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Ten-Minute Playwriting: A Study of Design, Method, and Structure

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TEN-MINUTE PLAYWRITING: A STUDY OF DESIGN, METHOD, AND
STRUCTURE

By

JEFFREY PEACOCK

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the Honors in the Major Program in Theatre
in the College of Arts and Humanities
and in the Burnett Honors College
at the University of Central Florida
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Thesis Chair: Earl D. Weaver

ABSTRACT

The purpose of my research was to discover the most effective ways to write ten-minute plays. I adapted various “suggestions” proposed in the many playwriting books I gathered to find the way that worked best for me as an artist. The majority of the books I read suggest writing ten-minute works before attempting a one-act or even a full-length play. My resources yielded a plethora of information on how to actually write a play. Three of my sources that proved to be enlightening were *The Art & Craft of Playwriting* by Jeffrey Hatcher, *Playwriting for Dummies* by Angelo Parra, and *Naked Playwriting: The Art, the Craft, and the Life Laid Bare* by William Missouri Downs and Robin U. Russin. I also attended a master class with playwright Tim Bauer, and he gave me insight on approaching writing ten-minute plays. Through my research, it became evident that the real problem with writing is not so much the structure or the way a person writes, but the actual writing itself. Each of my resources had valuable information that made my job as an artist easier, but none of them, even the tips Bauer gave me, worked one hundred percent of the time. Some plays were easier to write if I wrote them without stage directions first, as Bauer suggested, but others stalled if I didn’t write my vision of the stage before actually writing dialogue. The research I have completed can aid a multitude of future creative artists. My Five Tips for Writing and Three Tips for a First Production are useful insights that would have been invaluable had I known them when I started writing.

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INTRODUCTION

The purpose of my research was to discover the most effective ways to write ten-minute plays. I adapted various “suggestions” proposed in the many playwriting books I gathered to find the way that worked best for me as an artist. Very little has been written about writing ten-minute plays, but the majority of the books I read suggest writing ten-minute works before attempting a one-act or even a full-length play.

My resources yielded a plethora of information on how to actually write a play. I took suggestions from each resource and applied it to a ten-minute work of my own creation. Three of my sources that proved to be enlightening were *The Art & Craft of Playwriting* by Jeffrey Hatcher, *Playwriting for Dummies* by Angelo Parra, and *Naked Playwriting: The Art, the Craft, and the Life Laid Bare* by William Missouri Downs and Robin U. Russin. I also attended a master class with playwright Tim Bauer, and he gave me insight on approaching writing ten-minute plays.

Through my research, it became evident that the real problem with writing is not so much the structure or the way a person writes, but the actual writing itself. Each of my resources had valuable information that made my job as an artist easier, but none of them, even the tips Bauer gave me, worked one hundred percent of the time. It became evident in my research that writing, much like comedy, is subjective. Some plays were easier to write if I wrote them without stage directions first, as Bauer suggested, but others stalled if I didn't write my vision of the stage before actually writing dialogue.

The research I have completed can aid a multitude of future creative artists. There are thousands of “How to” books on bookshelves, but it isn't until someone tries something for themselves that they can truly find what works for them. My Five Tips for Writing and Three

Tips for a First Production are useful insights that would have been invaluable had I known them when I started writing.

RESEARCH

Research into the theory of writing a play is a daunting journey and a person can get overwhelmed with all the information that is available. Of all the books I read, three proved to be invaluable: *The Art & Craft of Playwriting* by Jeffrey Hatcher, *Playwriting for Dummies* by Angelo Parra, and *Naked Playwriting: The Art, the Craft, and the Life Laid Bare* by William Missouri Downs and Robin U. Russin. The master class I attended with Tim Bauer enlightened the process of writing, but especially on writing ten-minute plays.

Playwriting for Dummies- Angelo Parra

Angelo Parra's book, *Playwriting for Dummies*, is the perfect introduction to the new playwright. Parra discusses all the basic tools for writing and explains why each tool is important. One of Parra's first suggestions is seeing a great number of plays, good or bad productions. Parra states that "even if a play is a dud, you can learn as much by analyzing a flop as you can by studying a hit" (Parra 23). Parra also explains that creating structure when writing is extremely important. He suggests finding a specific time and place to write each day. Parra continues by stating that most successful writers, such as Stephen King or Neil Simon, structure their entire day around writing. Stephen King writes every day until he has written ten pages and Neil Simon writes every day from 8 a.m. to 1 p.m.

Parra believes there are three absolutes when it comes to choosing a place to use as a writing space. First, it must be a place of solitude. "When you're working, you should be left alone" (Parra 32). Parra believes that no one can know when a great idea will come. He states, "A sudden intrusion may be all it takes for a thought or some ideal wording to evaporate from your mind" (Parra 32). Secondly, Parra believes a writing area should be quiet. He states that he enjoys writing in quiet, but understands that other writers enjoy having music or even ambient,

“white noise” in the background. Parra warns that writing with music is fine until you have to “yank out those earbuds if you find yourself humming and tapping your foot rather than writing dialogue” (Parra 33). Third, a writing space must have all the necessary items for writing. Dictionaries, printers, lamps, and pen and paper are all tools that should be within arm’s reach to avoid creating a distraction in the form of a search.

One of Parra’s biggest points is the fickle nature of the human memory. Parra encourages writers to carry something on which to keep notes and ideas from evaporating. Pen and paper, diaries or journals, and recording devices are all things that Parra suggests using to keep “Tony-winning ideas from evaporating” (Parra 81). Parra suggests using a recording device, because it is easier to speak an idea than it is to write it down in some situations, such a driving or riding a bike. He creates a joke on Murphy’s Law, called Parra’s Principle, in which “if something can go right, it will...at the worst possible time” (Parra 82). Parra suggests having a recording device nearby at all times. Parra keeps a recording device stashed in the glove compartment of his car and carries one in a fanny pack when he exercises.

Parra stresses the importance of preparation before putting pen to paper. He states that “part of the excitement of writing is making little discoveries and having brainstorm along the way” (Parra 170). His main point is that it is a good idea to map out the journey of the play, but a playwright should be willing to follow a random thought if one arises. Parra suggests that “playwrights who tightly plan their work should give themselves permission- more than that, *encourage* themselves- to change the plan as they go along” (Parra 171). A loose outline is useful when a playwright begins the process of writing a play. It is especially useful when the playwright begins writing with the end of the play in mind, but has little concept of how to get

the characters from the beginning to where they end. “Outlining is a smart practice that produces an invaluable tool” (Parra 173).

Parra discusses at great length the process of finding the perfect ending to a play. His most important suggestion is the use of “Chekhov’s Gun”. In Chekhov’s *The Seagull*, a gun is prominently featured in the scenic design, and in the final scene of the play, the gun is used when Konstantin commits suicide offstage. “The phrase ‘Chekhov’s Gun’ is sometimes used to mean foreshadowing” in the sense that it creates “an obligatory moment in which the weapon will be used in some way” (Parra 216). Using the rule of “Chekhov’s Gun”, a playwright knows that if something, such as a gun, is introduced early in the play, it must be addressed by the end of the play. Parra concludes his book by quoting Anton Chekhov:

“After all, in real life people don’t spend every minute shooting at each other, hanging themselves and making confessions of love. They don’t spend all the time saying clever things. They’re more occupied with eating, drinking, flirting and talking stupidities- and these are the things which ought to be shown on the stage. A play should be written in which people arrive, go away, have dinner, talk about the weather and play cards. Life must be exactly how it is” (Parra 335).

The Art & Craft of Playwriting- Jeffrey Hatcher

Jeffrey Hatcher begins his book with exposition on playwriting as a medium. He states that “the terms *drama* and *theatre* are not interchangeable. Drama consists of characters in conflict and in action. Theatre is both the arena for the action and the sensory experience of that action” (Hatcher 7). Hatcher continues by defining drama the same way Aristotle did as “an *imitation* of an action” (Hatcher 7). Hatcher makes it a point to differentiate the process of writing novels, films, and plays. He believes that “novelists write for the page, motion picture

writers write for the screen and playwrights write for the stage- a three-dimensional space encompassing live action performed by human beings” (Hatcher 7).

At the end of each chapter in *The Art & Craft of Playwriting*, Hatcher gives a series of tasks to complete to help grasp the concepts he discussed in the chapter. The best assignment is found in the chapter discussing Language in a play. Hatcher defines Language as “what is spoken onstage by the actors in the play,” and he even later states that “drama is Language” (Hatcher 45). The fact that Language is so imperative in drama is one of the major differences between writing for theatre and writing for screen. Hatcher states that “good dialogue is Language doing” and that it “must deliver exposition [,] depict action [, and] must promise future action” (Hatcher 45). These three parts constitute good and realistic dialogue that feels natural in a theatrical setting.

Hatcher quotes August Wilson who said that “he doesn’t so much ‘write’ his characters as ‘listen’ to them” (Hatcher 151). Writing dialogue is a difficult task and some are better equipped than others. Hatcher suggests carrying notebooks around to capture dialogue or even using tape recorders because he “[could] never find [his] pens, so [he] bought the tape recorder” and “found dictation [to be] useful” (Hatcher 151). Capturing the rhythm and syntax of characters can be difficult, but finding techniques to capture the dialogue when it comes is one of the most important parts of becoming a playwright.

One of Hatcher’s biggest suggestions for new playwrights is to start plays with a bang. He believes that “late twentieth-century theatre audience[s are] much more apt to be attuned to the speed and rhythms of popular music, film, and electronic entertainment” and that “for the modern audience, slow and easy may be dull and deadly” (Hatcher 103). Hatcher states that “there’s an immediate rush, a sudden jolt to the senses [when] a play... start[s] with a bang”

(Hatcher 103). Hatcher suggests that “anything theatrical that arrests the eye and ear and connects the audience immediately to the action” whether the first line is a punch line or an image or some sort of physical gimmick is the most effective way to begin a play (Hatcher 103).

In the afterword of his book, Hatcher’s final words are some of the most useful to beginning playwrights. Hatcher writes, “Learn from the plays that have come before you. Learn from the writing you’ve already done. Learn from the world around you. Listen to yourself. Compel us” (Hatcher 207). Those four sentences carry the greatest advice for aspiring writers that anyone can give. By studying the great plays of the past, a playwright discovers what works in theatre. Through looking at the writing a playwright has already done, a playwright can see improvement and make revisions/corrections. Learning from the world gives the playwright perspective and an awareness of things other than what is happening in their own lives. Listening to themselves will aid a playwright in being honest, one of the most important things in playwriting. The charge of compelling the theatre world is a difficult task, but it gives a reassurance to the beginning playwright that the modern theatre audience wants to be surprised and wants to hear new stories.

Naked Playwriting: The Art, the Craft, and the Life Laid Bare -

William Missouri Downs and Robin U. Russin

Downs’ and Russin’s book, *Naked Playwriting*, is an insightful look on the life of a playwright as well as suggestions on creating better plays. The first suggestion comes in the form of what Downs and Russin call The Three C’s. “Conflicts, crises, and complications are the obstacles that make sure the protagonist’s course of action isn’t clear-sailing” (Downs 69). The Three C’s make theatre more interesting and invite action into a play. Downs and Russin quote

Shakespeare, “the course of true love never did run smooth,” and they add, “or it wouldn’t be interesting to watch” (Downs 69).

Downs and Russin also warn against the use of formulas in playwriting. They state that “although formula plays may have diverse characters and dissimilar stories...they follow the same basic structure” (Downs 73). Downs warns that even though a formula makes it easier to write, the problem arises when a playwright becomes too comfortable with a formula and then shies away from taking risks with their plays. Downs and Russin suggest that writing “without formula, the playwright can let the story grow naturally from the character rather than following preset guidelines” (Downs 74). Downs and Russin also state that the use of formula is something ingrained in storytelling because the first stories that children are taught are formulaic.

Downs and Russin spend a great deal of time discussing Ten-Minute Plays. Downs and Russin structure ten-minute plays the same as longer works but with a much quicker pace. They believe the “point of attack [should] occur at the bottom of the first page or the top of the second” (Downs 99). This immediate introduction to the main theme of the piece gives the audience a swift introduction. There is little time for any meandering, so the plays are “brief [and] exceptionally involving moment in [a] character’s [life]” (Downs 99). Ten-minute plays are an effective tool for teaching new playwrights to structure and pacing. Downs and Russin state that a playwright should “keep [the] original goal in mind, because, if [the] play expands, it may simply be due to lazy writing. Even long plays should be economical and include only essentials” (Downs 99).

Downs and Russin warn playwrights about discussing current projects with family and friends. “If you have already told your story a dozen times, why spend time writing it” (Downs 110). By repeating a story to your relatives or friends, the compulsion or urge to create can

dissipate leaving a writer with nothing but a worn out idea. Downs and Russin suggest that new playwrights “start working, right now, and keep at it until [it is] done” (Downs 110). Downs and Russin quote Terrence McNally who wrote:

“Write. Just write. Even when you don’t feel like it. Even when you’re not inspired. Even when they want to smother you in your cradle. Write. Write when it’s hard. Write when it’s lonely. Write even when you think no one else in the entire world cares what you have to say. And don’t pretend that tomorrow will be a better day; as the old adage goes, ‘Procrastination preserves only the illusion of greatness, because the potential is never tested’” (Downs 89).

The most important bit of advice that I gleaned from Downs and Russin was the commitment to actually setting aside time to write. Unless I made sure to set time out of my day to devote entirely to writing, I would find an excuse to avoid it. Laziness is the pitfall of creativity.

Master Class with Tim Bauer

Tim Bauer is a talented playwright who has gained popularity with his faux-documentary play entitled *Zombie Town*. Bauer earned his Bachelor’s degree in advertising, with a minor in theatre, from the University of Texas. Bauer began writing stories as a child and has written screenplays, commercials, and plays. He continues to write for an advertising agency while also finding success as a playwright.

I was fortunate to perform in Theatre UCF’s production of *Zombie Town* in the Fall of 2012. Working on a new play is different from working on an older play because the playwright is traditionally more involved in the first several productions. When Bauer flew in to see the opening performance, he answered any and all questions we still had about the play. At the time

Zombie Town had only been produced two other times and Bauer told us that he was excited to see it produced in a collegiate setting.

After working with Tim Bauer at the Theatre UCF production of *Zombie Town*, I had the opportunity to attend a playwriting master class that he taught. Bauer suggested that playwrights discourage talking about ideas for current plays because it will cause the impulse to disappear. When writing in a group, Bauer finishes an entire draft before he begins showing it to others; doing this keeps him from losing his original goal for the play. Bauer advises writers to write short because it is easier to expand than it is to compress. Bauer is a strong proponent of weaving stage directions into dialogue, as to reinforce the writer's intent. Bauer suggests having four random ideas about a play because it creates multi-dimensional characters. When he began working on *Zombie Town* his random ideas included:

- He wanted to write a mockumentary, in the style of *The Laramie Project*.
- He was interested in writing a play about zombies.
- He wanted to write a character who worked in advertising.
- He wanted to write a play that took place in Texas.

PLAYWRITING INTERNSHIP AT THE HANGAR THEATRE

In the Summer of 2013, I accepted an internship as a Lab Academy Playwright for the Hangar Theatre in Ithaca, New York. The position would include working as a dramaturge on two main-stage productions, playwright and dramaturge on one experimental play, and the summer would culminate with a production of a play that I would write during my time in Ithaca. I was given a member of the Drama League to mentor me for the summer. I spent the entire summer putting my writing theories into practice and working to establish my writing process.

I worked as dramaturge on two shows, *Gypsy* and *Clybourne Park*. My work as a dramaturge was meant to give me insight into problem areas in scripts so I could learn from the mistakes of other playwrights. Working on *Clybourne Park* proved to me that a playwright had to either be an expert on the topic of the play or be a fantastic liar. Bruce Norris, who wrote *Clybourne Park*, could be either because I read his script nearly thirty times and was amazed each time by the depth of his knowledge or his ability to make things up.

My second task was working on a stage adaptation of the French film *Amelie*. Unfortunately, the director facilitating the production was an unorganized mess and consistently took advantage of all those working on her play. My work began by transcribing the two and a half hour film into a script and then distilling it into a forty-three minute stage production. When I finally finished cutting the script into the bare skeleton, I was then asked (read as forced) into rewriting the entire script in my own style. Instead of having creative control over the script, the director intruded into my writing space by constantly changing lines and injecting her own artistic desires onto it. The finished product was well-received, but the process proved to be one of the most artistically taxing experiences of my life.

During the writing process I never felt what I was writing was good enough for the director. Instead of constructively criticizing the work through positive mentoring, she demanded changes to be made without any guidance. After several weeks of enduring this method of working, I felt creatively stifled and questioned my own playwriting abilities.

Throughout the summer, I was assigned different writing prompts by my mentor. My assignments varied from writing a ten-minute play using genderless characters to writing a ten-minute play in the style of my favorite playwright. My main project was writing a piece that would be performed, either as a staged reading or as a semi-produced work, at the end of the summer. Instead of writing a piece from scratch, I kept returning to a ten-minute play I had submitted earlier in the summer. I discovered that I had more stories I wanted to tell using the characters, so I began to expand the play as part of my final project.

Imaginary is a play about growing up and being content with who you are. The story revolves around a college freshman and her two imaginary friends. I spent a great deal of time reading about children who had imaginary friends. These children had no more need for imaginary friends once they got too old. The play began as a short, two scene, ten-minute play. My original intention was to put non-theatrical characters, such as cartoon characters, on stage. The biggest problem with expanding a shorter play was that the ten-minute play had an obvious arch. The original piece had a beginning and an end, so with the longer work I began expanding my vision.

My process for creating the play began by imposing a writing routine. Each morning I woke up and went to the gym. I took my phone with me so that I could record notes on plot ideas that I might get while running. Keeping my body busy allowed my mind to work out problems subconsciously. After working out, I would write for about two hours. I would only write in my

notebook, with ink on actual paper, so that I would be forced to get tangible ideas. After writing for several days, I began typing the rough script into my playwriting software. In the time I wrote, I listened to music constantly, but very specific styles of music. In the case of *Imaginary*, which has a very cartoonish feel to it, I only wrote to experimental rock music such as Circa Survive and Anthony Green.

After completing the first draft of the play, I took a day away from the script to decompress and returned to it the following day to begin making edits. I was as ruthless as I could possibly be with my edits, at times cutting entire pages from my script because they slowed down the plot. After an excruciating week of edits, I began work on my next draft. I went through three rewrites before I finally felt content with the play. *Imaginary* was first presented as a staged reading by several actors in the Hangar Theatre Lab Academy. The rehearsal process lasted a week, and in that time I adjusted dialogue and added clarifying stage directions. After the initial performance, I was approached by a director who wanted to fully produce *Imaginary* and the next step in the process began.

HAVING A PLAY PRODUCED

During my time in Ithaca, I was approached by a director who wanted to produce one of my plays. Finally being able to say that I am a produced playwright is one of the most invigorating experiences of my life. The experience proved to be one fraught with frustration. My mistakes and the mistakes made by the directors taught me lessons that will give insight to any future playwrights.

My first mistake was to agree to do a show without thinking about it. Instead of considering all that could go wrong, I simply agreed. The production of my play *Imaginary* was to take place at a small, non-profit theatre in Tucson, Arizona. I knew immediately that there would be no way for me to fly out for rehearsals or to even be there for opening, but I agreed anyway. It proved to be a source of stress for the entire rehearsal, rewriting process and run of the show.

Instead of voicing problems with the script directly to me, I received emails once a day from the director with questions or suggestions from the cast for my script. Instead of feeling that I had the freedom to experiment with ideas, I felt forced to make choices simply to meet deadlines. The larger problem was a lack of communication. Instead of feeling that I could stand up for my creative desires, I was being forced to write a show that I had no passion to write. I am not proud of the second act of the show that was once *Imaginary*. It is completely unnecessary to the story as a whole and it makes the play unfocused.

In the end, I realized the show performed in Arizona is not the show that will be subsequently produced. This is not an ideal outcome; as a playwright you should always try to write what you know your show to be. It is my fault that I felt the need to essentially give up on my play and write whatever my director sent me. That is the deadliest sin any writer can commit.

In hindsight, the production in Arizona was not a complete failure. If anything, I learned what not to do in a production, but on a larger scale I learned how it feels to be a playwright in isolation. Instead of feeling that I was sharing a story with friends, I felt a sense of ownership and a reluctance to give my story away to others. This selfishness did nothing to lift my play, and I believe it is the reason I had such a terrible time with the production.

CONCLUSION

After working with several different formats, I have found these ideas work best for me when writing ten-minute plays, but these tips could work on longer pieces. These five things were a good starting point for me as a new playwright. Using these five suggestions guided me away from the common pitfalls of actually writing a play.

1- Outlines are useful, so use them.

Outlining the idea and arc of your play can keep you from meandering. Soft outlines (those with major points and bare bones of the script) work best for me, but hard outlines (those with every bit of script mapped) work for some writers.

2- Let the text speak for itself.

If you feel the need to use pages and pages of stage directions to set the scene (I'm looking at you Tennessee Williams), you might rethink that impulse. Directors may disregard your written stage directions. Try putting the specific directions into dialogue. If a character tells another one to put down a gun, the director will not be able to argue with you about having a gun in your show because it will be in the dialogue.

3-Brevity is best.

I learned not to show the breadth of my vocabulary; just writing what I must write to get the point across. I discovered not to waste time on pretty language. I found brevity to be a good tool when going back to rewrite, because I found it easier to expand a scene that is half a page than it is to cut down a two page scene.

4-Don't self-criticize.

When you are writing the first draft of your play, just let it flow. No one, not even Edward Albee, writes it perfectly the first time. You will rewrite and re-draft later, so don't expect

perfection yet. The first draft is all about getting ideas onto paper. You will have plenty of time to call yourself an idiot when you are rewriting.

5-When rewriting, be ruthless.

If it does not serve the piece, get rid of it. The joke may be the funniest joke ever, but if it doesn't aid the story it will be a cancer. Kill it now. It will make the play stronger in the long run.

After going through the process of having one of my plays produced for the first time, I have added three tips for having your play produced for the first time. The first production is extremely important and can have an effect on your relationships with future productions. The three tips are suggestions on how to keep your sanity during a process that can be very draining on a playwright.

1-Don't fall to peer pressure.

You are the only person, at this point, who knows what your play is, so don't feel pressured to change it. Actors and directors will want to add things to the text, but that is your domain. You have your name under the title and only you can make changes to the script.

2-Don't miss deadlines.

This tip is fairly self-explanatory, but it is important. Nothing is more unprofessional than being unreliable. If you agree to have rewrites completed by a certain time, you better sit down and do them.

3-Speak up and choose your battles.

I learned not to be afraid to be the final word; not to be afraid to clarify something in the text; and not to be afraid to put my foot down when I felt I was losing creative control. Some things are important enough to warrant a serious discussion, but I learned not to play the "I wrote this play" card unless absolutely necessary. No one will ever be able to create the image you had

when you first wrote your play, so don't expect that. Learn to recognize when you can let go of your vision and compromise.

Personal Assessment

With *Artichoke Hearts* at the Hangar Theatre, the first production of *Imaginary* in Arizona, and, most recently, the Orlando Fringe production of *Sharknado: The Musical?*, I experienced creative conflict with my collaborators which led to a great deal of frustration. These three experiences have led me to self-evaluate to learn how to better deal with conflict in the future.

In *Artichoke Hearts*, the stage adaptation of *Amelie*, the main issue was a lack of communication clarity. The production was the brainchild of the director, and she had specific ideas about the production, but those expectations could have been expressed more clearly to me. I had no emotional attachment to the subject matter and was simply beginning my career as a playwright, so my first draft of the adaptation kept the main themes but ignored some of the nuances of the original film. Had I better understood or sought to better understand the expectations, I believe the director might not have felt the need to dictate moments and hover over my writing space. I have never taken courses in playwriting; everything I know I have learned on my own through personal research. This was definitely a contributing factor to the issues I faced with the director of *Artichoke Hearts*. I would have more successful had I been mentored throughout the process by a professional playwright.

After spending time away from *Imaginary*, I have a clearer awareness of the issues related to the production. I should have made it a point to travel to Arizona and attend several rehearsals. Technology has done wonders in connecting people, but Skype, e-mails, and texts are no substitutes for someone being physically present. The greater issue was a misconception of

what *Imaginary* actually should have been. *Imaginary* began as a ten-minute play and then was expanded into a one-act and subsequently into a full-length play. Expanding *Imaginary* into a one-act was not the problem; it had plenty of room to grow, but I should have stopped at act one. Even though I knew the piece was not initially structured to have two acts, I agreed to expand the play. The second act was not as clear as the first act because I was searching for a resolve that was unrelated to the original script I wrote. I should have made the choice to keep the play as a one-act.

Six months ago, I began collaborating with a composer and lyricist on an original musical based on the concept of the movie *Sharknado*. The collaboration was artistically fulfilling and enjoyable at first. The musical, then titled *Sharknado: The Musical?*, was to be produced at the Orlando Fringe Festival, and other people became involved in the writing process. This is when the conflict began. At first, working with new people was just as fulfilling as it was with the original two collaborators. The script became stronger with each rewrite. But, when individuals began rewriting my dialogue and adding entirely new scenes and characters without consulting with me, I felt I was being devalued. I voiced my concern about what was being added, but I was strongly advised by the producer to learn to collaborate with the team. I should have followed my third rule about speaking up. Instead of being tentative, I should have said, “While criticism of weak moments in the script is always welcome, I have a problem with someone changing the script without communicating with me first.” It was clear that artistic differences would not be resolved, so I decided to withdraw my script and leave the project.

These three situations, while emotionally taxing at times, have proven to be invaluable learning experiences. A common theme among these three situations is communication. Had I asked questions or better explained or simply spoken up when I needed to, maybe the conflict I

dealt with would have been solved. There is no band-aid for these problems, no magic potion that could have fixed any of these instances, but I can only hope that articulate communication could have incubated a better working environment.

I still have a great deal to learn about the craft of playwriting. My next step will be to find a mentor or a writing group to aid my growth and to prepare me to seek a graduate degree in playwriting. My discoveries for writing and for productions are a result of my own experiments. I failed many times, but I hope my failures will ensure future success. These tips would have been most useful when I began my training as a writer.

APPENDIX A

Appendix A

Original Ten-Minute Draft of *Imaginary*

[Lights up on CANDACE's bedroom. CANDACE is seated at the desk with is Up Center. BENEDICT is sitting in his usual spot, he is "smoking" out of a pipe that produces bubbles. BOO-BOO is running around CANDACE's desk.]

CANDACE-

What do you think I should say?

BOO-BOO-
mraw. What do you think I should say? mraw.

BENEDICT-
(To CANDACE)
I think you should tell him how you feel.

(To BOO-BOO)
How about a cow?

CANDACE-
I'm serious!

BOO-BOO-
moo. I'm serious! moo.

BENEDICT-
(To CANDACE)
I'm trying. I don't have much experience with boys.

(To BOO-BOO)
Great horned owl.

CANDACE-
Boo-Boo! Stop it!

BOO-BOO-
Hoot. Boo-Boo, stop it! Hoot!

CANDACE-
Stop mocking me and help me please!

BOO-BOO-
Meow.
[CANDACE throws a stuffed animal at BOO-BOO.]

Mee-ouch! Sorry, sorry, sorry!

CANDACE-
Stop playing around! He's going to call me back any minute expecting an answer!

BENEDICT-
You don't have to answer him. I mean, it's just a phone call.

BOO-BOO-
Yeah!

CANDACE-
I can't just ignore him.

BOO-BOO-
Why not? You ignore me all the time.

CANDACE-
But what if he's the guy that I'm supposed to marry?

BENEDICT-
[Playfully serious.]
Then you'd better get ready, you're in no state to be meeting your prince charming. Not with that hair, no ma'am.

BOO-BOO-
[Betrayed.]
Who's side are you on?

BENEDICT-
I'm not on anyone's side. I'm neutral. I'm Switzerland.

BOO-BOO-
You're an idiot.

BENEDICT-
No, you're the idiot, idiot!

BOO-BOO-
Nuh uh! You are!

CANDACE-
Enough!
[BOO-BOO does a raspberry at BENEDICT.]
Can you two ever stop bickering?

BOO-BOO-
[Mocking.]
Can you two ever stop bickering?

BENEDICT-
Alright, Boo-Boo... She really needs us right now. Let's try to be supportive.

BOO-BOO-
Ugh... Fine...
[Suddenly playing.]
What can I get for thee, my liege?

CANDACE-
[Playing along.]
Fetch me my make-up, please.
[BOO-BOO exits.]
Sir Benedict? Would you mind picking out some clothes for my date?

BENEDICT-
As you wish!
[BENEDICT exits. The phone rings.]

CANDACE-
Hello? Oh, Hi Jared! I'm great... Yeah. Yeah? I had a great time too. Where are we going tonight? Dinner, a movie, and back to my place?

[Beat.]
Oh. Oh, I'm sorry to hear that. No, I understand. Another time, maybe. Yeah.
Talk to you later. Bye.

BENEDICT-
Okay, you've got two choices. Classy and sassy. I'd go for classy because class never goes out of style, but I totally support your decision to...
[Notices that CANDACE is upset.]
Whoa, you alright?

CANDACE-
Yeah. Just put those things back.

BENEDICT-
Oh, as you wish.
[BENEDICT exits. BOO-BOO runs in as if she is in a gunfight with unseen enemies. BOO-BOO is carrying CANDACE's make up box.]

BOO-BOO-

Pew-pew! Don't worry your highness, I got the top secret plans. Pew-pew! I've been wounded, but I made sure to get them. Now we can defeat the evil king... Our people will be safe... From his wrath... Aaaaarrrrghhh....

[BOO-BOO collapses onto CANDACE's desk.]

CANDACE-

Thanks, Boo-Boo. I'm not really in the mood for games right now.

BOO-BOO-

Pew-pew!

CANDACE-

No...

BOO-BOO-

Pew-pew?

CANDACE-

NO!

BOO-BOO-

pew...pew...

CANDACE-

[Suddenly angry.]

Gosh, why do you always do that? Animal noises and crap. I told you that I didn't want to play any games.

[BOO-BOO is still.]

Stop pouting.

[Beat.]

Please?

[Beat.]

BOO-BOO-

[Suddenly crying.]

Waaaaaaaaaaaaah!

[BENEDICT runs in.]

BENEDICT-

What on Earth happened to Boo-Boo?

CANDACE-

Ugh...She's just being Boo-Boo!

BENEDICT-

What did you say to her? Did you tell her to stop playing Pew?

You know she does that to cheer you up! You'd think after growing up with her that you'd learn how Boo-Boo's mind works!

CANDACE-
Can we focus on my crisis right now? Please?

BOO-BOO-
Waaaaaaaaaaaah!

BENEDICT-
So what? He broke his date with you. It's not like he spit in your face or said you were ugly. Big deal, Candace. Like there won't be another date or another prince charming to come a long and sweep you off your feet.

CANDACE-
Oh, well, I guess...

BENEDICT-
But as for another Boo-Boo? She's the only one.

BOO-BOO-
Like Tigger!

BENEDICT-
[Smiling.]
(To BOO-BOO)
That's right. Just like Tigger.
(To CANDACE)

You made us to help you cope with the real world. So let us do that.

CANDACE-
I know... I just...

BENEDICT-
You just what?

CANDACE-
I just... I'm too old for this.

BENEDICT-
Too old for what? Us?
You still need us, don't you?

CANDACE-
...
BOO-BOO-

Candace?
[Laying her head in CANDACE's lap.]
You still want us around, don't you?
[Beat.]

CANDACE-
I... I'm too old for imaginary friends.

BENEDICT-
I see...
Well, I knew this day would come sooner or later.

BOO-BOO-
[Beginning to plead.]
Please don't send us away, Candace. We don't have anywhere else to go. I promise to pick up my toys and be quiet! Please?

BENEDICT-
[Comforting BOO-BOO.]
It's okay Boo-Boo. I'll always take care of you. Even if Candace won't.
(To CANDACE)
Is this what you want? Just imagine us away?

CANDACE-
I don't want to. I have to. I have to grow up.

BENEDICT-
Well, if that's what you think is best. We'll leave. Because that's what real friends do.
I hope he's worth it...

[BENEDICT and BOO-BOO exit.]
[Lights out.]

APPENDIX B

APPENDIX B

Imaginary

Scene One

[Lights up on CANDACE's dorm room. It is decorated like a younger girl's room. A large bed sits stage left, it is covered in stuffed animals. Few things in the room hint that CANDACE is really almost 18. CANDACE's desk and mirror sit Up Left. A chair is seated to the right of the desk. The entrance to the room is on stage right and the door to the walk-in closet is stage left. Book shelves and a small table are next to the main door.]

[At Lights Up, BOO-BOO is dancing to the song "Pink Fluffy Unicorns Dancing on Rainbows." She starts on the ground and then starts jumping on the bed. BENEDICT is reading a book in the chair next to CANDACE's desk, he hums along with the song.]

[CANDACE and APRIL enter from the main door. They are in the middle of a very important discussion. When CANDACE enters the song stops and BOO-BOO sits at the foot of CANDACE's bed to play with two toy horses.]

APRIL-

I'm telling you. He's gorgeous! He'd be on the List if I didn't already have a backlog?

CANDACE-

Oh goodness, not the List again...

APRIL-

Don't you talk down about the List! It's the most eloquent thing I've ever thought up.

CANDACE-

But isn't it kind of... I dunno, slutty?

APRIL-

Slutty? No. I mean, it would be if i was just sleeping with these guys, but I'm not. I mean, I do sleep with most of them. But at its best, the List increases the chance of having a date exponentially.

You cast your nets and you're bound to catch at least one fish.

CANDACE-

Huh?

APRIL-

Okay, say you flirt with one guy, if it doesn't work out, you've wasted all your valuable time. If you flirt with, say, ten guys your chances are way higher that you won't waste your time. One of them is bound to be worthwhile.

CANDACE-

Oh...Well, still isn't it...

APRIL-

It's only slutty to little angels like you who have never even kissed a guy.

CANDACE-

Okay, okay. Make fun of me all you want, I just haven't had time to...

APRIL-

That's why I'm trying to set you up with Jared! God knows that you're too bashful to even talk to him, but I can get you in and maybe we can get you some action!
Did you watch the video I sent you?

CANDACE-

The corgi one?

APRIL-

That was so funny wasn't it?! They're so cute with they're little legs!
No, the one of the soccer game.

CANDACE-

Oh. Yeah.

APRIL-

Wasn't it awesome how he took that guy out?! The guy is headed to score, there's no one there to challenge him and out of nowhere, Jared comes in and DOOOOSH!!!! Slide tackles him and saves the game.

BOO-BOO-

(To the horses.)

DOOOOSH!!! DOOOOSH!!! DOOOOSH!!!

CANDACE-

Oh yeah! It was pretty... awesome.

APRIL-

He's so... I don't know like wild.

BENEDICT-

Feral.

CANDACE-

Yeah... So feral.

APRIL-

What does that even mean?

CANDACE-

Ummm...

BENEDICT-
Not domesticated or cultivated: Wild.

APRIL-
You don't even know what it means!

CANDACE-
Yeah, I do! It means, not domesticated or cultivated.

APRIL-
Like I said... Wild...

[Beat.]

I can't believe you still have this stuff.
[APRIL picks up a few stuffed animals off of CANDACE's bed.]
Don't you think you should get rid of your kiddie stuff? I've been asking you to toss it since you moved in.

BOO-BOO-
Hey! That's mine! You put that down!

CANDACE-
All this stuff means a lot to me.

APRIL-
Well, yeah... Listen, I understand wanting to keep a grasp on your childhood, but some of this is kinda creepy.
[APRIL picks up a pink tutu.]
I mean, does this even fit you anymore?

BOO-BOO-
That's my Tutu! You put that down this instant!

[APRIL looks at the toys CANDACE has on a shelf.]

BENEDICT-
Boo-Boo, calm down. You know April can't hear you.

BOO-BOO-
Harrumph!
APRIL-
People are talking, Candace. You're a bit of a joke in the hall.

[BOO-BOO throws one of the toys. It hits APRIL in the back of the head.]
OUCH! What the heck?

CANDACE-
(Glaring at BOO-BOO)
What happened? Something fall off the shelf?

APRIL-
Must have... Ow.
What's going to happen one day when you bring a boy over?

CANDACE-
I don't know.

APRIL-
[Picks up one of the ponies]
I do. He'll take one look at your pink bedspread and all your stuffed animals and he'll gallop out of here on Your Little Pony...

BOO-BOO-
Boys aren't allowed to ride My Little Pony.

CANDACE-
Oh come on! It isn't that bad in here!

APRIL-
You keep telling yourself that.

[APRIL picks up a picture of CANDACE's desk. APRIL's phone rings.]
Is this your Dad?

CANDACE-
Are you going to get that?

APRIL-
Oh, BRB.

[APRIL exits.]

BOO-BOO-
Doooooooooosh!

CANDACE-
Boo-Boo! Don't say words if you don't know the meaning.

BENEDICT-

Who was the young, uhm, gentleman of which April was speaking?

CANDACE-

[Psuedo-mocking.]

Only the most dreamiest guy in all of...

[Beat.]

Jared. His name is Jared.

BENEDICT-

I don't like the influence she's having on you.

CANDACE-

Oh, April isn't so bad. She's just enthusiastic. I think she thinks since I'm not snogging with someone everyday that I'm missing out on the college experience.

BENEDICT-

Ah, I see.

And this boy, this Jared, he's somewhat desirable? Is he a good student?

CANDACE-

Benedict! I don't know what his grades are. I didn't look at the fridge to see his report card. You haven't even seen him! He's gorgeous.

BENEDICT-

Well he'd better be. I don't want you to be around any of those knuckle-headed soccer hooligans.

BOO-BOO-

DOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOSH!!!!!!

CANDACE-

You don't even know him, Benedict! How can you make assumptions like that?

BENEDICT-

What else am I supposed to do? I've not met the young man, I only have to go off of what April has said.

CANDACE-

Yeah.

BENEDICT-

You'd think someone would have taught him to keep his hands to himself before he was a sophomore in college... What has happened to the education system in this country?
When I was a little boy--

CANDACE-

First of all, it's soccer, it's a rough sport and second of all, when were you a little boy?

BENEDICT-
Many, many years ago.

CANDACE-
You've always been... However old you are. You don't age.

BENEDICT-
Well, that doesn't change anything--

CANDACE-
And you never went to school!

BENEDICT-
How do you know?

CANDACE-
I made you up! You didn't have a life before I created you. And I know you have never ever ever gone to school.

BOO-BOO-
We went to school with you a lot of times when you were younger.

BENEDICT-
That's true. We went quite a few times.

CANDACE-
That doesn't count!

BENEDICT-
Why not?

CANDACE-
It just doesn't count!

BOO-BOO-
Meanie!

BENEDICT-
Alright...

BOO-BOO-
Candace, can we play The Floor Is Lava?

CANDACE-

Sure, go get into your lava suit.

[BOO-BOO exits.]

BENEDICT-

I'm glad you are spending more time with Boo-Boo. She wants to be you when she grows up.

CANDACE-

Yeah, she's been saying that for 13 years.

BENEDICT-

I don't think she means it any less now than she did when she first said it. I think it's good for you to have someone to take care of. I've always enjoyed being here to help you out.

[APRIL bursts through the door. She has been running. She attempts to catch her breath.]

APRIL-

Ohmygod. Ohmygod. Ohmygod.

CANDACE-

What? Are you okay? is everything alright?

APRIL-

Ohmygod. Ohmygod. Ohmygod.

CANDACE-

Take a breath and tell me.

APRIL-

IJUSTGOTOFFTHEPHONEWITHMARLAWHOJUSTTALKEDTOJUDY...

CANDACE-

Too fast.

APRIL-

I just got off the phone with Marla, who just talked to Judy, and Judy said that Jared was talking about you today in English Lit. He was asking for your number! You are in!

CANDACE-

Wait... WHAT?!?!

APRIL-

IjustgotoffthephonewithMarla,whojusttalkedtoJudy,andJudy...

CANDACE-

Jared is interested in me?

APRIL-
YES!!!

[APRIL begins taking all of CANDACE's "Childish" things and hiding them. She frantically runs around the room.]

CANDACE-
Oh my gosh.

APRIL-
I know!!!

BENEDICT-
What on Earth is she doing?

CANDACE-
What are you doing?

APRIL-
Look, I know your dad gave you all this shit, but you can't let him see your room like this! He wouldn't want to stay!

CANDACE-
What makes you think that I'd want him to come into my room, much less stay for any length of ti...Oh...

BENEDICT-
My goodness...

APRIL-
Exactly! So come help me! We can pick up a bit before you go meet him.

BENEDICT-
I don't approve of this. I don't approve of this at all.

APRIL-
Candace! Come on! There's a party at Gina's tonight and he will be there. Oh God, what are you wearing? You need to change.

BENEDICT-
What's wrong with what she's wearing?

CANDACE-
What's wrong with what I'm wearing?

[APRIL grabs clothes from CANDACE's closet.]

APRIL-

Put this on. And this. We've got to make you look stunning.

[CANDACE goes into the closet to change.]

BENEDICT-

If by stunning she means looking like a... Well, not a classy lady.

[BOO-BOO runs from the closet. She is in her "Lava Suit", mayhaps pillows belted around her to protect her. BOO-BOO leaps onto the bed.]

BOO-BOO-

THE FLOOR IS LAVA!!!!!!!!!! THREE SECONDS TO SAFETY!!!

[BENEDICT hurriedly stands on the chair he's been using. There is a great rumbling sound heard. As if a volcano was preparing to erupt.]

BENEDICT-

Oh my goodness! The floor is lava!

BOO-BOO-

TWO SECONDS!

[APRIL pulls out a box of condoms from her purse and puts them in a box on CANDACE's shelf.]

APRIL-

Candace, come on! Your Prince Charming is waiting!

[An explosion! Lava floods into the room. Hot, molten rock covers the floor. It almost is high enough to cover the bed, but BOO-BOO is safe.]

BOO-BOO-

ONE SECOND! THE LAVA HAS ARRIVED!

(To APRIL)

You'd better get on a chair or something. You're being burned alive.

[CANDACE exits the closet. She disregards the enormous lava pit that was once her room.]

CANDACE-

Okay, okay, okay...
How do I look?

APRIL-

Sexy.

BOO-BOO-
Hot.

CANDACE-
Thanks.

BENEDICT-
She literally means you look hot. You're in the middle of a pit of lava.

BOO-BOO-
April is melting. Tell her to get on the chair.

CANDACE-
(To BOO-BOO)
Stop it.

APRIL-
Alright, let's go.
I left you a present in your jewelery box. Just in case.

[APRIL and CANDACE exit.]

BOO-BOO-
Candace?
She can't just walk on lava like that.

BENEDICT-
I guess she doesn't want to play.

[Beat.]
Has the floor cooled down yet?

BOO-BOO-
Hmmm.
Yeah.

[Both get down from their safe spot.]

[Beat.]
Hey, Benedict.

BENEDICT-
Yeah?

BOO-BOO-
THE FLOOR IS LAVA!

[Lights Out.]

Scene Two

[Lights up on CANDACE's bedroom. CANDACE is seated at the desk. BENEDICT is sitting in his usual spot, he is "smoking" out of a pipe that produces bubbles. BOO-BOO is running around CANDACE's desk.]

CANDACE-
What do you think I should say?

BOO-BOO-
mraw. What do you think I should say? mraw.

BENEDICT-
(To CANDACE)
I think you should tell him how you feel.
(To BOO-BOO)
Very nice T-Rex. How about a cow?

CANDACE-
I'm serious!

BOO-BOO-
moo. I'm serious! moo.

BENEDICT-
(To CANDACE)
I'm trying. I don't have much experience with boys.
(To BOO-BOO)
Great horned owl.

CANDACE-
Boo-Boo! Stop it!

BOO-BOO-
Hoot. Boo-Boo, stop it!. Hoot!

CANDACE-
Stop mocking me and help me please!

BOO-BOO-
Meow.

[CANDACE throws a stuffed animal at BOO-BOO.]
Mee-ouch! Sorry, sorry, sorry!

CANDACE-
Stop playing around! He's going to call me back any minute expecting an answer!

BENEDICT-
You don't have to answer him. I mean, it's just a phone call.

BOO-BOO-
Yeah!

CANDACE-
I can't just ignore him.

BOO-BOO-
Why not? You ignore me all the time.

CANDACE-
But what if he's the guy that I'm supposed to marry?

BENEDICT-
[Playfully serious.]
Then you'd better get ready, you're in no state to be meeting your prince charming. Not with that hair, no ma'am.

BOO-BOO-
[Betrayed.]
Who's side are you on?

BENEDICT-
I'm not on anyone's side. I'm neutral. I'm Switzerlanding.

BOO-BOO-
You're an idiot.

BENEDICT-
No, you're the idiot, idiot!

BOO-BOO-
Nuh uh! You are!

CANDACE-
Enough!

[BOO-BOO does a raspberry at BENEDICT.]

BOO-BOO-
[Mocking.]
Enough.

BENEDICT-
Alright, Boo-Boo... She really needs us right now. Let's try to be supportive.

BOO-BOO-
Ugh... Fine...

[Suddenly playing.]
What can I get for thee, my liege?

CANDACE-
[Playing along.]
Fetch me my make-up, please.

[BOO-BOO exits.]
Sir Benedict? Would you mind picking out some clothes for my date?

BENEDICT-
As you wish!

[BENEDICT exits. The phone rings.]

CANDACE-
Hello? Oh, Hi Jared! I'm great... Yeah. Yeah? I had a great time too. What movie do you want to see tonight? We could always just stay in and watch an episode of Sherlock-

[Beat.]

Oh. Oh, I'm sorry to hear that. No, I understand. Another time, maybe. Yeah.
Talk to you later. Bye.

[BENEDICT enters with two dresses.]

BENEDICT-
Okay, you've got two choices. Classy and sassy. I'd go for classy because class never goes out of style, but I totally support your decision to...

[Notices that CANDACE is upset.]

Whoa, you alright?

CANDACE-
Yeah. Just put those things back.

BENEDICT-
Oh, as you wish.

[BENEDICT exits. BOO-BOO runs in as if she is in a gunfight with unseen enemies. BOO-BOO is carrying CANDACE's make up box.]

BOO-BOO-
Pew-pew! Don't worry your highness, I got the top secret plans. Pew-pew! I've been wounded, but I made sure to get them. Now we can defeat the evil king... Our people will be safe... From his wrath... Aaaaarrrrghhh....

[BOO-BOO collapses onto CANDACE's desk.]

CANDACE-
Thanks, Boo-Boo. I'm not really in the mood for games right now.

BOO-BOO-
Pew-pew!

CANDACE-
No...

BOO-BOO-
Pew-pew?

CANDACE-
NO!

BOO-BOO-
pew...pew...

CANDACE-
[Suddenly angry.]
STOP! Why do you always do that? Animal noises and shi...crap. I told you that I didn't want to play any games.

[BOO-BOO is still.]
Stop pouting.

[Beat.]
Please?

[Beat.]

BOO-BOO-
[Suddenly crying.]
Waaaaaaaaaaaaah!

[BENEDICT runs in.]

BENEDICT-
What on Earth happened to Boo-Boo?

CANDACE-
Ugh...She's just being Boo-Boo!

BENEDICT-
What did you say to her? Did you tell her to stop playing Pew?
You know she does that to cheer you up! You'd think after growing up with her that you'd learn
how Boo-Boo's mind works!

CANDACE-
Can we focus on my crisis right now? Please?

BOO-BOO-
Waaaaaaaaaaaaah!

BENEDICT-
So what? He broke his date with you. It's not like he spit in your face or said you were ugly. Big
deal, Candace. Like there won't be another date or another prince charming to come a long and
sweep you off your feet.

CANDACE-

...

BENEDICT-
But as for another Boo-Boo? She's the only one.

BOO-BOO-
Like Tigger!

BENEDICT-
[Smiling.]
(To BOO-BOO)
That's right. Just like Tigger.
(To CANDACE)

You made us to help you cope with the real world. So let us do that.

CANDACE-

I know... I just...

BENEDICT-
You just what?

CANDACE-
April was right. I just... I'm too old for this.

BENEDICT-
Too old for what?
Us?
You still need us, don't you?

CANDACE-
I...

BOO-BOO-
Candace?

[Laying her head in CANDACE's lap.]
You still want us around, don't you?

[Beat.]

CANDACE-
I... What if Jared doesn't like me because I have all this kid stuff. I'm an adult now and I still
have imaginary friends.
I'm too old for imaginary friends.

BENEDICT-
I see...
Well, I knew this day would come sooner or later.

BOO-BOO-
[Beginning to plead.]
Please don't send us away, Candace. We don't have anywhere else to go. I promise to pick up my
toys and be quiet! Please?

BENEDICT-
[Comforting BOO-BOO.]
It's okay Boo-Boo. I'll always take care of you. Even if Candace won't.
(To CANDACE)
Is this what you want? Just imagine us away?

CANDACE-
I don't want to. I have to. I **have** to grow up.

BENEDICT-
Well, if that's what you think is best. We'll leave. Because that's what real friends do.
I hope he's worth it...

[BENEDICT and BOO-BOO exit.]

[Lights out.]

Scene Three

[Lights up on CANDACE's room. It is very different than it has been before. Less pink. No stuffed animals. It looks more "age appropriate". All the toys and coloring books are gone. Her walls are covered with pictures of movies, actors, and popular bands.]

[BOO-BOO hides under the bed while BENEDICT masquerades as a lamp, ala a lampshade on his head and standing very still.]

[At lights up, CANDACE and JARED enter through the main door.]

CANDACE-
So, this is my room.

[JARED looks around.]

JARED-
It's nice.

CANDACE-
Think so?

JARED-
Yeah.

[CANDACE notices a toy horse on the desk. She picks it up and kicks it under the bed. Nonchalantly, of course.]

CANDACE-
It's just a regular room. Standard. Nothing abnormal here. Everything age appropriate.

[JARED picks up a book.]

JARED-
The complete works of Dr. Seuss?

CANDACE-
Oh... Yeah. His books are allegories for all sorts of things.

Yertle the Turtle is about Nazism. *Horton Hears a Who* is about Isolationism. *How the Grinch Stole Christmas* is about the dangers of materialism.

[Beat.]

JARED-
I like *Green Eggs and Ham*.

CANDACE-
Oh, yeah! That's all about how being afraid of the unknown can keep you from developing an informed opinion. Very relevant nowadays. I'm writing a paper on it for Dr. Peters' class. I love that his books are for children, but they deal with such huge topics.

[Beat.]

JARED-
I guess... I just like the name Sam I Am. Even if it's totally a rip off of Will.I.Am.

CANDACE-
Umm... From the Black Eyed Peas?

JARED-
Yeah.

[JARED sits on the bed.]

BOO-BOO-
(Under the bed.)
Dooosh!

BENEDICT-
Boo-Boo! Shhh!

BOO-BOO-
Sorry...

JARED-
Comfortable bed. Is it memory foam?

CANDACE-
Oh, umm... Yeah.

JARED-
It's nice.
I like it.

CANDACE-
Me too.

[Beat.]

JARED-
You can sit next to me.

CANDACE-
Umm...

JARED-
I promise I'm not a weirdo or anything.

CANDACE-
Oh, I know. I'm comfortable here.

JARED-
Well, you'll be more comfortable over here.

CANDACE-
Oh, okay...

[JARED pulls CANDACE closer. They sit in silence for a moment. He gets the courage to kiss her. They kiss for a moment and then his hand wanders. BENEDICT enters.]

Wh- what are you doing?

JARED-
Umm... I just...

CANDACE-
Shhh.. It's okay

[BENEDICT enters covered in a white sheet. He runs around the room.]

BENEDICT-
Ooooooh! Oooooooh! I'm a scary, scary ghost! Oooooh! Oooooh!

[CANDACE is aghast. JARED is oblivious. BENEDICT leaves defeated.]

JARED-
D'you hear something?

CANDACE-
Nope. I didn't hear anything.

[JARED and CANDACE go back to kissing. BENEDICT enters with a bass drum on his chest. He is wearing a marching band uniform and pounding the bass drum with mallets. He sings.]

BENEDICT-
"Sergeant Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band!!!!!!!"

[CANDACE bolts up.]

CANDACE-
You want some music?

JARED-
Umm... Sure...

[BENEDICT exits. CANDACE turns on her iPod. Smooth, sexy-time jazz plays. CANDACE unbuttons her shirt, she pulls a condom out of a box on her shelf. She hands it to Jared. CANDACE gets under the covers. JARED tries opening the condom, but it won't open. He tries tearing it and it won't work. He tries a different side, still won't work. He finally attempts opening it with his teeth.]

[BENEDICT enters. He is furious. He begins over turning items in the room. A chair next to the desk, then the other chair, and finally a table.]

BENEDICT-
I think it's time for him to go. Get out! Get out! GET OUT!

[BENEDICT grabs JARED by the back of his collar and lifts him off of the bed.]

JARED-
What the?

[JARED is being dragged out of the room.]
Whoa, whoa, whoa!

[BENEDICT opens the door and throws JARED outside.]
What's- Ahhhh!

[BENEDICT slams the door and wipes his hands.]

CANDACE-
Benedict! What the fuck is wrong with you?

BENEDICT-
Watch your language! You're not too old to make you wash your mouth out with soap.

CANDACE-
I told you that I didn't need you anymore.

BENEDICT-
Well, obviously you do.

CANDACE-
I'm too old for this, Benedict.

BENEDICT-
But you aren't old enough to defend yourself from someone like him.

CANDACE-
What are you talking about? What makes you think I didn't want that?

BENEDICT-
You're acting like a child. You're in such a rush to grow up that you are trying to do things you aren't ready for yet.

[Beat.]

CANDACE-
What are you even doing here?

BENEDICT-
We had to come back.

CANDACE-
We? Where's Boo-Boo?

BENEDICT-
Under the bed.

CANDACE-
Boo-Boo?

[BOO-BOO crawls from under the bed. She holds an inflated condom.]

BOO-BOO-
Look! I found a balloon.

[Beat.]

(To BENEDICT)
Will you make it into a giraffe?

CANDACE-
You shouldn't have come back...

BENEDICT-
What did you want us to do? The farther away from you we go, the less real we become.

[Beat.]
You can't expect us to kill ourselves.

CANDACE-
I expect you to do what's best for me--

BENEDICT-
I am doing what's best for you.

CANDACE-
I expect you to do what you are told!

[Beat.]

BENEDICT-
Well, if you want us to die, then I guess you will have to kill us yourself...

CANDACE-
...

BENEDICT-
[Starting to get confrontational.]
I mean, why even imagine us if you are just going to take us out back and shoot us in the head when you get done with us.

[CANDACE is beginning to break down.]

BOO-BOO-
Benedict?

CANDACE-
Benedict, no...

BENEDICT-
[Into a simmering fury.]
Who's it going to be first, Candace? Me or Boo-Boo?

[CANDACE is broken. BOO-BOO is stunned.]

CANDACE-

I'm... I'm sorry.

BENEDICT-

[Full blown rage.]

Don't tell me. Tell Boo-Boo. Tell your Father.

[Beat.]

Oh, wait. That's the thing isn't it? That's why you needed us, isn't it? To grow up? But you're all grown up now. Big college girl. No need for a father now, right?

[CANDACE is sobbing. BOO-BOO is crying next to BENEDICT. He has his arm around her.]

CANDACE-

I'm sorry! I'm so sorry...

BENEDICT-

Go ahead, Candace.

If it's so easy...

You imagined us into this world, so imagine us out of it.

[Beat.]

BOO-BOO-

Candace?

[Beat.]

CANDACE-Hey, Benedict...

The floor is lava.

Three...

Two...

One...

[Lights Out.]

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