

SOME OVERWHELMING QUESTION

A ONE-ACT PLAY

HONORS THESIS

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by

Leah G. Knoble

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Thesis Supervisor:

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Name of Thesis Supervisor, Degree  
Department of Supervisor

Approved:

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Heather C. Galloway, Ph.D.  
Dean, Honors College

*Some Overwhelming Question: A ONE-ACT PLAY*

In broad terms, this is a play about the experience of navigating the world as a woman. This play explores the comical side of dating as a woman in the digital age, but it also delves into the more sinister side. It is told in a series of brief scenes. The play is supposed to have a semi-transient quality to it, as if the actors could disappear at any moment. Since the play is about moments, every moment must seem both final and fragile.

It explores whether memory can be trusted or if every memory that humans possess has been altered in some way, regardless of intention. Every human being sanitizes their memories, so the play explores the sanitization of memory along with the grit of memory. There are the flimsy moments that are closer to tissue paper and can easily be doubted, and then there are the real, authentic moments that ground the play in something more.

There is a juxtaposition between this flimsy, fantastical element and the heavy, grounded element, and they play off each other culminating in some sort of semi-realism, semi-absurd way, which parallels life as something ridiculous and difficult and beautiful.

CHARACTERS

Rose  
Iris  
Amy  
Jade  
Seraphina  
Guy

Greek Chorus:  
Chorus Leader  
B  
C  
D

TIME

The Present

PLACE

Anywhere

Author's Note:

Chorus members double as extraneous characters like the reporters and talk show host.

Chorus stays onstage the entire time.

Minimalistic setting and costuming. Monologues should be given outward.

Trigger warning MUST BE given before start of play.

Notes about the BURN IT TO THE GROUND scene: The "fire" is contained in a trash can so it can easily be faked. There should be a moment after all the clothes are burned where images are shown of rapists that were freed by the failure of the justice system: i.e. Brock Turner, Steubenville case, Ben Roethlisberger, Jameis Winston, and ultimately Donald Trump.

Changes between the scenes should be indicated with a text tone.

SCENE: TAKING UP SPACE

CHORUS LEADER

I don't know when I first learned that my body wasn't my own.  
Was it the first time a boy stuck his tongue in my mouth  
without my permission?

B

Or was it the first time he put his fingers inside of me  
without my permission?

C

Or the first time he stuck his dick inside me without my  
permission? I guess everything leads back to permission in  
some way, huh?

D

But somewhere along the way is when I lost my sense of  
myself. I didn't own myself anymore.

ALL

They did.

B

Everyone else did. Shaping me, molding me. How do I be sexy?

D

How do I make myself wanted?

CHORUS LEADER

How do I shrink myself small enough to fit inside my waning  
body?

C

When I'm skin and bones and it's still not enough, how do I  
make my very bones smaller?

CHORUS LEADER

Can I breathe?

D

Does it matter?

ALL

Do I dare disturb the universe?

CHORUS LEADER

Women used to have to wear corsets to shape themselves.  
Doesn't matter that they could barely breathe. Barely move.

D

Doesn't matter that their organs are shifting in a space too  
small. Women's organs take up more space than women can.  
I tuck up inside myself on the bus. On planes.

B

Fold one leg over the other. One arm over the other. I don't  
get the armrest. Either armrest. His knees are in my space.  
My space keeps shrinking until I can't fit.

ALL

And then I explode.

C

Grow so big so wide that no one would want me. I'm invisible.  
But it still just doesn't feel right. Doesn't seem right. I'm  
still not taking up enough goddamn space.

SCENE: SPLIT

CHORUS LEADER

They say that we were created with two hearts and two brains  
and four arms and four legs. Two whole sets of organs. And  
then we were separated, and we search for our other half.  
But I've been searching so much that I've split into more  
than two pieces. I've given away so many fragments of myself  
that when I find my other half, I'll have nothing left to  
offer them.

D

He split me into pieces, and I rebuilt myself from the ground  
up. Stronger. But more closed off. I fortified the wall  
between me and anything that could crush me again.

ALL

And that's where my story begins.

SCENE: SWIPE RIGHT

ROSE lounges comfortably on the couch, feet kicked up, on her phone.

IRIS fumbles around in the kitchen.

ROSE  
No. No. No.  
(beat)  
Mmmmmaybe?  
(beat)  
Oh my god

IRIS  
What?

ROSE  
Come look at this.

IRIS walks over, looks over ROSE's shoulder at the screen.

ROSE (CONT'D)  
Dude's got a fucking skunk as a pet.

IRIS  
Oh my god. you have to marry him.

ROSE  
I'm swiping solely for the skunk.

AMY walks into the room.

ROSE (CONT'D)  
Hey! Come look at this! This dude has a fucking skunk!

AMY  
What? No way. Holy shit. He's hot?

ROSE  
I honestly don't care. I need to know more about how in the hell this *dude* has a goddamn *skunk* as a pet.

(beat)  
Fuck! We matched! I can't wait for our wedding. The skunk can be our ring bearer. It'll be so cute.

A SCENE: TRUMPED

CHORUS LEADER

I guess I'm just not really sure what to say. What is there to say, you know? And I have a hard time talking politics, especially around my family, because I don't want to be divisive. But it boils up inside of me. And it's just... we don't exist in a vacuum. You can't disregard the racism, the sexism, the sexual violence, the homophobia, the xenophobia. You can't just wave it away and say oh I don't agree with that as if he just said he doesn't like milk in his coffee or he prefers tea. You can't just pick and choose. This isn't like chipotle or subway for politicians. Well maybe it could be subway. Ask for spinach and end up with a rat, right? And like... people are so shocked that there's millennials voting for him? Like someone raised those millennials. Again, we don't exist in a vacuum. This kids didn't just come into being wanting to "make America great again."

SCENE: WHO IS STACY'S MOM?

IRIS

I think Stacy is Jesse's girl.

ROSE

Explain.

IRIS

Alright. So 'Stacy's Mom' and 'Jesse's Girl' exist in the same universe.

ROSE

Is Stacy Jesse's girl?

IRIS

Yeah. But Jesse's actually into Stacy's mom.

ROSE

Is Stacy's number 8675309?

IRIS

No. That's Jenny.

ROSE

Wait. She actually has a name? The girl in that song has a name? I don't know anything beyond  
(singing)

8675309.

IRIS

Yeah. I'm pretty sure her name is Jenny.

ROSE

Well then Jenny's in love with Stacy.

IRIS

Okay. So Jesse is into Stacy's mom, and not Stacy. And a friend- a good friend of his knows that, and so he's in love with Stacy, who is Jesse's girl.

ROSE

I believe it.

SCENE: WHAT'S HE KNOW?

ROSE

I keep learning all this stuff about him, and he still knows nothing about me beyond the school i go to, and that our sisters have the same name. And i guess now my birthday, which got a lukewarm reception if I'm being honest.

IRIS

What do you mean?

ROSE

Like just, "oh. Okay. That's cool." You know?

(beat)

And it's like it isn't even that he's a jerk or selfish? It just seems like they're conditioned to be like that.

IRIS

Who is?

ROSE

You know. Guys. That's just how they are.

IRIS

That's kind of a huge generalization.

ROSE

Am I wrong though?

(beat)

IRIS

No.

ROSE

Exactly.

SCENE: WHAT I KNOW

ROSE

I don't know. He just kind of talked about himself the whole time? Have you ever noticed that? That guys will kind of just ramble on about themselves and never ask you a single thing about yourself. I know he was the youngest of five siblings, all sisters except him.

JADE

I know that he dropped out of high school because he was depressed.

AMY

I know that he speaks multiple languages.

SERAPHINA

I know that he is worth millions of dollars.

ROSE

I know he wants to go to school for acting/

JADE

Writing/

SERAPHINA

Business/

AMY

Engineering.

ROSE

And what I really know is, I know that

ALL

He only knows my first name.

SCENE: THE HEAD OF THE HORSE

IRIS

Listen. You can't always see the head of the horse you're riding.

ROSE

What?

IRIS

That's a strange metaphor.

ROSE

You should always be able to see the head of the horse you're riding?

IRIS

Not if it's really dark outside.

ROSE

Why are you riding a horse in the dark?! You shouldn't even be riding a horse if it's that dark.

IRIS

You would be if you're running away/

ROSE

What?

IRIS

/yeah. Like running away from criminals/

ROSE

Okay.

IRIS

/or your problems. But I guess criminals would also be your problem.

ROSE

Alright. So like... extending the horse head metaphor... what does it mean if you can see *only* the head of the horse, like in *The Godfather*?

IRIS

Well if you can only see the head of the horse, then you might have tunnel vision. And you might need to see a doctor. Or you're in broad daylight, and then you shouldn't really be worrying.

ROSE

No like. If you can only see the head of the horse. What does that mean?

IRIS

That you have tunnel vision.

ROSE

No like in *The Godfather* where it's literally only the head of the horse.

IRIS

Well then that's a warning sign and you gotta go. You've messed with the mafia, and they're coming for you. You need to leave the country.

SCENE: LOVESONG

IRIS

"Let us go then, you and I..."

I was always a fan of T.S. Eliot. Which is stereotypical and kind of ridiculous when you think about it. But I studied *The Lovesong of J Alfred Prufrock* in high school and like... it stuck with me?

I had been introduced to T.S. Eliot through *The Hollow Men*. "Shape without form; gesture without motion" and all that. But having to write about Prufrock really... changed the way I felt. About it. About everything. I wasn't much of a fan of poetry. Not very good at it. But it stuck. Deep. Teeth sunk in and all. Like one time I cried while reading it in a Half Price Books.

And my favorite analysis of that poem was not that it was about unrequited love but rather suicide. Which is a different kind of unrequited love I guess— of like, the self love variety.

"To lead you to an overwhelming question— do I dare disturb the universe?"

And so many in the class read that as love. We studied it extensively about love, about him asking the woman if she loved him back. If he disturbed their universe. But maybe the overwhelming question was something else entirely. Something more internal. Something more sinister. Do I kill myself? "To be or not to be?" That is the overwhelming question.

(laughs)

(beat)

Does he dare disturb the universe by removing himself from it?

And in the poem, the man— he's... he's so *unremarkable* that maybe he wouldn't disturb the universe at all. And maybe that's what he's afraid of. That his death wouldn't send even a ripple out into the universe when he wants waves. And the thing is, the man might not even be that unremarkable. But to himself, he is. He doesn't deserve this woman he's pining after. He's not good enough. And loving her is like a suicide anyway. So like... maybe he tries to make a ripple. You know? It's something. Right?

"'Til human voices wake us and we drown."

Yeah. I guess we'd all like to make a ripple, huh?

SCENE: ROACH QUEEN

AMY

Alright so like what if you were the only person left after a nuclear, like, *thing-*

ROSE

War?

AMY

Sure? Or accident. Or explosion of a plant. Or whatever. It doesn't really matter what happened. What matters is somehow you're the only one left. And like, it's you and the roaches, right? Because roaches are the only thing left after nuclear shit goes down.

ROSE takes a hit off of a joint  
and laughs.

ROSE

(smirking)

Roaches.

AMY

Focus. So it's you and the roaches. What do you do?

ROSE

I bet you're expecting me to say I'm gonna like kill myself or something, right? Because I fucking hate roaches. They make my skin crawl. But I'm the only one that survived a nuclear event? That's gotta fucking *mean* something, right? Like that's gotta be a part of some bigger plan or some shit. I can't have just miraculously been the only human being left for no goddamn reason, right?

AMY

Sure. If you believe that, I guess?

ROSE

What? Believe what?

AMY

That there's just a plan for anything in general. That there's a plan in place and everyone else died? That's part of the plan. That sucks, dude.

ROSE

Yeah. For *y'all*-

AMY

It sucks for you too, dude! You're left alone with fucking *roaches*!

ROSE

Yeah! But it's what you make of it, you know?

AMY

What the fuck are you gonna make out of that?

ROSE

I'm gonna... I'm gonna... I'm gonna become fucking- I'll be fucking queen of the roaches!

AMY  
Jesus Christ

ROSE  
No, seriously!

AMY  
Alright. How?

ROSE  
I don't know. I'm the smartest, so I'll automatically be in charge.

AMY  
How are you gonna get the roaches to ascribe to like, that fucking kind of hierarchy/

ROSE  
/Uh/

AMY  
/Like roaches don't fucking just already have a monarchy in place that you're gonna overthrow-

ROSE  
That you know of!

AMY  
That anyone knows of!

ROSE  
You're not an entomologist! Bees have a fucking monarchy. There's a queen bee, so why can't there be a queen roach?

AMY  
Because there's just not!

ROSE  
That's incredibly small minded of you.

AMY  
Oh my god we are talking about roaches. You wanna talk about small minded? They can live without heads! They don't even need a mind!

ROSE  
Wow.

AMY  
What?

ROSE  
There is no need to just shit on roaches like that.

AMY  
You hate roaches

ROSE  
Not anymore.

AMY  
What?

ROSE  
They're, like, my people now.

AMY  
Jesus fuck. You're ridiculous.

SCENE: THE SHAPE OF IT

B  
A mouth full of "stop."

C  
A mouth full of "you're hurting me."

CHORUS LEADER  
A mouth full of someone else's tongue, too rough. Words too big to come out of my mouth. Words too heavy to go anywhere besides the spot where they press against my chest.

B  
Thieves always try to be quiet when they steal something, when they rob someone.

ALL  
The silence of rape is deafening.

B  
The shape it takes inside my head shifts, becomes something else.

CHORUS LEADER  
Sometimes it takes the shape of him, impossible to move.

C  
Sometimes it takes the shape of my hands against his chest.

B  
Sometimes it takes the shape of my leg over his shoulder, bent back farther than is comfortable.

ALL  
And sometimes it loses shape entirely.

CHORUS LEADER

It floats around me, and it shocks me that no one else can see it.

It presses me, shoulders down and inward. It cloaks me in shame and sweatpants. Loose clothes to hide my body.

B

It morphs into desperate desire. Not lust or sexual attraction, but the desire to take so many inside me that it flushes one out.

CHORUS LEADER

My lips are shut to the words it might use to explain what happened. There is no explanation.

ALL

The shape of rape/

C

/seems like it would be all jagged edges and sharp lines, but it's not. It has curves not unlike the ones of my own body.

My cursed body.

It's too fluid to maintain any rigid structure. It morphs too often for the curves to lengthen and sharpen.

I keep my fingernails too long. I keep pepper spray on my keys. I keep knives on my keys and in my bag. I keep information in my head.

ALL

Detachable body parts. Ears. Nose. Testicles. All can be ripped off.

CHORUS LEADER

I put away the thought that none of these would have helped me.

Rape does not take the shape of a dark alleyway.

For me, it takes the shape of someone I thought I loved.

C

After, I heard  
I'm sorry

B

I heard

I just wanted to be your first so badly.

My accusation took the shape of a fragile bird, and he crushed it instantly.

CHORUS LEADER

You wanted it.

He said.

You were so wet.

He said.

(MORE)

CHORUS LEADER (CONT'D)

Don't lie.  
I said I wanted to die  
He said go ahead but make sure you take enough pills.  
I didn't die  
I didn't take enough

ALL

I did die.

C

He took enough.

B

Rape takes the shape of a murder. The murder of something  
intangible. The murder of the person I was before.

ALL

I did die  
But I'm ~~not dead~~ still alive

SCENE: ONE IN FIVE

D

One in five.

B

As a statistic on paper, it seems so harmless. But it's kind  
of like the statistics for wars, you know? They count the  
dead, but they don't count the wounded or the families of the  
dead. So one million people killed, sure. But that could mean  
four million deaths. You don't live after you lose something  
that important. That you dies. And you have to become a new  
you. There is so much more than just one in five.

D

Three hundred forty-four.

C

The number of rape cases that go reported out of one  
thousand.

D

Sixty-three.

CHORUS LEADER

The number of cases that lead to arrests.

Thirteen. D

The number of cases that get referred to prosecutors. B

Seven. D

The number of cases that will lead to a felony conviction. C

Six. D

CHORUS LEADER  
The number of rapists that will be incarcerated.

C  
And I've never experienced it as one in five girls. That's assuming that if you're in a room of five girls, it happened to one. I've been in a room where it happened to every single girl.

CHORUS LEADER  
It happened and then I went home

CHORUS LEADER AND B  
And turned the water in the shower as hot as it would go

CHORUS LEADER, B, AND C  
And I stood under it until my skin was red and I wanted to feel clean again. I wanted to wash off all of this...

MALE CHARACTER  
Filth?

ALL  
One hundred nine.

D  
Number of seconds until another person is sexually assaulted.

Silence for one hundred nine seconds, then blackout.

SCENE: I DON'T TELL

CHORUS LEADER

Today is my rapist's birthday.  
His 22nd birthday to be exact  
And it seems almost fitting that I have to go through his  
birthday at the height of the Stanford rape trial outrage  
and I can't help but feel my own private brand of outrage  
and guilt.

B

Why am I so angry that all these people care?

C

Why am I frustrated with this being the new hot button issue?

D

The new murdered gorilla?

CHORUS LEADER

I wonder if it's because I have had to live with this secret  
burning under my skin for four years.  
A secret so hot that sometimes I just want to claw it out  
from where it lives, buried inside of me.  
I still feel dirty sometimes.  
And these people get to post on their Facebook how upset they  
are.  
And then they can move onto the next hot button issue.

C

I know they care.  
I know I'm being petty and irrational.  
I know all this, and I still feel this rage balled up under  
my ribcage, spreading, glowing.

B

I don't get to move on.  
And I can't help but feel almost a sick sort of jealousy.  
Rapist Brock Turner didn't get what he deserved.  
But he got some form of punishment.  
Hopefully his life is ruined.  
My rapist went to college.  
My rapist went to a fucking religious college.  
My rapist fucking went to a Mormon fucking college.  
And if he went on his mission, my rapist is teaching other  
people how to live good and righteous lives, or whatever  
bullshit they spew.

CHORUS LEADER

And it makes me so sick.  
His life is far from ruined.  
He wasn't affected.

(MORE)

CHORUS LEADER (CONT'D)

I doubt he even thinks about it.  
He never even saw it as rape.  
He blamed me.

D

I wanted it, he said.  
And something that I can never say.  
That I feel too vulgar for putting into words.  
Maybe someday I can let it out of the place it is firmly  
lodged in.  
Right now, though, it stays. It festers.

B

I wish my rapist had gotten six months.  
I wish I had taken him to trial.  
I wish I hadn't gone home and washed and washed until I felt  
clean, but I never felt clean.

ALL

Still don't feel clean.  
But even then, who would've believed me?

CHORUS LEADER

I drove there on my own accord

C

I went in there

B

I allowed other sexual things to happen

D

But every sexual act was tainted in the fact that I had  
always kind of been forced into it before I was ready.  
He kissed me before I wanted to be kissed, all teeth.  
My first kiss ever.

C

He touched me in places I didn't want to be touched in, and  
eventually I gave in.  
Stopped shoving him away.  
Stopped telling him no.

CHORUS LEADER

Is that sexual assault? I don't know. I don't think about it  
So when he forced himself inside of me again, it wasn't  
wholly unfamiliar.

B

What was unfamiliar was the fact that I vocalized my protest?

C

"No.

D

Please stop.

CHORUS LEADER

You're hurting me"

C

Straight out of a fucking lifetime movie.  
The words I said to my rapist.  
And no one would believe me.  
They sound made up  
But it's what I said.

B

And I put my hands on his chest, and tried feebly to push him  
off.  
But then it didn't matter.  
It was done.  
And so i let it continue.  
Numb.

CHORUS LEADER

Again, so characteristically stereotypical.  
Why didn't I stop him?

D

Why did I let him keep going? I guess I wanted to enjoy it.  
I wanted to pretend that it wasn't what it was.  
After, he cried.

B

I'm not really sure why, even now.  
He cried, and he said that he just wanted so badly to be my  
first.  
To be the one that took my virginity.  
And I'm just now remembering this,  
Four years later, I'm remembering that he said that, and it  
stings.

CHORUS LEADER

How had I tucked that away?  
And where did it come from?  
I've never said that before, never thought about it.  
But Jesus  
What an awful fucking thing to say  
What an awful reason.

C

And I comforted him.  
I told him it was okay.  
I think I told him I loved him.  
And he told me the names of every girl he'd ever had sex with  
and I lost it.  
Then I finally cried.

(MORE)

C (CONT'D)

I sobbed.  
And he held me.

D

And I'm so disgusted about it that my skin is crawling just  
thinking of it.  
Thinking about the fact that he held me as I cried makes my  
hands shake and bile rise up my throat.  
I feel sick.

CHORUS LEADER

Now I have to face questions about virginity.  
How do I answer when people ask how I lost my virginity.  
Usually I just say I don't believe in virginity.  
That it's a social construct.  
Which is true.  
I don't tell them mine was stolen.

B

I don't tell them I still long for it.

C

I don't tell them that I wish I could've chosen to lose it.

D

I don't tell them that it matters to me.

B AND C

I don't tell them that I went home and wrote in my diary that  
I felt unclean.

B

I don't tell them that I wrote that I feared I would never  
feel clean again.

CHORUS LEADER AND D

I don't tell them any of that.

D

I just smile, and laugh, and force bravado.

ALL

I don't believe in virginity.

CHORUS LEADER

Because mine was stolen.  
And I feel ashamed admitting that/

ALL

/I want it back.

SCENE: IT HAPPENED TO ME

IRIS

Alright. So I'm on this dating website, right? And this is one that people generally use for more than just hookups. And I talk to a few guys, and there's this one, and we just kind of hit it off, you know? Charming, funny, cute, and into the same kind of things I'm into. So we talk, exchange numbers, talk some more, and everything's fine. Everything's cool. He's even more charming the more I talk to him, so I decide that yeah, I'll meet him. And the rest is hazy.

ROSE

This guy had been torturing me all through high school.

ALL

And all I know is I died that day.

SCENE: BLUEBIRD

ROSE

There's a poem that I really love. It's by Bukowski, who I think is kind of a dick, but he wrote some great shit. And it's:

there's a bluebird in my heart  
that  
wants to get out  
but I'm too tough for him,  
I say, stay in there, I'm not  
going  
to let anybody see  
you.  
there's a bluebird in my heart  
that  
wants to get out  
but I pour whiskey on him and  
inhale  
cigarette smoke  
and the whores and the bartenders  
and the grocery clerks  
never know that  
he's  
in there.

there's a bluebird in my heart  
that  
wants to get out  
but I'm too tough for him,  
I say,  
stay down, do you want to mess  
me up?  
you want to screw up the  
works?  
you want to blow my book sales in  
Europe?  
there's a bluebird in my heart  
that  
wants to get out  
but I'm too clever, I only let  
him out  
at night sometimes  
when everybody's asleep.  
I say, I know that you're there,  
so don't be  
sad.  
then I put him back,  
but he's singing a little  
in there, I haven't quite let him  
die  
and we sleep together like  
that  
with our  
secret pact  
and it's nice enough to  
make a man  
weep, but I don't  
weep, do  
you?

And it's true. I don't weep. Do you?

SCENE: TRIGGERED

IRIS

You know? I really don't understand why people mock triggers.  
It doesn't really affect them at all. And it's not... funny?

ROSE

And you hear people say, "Oh. I don't make fun of *real*  
triggers,"

AMY

But how do you know what is a real trigger?

JADE

Triggers don't make sense. They're not always the form of some reasonable fear. One of my triggers is Frank Sinatra.

ROSE

Peanut butter and jelly sandwiches.

IRIS

Watercolors.

AMY

Christmas lights.

ROSE

(outward to audience,  
daringly)

So... what's a real trigger?

SCENE: ART POLICE

CHORUS LEADER

I'm always wondering why what I have to say matters. It doesn't. It's selfish and self indulgent and arrogant to assume that everyone —that anyone— wants to hear what I have to say. A million people have said it, and a million more have said it better, and a million more should be heard before I am. Where do I fit in?

ALL

I don't.

B

We were raised to share ourselves, share our thoughts, our ideas, our lives, and then told we were full of ourselves. The "me" generation. And all we wanted was to just share. And it somehow was a beautiful thing taken and turned ugly. Selfies somehow became an act of vanity.

C

Selfies are a fucking act of rebellion. Actively loving yourself, or even trying to, in a society that sells you the idea that you are never good enough, is a revolutionary act. We aren't arrogant vapid morons. We are revolutionaries. And they see that. And I think it scares them. And so they tell us our ideas are dumb. We don't matter. We are selfish. Useless. And it's an act of rebellion to just.. not believe them.

CHORUS LEADER

I guess what I have to say matters because even if it has been said before and better, no one can say it like I do, and that is uniquely, wholly mine. And it may be self-indulgent and ridiculous and arrogant. But what exactly is so goddamn wrong with that? We weren't the first generation to be like this and we won't be the last.

SCENE: FACEBOOK WON'T KILL YOU

ROSE

I don't know why people think technology made us anti-social. People have always fucking hated talking to other people. Before technology, people would read. What's the difference between reading, like, "heart of darkness" and talking to your friends on facebook? At least with facebook you're talking to someone?

IRIS

"Heart of darkness" probably wasn't the greatest choice for that, but yeah.

ROSE

Why not?

IRIS

I mean people are gonna argue that reading that is, like, gonna enrich you and make you more *cultured* and *intelligent*.

ROSE

God. Because people on Facebook aren't capable of deep thought? I can find out what fucking type of french fry I am *AND* read multiple scholarly journals.

SCENE: CONSIDER THIS

ROSE

I don't know. Like he's the kind of guy who does meal preps? And considers ice cream to be a cheat meal? Like it's not even a meal. And I'm the girl who drinks her calories and then goes to Whataburger and piles more on and eats pizza and goes to the store just to buy garlic bread. Food means so much to me, and I wish it didn't. I guess.

SCENE: A PAIN

B

So I had this pain, right? Debilitating pain that made me want to dig my fingers inside of me and pull my ribcage apart. Heartburn, my mom said. And I thought it's this bad? How do people do anything?

(MORE)

B (CONT'D)

I can barely breathe, let alone go about my business like the people in commercials do. And they're, like, mildly inconvenienced. They look slightly uncomfortable, and I felt like I was dying. And so I told myself to stop being so dramatic and get over myself. But then it hit twice in one day, and I begged to go to the hospital. Morphine didn't even take the pain away. It just made me puke. Which was just, like, another fun addition, and my heart rate was through the roof, just running away because I was in so much pain. And I had to go into emergency surgery to get my gallbladder removed. They were gallbladder attacks. So I still have no clue what heartburn feels like, but I bet it wouldn't make me throw up.

A SCENE: TAROT

ROSE

Can you do a reading?

JADE

Yeah. Let's do it.

Jade spreads out crystals

JADE (CONT'D)

Alright. So you can tell me your question or not. No yes or no questions. Do you wanna say your question?

ROSE

(uncertainly, but firmly)

Yeah.

JADE

What is it?

ROSE

How do I stop feeling like such a fraud?

JADE

Alright.

(handing the deck to Rose)

Shuffle until it feels right, and then give them back to me.

ROSE shuffles the cards, pauses,  
and shuffles one more time.

ROSE

Okay. They're good.

ROSE hands the cards back to  
Jade.

JADE

(while lying the cards down)

Huh. This is crazy. I've never seen a spread like this. Alright. So they're telling me that your obstacle... is you. And the way to stop feeling like a fraud is to reach out to the people who love you like friends and family.

ROSE laughs softly.

JADE (CONT'D)

(grinning)

They're also telling me you knew this already.

SCENE: CONSTELLATIONS

ROSE

Do you ever wanna make a new constellation?

GUY

(sleepily)

Hmn?

ROSE

Like trace the stars again and rearrange the cosmos into something new and interesting and fresh. Put the stars on a string and pull and spin until they fly off like you're painting the sky by flicking a brush.

GUY

I guess I've never really thought of it.

(singing)

I've got the world on a string.

Rose sucks in air between her teeth as if she's in pain for a brief moment before continuing.

ROSE

There's just so many greek myths that didn't get a constellation. Where is Persephone's constellation?

GUY

Who?

ROSE

You know. Persephone. Greek mythology. She ate in the underworld and Hades was like oh shit you're mine now. And so they negotiated out where she stays half the year on earth and the other half of the year she's in hell. Which is more than the rest of us I guess since we're always in hell.

(beat)

Nothing? Alright I thought it was a good joke.

(MORE)

ROSE (CONT'D)

Anyway, that's why we have seasons. According to the Greeks. I think she should have a constellation.

GUY

Ah.

ROSE

Sorry. I'm just really passionate about mythology.

GUY

It's cool. I didn't really pay attention in class so now I know.

SCENE: WHAT I WANTED TO SAY WAS

CHORUS LEADER

It's weird when your heart's split open and everything is pouring out, but you're the only one who can see it. Everything just is kind of tumbling out of you, and it seems obvious, but it's not. And what he said was

GUY

You're one of the best people I know

CHORUS LEADER

And what I wanted to say was

ROSE

I wish I believed that

CHORUS LEADER

But what I actually said was

ROSE

Thanks

CHORUS LEADER

And what he said next was

GUY

I mean it. There should be more people like you in the world

CHORUS LEADER

And what I was screaming inside was how badly this hurt. How badly all of it hurt. How it felt like some rejection I didn't even know was possible. And what I said was

ROSE

Thank you

CHORUS LEADER

And then he said

GUY

Someday you're going to make some lucky guy very happy

CHORUS LEADER

And I split into a hundred, million pieces. I had- have no idea how to take that. I have no idea what it means. And what I said was

ROSE

I hope so

CHORUS LEADER

And what I wanted to say was

ROSE

Right now I don't care about any other guys if they aren't you

CHORUS LEADER

And what I said next was

ROSE

I need to take a step back and figure some things out. I'm sorry.

CHORUS LEADER

And what I meant to say was

ROSE

I love you.

SCENE: FALLING

CHORUS LEADER

I knew I needed to love myself. Demand love for myself. Create a space within me only for me. A space that no one knew about. An endless space of love dedicated to myself. I knew I had to let him go. I knew it would hurt like hell. I knew I needed to take care of myself, and that meant letting go of someone that I had fallen into too deep, too fast and swimming back out is a nightmare. Drowning. Bottomless. Unfathomable.

(beat)

My chest is constricting and I'm cold and numb and hollow and I feel this anger inside of me, this hatred at myself for robbing me of something that was bringing me happiness. But for how long? That happiness was finite. It was going to end. All relationships have an expiration date. No exceptions. Just some burn up faster than others. But they also burn up brighter. And god I felt the brightest I had ever felt in a long time. I felt consumed by it. Overwhelmed, and I knew it led to nothing good. And I ran.

(MORE)

CHORUS LEADER (CONT'D)

Who knows if it's the right choice.

ROSE

I have to go

GUY

Why?

ROSE

I have to take care of myself. I thought it was obviously, painfully obvious. I figured you knew that I felt something for you. I hoped you felt the same, but I don't think you do. You can't. I shouldn't. I told myself I couldn't, but I did it anyway. I fell. And I'm trying to catch myself. And I can't keep doing this.

(beat)

I can't keep giving parts of myself away. I'm so fucking empty. I have nothing left inside of me, and I'm so tired. and-

I can't.

I'm sorry. I'm sorry.

(beat)

I love you.

Please leave me.

SCENE: MY OWN CARDS

ROSE is sitting cross-legged on the floor in front of a circular rug. She lights incense before shuffling a deck of tarot cards with her eyes closed. This should feel sacred and similar to a religious ceremony. She takes three deep breaths and starts laying the cards out. She takes her time, tension building in her shoulders and arm, hands shaking, as she sets down the final card and gasps. She sits still for a moment before finally breaking down and crying, scattering the cards and throwing the last one: the ten of cups. The Chorus Leader watches silently.

ROSE

Where is my ten of cups, huh? Where is my fucking happy ending? Why does everything have to be so fucking goddamn complicated? How am I so cynical and still have my heart wide open for anyone to make their home in?

(MORE)

ROSE (CONT'D)

He set himself up in there, and I couldn't do anything about it. I tried to close myself off, but he found his way anyway. And I decided that love is a different kind of violation. An emotional violation. But it's not dirty or murderous. It's warm. Too warm. And fuck it burns, doesn't it?

The Chorus Leader slowly,  
tenderly starts to pick the cards  
up.

Fade to black.

SCENE: WHAT IS WRONG WITH YOU

IRIS

Why?

(beat)

Why do you do this?! What are you getting out of it?

ROSE

I'm empty! I'm empty, okay? And I try-- I keep trying to fill myself with other people. There's this cavern in my chest, just like some yawning chasm inside me swallowing everyone and everything, but it never fills up. I'm still so fucking empty.

IRIS

Maybe you're empty because you don't have a conscience. Maybe that chasm is where your heart is. Maybe your brain is empty and you lost the part that tells you that other people feel pain and hurt and they're real and shouldn't have to be used by some cold, sociopathic narcissist.

ROSE

I'm sorry.

IRIS

You know... hurting people won't make you feel less empty. You can't just swallow all these people into your... Your *nothingness* and expect them to just let you keep doing it. how about you stay miserable on your own from now on and don't fill everyone else with the emptiness that's suffocating you?

SCENE: DANGER

IRIS is running, but what from?  
Her breathing is panicked as she  
searches desperately for  
something. A man runs onstage  
after her, crazed.

He's brandishing a weapon. She  
cowers in front of a couch.

IRIS

I'm sorry. Please don't do this.

The man says nothing. Just  
advances towards her. He strikes  
her and she falls onto the couch,  
crying out.

IRIS (CONT'D)

(sobbing)

Please don't kill me.

He pulls her up by the hair and  
pushes her up against a balcony  
railing. He releases her hair,  
still too close. They stand  
there, doing nothing, for a  
moment. And in a second of  
desperation, she faces out over  
the balcony.

IRIS (CONT'D)

Help! Please! Somebody hel-

He shoves her, and she loses her  
balance. Her hands grip the  
railing, but start slipping.

IRIS (CONT'D)

Please don't do this. Please! I don't wanna-

She loses her grip. Blackout. The  
sound of news media filters in. A  
single, faint spotlight rises on  
her broken body, alone in the  
middle of the stage.

FEMALE REPORTER (O.S.)

Tragic scene today at the hotel downtown. A woman falls to  
her death from the fourteenth story.

MALE REPORTER (O.S.)

She was supposedly fleeing from a Tinder date that became  
aggressive. Earlier in the night, they had been seen laughing  
and having drinks together, seeming very close. So you have  
to wonder-

ANOTHER MALE REPORTER (O.S.)

Was there more to this story? Were there drugs involved? We  
will find out once her toxicology report is released.

FEMALE TALK SHOW HOST (O.S.)

And I thought some of my first dates were bad.

There is the sound of canned  
laughter from a laughtrack that  
slowly fades out.

SCENE: MOVIE UNIVERSES

JADE

So do famous people exist in the movies that they're starring in? Like... so Brad Pitt's in a movie, right? And it's set in the normal world. Does Brad Pitt exist as an actor in that world? Like we have Brad Pitt's character, but do we also have Brad Pitt? Or does he just not exist in this world? It's tough when an actor is bigger than anything else. Like these ubiquitous actors that are just so prominent in our world don't exist in this other one? Or is Brad Pitt's character a fan of Brad Pitt the actor? And then that means Brad Pitt in that universe is also making movies, so it just goes deeper. It's like when you're sitting between two mirrors, and they just go on and on forever. But it's with Brad Pitt.

SCENE: ANOTHER FIRST DATE

ROSE looks quietly at the stars.  
Guy lazily traces circles on her  
body.

GUY

Hey?

ROSE

Yeah?

GUY

I know this is dumb, and don't make fun of me, but...

ROSE

What?

GUY

Do you ever wanna make a new constellation?

Rose grins broadly and kisses him  
passionately.

Lights fade with constellations  
showing and shifting, then fade  
to blackout.

JADE

SCENE: SHOW US ON THE DOLL

Chorus Leader and B stand with the judge as if in a courtroom. B stands rigid like a doll or mannequin.

JUDGE

Now show us where he hurt you.

Chorus Leader walks towards B and tentatively reaches a hand out. Eventually, she places her hand over B's heart. She starts to cry, silently at first. She moves her hand to B's face and gently places it over her cheek. Chorus Leader breaks down, and B comes to life, breaking down as well. They sob and hold each other. A release.

SCENE: BURN IT TO THE GROUND

Jimi Hendrix's "Star Spangled Banner" or something similar plays. Rose, Iris, Jade, and Amy stand together around a trash can in silence. They each hold a bag in such a way that shows disgust towards the objects inside. With shaking hands, Amy opens her bag and withdraws clothing. She appears pained, almost as if the clothing burns her skin, before she drops it into the trash can. Jade, Iris, and Rose follow suit. Iris lights a match as Jade pours lighter fluid into the trash can. Iris drops the match into the trash can, and the clothes go up in flames. Their faces glow triumphant and strong. Their shoulders seem as if some tremendous weight has been lifted. They breathe together. In. Out. In. Out. In. Out. The fire dies down to blackout.