JULES

Yes, I know they'll be angry but-

Tim "drops" his computer or simulates doing so. We see him scrambling to pick it up.

Okay, seriously?!

She regains her composure.

(Forced)

You seem a little distracted, Tim. I'm- like- over here trying to confide in you about my parents and how they're being like totally unfair. This dance is my chance to possibly meet, like, the love of my life. (Beat.) Don't you have anything to say to that?

Long pause. Tim's camera turns off. We can see Jules' obvious frustration written across her face. She is about to say something when the Director unmutes herself.

DIRECTOR

Tim, you there?

Beat. Tim types in the chat:
"I dropped my computer and the screen is acting weird."
Another chat: "I'm so sorry, I can't see

*anything I have to go.
I'll try to find another
computer."*
*He leaves the Zoom Room.
Jules is still on
screen, silently trying
not to flip shit.*

A moment passes.

*The Director turns on
her camera. She has done
some sort of costume
change to look like Tim.*

DIRECTOR

(Deepening her voice)

Uh, yeah. Yeah, that's totally unfair. But I don't think it's a good idea, Jules. Nope, not a good idea at all. It sure would be a bad idea for you to go behind my back and go to the dance. Bye.

*The Director turns off
her camera. She chats:
"Keep going."*

JULES

(While forcing a smile)

From where?

*The Director chats:
"Take it from the dance
scene."*

*Remy turns on his
camera. Jules gives a*

sign that she understands and turns off her camera. There is more than an awkward pause of Remy being by himself on screen. Use it.

When Jules turns her camera back on, she has changed her appearance and her environment in a way that is noticeable to the audience. Maybe she's changed into a dress or dimmed the lights to give that special "school dance ambiance."

The stage manager shares her sound so that a cheesy "hip" love song comes on, like "Driver's License" by Olivia Rodrigo. Kids love that shit.

JULES

Notices REMY

OMG, you scared me! I didn't think anyone would be here on the balcony.

REMY

And I didn't think any beautiful girls would come and meet me.

JULES

Why aren't you jamming out on the dance floor?

REMY

I guess I was just waiting for the right partner. Wanna dance?

JULES

That would be, like, totally amazing!

They hold their arms around their computers like they're holding each other and attempt to "dance." It's cringey.

REMY

You're a good dancer. I might need you to teach me a thing or two.

JULES

Oh, thanks. I just picked up on a few things through TikTok. You should like totally follow me.

REMY

Baby, I'd follow you anywhere.

Remy and Jules lean into the cameras for a "kiss."

Suddenly, they are interrupted by Merk turning his camera on. His screen is upside down.

MERK

Woah, what's going on here?

Remy and Jules quickly stop "dancing."

REMY

Chill, man. I'm just dancing with... wait, I never got your name.

The stage manager chats: "Merk, your camera is upside down."

JULES

It's Jules. (Beat.) I'm sorry, Merk*, can you not read the chat?

MERK

No, it doesn't show up on tablets unless I scroll. Is something wrong?

JULES

You're upside down.

MERK

Oh, sh- I'm sorry. Let me try to figure it out real quick.

He turns off his camera. After a moment, he chats: "I think I fixed it!"

The Director unmutes herself but leaves her camera off.

DIRECTOR

Okay, just take it back from right before Merk enters.

Thanks for hanging in there, folks!

Remy and Jules put their arms back around their computers and resume "dancing".

REMY

Baby, I'd follow you anywhere.

They go in for the kiss again.

Merk reenters, this time with a Zoom filter on. The bunny one. (If another filter is chosen, the following lines should be changed to reflect that.)

MERK

Woah, what's going on here?

JULES

Oh, you have got to be kidding me. Merk, are you trying to ruin this scene?

MERK

What?

REMY

...You're a bunny, dude.

MERK

Noooo, I'm sorry, I can't figure out this thing.

REMY

Hey, I like it. Adds character.

JULES

He already *has* a character. Merk, can't you shut that thing off?

MERK

Hold on, I'm trying.

He switches from the bunny filter to another one. Even more ridiculous, if possible.

Better? Did I fix it?

JULES

Oh my god.

REMY

Come on, let's just keep going.

JULES

No, I will not keep going! This is ridiculous, am I the only one that is treating this show seriously?

*The Director chats:
"Jules, just keep on going."*

Okay, let's keep going!

MERK

Okay... Uhm- Woah, what's going on here?

REMY

Chill man, I'm just dancing with this chick- I mean, what's your name again?

JULES

It's Jules. Not chick, by the way, but nice.

REMY

Okay, Merk. This is Jules who is *not* a chick, by the way.

Happy?

JULES

(Under her breath) Oh, shut. Up.

REMY

Jules, this is my best friend, Merk. We've known each other since we were kids, dads are like brothers, blah blah blah.

MERK

Hang on... Jules? Jules Carpenter?

JULES

Yeah, why? Do you follow me on TikTok? My "Renegade" dance like totally almost went viral, so I wouldn't be surprised.

During the aside, Jules is keeping herself preoccupied by twirling her hair, doing that far away angsty look again, whatever.

MERK

(Whispers) Dude, tell me you're not into this girl.

REMY

I might be. Why?

MERK

Dude, her dad is the one who sued our dads' company last year. She's like friggin' public enemy number one, bro.

REMY

Oh, damn. So, she's got connections. That's hot.

MERK

No, man. That lawsuit almost killed us. We lost our boat. Your dad would flip if he found out you were dating her. I would too, because, like, I really miss that boat, man.

Merk starts to "tear up."

Remy starts to giggle.

REMY

Sorry, I just can't take you seriously with all of that on your face.

JULES

REMY.

REMY

Jeez, sorry. I meant, (*mocking*) "Oh no, but she's perfect."

MERK

I know she seems perfect, man, but she's dangerous. She'll be the death of you, seriously, dude. One wrong step, then she's running off to her dad, and next thing you know— you're like, never seen again.

Remy is trying to hold back his laughter, but it might be one bong rip too late for that.

REMY

Merk, my man, chillax. I'm not going anywhere. There's just something about her. Can't we worry about our dads tomorrow?

MERK

Fine. You two enjoy your night— but be prepared to face the consequences.

REMY

Yeah, yeah, yeah. I'll catch up with you tomorrow.

Merk turns his camera off. Remy shakes off his giggle fit.

JULES

What was that all about?

REMY

Oh, come on. You can't tell me that wasn't hilarious.

JULES

...No, that was the line. "What was that all about?"

REMY

Oh, no, right. I knew that. Uhm... that was just Merk being Merk. He got all freaked out because apparently our dads have some bad blood, and your dad is apparently going to make me *disappear*.

JULES

Wait, like, who's your dad?

REMY

Robert Montgomery, but really, it's not a big deal. Let's just go back to what we were doing /earlier

JULES

/OMG, no, you're Remy Montgomery. You're, like, the main reason my parents didn't want me to go to this dance. They didn't think I could handle the suave seduction of the Montgomery men, and they were, like, totally right! I have to go.

REMY

Wait, Jules, I'm sure we can figure this out-

She turns off her camera, very dramatically.

Well, sh-

Jules' voice comes over the speakers.

JULES

REMY.

REMY

What, I thought you were gone, hot stuff?

JULES

That is not the line.

*The Director chats:
"Please just keep
going."*

REMY

I know, I was just spicing things up.

JULES

This is a *PG play*. Why can't you just stick to the script?

*The Director chats
again: "GO TO THE NEXT
SCENE."*

REMY

Why do you insist on being such a b-

*Jules turns her camera
on.*

JULES

EXCUSE ME?

REMY

Oh my god, I was going to say "buzz kill." Chill.

JULES

Oh, I'll show you chill-

The Director turns on her camera. She is pissed.

DIRECTOR

"And they BOTH exit."

Pause. Remy and Jules both turn off their cameras.

The Director tries to turn on the charm, but she is scrambling.

OKAY! This just goes to show that even the most famous couples in history have lovers' quarrels! We promised you an interactive experience, didn't we? Now, while we wait to see how the "will they, won't they" pans out, why don't we take a brief intermission!

The stage manager chats: "The intermission isn't for another three scenes." The Director sees this.

Yeah, well we're going to have two intermissions. With all the action in this play, I think the audience deserves a couple of breathers to really let the anticipation build up! We'll see you in five minutes, folks! Feel free to just turn your volume down or something, grab a snack or two, and we'll have another sign pop up to let you know when to come back! Thanks!

She pauses, allowing the audience members time to step away. Once she's sure that they're alone, she drops her smile.

Can all cast and crew turn their cameras on, please?

They do. Note: this is the first time we see the stage manager. She is not amused, and we see her hard at work designing what we assume to be another neon graphic.

Merk has a baby picture of himself as his Zoom background. He doesn't know. Tim is masked and walking... somewhere.

Great. Now does anyone want to tell me what the hell is going on?

REMY

Well for starters, Merk has a random kid behind him that's kind of freaking me out.

MERK

Wha- oh, crap. No, that's not a random baby, that's me. Weird, I guess it used my brother's screensaver as a background. I'll fix it.

REMY

Why are you your brother's screensaver? That's weird, dude.

MERK

It's not weird, he's in the background, but he got cut off,
and- we're a close family, okay?

REMY

Still weird-

DIRECTOR

ENOUGH! I don't care who's in the picture or if it's weird
or- I-I-I don't care! Merk, please trying to figure out
your Zoom. It is so distracting. Tim, are you almost in a
place where you'll be okay to continue?

TIM

(Out of breath) Yeah, yeah, I've got a spot I think will
work, and I'm almost/ there.

DIRECTOR

/Great! Now Remy and Jules.

JULES

I know, and I am so sorr-

DIRECTOR

Please, just cut the shit. Just stop. I don't know what is
going on with the two of you, but unless you're only goal
for today is to kill my baby, then I'm going to need you
both to quit bickering for like 2.5 seconds and do the damn
show like we rehearsed.

REMY

Your baby? Woah, I would never hurt a child.

JULES

She obviously means the show, idiot.

DIRECTOR

OH MY GOD ENOUGH. This is exactly what I'm talking about. I will kick you both out of this thing and perform it myself if I have to. I have no shame, okay? And, Remy, if you're gonna decide to show up to my performance high out of your mind, the least you can do is throw in some eye drops and wipe the Cheeto dust off your fingers. Understood?

REMY

...Yes, ma'am.

DIRECTOR

Great! Now do we think we can attempt to get this thing back on track and try to salvage my reputation just a little bit?!

ALL

Yes, ma'am.

DIRECTOR

Fantastic! We'll be taking it from Tim's expulsion scene. (Stage manager's name), bring 'em on back.

Everyone except the Director turns off their cameras. The stage manager shares her screen: another neon

sign saying something along the lines of, "WELCOME BACK." The Director waits for a few seconds for audience members to return before continuing.

Hello, everyone! Thank you for rejoining us. We're already a little pressed for time now, so let's keep cracking!

She turns off her camera. A few moments pass. No one has turned on their cameras. The Director unmutes herself.

ACTION.

Play with the timing however you want- long enough of a pause to make you uncomfortable- before Remy eventually turns on his camera. He is blinking a lot. Merk also turns on his camera. It seems to be functioning normally.

MERK

There you are bro! I've been trying to FaceTime you, but you've been mad busy, I guess.

REMY

Yeah, bro. I don't know, man. Jules is like this totally rad girl, but her cousin Tim is trying to get in between us. It's like so messed up.

MERK

What? Why can't he just embrace true love, man? What is he doing?

REMY

He keeps threatening to tell her parents if she doesn't break it off, but we're like so into each other. It's so uncool.

MERK

Well, if I know you, and I'm pretty sure I do, you have a plan.

REMY

I didn't want to do it, but everyone knows Tim has a weed problem.

MERK

Wow, that's so dumb. Why would anyone do weed?

REMY

I know! It's like ruining his life wasn't enough. Now he wants to ruin mine and Jules' too. So, I think it's time to remove him from the equation.

MERK

Like... are you gonna try to make him overdose?

REMY

OMG, no. I just gave an anonymous tip to the dean that we might have an addict at our school, and I think that it's in the interest of the whole student body if he gets the help he so clearly needs.

MERK

Dang, man. That's savage!

REMY

What can I say? No one gets in between me and my woman.

They fist bump their cameras. When Merk does this, somehow it makes a background come up. It's a picture of him, Remy and his brother with some sort of paraphernalia. They appear to be high.

Oh, my god oh my god Merk turn your camera off now.

MERK

What? What's wrong? I can't see.

Tim turns on his camera. He's out of breath. He's somewhere indoors, still masked.

TIM

(Wheezing) Remy... I'm gonna kill you for reporting me to the-

He notices Merk's background.

(Whispering) Is this part of the show?

MERK

Is what part of the sh-

Merk's camera is turned off. The Director turns her camera on. She's has attempted to put on a costume of some sort.

DIRECTOR

(Affectedly) Oh, now, now Tim. Remy and Merk showed me that picture that they staged to show you how dumb you look while you're on drugs. They obviously were not on drugs. Nope, not drugged out at all. Legally, that would be wrong. So they weren't. You're still expelled though. Good day.

The Director turns off her camera. Remy and Tim sit there for a moment, not really knowing what to do.

Jules chats: "Wait, doesn't Merk get expelled too?"

The Director chats: "Hold on."

A moment passes. The Director turns on her camera. She has done another costume change.

DIRECTOR

Yo, Tim, don't take this out on Remy. I ratted you out.

Leave these lovebirds alone.

TIM

Um... Merk?

DIRECTOR

(Deepening her voice again)

Uh- yeah, man. Duh, it's Merk. Being around all your marijuana smoke just changed my voice because drugs do that mess. Stay away from them.

TIM

Oh, well, I'm gonna report you to the dean, too!

DIRECTOR

Oh- no, my life will be ruined! I have to go- cry, or punch something, or something. Bye.

The Director turns her camera off. A moment passes.

Jules turns her camera on.

JULES

There you are, Tim! I can't believe you got expelled. I didn't know you were doing weed! You're lucky that even though you have been trying to sabotage my relationship with Remy, his friend still cared enough about your

wellbeing to report you and get you the help you need!

Remy, you're a hero.

Remy's reaction tells us that this isn't supposed to be happening.

REMY

Uh, yeah. It was nothing. Anything for my lady...'s cousin.

JULES

Isn't that sweet, Tim? Now, I think it's time for you to go.

TIM

Oh- oh, right.

He gets back into character.

Well. I'm off to Amsterdam for a month of rehab. The weed won't find me there. Stay in school.

They turn off their cameras.

Remy chats: "nice save."
Jules chats: "I know."

The stage manager throws up a graphic (neon) that reads: "THE NEXT DAY."

Jules and Remy turn their cameras back on.
They look around their Zoom boxes to see if the coast is clear.

REMY

Hey, babe. It feels like ages since I've seen you.

They "hug" their cameras.

JULES

Oh, Remy! I have the worst news! Tim's dad told my dad about you and Merk getting him expelled, and my dad totally didn't get that you were a hero that was just looking out for Tim!

REMY

Well, he hated me anyways, right?

JULES

Yeah, but that's not the worst part... Tim told him that we're together, and now my dad is making us break up.

REMY

What? No, that's not fair. I love you!

JULES

I love you too. This past week being your girlfriend has been the best time of my life.

REMY

What are we going to do? Can we just stay together and tell him that we broke up?

JULES

If he finds out I'm lying, I'll get shipped off to Amsterdam, too!

REMY

No! We'll find another way!

JULES

There is no other way.

Tim's camera turns on. He's outside, and the connection is poor. He's glitching, a lot.

TIM

You heard- ... Rem- ... her alone.

REMY

Uhm, Tim. You're freezing, dude.

TIM

Can- hear me? Am- ...-ozen?

REMY

TIM. YOUR COMPUTER IS GLITCHING, BUDDY.

The Director chats: "Tim your service is bad. Let us know when you get to a place with better wifi."

TIM

Oh, no- ... try to... with better servi-

Tim turns off his camera.

JULES

Guess he, uh...

REMY

Had to catch that flight to Amsterdam!

JULES

Right! Yeah, right, hope he gets off those drugs... Uhm, so.

*The Director chats:
"Keep it on track. Skip ahead."*

REMY

Right... well I have a plan!

JULES

...No, I come up with the plan.

REMY

You have a plan!

JULES

Yes! I have to go, but I'll leave a note on your window with the details. My dad is checking my phone.

Suddenly, VERONICA's face pops up onto the screen.

Oh. Oh, hi. I think you have the wrong link; this one is for the cast and crew only.

VERONICA

No, I have the right one. Wanted to meet the girl Remy can't stop jabbering about!

The Director chats: "WHO GAVE OUT THE WEBINAR LINK?!"

REMY

Veronica, what are you doing here? We're streaming this live.

VERONICA

Oh, I know honey. I think it's good that everyone knows that you're a cheater.

REMY

Wait- what? I literally have no idea what you're talking about, but you need to get off the call now.

JULES

Veronica? What the hell, Remy?

REMY

You think I planned this?

JULES

Oh, no. That would actually take some thinking, and you obviously aren't capable of that considering you did the

ONE thing you weren't supposed to and GAVE OUT THE FUCKING LINK.

The Director turns on her camera.

DIRECTOR

OKAY. First off, I don't think I need to remind everyone that people are *still watching*, so let's try to be careful of what we say live, alright? (Stage manager's name), I need you to send out another notice to the audience. To all of the folks watching back home, I am so sorry for this inconvenience, but I promise you: WE ARE GOING TO FINISH THIS SHOW.

The stage manager chats: "It's not letting me share my screen. Apparently, Veronica was made host when she joined."

The Director is seething. We can see her wrack her brain for a way out of this.

Okay. Veronica? You need to leave the meeting now.

VERONICA

No, I don't think I do.

DIRECTOR

I don't know what's going on in your relationship, but whatever it is can wait until after this performance.

VERONICA

Well, I don't think I'm really hurting anything. I was watching before I joined, and- yikes.

DIRECTOR

Well, I can't control technology, but I sure as hell will not have you ruin my thesis, so if you think that-

The Director's mic is muted. She is still talking.

VERONICA

Great, I guess the host can mute people!

The Director realizes that she is muted. We see her rage increasing as she tries to unmute herself and fails.

Good to know. I wonder if...

Veronica turns the Director's camera off.

There we go! Now it's just us!

JULES

...And literally everyone watching this right now. Cozy.

The Director chats: "End the meeting. I'll see if I can reset the password and send a new one out.

Well, we don't have to worry about them interrupting us!

And by the way, Remy didn't give the code to me. I found

it. I'm really good at finding things out, in case you couldn't tell, so you might as well just come clean now.

JULES

What are you talking about?

*The stage manager chats:
"The host is the only
one who can end the
meeting."*

VERONICA

Don't think I don't know about all the late-night chats between you two. I may not be as smart as the famous Jules, but I'm not an idiot.

*The Director chats:
"Then we can all leave,
and I will start a new
meeting."*

REMY

Ronnie, I told you we were rehearsing. There is nothing going on between us. I don't know how many times I have to tell you that for you to trust me. Now PLEASE GO, and we will talk about this later.

*The stage manager chats:
"This is the only
webinar link officially
associated with the
university. We aren't
able to distribute
another link to the
audience."*

VERONICA

Who needs to rehearse for an extra three hours every night alone after you already have God-knobs how many rehearsals a week?

REMY

JULES DOES.

VERONICA

Because she's obsessed with you.

JULES

I AM NOT-

She realizes she's shouting.

(More quietly)

I am not obsessed with him. I just like to be thorough.

VERONICA

Honey, like I said before: I've been watching. Obviously, not a whole lot of rehearsing went into this.

The Director chats: "Can we call I.T?"

JULES

HEY-

REMY

Okay, just calm down.

JULES

You telling me to calm down is not helping me calm down.

*The stage manager chats:
"Let me check."*

REMY

Do you want me to handle this or not?

JULES

(Under her breath)

It would be the first thing you've handled today-

REMY

JULES.

JULES

...Sorry. Go ahead.

VERONICA

Okay, you literally bicker like an old married couple, and you expect me to believe there's nothing going on? Do you seriously think I'm that stupid? Honestly, it's insulting.

REMY

Jesus, Ronnie- thereisnothinghappeningbetweenusohmygod.

Jules hates me. Like deep hate. Like, I think I saw her gag when rehearsed the kiss scene, and we were doing it through computers.

The Director chats: "Are they going to help?"

JULES

Oh, I had a bad tuna salad sandwich that day, sorry.

REMY

Makes me feel a little bit better, but not helping the point.

*The stage manager chats:
"No one is answering. I
don't think they work on
Saturdays."*

JULES

Right, you're right, sorry.

REMY

It's fine. So, what I'm trying to /say

JULES

/What he's trying to say, Ronnie, is that there is obviously nothing going on with us, he is fully your man and your man alone, and you can leave the show now.

*The Director chats:
"ISN'T THERE LIKE AN
EMERGENCY LINE FOR
SITUATIONS LIKE THIS?"*

VERONICA

Really, Jules? No feelings at all?

JULES

Nope. None.

*The stage manager chats:
"I don't think actors'
significant others do
this sort of thing
often."*

VERONICA

You sure about that, sweetie?

REMY

Veronica, she already said she didn't, just drop it, okay?
We'll talk about this later.

VERONICA

Fine. But before I go, I do want to share just one little thing with the class.

The Director chats: "Is it a sex tape?"

She chats again: "It had better not be a sex tape."

She chats again: "DO NOT SHOW PORN ON THIS STREAM I AM BEGGING YOU."

Oh, honey, relax. Nothing like that. I just love that you can record Zoom meetings now! I mean you would think that people would remember to check for that cute little blinking light before saying anything stupid, but I guess not!

REMY

Okay, well share whatever you want to share because we did nothing in those rehearsals together.

The Director chats: "NO DON'T SHARE DON'T SHARE"

JULES

Well, we rehearsed.

REMY

Oh, right.

VERONICA

Oh, Remy, sweetie. I wasn't talking about you.

JULES

What are you talking /about

Veronica starts sharing her screen.

VERONICA

/Oh, there it is! Alright, let's see if this clears anything up.

She starts playing a recording of a Zoom rehearsal. Remy and Jules are both on screen.

(On the recording)

JULES (REC)

"Okay, so then when we get to the death scene, it needs to be super emotional. Like really pull out all the stops."

REMY (REC)

"Yeah, yeah, I gotcha. Speaking of pulling out stops, I gotta hit the restroom real quick."

JULES (REC)

"You're disgusting."

REMY (REC)

"I know. Be right back."

*He leaves the room but
leaves his camera on.
Jules' phone rings. She
answers.*

JULES (REC)

"Hey, Mom. ...Yeah I'm just rehearsing for the show. ...No,
it's just me and Remy right now."

JULES

Oh my God. Veronica, turn it off now.

VERONICA

Hush, you're gonna miss the best part!

JULES (REC)

"No, Mom. He has a girlfriend. ...Well, it doesn't matter how
I feel. It's not like we get along anyways. ...Yeah. I don't
know, I tried to flirt before I knew he was in a
relationship, but that's not exactly my strong suit."

*The stage manager chats:
"Oh, shit."*

REMY

Wait, what is this?

JULES

Turn it off, NOW. Please, Veronica.

VERONICA

Shhhh. You're interrupting the movie.

JULES (REC)

"Yeah, I'm not even sure if he likes her anymore, but I'm not about to get in the middle of that. If they were broken up, maybe, but I don't even know how I would make a move. ...No, Mom. This isn't the '80s. People don't do that anymore."

On screen, Remy reenters the room.

"Oh, crap, I gotta go. Bye, love you!"

She hangs up.

REMY (REC)

"Awh, you love me?"

JULES (REC)

"What? No- what? You're so annoying, I was on the phone with my mom, oh my God-"

REMY (REC)

"Dude, chill. I'm playing. Let's just get back to the scene."

JULES (REC)

"Uh, yeah, I knew that. Obviously. Um, so, yeah. Like I was saying when we get to the death scene-"

Veronica stops sharing her screen.

VERONICA

Well, I think that about does it! What did you think,
Jules?

JULES

Uh- I- I can't do this.

*She turns off her
camera.*

REMY

Ronnie, what the hell?

VERONICA

Okay, so maybe you didn't cheat, but now you have to admit
that she is trying to ruin our relationship!

REMY

No, she's not. But you just did.

*The stage manager chats:
"Ooh, burn."*

VERONICA

What?

*The Director chats:
"What was that @ (stage
manager)?"*

REMY

You can't just bust in here and make this some insane
reality TV bullshit, Ronnie. I put a lot of work into this-
everyone did and you still found a way to make it about you

and embarrassed my friends in the process. I don't think we should be together anymore.

*The stage manager chats:
"Hey, if you can't beat
em, join em."*

*The stage manager chats
again: "Omg he didn't"*

VERONICA

Babe, are you being serious right now?

REMY

As a heart attack. I think you should leave. Now.

VERONICA

...Fine. I don't want to be with a guy who still has his mom do his laundry anyway.

REMY

It was ONE time, I- you know what? That's fine. Bye,
Ronnie.

*Veronica is about to say
something but doesn't.
She leaves the meeting.*

*The Director turns on
her camera.*

DIRECTOR

FINALLY. Well, I'm so sorry to all of our audience members for that horrible Zoom heist-

*The stage manager chats:
"Everyone is commenting
how much they loved that
last 'scene.' I think*

*they think it's all part
of the show. Views are
still going up."*

*She chats again:
"They're saying you're a
genius for making Verona
a person?"*

...which was of course, totally planned! Gotcha! Obviously, Veronica represents Verona- (*mumbling*) wow that was lucky- which is really the thing that keeps Remy and Jules apart after all, right? We'll get a chance to dive deeper into any thoughts or questions you might have about that and all of the other metaphors in the show at our talk back later this evening- the Zoom code for that is listed along with the performance information for those who wish to join. For now, we're gonna head into another quick intermission. I think we need one after all that excitement! We'll see you back here in ten!

*The stage manager shares
her screen: another neon
sign. After a moment,
the Director drops her
smile.*

Jules, can you come back on?

*After a moment, Jules
turns back on her
camera. It looks like
she's been crying.*

Okay, we're gonna pick up where Remy is looking for the note that Jules left him when we get back, and Jules, if you can drop something in there about how Verona- Veronica-whatever, is toxic, and you need to get away for your love to thrive blah blah blah, that would be great. Just to make sure the whole thing flows, okay?

JULES

Y-yeah, sure I can do that.

DIRECTOR

Great. I'll see you both back after break.

REMY

Hey, (Director's name) ?

DIRECTOR

Hm?

REMY

I'm sorry about all of that. I really had no idea Ronnie was planning on doing that.

DIRECTOR

It's fine. Apparently, we made it work. Just make sure no more jealous girlfriends decided to make a surprise appearance. I don't know if we can BS our way out of that again.

REMY

Yeah, no, she's the only one. Swear.

DIRECTOR

Good. Now, I need to go meditate. I swear this thing is gonna be the death of me.

The Director gives an exasperated grin/grimace before turning off her camera. It's just Remy and Jules now.

JULES

Well.

REMY

Yeah.

A pause. Neither of them really knows what to say.

REMY

Look, I'm really sorry about that.

JULES

No- no, it's not your fault. ...So, do you think you guys are really over?

REMY

Why, are you trying to ask me out?

JULES

Oh my God, I can't-

REMY

Chill, I'm kidding. I didn't know you had tried to make a move on me. ...Just out of curiosity, what was it?

JULES

Uhm, do you remember that one day when I was finishing all of the lines you dropped?

REMY

Ugh, yeah, you would not let it go.

JULES

Well, um, yeah- that was me flirting.

REMY

Oh my God, you are *really* bad at flirting.

JULES

Shut up, I know, okay?

REMY

Well, we can work on it.

JULES

Oh?

REMY

Yeah, just don't eat any more tuna sandwiches when we do.

Not worth the risk.

JULES

Uhm, yeah, no, definitely, no tuna.

They share a smile.

*Tim's camera turns on.
He's finally in a quiet room.*

TIM

Get away from my cousin, Remy! It's just you and me now,
Merc is on his way to Amsterdam after I told the Dean that
he's the one that sold me drugs! Take that, narc!

REMY

Dude, we're on break. And that scene isn't until way later,
we're running behind.

TIM

What? How far behind? I only have this study room for 15
minutes!

JULES

Pretty far- a lot happened while you were gone. We'll fill
you in later.

TIM

Ughhhhhhhh. Fine, I'll figure something else out. I'll see
you guys in a bit, I guess.

REMY

Good luck, dude.

*Tim gives a wry laugh
before turning off his
camera.*

JULES

Poor guy can't catch a break.

REMY

Yeah, he missed a show. He'd probably shit himself if he
saw you confess your love for me.

JULES

I did not confess my love for you-

REMY

Eh, you kinda did.

JULES

Okay, don't go get a big head on me.

REMY

Well, if I'm being honest, Jules, I actually really-

The Director turns her camera on.

DIRECTOR

And we're back!

JULES

Wait-

DIRECTOR

Sorry, we're already running out of time as it is, so we're just going to do the scenes where Remy can't find Jules' note and then death scene, okay? Merk, Tim, you good with that?

Merk turns on his camera. He has another filter on. Maybe a chicken?

MERK

It's probably for the best. I've been trying to fix this for ten minutes now.

DIRECTOR

Yeah, we're just gonna avoid that altogether. Where's Tim?

JULES

...He got kicked out of his study room, so he's looking for another place.

DIRECTOR

Yeah, that's gonna take a while, so we probably won't even need to worry about him showing back up. Great! Okay, let's go ahead and give them the cue to come back. Y'all turn off your cameras, please.

They all turn off their cameras except for the Director.

The stage manager reshares her screen to show the "COME BACK" sign.

The Director waits for a few moments before addressing the audience.

Welcome back, folks! We're nearing the end, so without further ado, here is the finale of "Remy and Jules: A Modern Veronica-Verona," damn it- dang it!! Sorry, sorry, okay, here we go!

She turns off her camera.

Jules turns on her camera. She has her

lights so that it looks like she's by candlelight, or something like it. She's writing as she speaks.

JULES

"Remy, I think I tooootally have a plan that's gonna make our parents think that we, like, have to be together. I'm gonna take

some of my mom's special sleeping pills that are like really strong, so I'll be knocked out! And I don't snore, so, like, that shouldn't be a problem. I found some of Tim's marijuana brownies, so I'll have those laying by me and they'll totally think I OD'd on weed because they were so harsh. You'll 'find' me and go tell them it was because we couldn't be together (don't worry, I'll have a note in case they don't believe you!), but when you kiss me, it will be like true love's kiss, and I'll wake up, and they'll have to let us be together! It's perfect! I'm taking the pill tomorrow afternoon, and I timed it so that I'll wake up at midnight. Just climb the terrace before then so you'll find me in my room. *Winky face. * DON'T BE LATE! I'm so totally excited!"

She kisses the note and turns off her camera. The stage manager shares a screen to show a pre-

recorded video of Jules placing the note on a window. It cuts to a really cringe, really dramatic video of the note "falling" (aka someone grabbing it and doing a POV shot of the note swirling around and landing in like a bush or a ditch somewhere). The more ridiculous and melodramatic, the better.

The stage manager stops screen sharing, and Remy turns on his camera. He is "searching" for Jules' note. He is bringing his A-game on the dramatics.

REMY

Where is it?! She said she would leave a note with the plan, but I don't see it anywhere! I wonder if... no. No, she definitely loves me. She has to, I mean, we're like meant to be together, forever. She's just nervous. Yeah. Cold feet. Maybe just chilly. Chilly feet. Yeah. I can be patient.

He "waits" about ten seconds.

No, I can't. She can't let her parents get in the way of our love! I'm gonna sneak into her room tonight to talk to

her after her parents are asleep and tell her we are in this together! That'll be so frickin' romantic.

He turns off his camera. The stage manager shares her screen again to show a clock saying "11:30 PM" followed by a video of Remy sneaking across a yard in the dark.

She stops sharing her screen, and Remy turns his camera off. He has all of his lights off so that only the computer is lighting his face.

He acts like he is climbing a terrace as he says his lines, however you want to make that happen. He throws in a few grunts for good measure.

(Loudly whispering)

Jules! Jules, I'm coming up! We need to talk!

He "arrives at the top," maybe he grunts as he jumps to let us know he's there.

Jules? Oh, sweet, her door is open! It's like she wanted me to come. Now that's true love, for real. Jules, I'm coming in!

He turns on a light as he "enters."

Jules, I've got something to say-

Jules turns on her camera. It's angled to show her "asleep" on her bed with brownies around her and a note in her hands.

Once Remy sees her, he stops, looking in very melodramatic horror.

Jules? Jules, NO THE BROWNIES. NOT THE BROWNIES, JULES!

Wait, there's a note!

He pulls a note from somewhere and reads it out loud.

"Dear Mom and Dad. It's so totally unfair that you won't let me be with Remy. He's like honestly the love of my life, and without him, I have nothing to live for. I never thought I would turn to drugs, but you won't let me have Remy, so like, 'hugs not drugs' doesn't really work here, does it? Anyways, by the time you read this, the weed will have taken me away, but at least I won't be in Amsterdam. Goodbye."

He sets down the note. Maybe he falls to his knees.

Noooooooo, Jules. Weed was never the answer.

He looks at his watch.

Time of death... 11:58 P.M. Oh, Jules! We could have found a way out of this together! I can't live without you.

He pulls a brownie from somewhere.

So I won't.

He shoves the whole brownie in his mouth and eats it.

I'll see you on the other side, babe.

He kisses his camera like he's kissing Jules before angling his camera to show him laying down, "dead."

The stage manager shares her screen showing a beeping alarm clock reading 12:00 A.M.

She stops sharing her screen and Jules "wakes up."

JULES

Ahhhhh, true love's kiss! The only cure for the evils of the Devil's lettuce!

She looks and sees Remy "dead" on screen. She looks around and sees that he opened her note.

What? Remy? REMY?!

She shakes her computer like she's trying to wake him up and notices something "on him." She holds up a brownie crumb to the screen.

No, Remy, you didn't! Remy, no!

She kisses her camera repeatedly, trying to wake him up.

Come on, true love's kiss! Why (*kiss*) aren't (*kiss*) you (*kiss*) WORKING?!

She looks at him despairingly, then looks at the brownies on her bed. She picks one up.

Maybe... it was always going to turn out this way. Oh, happy brownie, this be your mouth. Be eaten there and let me die.

She eats the brownie, then falls back dramatically onto the bed.

Their cameras both turn off as the stage manager shares her screen.

In the Arms of the Angels by Sarah McLaughlin is playing. It's a black screen that reads: "Not every ending is a happy ending." Black and white pictures of Remy and Jules cycle through the screen as the song plays. We end on a black and white close-up picture of a brownie with a quote that reads: "Not even true love is stronger than drugs."

She stops sharing her screen and everyone

except for Tim turns on their cameras. Merk still has the filter on. They bow in their Zoom boxes.

DIRECTOR

WOO! And that concludes this production of "Remy and Jules: A Modern Veronica- VERONA." Oh my God, I can't get that right. Anyways, thank you all for coming to this viewing of a show that was very important to me and has such a necessary message. It was such a joy writing and producing this for my thesis, and even though we had a couple of technical bumps along the way, we did the best with what we had right now and had a great time doing it! I want to thank everyone that had a hand in this- give yourselves a hand, team!

They all awkwardly clap for themselves. The Director claps a little too hard.

Yeah, you deserve it. You do. Alright! If you want to attend the talkback and hear a little more of what went into this production, meet at the Zoom room listed at the production website. We hope to see you there!

They all wave at the screen until the stage manager chats: "We are no longer streaming."

Alright! Nice work, everyone! We did it! Okay, I'll see you all in the talkback in twenty minutes; go grab some water and get ready to answer some questions!

REMY

Hey, is it okay if Jules and I hang back in this room for a second to get our game plan together about what we're going to say in case anyone asks about Veronica?

DIRECTOR

Oh, yeah. Yeah, good idea- I'll just let y'all take the lead on that, and I'll come in with something about how I came up with the idea or something. Good thinking. The room should stay open for about... ten more minutes, I think.

Thanks, Remy.

REMY

Oh, it's nothing.

Everyone leaves the meeting except for Remy and Jules.

JULES

Awesome, I also think it's a good idea for us to be proactive about it because people are definitely going to ask. What are you thinking of saying? I was thinking maybe something along the lines of like she was a surprise artist from a local regional theatre that was going to put on

Romeo and Juliet before the pandemic hit, so she already knew the script, kinda, but-

REMY

Jules, I didn't actually want to plan what we were going to say at the talkback.

JULES

Yeah, you're right. I think we just come up with a general idea and then go with the flow from there.

REMY

Okay, for starters: you going with the flow? I don't even know who you are right now.

JULES

I'm trying to be more chill.

REMY

Yeah, yeah totally, that's great.

JULES

Yeah, I learned from the best.

A pause.

So... it sounded like you were going to say something earlier.

REMY

Yeah, that's why I wanted to hang back.

JULES

...And?

REMY

Um, so yeah. Ronnie may have called you out, but she was right about me too.

JULES

...Okay.

REMY

I'm saying I have feelings for you.

JULES

Wait, seriously? You're not messing with me, are you?

Because that would be like cruel on another level and-

REMY

Oh my God, Jules, don't make me take it back.

JULES

No, don't take it back!

REMY

I'm kidding. But. Yeah, I've always thought you were really cool, and smart, and, like, pretty. And I like you. So, I guess I'm just wondering if you... like the park?

JULES

The park?

REMY

Yeah, you know, the park. Maybe, if you wanted to, we could go and like... do park things. Like a picnic. Or frisbee. Or

something. And obviously like get COVID tested before, I'm not an idiot, but I think that could maybe be fun if you think that would maybe be something fun-

JULES

Are you asking me on a date?

REMY

That heavily depends on if you would say yes or no.

JULES

Okay, yes. IF you tell me something first.

REMY

Yeah, anything, shoot.

JULES

Does your mom seriously still do your laundry?

REMY

What? Oh my God, I'm gonna kill Ronnie. I do my own laundry, but sometimes she offers when I'm home, and can we please stop talking about this and go to the talkback?

JULES

Yes, we can. But seriously, what are going to say about Veronica?

REMY

No, what are you going to say about Veronica? I'm not going to be able to talk much when I'm in there, so get ready for a lot of "uh-huh's" and "absolutely's".

JULES

Oh, is the break-up finally hitting you? We don't have to go on a date or anything if you decide you're not ready.

REMY

Nope, the break-up isn't hitting me. The brownie is.

JULES

What? I made the prop brownies that got dropped off to you. There was nothing in them.

REMY

Yeah, I accidentally grabbed one of *my* brownies.

JULES

Ohhhh. Yep. Gotcha. Yeah, just follow my lead, I'll cover for you.

REMY

Thank God. I'll see you in there?

JULES

I'll see you in there.

They smile and sign off, a little nervously. It's awkward, but still cute. The goodbye should take longer than normal as this is new to both of them. Maybe one of them shoots finger guns at the other or does a weird leaving the video frame bit that doesn't land. I don't know, have fun with it.

After they leave the meeting, there is a slight pause. Then, Tim turns his camera on. He is sweaty and out of breath.

TIM

Guys, I finally found a space at the top floor of the library that's closed for construction, and the elevators were closed too, but really 8 flights of stairs really aren't that bad when you-

He notices that no one is on camera.

Guys? Hello? Is anyone still on? Guys? Oh come o-.

The meeting ends before he can finish.

End of play.

