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Setting the Stage for a Sober Community on Campus

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SETTING THE STAGE FOR A SOBER COMMUNITY ON CAMPUS
by

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A Thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the
Honors in the Major Program in Musical Theatre
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at the University of Central Florida
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Thesis Chair: Dr. Steven Chicurel

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ABSTRACT

In the last thirty years, a movement in America helps students struggling with substance abuse and dependency. Only recently, in the 1970s to be precise, has there been any significant documentation that unveils the problem of substance abuse in college.

Schools like Texas Tech University and Kennesaw State University are in the forefront helping hundreds of thousands of students who struggle to have a safe and productive college experience. These schools provide support systems, scholarships, and mentorship to those students who are free from drug use and dependence and are looking to further their education.

It is my intent to demonstrate a growing need for these support systems and present a theatrical work that will raise awareness of this issue. Oftentimes, the issue of substance abuse is an embarrassing and uncomfortable topic for people to discuss. There are issues of denial at both the personal and academic level. By using theatre as a means to present this topic in a non-confrontational, engaging, and thoughtful manner, I contend that there can be progress in bringing Collegiate Recovery Programs to colleges nationwide. My play, *A Way Back*, will add to the canon of substance abuse plays with an emphasis on substance abuse recovery in college.

DEDICATION

For students everywhere struggling with substance abuse, especially those without a voice to be heard.

For my friends Tommy Hall, and Deirdre Manning, who never stopped believing in me.

For my mom, my dad, my step-mother Rita, and my family for never judging me for who I used to be, but instead accepted me for both my strengths *and* weaknesses.

And finally to Dr. Steve and the amazing faculty at The University of Central Florida, for giving me the greatest second chance of my life.

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I would like to express my gratitude for those who helped me with my thesis indirectly and directly. Most of the recognition has to go to schools like Texas Tech University and Kennesaw State University for organizing the national Collegiate Recovery effort, and for providing the statistics to make the case that recovery is a topic that cannot be ignored. I thank Tom Hall for always meeting with me at any odd hour of the day to discuss recovery with me. I would like to thank Mark Routhier for his mentorship and guidance in the writing of this play. I thank my thesis committee members, Dr. Ida Cook, Prof. Earl Weaver, and Dr. Steve Chicurel, who guided me through this process and were always enthusiastic about this topic. Finally, I would like to thank The University of Central Florida for providing a great forum for intelligent and thoughtful discussion on important topics and giving students like me a chance to voice their opinions in a meaningful way.

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INTRODUCTION

I am an honors Bachelor of Fine Arts Musical Theatre student at University of Central Florida. I have a 3.8 GPA in my major. I've received the award for Best Actor for the 2012-2013 season from my peers. I have received two Kennedy Center Irene Ryan Acting nominations, a departmental talent scholarship, and a nomination from Broadwayworld.com for Best Actor in a Musical in Orlando. I have also been in recovery for the last three years concerning substance abuse issues.

I was first admitted to college at Florida State University's College of Music for the Bachelor of Music program in Musical Theatre in 2008. In my freshman year, I was cast in every musical of the production season, including an understudy role for a lead in the main stage production of the musical *Hair*. On the surface, things were going well. I was accepted into a prestigious university, I had good grades, and I was being cast. However, behind the scenes, so to speak, a different story was playing out. I had started to drink heavily, smoke marijuana multiple times a day, and was getting into harder drugs (inhalants and hallucinogens) as time went on. I became an everyday user who would show up high or drunk to class, if I went at all. Eventually, I left school on a mental health leave and was hospitalized for a week.

After hospitalization, I committed myself to various 12-step meetings, found a sponsor who helped me stay clean, worked a part-time job, and went to school full-time at the local community college. I auditioned for UCF and was accepted into the Bachelor of Fine Arts program for Musical Theatre in the fall of 2011. I have been sober since September of that year.

Most people wouldn't guess that I was a recovered addict based on my demeanor or accomplishments, but most people don't really know what an addict is, and that's part of the problem. When searching the internet for the word "addict" this is the first image I found:



This is what the popular version of an addict is in our culture; the bum under the bridge, the abusive father, the absent mother, the *college drop out*. These things can be true of addicts who are in the throes of their addiction. However, once an addict admits he has a problem and goes into recovery, he takes on a dramatic metamorphosis of personality. Some addicts even admit they have a problem in their adolescence or young adulthood. In my experience in recovery, these people are lovingly referred to as “young people.” These are the young adults who have hit “rock bottom” who have chosen to live clean and sober one day at a time for the rest of their lives.

In my case, I chose to go back to college, but I was terrified of relapsing (which is recovery lingo for using drugs again). It was in college that this whole nightmare had started; not fitting in, strenuous hours of study, no peer-to-peer support. And without the support of my recovery group. I did relapse. I was in a position to lose all I had worked so hard to get back. Miraculously, I found someone at my school who was also in recovery, and we have been going to meetings ever since.

My story is not everyone else’s story. Not everyone finds that friend in recovery at their school, not everyone has a car to get to meetings off -campus (the closest young persons’ group is 25 minutes off campus), and that is where the problem continues.

According to research conducted at Texas Tech University: “More than 80% of college students are drinking. More than a third do drugs. For students struggling with substance abuse, temptations on-campus and stressors that can derail abstinence run high” (Harris, Cleveland, Wiebe). Not only is college a dangerous place for someone in recovery, but there is an epidemic on campuses across the nation for students who haven’t even admitted to being an addict:

Altogether, each month, almost half (49.4%) of all full-time college students aged 18-22 either binge drink, abuse prescription or illegal drugs, or both, and about 22.9% of those students meet the diagnostic criteria for substance abuse or dependence, almost triple the rate of the general population (8.5%). (Harris, Cleveland, Wiebe)

There are some universities combatting the problem. Universities like Texas Tech University, Kennesaw State University, Ohio University, and Texas State University are leading the charge by creating substantial faculty- and student-supported collegiate recovery communities. These communities provide a network of recovering addicts, faculty addiction counselors, and academic advisors who provide support for those recovering students. These schools also provide special housing and academic scholarships for those who qualify.

As a young person in recovery, and a creative theatre artist, I asked myself this question: How does theatre play a part in collegiate recovery? While reading about theatre for social change, I found the work of Augusto Boal to be inspiring. Boal focuses on audience participation and resolving conflict through dramatic action. He uses personal stories from the audience as subject matter and devises scenarios on how theatre can solve complex social problems. But how does one reach a larger audience? How does one reach a student/faculty populous in a university while effecting an emotional response and affecting active change in the community?

With the help of writing partner Tommy Hall, and under the supervision of The Director for New Play Development at The Orlando Shakespeare Theatre, Mark Routhier, I created a one- act play that tells the story of a young addict who loses his way, finds hope in recovery, and struggles to return to college. Through theatre, I can elicit an emotional response from an audience, change the perception of who an addict is, and encourage the implementation of collegiate recovery programs.

RESEARCH

The problem is as obvious as it can be, but it's a tricky one to approach. As stated in the introduction, drinking and drug use has become rampant on today's college campus. Drug abuse prevention in America is historic. One recalls events like Prohibition, and the "War on Drugs," but it wasn't until the late 1970's that drug abuse in college came into the spotlight. Public awareness was heightened when, in 1977, an article in Esquire Magazine told the tale of drug use on Yale University's campus:

The effect of some of these drugs was not unlike drinking: Quaaludes were for evenings of bumping into tables and warm, cuddly sex. Speed of the garden variety, like Dexedrine, was strictly functional: something for exam time. Methedrine, the speed that killed, had the shortest fuse you could find. THC was a marihuana extract, MDA was a mid-range pseudo psychedelic, and nobody ever found out what the hell STP was. Mescaline was the war-horse hallucinogen; it was usually high quality, and you could take a good bit of it with no lasting effect. (Casey)

During those times, drug use was rampant in universities across America; even Ivy League schools were not immune. The entertainment world also was mirroring college society with movies like *Animal House*, where binge drinking and drug use were the norm and lauded as something of an achievement.

According to data published by Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA), approximately 21% of the young adult population between the ages of 18 and 21 meets the criteria for substance abuse disorders (ARHE). According to Tom Hall, the Director of Alcohol and Other Drug Prevention services at UCF, over 17.5 million college students were enrolled in American colleges and universities in 2013. 21% of that population is 3,765,000 and yet only 5%, or 875,000, identified themselves as recovering addicts (ARHE). These college students are in need of a safe space

away from the lure and dangers of drug use in college. In my home state of Florida, the combined population of the 3 largest state universities, Florida State University, University of Florida, and University of Central Florida, is 172, 574. 5% of that number amounts to 8,628 self-identified recovering students. Of the 69,086 students at UCF, 3,454 students have acknowledged their addiction. However, given the data provided by SAMHSA there could be as many as 14,508 UCF students at risk.

In response to this widespread problem, schools like Texas Tech University are implementing what are nationally known as collegiate recovery programs to help support the figurative city of recovery that is growing in the United States today.

Since early 1977, when Brown University began to support the collegiate population in recovery on the college campus, there has been a slow and steady movement toward recovery in higher education. In 1983, Rutgers University saw the need to provide on-campus solutions for addiction and recovery. Likewise, in 1986, students in recovery at Texas Tech University began to see the need for recovery support on the campus. With the addition of Augsburg College's StepUP program in 1997, university systems nationwide have been well on their way to supporting what, until then, was an invisible population. (ARHE)

The Association for Recovery in Higher Education defines a collegiate recovery program (CRP) as: "a supportive environment within the campus culture that reinforces the decision to disengage from addictive behavior. It is designed to provide an educational opportunity alongside recovery support to ensure that students do not have to sacrifice one for the other" (ARHE). CRPs provide students with a number of resources to succeed on campuses nationwide. These programs may provide:

- Specialized housing
- Academic counseling and scholarships
- Peer- to -peer mentorship
- Regular and frequent 12-step meetings on campus (drug, gambling, etc.)

Thanks to these recovery programs, recovering students succeed academically, often with higher success rates than the non-addict college student. Students in recovery are reported to have retention rates as high as 90.8% versus 81.8% institutionally, and higher graduation rates, 89% versus 60.5% (Bennett).

In the state of Florida, there are various college programs to help students with their substance abuse issues. University of Florida's BACCHUS network does an exemplary job of advocating for awareness and prevention of alcohol dependency on campus (bacchusnetwork.org). Florida State implements a one-on-one faculty counseling -centered approach (counseling.fsu.edu). UCF provides alcohol and other drug intervention services through the Office of Student Development and Enrollment Services (<http://whps.sdes.ucf.edu/intervention>).

In spite of the impressive graduation and retention rates that schools with CRPs have, programs like those described at the three aforementioned Florida schools, although somewhat effective, can be lacking. Schools are mandated to have alcohol and other drug prevention and education programs, but many administrators do not recognize the need to go beyond the two-session counseling approach, whatever the outcome, or the typical movie at orientation that dramatizes the consequences of alcohol and other drugs abuse. Students know how drugs affect their bodies; that's why they use them. What is in place is simply not enough. What can be done to meet the needs of the 21% of students who struggle, regardless of the services that are offered on their campus?

It is my hope that the following play will raise awareness of the need for more widespread college recovery programs. It will allow readers to see what an addict struggles with to enter into recovery, and how hard and truly frightening it is to return to college where it all started. Under the guidance of the University of Central Florida Health Center and the direction of The Director for New Play Development at The Orlando Shakespeare Theatre, the original play that follows is the second draft of an ongoing process to use theatre as a means to champion this important social issue. It is entitled, *A Way Back*.

A WAY BACK

A Note on the Play

At the start of my senior year I realized I wanted to go above and beyond the academic call of duty. I had been receiving accolades for my college performances and was doing fairly well professionally, but I knew I hadn't made enough time to give back to my recovery community. One Wednesday afternoon, I stopped by a recovery meeting on campus and no one showed up. The faculty at the Recreation Center told me no one had been running the meeting for quite a while, so I took it upon myself to start facilitating the meeting to try and get more people involved. Initially, I was excited. This was my chance to give back. But it didn't take long for me to realize why the meeting had such low attendance. The room was in an obscure location, parking was nearly impossible, and any person outside of the UCF community found the time slot inconvenient. Needless to say, the meeting wasn't getting much attention. During one of the regular Wednesday recovery meetings that I facilitated, I was calling it quits early because the only people that showed up were two close friends. Then, fifteen minutes before closing, a woman walked in. She was crying, drunk, and didn't know what to say at first. Eventually, she started to share what she was going through. We gave her phone numbers to call and a directory of other meetings in the area. I walked away from that meeting playing that scene over in my head--her tears of desperation, the smell of alcohol on her skin. It is a scene I will never forget. Something she said kept me up late into that night and inspired me to write this play. She said, "It was so hard to find you guys. I wasn't really sure I was going to make it here." I went to bed that night steaming mad. Why wasn't I knocking down the doors of higher academia to demand that recovery be a top priority at UCF?! Why were people like Tom Hall, a faculty advocate of collegiate recovery, being ignored? Why weren't more schools doing more to help people like her? I wrote this play to share my story. I wrote it to incite a fire in people much like my own fire that started when that woman left our meeting on campus. Some people

say it is pointless to try and have recovery on campus and that it is not necessary to reach out to students and go beyond what local 12-step meetings provide for their community. I don't think they are right. I think that my small meeting on campus *did* make a difference because something miraculous happened just two months later. I gave that woman her two months of sobriety chip at a meeting downtown. She found recovery on campus, it began her journey into recovery, and it has changed her life for the better. It was after that meeting with her that I knew recovery on campus is not a contradiction. . It is something schools needed. It is something that works

A Way Back

By: John DeLisa and Tommy Hall

Mailmen Theatre Group 2014

(The stage is dark. We hear a cacophony of sounds that mimic what happened the night before. Party sounds, police siren, Miranda rights, etc. Lights up on Jason in a jail cell. He is curled up with his head in his hands. A random inmate is standing over Jason menacingly.)

RANDOM INMATE: ...That' a nice hat

(Jason quickly hands over his hat)

RI: Do you think I want this hat? (Gets closer) Do you think I want that nice jacket? What if I just liked your style? Way to perpetuate stereotypes. *(He walks with a certain thug swagger towards a bench and sits down)* You alright?

JASON: Leave me alone.

RI: First time in jail?

JASON: ... *(Jason turns from him)*

(Another stranger appears next to Jason reading a newspaper)

STRANGER: It's most certainly his first time. Is it his last time, well who knows these things?

JASON: Hey man, why don't you just shut up?! Nobody asked you.

RI: Excuse me?

STRANGER: That was a bad idea.

JASON: What?

RI: Did you just tell me to shut up?

JASON: Um...no...I was talking to the loudmouth next to you.

RI: You think you're funny?

STRANGER: *(Egging him on)* Now you've done it. Look at how angry he is.

JASON: No! Him! The guy with the newspaper!

RI: Listen new kid, it's about time you learned how things work around here. *(Poses Threateningly)*

STRANGER: Well that's about enough of that. *(Stranger taps Random Inmate on the head and he falls to the ground motionless)*

JASON: Whoah! What did you just do!?

STRANGER: Me? Oh nothing? He won't remember a thing when he comes to. Aren't you grateful I stopped him from smashing your head in like a cantaloupe?

(The Stranger starts medically examining Jason)

JASON: Well yeah, but how did you do that...who are you, and why couldn't he see you before?

STRANGER: *(Smiling)* Those are a lot of questions. I think I'll answer just one of them. I'll let you decide.

JASON: Who are you?

STRANGER: That's not an easy question to answer. Let me put it terms you can understand. I am what you see before you, I am not today what you will see tomorrow, and I am what I was yesterday and what I will be always.

JASON: You sort of look like a doctor...

STRANGER: You may call me a doctor, if you wish, if that makes things easier for you.

JASON: Doc...you haven't really answered my question of who you are or why you're here...

DOC: Well I really don't have time for any more questions. We must be off.

(Doc touches Jason's shoulder)

JASON: Wait, Let me go!

(Doc and Jason are transported out of the jail cell. Jason appears by himself outside of a house party.

Music is heard. It feels vaguely familiar to him. He feels a sudden sickness and throws up. A random Bro sees this and calls to him)

Bro: Dude! Pre-gaming like a pro! Don't let it stop you though! Round two man! Round two! *(Bro walks off)*

JASON: What the hell is going on? This house...I've been here before...

(A beautiful, scantily clad, girl walks by and notices him)

Girl: Hey Jason.

JASON: Hey...I know that girl!

(Doc appears dressed as a stereotypical frat boy)

DOC: Yo broski!

JASON: Wait...Doc?

DOC: Correctamundo Bromosapien!

JASON: Doc, what the hell is going on!?

DOC: What the hell is going on? It's the first party of the year man! Don't you remember?

JASON: Remember? Oh shit...I've been here before. This is Alpha Alpha Zeta house...Doc when are we?

DOC: That's a good question Indiana Brones. When do YOU think we are?

JASON: Doc, you brought me here. How *DID* you bring me here!? Who ARE you? What do you want with me?

DOC: Listen Brobocop...

JASON: Stop using made up bro names! I'm not going anywhere with you until you give me some answers!

DOC: Ok jeez! You think you give someone a second chance at their life they'd be grateful. "Hey bro, thanks a lot for helping me out of jail and shit." But Noooo there all like "Who are you? What do you want with me? Stop saying bro!" *(Doc starts to walk away)* You think a little time travel would impress a bro...

JASON: Time travel...? Wait Doc! Doc!! (*Doc is gone*) A second chance at my life?

(*Enter Hope*)

JASON: Hope...Hey Hope!

HOPE: Um...Hi.

JASON: Is everything ok? How've you been? You have no idea how sorry I am.

HOPE: It's Jason, right? Sorry for what?

JASON: Oh...(aside) Time travel...

HOPE: Excuse me?

JASON: I'm sorry...because the other day in music appreciation class I borrowed your pencil, and it was your favorite pencil I think it had Butterflies? Anyways I was supposed to give it back to you, but you see I couldn't because I get fidgety in class and chew on pencils and pens and things...I figured you wouldn't want it back with my teeth marks all over it so...IM SORRY, I WILL replace it if it is the last thing I do.

HOPE: OH! Ok...Well that's...very thoughtful of you Jason. So are you...

JASON: On my way to the party? You betcha. Just need to catch up with my...bro over there. Gotta go.

HOPE: (*Confused*) Alright...bye

(*Jason frantically searches for doc*

bro)

JASON: Doc? Doc bro? Paging

Dr.Bro? (*Doc appears*)

DOC: Oh so noooooow you wanna talk?

JASON: Doc, you're for real aren't you? This whole time travel thing? That's, this is happening!

DOC: Yeah bra

JASON: That girl...oh my god, Hope. Doc, you don't understand. Back in the future...present...whatever. I

hurt that girl. I ruined her life.

DOC: Tell me about it bro, seriously, I'll level.

JASON: We met. THIS night, at THIS party. And we started getting involved. She got dragged into my shit.

DOC: Bro, how much shit are we talking? Ankles, knees, hips?

JASON: Eyeball level shit ok? We were driving and we got pulled over because of a busted tail light. The cop searched the car and they found me with a bunch of weed. I got charged with intent to distribute...I tried to tell the cop she had nothing to do with it but he still charged her with possession. That's a FELONY.

DOC: Eyeball shit. Damn. Well good thing you were scheduled for a re-do broski! Listen I say, you go over there to Hope. Talk to her, like you do, and this time you fix your tail light before you go on that drive! Problem solved! (*Goes for a high five*)

JASON: No. I don't want to talk to her at all! I can't get her involved this time. (*Gets an idea*) Why don't YOU talk to her!? You wanna help? Keep her away from me. I'll just...meet somebody else.

DOC: I dunno. The way she looked at you? That smile? Those eyes? I saw a future there man, maybe the next Mrs. Jason...what's your last name again?

JASON: Wow ok, so to add to your resume of crazy, you're a time traveling, shape shifting, *future seeing*...bro?

DOC: Yeah! I'm a regular brostrodamus!

JASON: Ok brostrodamus, are you gonna help me or what?

DOC: One bro to another? YEAH bro! I'll be your wing man! (*goes for another high five. Jason doesn't reciprocate*) Bro if you leave me hanging, I will drop your ass off at your conception.

(*Jason High fives Doc, when all of the sudden Mercedes walks by*)

DOC: (*winking to Jason*) Mercedes! Have you met my good friend Jason?

MERCEDES: (*dtf*) Hey Jason...

(*Jason and Mercedes walk off stage. Doc has a knowing look on his face, which is neither hopeful nor dreadful*)

(*The next scene we see Doc, Jason, Mercedes, and Hope in a progression that shows...*

Jason getting drunk with Mercedes

Doc getting more aggressive with Hope as he keeps her away from Jason

Mercedes getting sexual with Jason

They all sense the tension...)

(*Finally Doc gets Jason alone*)

DOC: Bro! What a plan you've come up with! It's working out for both of us. You're gonna score and so am I!

JASON: What? Doc that's not what we talked about.

DOC: Sure it is! Keep hope out of your life right? That was the plan? Alright then, I'll keep her out of your life but I'll get into hers (*obscene gesture*).

(Hope walks in)

JASON: Fuck you man! That's not the plan.

HOPE: Is everything ok?

JASON: No, everything is not ok. Don't go home with brostrodamus over there. He's not a good guy. He's like...a trickster? Like way worse. Like Loki status.

HOPE: You mean George?

(Jason looks at George)

JASON: Yes. Fine. George. He's not the kind of guy you want to go home with. You can't really tell me he's the kind of guy you want to be with?

HOPE: Well, there was this cute guy who promised me my pencil back but then he left to go get drunk with another girl.

JASON: ...well I'm still cute...and I'll give you twenty pencils. And they'll have lady bugs, praying mantis, mosquitos...just don't go home with him.

(Hope Laughs)

DOC: Why you gonna cock block me like that bro?

HOPE: I'm sorry George. I really was impressed by how much you knew about 18th century German composers, but this gentleman owes me a debt that I'd like to see him make good on. I hope you understand.

DOC: Whatever man! Wrap the stump before you hump!

(Mercedes walks in)

DOC: Hey Mercedes! Lemme tell you a little bit about Ludwig van Beethoven. You know he faked his deaf?

(Mercedes Walks away with Doc)

HOPE: Well I'm this way.

JASON: Alright

(Lights Down)

(Lights up on Jason and Hope at her apartment Jason and Hope are laughing)

JASON: Haha I forgot what it was like to laugh with you.

HOPE: What are you talking about? Forgot what it was like?

JASON: I mean...forgot what it was like to genuinely laugh with someone

HOPE: Oh. Yeah, its pretty nice. So you're a composition major? You should play me some of your stuff sometime.

JASON: Nah, my stuffs not that good yet.

HOPE: I bet it's great. When did you know that was what you wanted to do with your life?

JASON: Well...when I was twelve I wrote a small melody on my family's piano. It wasn't anything super awesome but it was something I liked. About thirty minutes after I stopped practicing my brother started humming the tune when we were playing video games. He asked me "Who wrote that song you were playing? It's catchy." I just smiled and said, "I did." I've never felt anything better in my life.

(They share a look)

JASON: Well I better get going...

HOPE: That's it?

JASON: What do you mean?

HOPE: I leave the guy I'm with to walk home with you and you spend the whole night dodging my questions and trying to leave. Do I have bad B.O. or something?

JASON: No it's not that. I just...I've got a lot of baggage. I don't want you involved in it.

HOPE: Oh, the old "I've got baggage line." Do me a favor. Just be honest with me. Do you want a second date or not?

JASON: Well, this wasn't really a first date.

HOPE: All the more reason why you should treat me to a proper one. We could go to my favorite Italian place downtown...

JASON: Mario's, I remember.

HOPE: Have you been stalking me?

JASON: What? No! It's really the only place you can get authentic Italian food around here. So I figured...

HOPE: Right...*(Hope's phone buzzes)* Oh, I better get going. I need to talk to my brother. He's having a rough time.

JASON: That's right. Well listen, go easy on him. He really...or I mean...probably cares about you a lot and everyone has a hard time in high school.

HOPE: Ok...I'm gonna officially put you in the stalker category. How do you know all of these things?

JASON: You wouldn't believe me if I told you.

HOPE: Whatever you say mystery man. Either way that was very sweet of you to say.

(They share a look. She leans in for a kiss. Jason pulls away and gives her the cheek)

JASON: So...Mario's next week right?

HOPE: Right

JASON: Good night

HOPE: Night mystery man

(Hope goes inside. Doc appears)

DOC: Bro! You didn't close the deal!

JASON: You...

DOC: Me...

JASON: Look at what you made me do!

DOC: Look what *I* made you do?! I'm not the one who took her home. I'm not the one that set her up on a second date. This is YOUR do over man. I'm just riding the wave.

JASON: Yeah well if you weren't such a douche bag at the party I wouldn't have felt I needed to step in.

DOC: Listen bro, you can blame me all you want, or you can figure out what we can do next.

JASON: We? Excuse me?

DOC: Yeah I did bring you here. And if I remember right, I'm the one who can zap your ass back in jail.

JASON: Fine! Thank you almighty ghost of Christmas past for taking me here. Now, please help me stay AWAY from this girl and get on with my life. I have to think of how to get out of this date.

DOC: Think away bro. This is your second chance. But I don't have all night, so hurry it up.

JASON: I could drop out of school...no that's way too drastic. I could change my name and leave the state...that's not any better. Wait! I'm pretty sure Mercedes said she was having a party that week. I'll just go there instead of Mario's!

DOC: Party at Mercedes next week, sounds like a real blast.

(Doc and Jason are transported to Mercedes party the following week. They are outside of the house.

Hope appears and is in mid-sentence with Jason)

HOPE: ...I don't know why you wanted to come here instead of Mario's, but I am excited to try the pot with someone I think I can trust.

(Jason is dumbfounded)

JASON: *(to himself)* Fuck...fuck fuck FUCK!

HOPE: Hello? Earth to Jason?

JASON: What?

HOPE: I was saying I'm excited to try the pot tonight. I mean maybe we can go to Mario's after! I know you're supposed to get the crunchies after you smoke it right?

JASON: *(Jason Laughs)* The crunchies... I think you mean the munchies. But listen we don't HAVE to go to this party. Why don't we go to Mario's now?

HOPE: Jason, what's going on? You've spent this whole week telling me about smoking for the first time and now you don't want to do it anymore?

JASON: This whole week? ...Doc! Ok. Yeah but I changed my mind. You're a great girl Hope, and you don't need to get involved in this kind of stuff.

HOPE: *(She gets closer to Jason)* Jason I'm not as good of a girl as you think. And besides *(Hope knocks on the door)* its just the pot.

(Mercedes opens door. Looking edible)

MERCEDES: Oh hey Jason. *(Hugs Jason seductively)* Hope. *(Bitchface)*

(Jason is stunned. Hope sees this and retaliates)

HOPE: Mercedes! Thanks so much for having us. That dress is so...you.

(Taking Jason by the hand, Hope walks right in. They are now inside the party and head towards the bar.

Hope grabs her drink. Jason grabs his)

HOPE: So how do we smoke the pot? Do we use a pipe? Like Sherlock Holmes? That'd be classy. Or do we roll in a doobly?

JASON: Yeah...listen. Oh you know what? I totally forgot to get the pot! I don't even have any on me.

HOPE: Oh...that's disappointing. Is there anyone else here that can hook us up?

(Doc walks by as a total stoner)

DOC: Anyone want to match? First one's on me! Hey Jason! I know you want to

HOPE: There we go.

JASON: *(To Doc)* What are you doing? *(To Hope)* Hope. I don't know how we got to this point, but I you're a great girl and this just isn't your scene.

HOPE: Jason, what is going on with you? I appreciate your concern but this is my decision.

JASON: I won't allow you to do this again!

HOPE: Allow me?

DOC: Ruh Roh. I have an idea. *(Lights the joint and takes a hit)* Who's ever holding the peace stick is allowed to share their feelings.

(Jason takes the blunt away from Doc)

JASON: I don't want you to make this decision.

HOPE: It's not your decision to make. *(Looks at Doc)* What's your name?

DOC: My names Seymour, but they call me Dr. Rasta. I've got a PhD herbal medicines, ya feel?

HOPE: Well Seymour, you have any more of that?

DOC: Most certainly pretty lady.

(As they walk off)

DOC: You owe me Jason.

(Mercedes walks to Jason)

MERCEDES: So your little girlfriend left huh?

JASON: She's not my girlfriend...well she was...but...it's complicated.

MERCEDES: It always is. But we don't have to do complicated tonight do we?

JASON: No I guess we don't.

(Jason grabs a drink. He and Mercedes proceed to dance. Jason is hesitant but as he smokes and drinks more he gets into it. Jason leaves to go to the couch. Mercedes follows him with two fresh beers)

MERCEDES: You tired of dancing already?

JASON: Is one of those beers for me?

MERCEDES: Of course it is, baby. I know how thirsty you are.

(Jason chugs the beer)

JASON: You get me Mercedes. You know what you're doing. But Hope, she thinks she's better than me...she's better than this...maybe she is. I didn't do right by her the first time. Maybe I should go and check on her.

MERCEDES: Whoah, hunny. Don't worry about her. She's looking out for herself. You should too. I got a little something for you. *(Takes out a pill bottle)*

JASON: Like a present?

MERCEDES: Happy birthday. *(She grabs him by the cheeks and drops a Percocet into his mouth)*

(Mercedes and Jason kiss. She leaves to get another drink and Jason lights up a blunt)

(Lights down. Lights up on the same night. Jason is on the couch with Mercedes high out of their minds.)

Hope enters.)

HOPE: Hey Mercedes, I just saw someone throwing up on a bed down the hall?

MERCEDES: What!?! Those are silk sheets! *(Mercedes gets up and stumbles off)*

(Hope sits next to Jason)

HOPE: Jason? What did you do? You don't look so good.

JASON: Hope? No. I feel great. I feel fan-tastic. How are you? Oh wait...you went off. You left with Doctor pasta. We were supposed to go to Mario's!...Are you high?

HOPE: No Jason. I wanted to smoke, but I really just wanted to be with you. Seymour passed out after hogging all the pot.

JASON: Oh...well that's no good. Here you wanted to get high with me? I shouldn't have got in your way.

Let no man say that Jason Brevard is a buzz kill. *(gets out a joint and gives it to Hope)*

HOPE: Jason this isn't the way I wanted tonight to go. Look, I really like you, but this whole week has been really confusing. You've been telling me how great it is to party, and then we get to the party and you want to leave and go to Mario's, then you hang all over Mercedes, I just don't know what to think.

(Jason has lost consciousness and falls to the floor)

HOPE: Jason? Jason! *(She tries to wake him)* Jason oh my god. Somebody help me! I need some help

(Mercedes enters)

HOPE: Mercedes, you were with him, what did he take?

MERCEDES: Relax, he's just had too much. He'll be fine.

HOPE: He doesn't look fine. We should call someone.

MERCEDES: No. He'll be fine here with me. Why don't you go home?

HOPE: I'm not leaving him here with you.

MERCEDES: Suit yourself. You can both stay out here for the night.

(She starts to walk away)

MERCEDES: He was right. You do think you're better than us. This is who he is darling, best accept that.

(Lights out)

(Lights up at a diner. Jason is hung over with Hope)

JASON: I think I could go for a black coffee. And bacon. Lots of bacon.

HOPE: I think I could use some explanation as to what happened last night.

JASON: Nothing happened. Party just got a little crazy. You weren't even supposed to be there.

HOPE: And where exactly was I supposed to be? We were on a date but you wanted to go to that party.

Then you abandoned me.

JASON: I abandoned YOU? You went off with Seymour.

HOPE: What was I supposed to do? You were trying to get rid of me and stop ME from partying all night.

JASON: Look, I was trying to protect you. I party, I'm good at it. Last night I just got a little out of control.

HOPE: A little?

JASON: This is what happened last time. You got all judgy on me. Which was part of the reason I wanted to stay away from you in the first place.

HOPE: The first time? The last time? What are you talking about?

JASON: You want to know the truth? The truth is I...

(Enter Doc as a waiter)

DOC: Hiya folks! What a nice looking couple we have this morning! We have a couple of specials we have going on. Might I recommend the all American breakfast for you sir, you look hungry as a horse. Extra bacon, am I right? And for you young miss we have some delicious strawberry covered pancakes that will knock your socks off! But first, before the conversation goes any further *(looks at Jason)* what can I get you two to drink?

JASON: Hope this is what I've been trying to tell you. The truth is this guy has been...

DOC: *(claps)* Trying to take your drink order, if you don't mind.

(Jason and doc share menacing looks. Hopes phone rings)

HOPE: I've got to take this. *(Hope leaves)*

DOC: I know what you're trying to do and you need to stop

JASON: Try and stop me

DOC: You tell her who you are, and when you're from, and I'll pull your ass back into future.

JASON: I've heard that before

DOC: You think jail was bad for you? How do you think Hope would survive in a place like that?

(Hope enters)

DOC: So! Black coffee for the gentleman. Mocha for the lady?

HOPE: Just water please.

(Jason is terrified)

DOC: Right away, I'll put your food in as well. I'll be back in a few moments. You too can carry on your discussion. *(Looks at Jason)*

HOPE: Turns out it was nothing. What were you trying to tell me about the truth?

JASON: The truth is...I'm no good for you. I like to party. That's how I have a good time. I liked to get fucked up.

HOPE: I get that, everyone likes to drink every now and then.

JASON: No, Hope. This is my life.

HOPE: I don't believe that. That's not all that there is to you. Do you always have to party that hard?

JASON: That's how it's done. You're in school, you study hard, and you party harder.

HOPE: What did you even take last night?

JASON: I don't know. Mercedes gave it to me. But it's cool it was probably just some sort of Vicodin, Percocet, Molly, bar, I don't know Mercedes rolls deep like that.

HOPE: You took something you didn't even know what it was? Holy shit, Jason, you could've killed yourself!

JASON: That's just how it goes. There's no way to REALLY know what you're taking, you just have to trust the person who's giving it to you, unless you're the one supplying it.

HOPE: So you're saying you trust Mercedes with your life?

JASON:

HOPE: Jason?

Jason. Hold on I'm thinking.

HOPE: Do wanna let me in?

JASON: What if I was the one controlling who was getting what?

HOPE: What?

JASON: What if I was the dealer?

HOPE: Are you kidding me?

JASON: No, I'm not. Think about it. These dealers are usually like shady figures that think they know what they're giving kids, but what if they're wrong? What if they don't even care?

HOPE: Jason are you listening to yourself?

JASON: Yeah. This is the first good idea I've had in a long time. I can be a supplier, I can be a good supplier, who gives kids straight talk about what they're getting. I'll be the friendly neighborhood drug dealer.

HOPE: You'll be the Spiderman of drug dealing?

JASON: It's a fool proof. I'll know what I'm taking, the people I sell it to will know what they're taking, I'll make tons of money, and I'll support my habit for free!

HOPE: Jason, I cannot support this. You're out of your mind.

JASON: If that's how you feel, then go.

HOPE: If you really mean that, then you're not the guy I thought you were.

JASON: Maybe I'm exactly the guy you thought I was.

(Hope gets up)

HOPE: Its your life. I wish you'd take better care of it.

(Doc walks back in and sits next to Jason)

DOC: Now was that so hard?

JASON: Leave me alone

DOC: What's wrong? Hope is out of your life. That's what you wanted right? Beats my busted tail light idea. Congratulations you got rid of Hope. By the way here's your bill.

JASON: *(Looking at the bill)* Can we just skip to the part where I'm a successful drug dealer and can afford breakfasts like this?

DOC: Oh we'll skip to something. *(Doc touches Jason and transports him to his apartment with Mercedes on his bed, surrounded by a whoooooole lotta drugs)*

JASON: I've died and gone to heaven.

MERCEDES: Aw, aren't you cute? But I'm no angel. Shall we celebrate our new merchandise?

JASON: Hell fucking yes. I'm gonna go grab a couple of beers. We'll each take a Vicodin. And go ahead and roll up a blunt.

MERCEDES: Hey babe, I'm down to party just like you but let's remember that this is business as well as pleasure.

JASON: Right. Yeah, I'm not gonna burn through my whole stash like some noob.

MERCEDES: Whatever you say sugar, whatever you say.

(Mercedes starts to get physical with Jason and leans in for a kiss when there is a knock at the door. A customer walks in and buys. This continues as Jason and Mercedes get more and more physical and use more and more drugs. Hope appears on the phone leaving a message for Jason.)

HOPE: Hey Jason. It's me...again. I'm just checking on you. I hope that you're alive. Not in jail. I hope you haven't caught anything from Mercedes...god that sounds like I'm a jealous crazy person, but she doesn't look clean Jason...anyway call me sometime, I hope you're well.

(Lights down. Lights up on Jason and Mercedes in bed in various states of undress. Most of the stash is gone. Smoked, drank, and popped away. There's a knock at the door. It's Hope)

HOPE: Jason? Jason, its hope. Are you there? I know I should just leave you alone but you haven't been to class in weeks and you're going to fail out if you miss anymore. I brought homework and notes if you want to look at them...you still owe me pencils you know...

(Mercedes stirs. Gets up. And answers the door)

MERCEDES: Oh.

HOPE: Oh. You.

MERCEDES: Yes, me.

HOPE: Um...I'm here to see Jason.

MERCEDES: Oh and I thought you were here to see me. He's sleeping hon, best let him be.

HOPE: No. I want to see him. Wake him up, or I will.

MERCEDES: Well Jason doesn't want to see you.

HOPE: Is that right? Did he tell you that? Or did you make that up?

MERCEDES: Fine. Come in, don't say I didn't warn you.

HOPE: Jason?

(Jason wakes up and walks into living room to confront Hope)

JASON: Hope? What are you doing here?

HOPE: I came here to...god I had no idea it was this bad...that you were so...

JASON: So...what? Say it. Say what's on your mind.

HOPE: So far gone.

JASON: So far gone? Hope, I've made more money in the last few weeks than any college kid working part time waiting tables. I'm being up front with all my customers about what they're buying. Look here. This bag is...wait...why are the blues mixed with the whites? Mercedes did you do this?

MERCEDES: You did. About a week ago you said we could start charging the same rate for both pills. So it didn't matter what they wanted really because they do basically the same thing.

JASON: Well...that's irreverent...because that's not the biggest point...

HOPE: You mean Irrelevant!? Jason the whole reason you started this was to keep other kids "informed," to be the Spiderman of drug dealers? You know what? Fine. Here are your notes for class do what you want. See if I care.

(Hope turns to walk away but stops and turns back and gestures to the apartment)

HOPE: But if you're anything like the guy I thought you were. This? This isn't the life you want.

(Hope walks out)

JASON: But *you're* not part of it! I kept you...out...fuck.

MERCEDES: Forget about her. You have more...pressing matters to deal with.

(She goes to seduce him but Jason is in no mood)

JASON: Not now Mercedes. I have to get lit.

(Jason goes and hits a joint that has been lying on the table and pops a pill)

MERCEDES: What is this about? Hope? What's she got you all fussed up about?

JASON: She just...nothing. It's just...she always does this to me.

MERCEDES: Does what, lover?

JASON: Nevermind. Was there actually a pressing matter to discuss or did you want to...

MERCEDES: Well I always want to...but no. There is something we should talk about.

JASON: What?

MERCEDES: It's about Julio Martinez.

JASON: The supplier?

MERCEDES: He wants his cut.

JASON: But...we haven't...where are we in the books?

(Mercedes gets out a ledger)

MERCEDES: Well that's what I wanted to talk to you about. We're in the red.

JASON: What!? But we still have some stuff left to sell.

MERCEDES: But even with that you're still not gonna have enough to give back to Julio. With interest. AND pay back your loan. Which you will have to start paying if you drop out of classes.

JASON: How long have you known about this!?

MERCEDES: I went through our stash this morning and did the math. I am still an accounting major, albeit an irresponsible one.

JASON: Well how much do I owe?

MERCEDES: Roughly 500 dollars

JASON: Holy shit. Well you better fucking contribute. How much are you gonna pitch in?

(Mercedes laughs)

MERCEDES: Jason, this isn't OUR business venture here. I was just helping you, and getting some free stuff on the side. It was you who used up most of the stash.

JASON: Bullshit! You were with me every step of the way!

MERCEDES: You're a dumb piece of work you know that? Jason, I don't party the way you do. Did you even notice the days when I would leave the house?

JASON: You were here the whole time...

MERCEDES: No sweetheart. This house is rank. You don't take care of yourself. Let alone me. I needed out. Which is why I'm leaving.

JASON: What!? You can't leave! What about me? Lover? Baby? Hunny? You have a lot of sweet names for someone you don't give a fuck about.

MERCEDES: Jason, you're sweet, you really are. But this was about three things. Your dick, your money, and your drugs. Now that I've had my fill of all three, I'm out.

(Mercedes starts to leave)

JASON: Fine! Leave! *If* Julio comes knocking I'll let him know *you're* just as much to blame for this.

(Mercedes stops. Then goes)

(Jason is alone. He goes fridge, grabs a beer. Looks at the ledger. Peeks out the window. Sits on the couch. Pops a pill. Hits a joint. Lights down)

(Lights up on Jason sleeping on the couch. His cell phone rings. Jason wakes up but he ignores the phone. He gets up. Pops another pill and grabs a beer.)

JASON: Ok let's figure this out. Julio's coming for me. A drug lord is paying a visit to my house. Great. What the hell am I gonna say. "Hey Julio, could I get an extension on the drug loan you gave me? Could we refinance the interest?" Yeah right. Like he's gonna go for that shit. Think Jason, think. Maybe I could sell my TV! Maybe Julio could take my TV. It's a nice TV...or my laptop! I don't use it anymore. It's gotta be worth something. Who am I kidding. I gotta get the hell out of here. As far out of here as I can. Maybe I can sneak into Canada.

(There's a loud knock at the door. A voice is heard outside the door.)

JULIO: Hello Jason. It's Julio. Could I come in, just to chat? Maybe over coffee?

JASON: ...fuck

JULIO: Jason, you know it's rude not to invite people in to your home.

JASON: ...shit

JULIO: I know you're home so it's no use pretending you're asleep on the couch you little shit. Open the door before you give me more of a reason to bust your kneecaps, after all nobody wants to be hurt. I just want to be your friend. I want my money back. Friends pay friends their money back don't they?

(Mercedes is heard from behind the door)

MERCEDES: Jason I tried calling you to warn you! I'm sorry! Don't open the door. He's got a gun, he's gonna kill...

JULIO: Shut up, bitch! I'll deal with you after I deal with this kid.

JASON: Oh god, Oh god, Oh god...what do I do!?

(There is a flushing noise heard from the bathroom)

JASON: What the hell?

(Jason grabs something to defend himself. Doc walks in from the bathroom dressed to the nines)

DOC: Well, well, well Jason. Got yourself in a little bit of a pickle huh?

JASON: Doc! Oh thank God it's you! Please, get me the hell out of here. Do that magic shit you do.

DOC: Jason, what seems to be the problem my frantic friend?

JASON: Don't pull that shit with me Doc, if I know anything it's that YOU already know that Julio is here and he wants my head. Doc, you have to get me out of here.

DOC: Oh yes, Julio, I do know about him but Jason I'm a busy man, I can't just fix everyone's messes when it happens to be convenient for them. What about me? I have an appointment coming up in just a few minutes. Please tell me you didn't think you were the only person I do this for.

JASON: I mean...I did, but Doc look, I really need your help. Why did you show up in the first place!?
To rub it in my face?

JULIO: Who are you talking to? Who else is in there? I've got people out here of my own so don't try any funny shit Jason. I'm gonna count to five before this door flies off the hinges. One...

JASON: Doc you gotta do something!

JULIO: two...

DOC: *(sighs)* Fine. When I was in the bathroom I looked out the window and saw no one guarding the back.

JULIO: Three...

JASON: But that's a two story drop from that window!

JULIO: Four...

DOC: Your choice.

(Jason grabs his back pack full of beer and dashes through the bathroom.)

JULIO: Five! Alright, bust this door down.

(Doc snaps his fingers and the lights go out. We hear dialogue in the dark)

JULIO: Who are you?

DOC: I'm a collector. Like you. And you have some massive debts to be repaid.

(Sounds of massacre and screams are heard.)

(Jason arrives at Hopes house. He has a guitar. He begins drunkenly playing an awful love song to hope to get her to come outside)

JASON: *(sings)*

Hope. You and me are no joke.

I know I did a lot of coke.

But if you'll stay I won't do dope.

Oh Hooooope!

I love you.

Mercedes was a bitch

She never scratched my itch

To be with you is...better

So hope come outside

Please!... One more time!

Hope. You and me are no...

(Hope pops out of a window)

HOPE: Stop! Ok. I'm coming out.

JASON: *(sings)* Thank you!

(Hope walks out of the front door. There is an awkward silence)

JASON: Hey.

HOPE: Hi

JASON: It's good to see you again.

HOPE: Jason you were just singing, that awful song to get me out here. What do you want?

JASON: Hope, I've been a douche. You were the best thing that's ever happened to me. And I, threw you away. Like a fat kid throws away celery.

HOPE: Jason that's awful.

JASON: But true! Listen, I'm sorry. Can you forgive me? I wrote you a song!

HOPE: I know. But you really hurt me. I tried to get you to come to your senses, I tried to get to know you, and I felt like we had a real connection, but you threw all that away for Mercedes and drugs.

JASON: I know. I was an idiot. I am an idiot.

HOPE: Yeah, for God's sake Jason, your friendly neighborhood drug dealer?

JASON: Not exactly the superhero I should've been. But you know that everything I did was to protect you.

HOPE: How can you say that Jason? Don't you dare put all of this on me.

JASON: That's not what I mean, Hope. I wish I could tell you the whole story. And one day maybe I will. All I can tell you now is that you're the most important person I have in my life and I won't let you get hurt again.

HOPE: You keep saying these things like you won't let me get hurt again. This has happened before. You don't want to see me go down this road again. How can I believe you when you won't even tell me the truth?

JASON: Can't you just trust the fact that if you knew the whole story we'd be in a shit ton more trouble than we are now? And that all I'm trying to do is protect you. Even though I've been an asshole about it.

HOPE: Jason, I don't know if I can.

JASON: Hope. I need you. I want to give this all up for *you*. The drugs, girls like Mercedes, this whole life. Give me the chance to change. Please.

HOPE: (*hesitant*) Jason...lets say that I believe that you want to change. What kind of trouble are you in?

JASON: Well...the kind of trouble that involves being hunted down by a drug lord.

HOPE: What!?

JASON: But I thought! I thought we could run away together. You could come with me. You could help keep me straight. But we have to leave right now, please.

HOPE: Jason, I still have school. My parents, my friends. I can't just pick up my life and go.

JASON: But...but I thought.

HOPE: Jason...

JASON: But what if the drug lord finds out about you!? About *our* relationship? What if he comes here looking for you? I couldn't live with myself knowing you were in danger. Besides, doesn't seeing the stars in Montana, the sunset on the California coast, doesn't any of that sound good to you. That's the kind of life we could have Hope. Just come with me. Help me. I love you...

HOPE: Jason....Ok. Give me a day to get things ready.

JASON: Hope, we have to leave now, you don't understand, these people are bad news.

HOPE: But Jason, I don't have my toothbrush, my clothes, I still have to call my friends and let my parents know.

JASON: We can do that on the way. I'll buy you a new toothbrush, clothes, and whatever you want. We'll make it work.

HOPE: If you think we're in that much danger, and you promise to leave all this behind, then I trust you. Let's go.

JASON: Ok. Ok! Me and you Hope. Let's go. *(They embrace and head towards the car. Lights down.)*

(Lights up on Jason and Hope in the car)

JASON: This is gonna be so amazing. This is all I ever wanted. Hope you just made my life. This second chance is going so much better than I had ever dreamed.

HOPE: So where are we going?

JASON: I don't know. We'll figure it out.

HOPE: How much money do you have?

JASON: Enough.

HOPE: Enough? What does that mean?

JASON: We'll figure it out when we get to a bank outside of town. Maybe outside of the state.

HOPE: Jason, I don't think you've got this figured out.

JASON: No, no I do. Of course I do. You and me are going to start a life together and its going to be great.

HOPE: ...

JASON: What?

HOPE: Jason. Did this, Julio guy really know who I was? Where I lived?

JASON: I don't know. He could have.

HOPE: What do you mean he *could* have?

JASON: He's resourceful! Mercedes brought him to my house, who knows what else she told him.

HOPE: Mercedes didn't know where I lived. You made this up just so I would come with you. You need to take me home.

JASON: But Hope. Now that we're already in the car. Think about it, a brand new life! We can start fresh. Be whoever we want! (*Jason cracks open a beer and starts drinking*)

HOPE: (*Looking out the window, not noticing the beer*) I had a life. I was in school, I had friends (*looks back at Jason and sees him drinking*) what the fuck are you doing?

JASON: What? I was stressed, I get shaky. I could barely control the wheel. I needed to relax, and this and this does the trick.

HOPE: You said you were going to get clean.

JASON: I am. From drugs. Alcohol isn't a drug.

HOPE: Yes it is! Oh my God, you're drinking and driving and you don't even see how that's a problem?

JASON: Mercedes...its just one...

HOPE: Pull over the car Jason.

JASON: *(Not looking at the road)* Hope, I'm sorry, please...

HOPE: Jason watch the road!

JASON: *(Jason over corrects the steering wheel)* What? HOLY...!

(Blackout. We hear sounds of a car wreck and an ambulance. Same as in the beginning of the play)

(lights up on Jason in a hospital bed. Arm in a sling. Various injuries. We see Jason sit nervously for a while before Doc walks in as a medical doctor. Doc enters with his back towards Jason)

DOC: You're lucky to be alive there, son. The good news is besides from a dislocated shoulder and a minor concussion you're ok.

(Turns towards Jason)

JASON: You!

DOC: The bad news is. You're going to go to jail for three counts vehicular manslaughter.

Jason...I want to see Hope

DOC: Negligent injury

JASON: I want to see Hope.

DOC: Driving left of center.

JASON: Where is HOPE! Tell me she's ok!

DOC: Reckless operation.

JASON: Fine. If you're not going to tell me, I'll find someone who will.

(Jason tries to get out of bed)

DOC: She's dead, Jason. She died on the operating table an hour ago.

JASON: ...That's not true. You're lying. You're a liar.

DOC: I wish I was. Hope was a good girl.

JASON: She's not DEAD!

DOC: Oh, but she is. Here's the report.

JASON: You. You could've made this up. This could have been forged. How do I know this isn't just another one of your tricks?

DOC: Do you want to see where they have the body? The lifeless corpse of a girl you loved, or claimed to love, until you murdered her.

JASON: I didn't murder her!

DOC: Oh? Then how did she die?

JASON: She...I was only trying to...I wanted to protect her...

DOC: By driving under the influence? By convincing her, that her life was in danger?

JASON: She wanted to start a new life with me!

DOC: Tell yourself whatever you want Jason. Her blood is on YOUR hands, not mine, not anyone else's!

JASON: YOU ARE LYING! THAT'S WHAT YOU DO! You act like you want to help and then fuck everything up! You told me this was my second chance to fix things and NOW LOOK WHAT YOU DID!!

DOC: What *you* did Jason. I offered you a second chance and *this* is what you ended up with because of your selfishness, your decisions...I actually thought you might be different Jason. *(Doc exits)*

(Jason is left alone to ponder is situation and his choices. He stands up and looks around. As he is wondering around his room, he sees a bulletin board with the words Addiction Recovery. He fumes. In a fit of rage he topples the bulletin board over. He sinks to the floor and begins to cry. Doc comes in dressed as a police officer with a random doctor)

DOCTOR: Mr. Brevard? We have reviewed your file. You're fit to leave. We're releasing you into police custody.

JASON: ...

DOCTOR: Here he is officer.

DOC: Why is it always the criminals who come out alive in these situations?

DOCTOR: I don't know. Nerves. Fate. We don't discriminate here. We just save lives. Thank you officer.

DOC: Yup. It seems a shame to do all this work patching him up, it's probably death row for this one.

(Jason looks up and sees Doc) You know how it goes.

JASON: I didn't want this...

DOC: Excuse me son?

JASON: I didn't want Hope to die.

DOC: Alright kid, that's enough.

JASON: She died because of me, because I couldn't stop!

DOCTOR: We need a few nurses in here!

JASON: I know what you are now, Doc. You're death. If I'm gonna die anyway. Change it. Bring Hope back and take me instead!

(Orderly's come in to restrain Jason)

DOCTOR: Get a sedative!

JASON: Doc please! Please Doc, it wasn't her fault! It was me! I couldn't stop. If I could do it again, I'd never touch a drop of any of that shit. It's not her fault...BRING HER BACK!

(The nurses give Jason the sedative. Lights go out)

(We hear the same sounds we heard in the beginning of the play. And Jason is in the same spot he was at the start.)

RANDOM INMATE: ...That's a nice hat

(Jason quickly hands over his hat)

RANDOM INMATE: Do you think I want this hat? (Gets closer) Do you think I want that nice jacket? What if I just liked your style? Way to perpetuate stereotypes. *(He walks with a certain thug swagger towards a bench and sits down)* You alright?

JASON: Leave me alone.

RANDOM INMATE: First time in jail?

JASON: ... What?

RANDOM INMATE: I said, is this your first time in the joint?

JASON: Yes. I mean. No. This is gonna sound weird but...I think you've asked me this before.

RANDOM INMATE: I've never seen you before in my life.

JASON: Yeah, but I've seen you! I've been here before! Holy shit. Did Doc bring me back?

RANDOM INMATE: Yo, you on something?

JASON: Tell me, why was I brought in?

RANDOM INMATE: Shouldn't you know?

JASON: Let's just say I'm a nut case. Have you heard anything about why I was put here?

RANDOM INMATE: You got busted for possession is what I heard.

JASON: Oh my GOD! I mean is that it? Is that all you know?

RANDOM INMATE: Look man, I ain't your attorney. All I know is you got busted for holdin.

JASON: You have no idea how happy I am to hear you say that.

RANDOM INMATE: Ok crazy man. What's your name?

JASON: Jason

RANDOM INMATE: I'm B-Fresh. That's what my homies call me. B-Fresh cause I look so good in orange. Ya dig?

JASON: Yeah, I guess. I mean sure, looks like it suits you.

B-FRESH: What's that supposed to mean? You saying I look like a criminal?

JASON: No! I'm just...agreeing with you.

B-FRESH: Its cool man, I'm just messin with you. Spend enough time in here and you gotta laugh somehow.

JASON: I guess so. Right.

B-FRESH: So you're in here for possession.

JASON: Yeah, I guess. I feel like I've been through so much I don't even know what's real and what's not.

I'll tell you this though I could use a drink so bad right now.

B-FRESH: We don't do that in here.

JASON: Yeah I figured not in jail but...

B-FRESH: What's wrong with you man? Did you fall on your head or something? This is a recovery meeting. For recovering alcoholics and addicts.

JASON: What? But I'm not an addict. I made a promise to stop and I can stop whenever I want.

B-FRESH: Aren't you the one who just said they could use a drink?

JASON: That was just a...I mean...

B-FRESH: Why don't you grab a pamphlet and sit down. We're about to start a session when everyone else gets here.

JASON: What about my phone call? *(Calls for the jailer)* I WANT MY PHONECALL!

(Doc walks in as a cop not facing Jason)

DOC: You don't get a phone call. You already used it. How many requests do you think you get in here?

JASON: Oh...I did. Who did I call?

DOC: She actually just got here. *(Doc turns around. Tips his hat at Jason and walks out)*

(Hope enters)

HOPE: Jason are you ok? Please tell me no one has hurt you.

JASON: Hope...oh my god! You're ALIVE!

HOPE: Yes. Yes I am. Should I not be.

JASON: Oh Hope I've missed you so much.

HOPE: Aw. I missed you too.

JASON: I'm so sorry. I didn't mean to get you charged with...wait why are you out there and I'm in here?

HOPE: When you took the fall for everything the cop charged you with possession and not me. I'm free and clear.

JASON: Oh thank God. I couldn't forgive myself if something happened to you.

HOPE: Well I'm ok. And the good news is, because you took the plea and you're going to go to all these recovery meetings, they said you can be out of here with six months on good behavior.

JASON: Recovery meetings?

HOPE: Yeah. Jason, I'm really proud of you for owning up to that.

JASON: Right...me too. Best decision I could've made

(B-Fresh walks up)

B-FRESH: Ya damn right. And if ya'll are done I'd like to get started.

HOPE: I'll keep in touch. Call me as often as you can.

JASON: I will.

(Hope goes to leave)

JASON: Hope.

HOPE: Yes

JASON: I'm glad you're ok.

HOPE: I'll see you on the outside, love.

(Other inmates sit down with B-Fresh)

B-FRESH: My name is William and I'm an addict

OTHERS: Hi William...

(Lights Down)

(Lights up on Jason and Hope talking in a visitation room)

HOPE: So how's it like?

JASON: Well, it's not the most fun I've ever had but I'm meeting some really great people in the rooms

HOPE: In the rooms?

JASON: That's what we call the meetings we have here.

HOPE: The recovery meetings you mean?

JASON: Yeah. And Hope I have to tell you something.

HOPE: What?

JASON: These past few weeks have really been life changing. I've admitted to myself that I have a problem and that my life has become unmanageable. I've met amazing people that I would have never befriended, but now they're my support system.

HOPE: That's great. So this was a good thing. So now you can take what you've learned and you can grow from it once you get out, right? You don't have to go to any more meetings right? You can come back to school with what you've learned and be fine right?

JASON: Not really. Recovery, from what I've been told, is a life-long thing.

HOPE: You have to do this forever? Not drink? Go to meetings? Are you sure?

JASON: I thought it sounded a little extreme at first too. But Hope, this is for me and *my* life. This is how I choose to live it. And this is what I have to do to be a successful recovered addict.

HOPE: Ok. I'll support you.

JASON: I was hoping you'd say that. Hey guess what?

HOPE: What?

JASON: I've come up with a new song for you.

HOPE: A new song?

JASON: Oh...nevermind. It's a good song. Can I sing it to you?

HOPE: That would be lovely.

(Jason sings yet to be written love song to hope)

(Lights go down. Lights come up on Jason speaking about his time in jail at his last meeting)

JASON: Hi I'm Jason, I'm an addict.

ALL: Hi Jason

JASON: I've been sober for 6 months, today, (applause) and I thought it was appropriate to share on fear. I'm getting ready to go back to college and it's where I started using. See, back at my old school, I started using because it was the only way I thought I could fit in. The only way I could talk to girls, and the only way I could feel a part of. But I only felt more alone the more I used. I ended up so isolated, and used so much I ended up in a jail cell before I made it here. (B-Fresh throws up a peace sign) Anyway, being here with all of you has been wonderful. It's been great to have people that support you. But what I'm afraid of is when I go to college, I'm going to lose that support. I know there are college recovery programs in the U.S. but I can't afford out of state tuition. I don't even have a car to get off campus for meetings. So I'm nervous. I want a college education, and I want the college experience, but I don't know if I can risk my sobriety. (beat) That's all I had to share.

CONCLUSION

Binge drinking and substance abuse addiction in college is an epidemic. But now universities across America are beginning to foster communities of students who choose sobriety, who help each other stay clean, and who can succeed both socially and academically. When I did a google search of plays about collegiate recovery, I did not find any artistic ventures focused solely on the issue of college substance abuse recovery. I want this play to introduce a genre of Theatre Activism focused on substance abuse, inspire a nation to support students recovering from substance abuse, and encourage universities to support those students financially, academically, and socially.

According to my research, plays that focus on the subject of collegiate recovery are few and far between. Although, there are plays that feature recovery. There is a recent Off-Broadway play that highlights the life and times of the founders of Alcoholics Anonymous, *Bill W. and Dr. Bob*: (<http://www.playbill.com/news/article/176807-Bill-W-and-Dr-Bob-About-the-Founding-of-AlcoholicsAnonymous-Will-Play-Off-Broadways-Soho-Playhouse>).

Recovery has now become a mainstream topic of discussion. Celebrities are breaking their anonymity and sharing that they are in recovery. Recently, English actor and comedian Russell Brand wrote an article in which he detailed his life in recovery for the past 10 years (<http://www.theguardian.com/culture/2013/mar/09/russell-brand-lifewithout-drugs>). *A Way Back* is a play that not only will add to the growing recovery culture but begin a dialogue about *collegiate* recovery.

This play will be produced in August of 2014, and I am in the process of raising funds to do so. I will take a group of actors to perform the play at various universities around Florida. I am in talks with the Director of Drug and Alcohol Prevention Services, Tom Hall, and we are working on a way to measure the success of the *A Way Back's* impact.

Before traveling to the university where the play will be performed, I will take an initial survey from their health center to determine how many student substance abuse cases are brought to the school's health and or counseling center before and after the play is produced. This would help to gauge the effectiveness of students' willingness to come forward with their issues. Another way of measuring the effectiveness of the play will be for me to check in on a school in six months after the play is put on to see if a recovery community of any kind has begun to spring up.

I can gauge the success of the play by making my contact information available to students. I hope this will encourage students in recovery to reach out to me. I hope to get a supportive and constructively critical response to see if my play spoke for them. It is my mission to give a voice to the voiceless with this production, and I look forward to hearing the response of the recovery community.

“If you can create something inspirational for the future, it's easy to let go of the past...” (Melchor Lim). I embarked on this Honors in the Major venture in order to graduate from UCF with the highest honor I could. I believe in getting the most of my college experience, and I thought creating *A Way Back* was a way to make my mark. It has grown larger than that, and has surpassed my initial goals. It has turned into a Theatre for Social Change non-profit theatre company. It has become the beginning of a recovery community at UCF. I have discovered so much about myself as a creative theatre artist, and as a student in recovery, by giving back to both communities that have helped me thrive in so many ways. I hope this play will continue into the future to inspire more universities to take action and reach out to those capable, driven, and wonderful students who are in recovery. We are not handicapped. We are not different. We choose to live without the use of mind altering substances because of the damage they have wrought in our lives. I take responsibility for the mistakes I've made in my past but I would like to think that I, and my brothers and sisters in recovery can have a second chance in college.

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