

True Theatricality: What Separates Live Theatre from All Other Entertainment

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Abstract

In order to better understand the art of live theatre in comparison to its many counterparts, an in-depth study of the elements of live theatre that separate it must be accomplished. Through Aristotle's *The Poetics*, to many contemporary studies of theatricality, to recent scripts incorporating those elements and effectively using them, the analysis of theatricality can be applied to an original script of its own kind. Some elements that have been discovered are double casting, expression through song, and even a break in the classic two act structure. The application of these elements of theatricality present a lot more issues to be examined. Do these elements even bring in the audiences, or is there something else that drives them in?

True Theatricality: What Separates Live Theatre from All Other Entertainment

Live theatre is a dying art. That sentence is said numerous times, especially in an age where screens are the predominant source of entertainment. And yet, Broadway is still glorified as one of the greatest places to be in New York. So, has theatre lost its edge? Is there to be no little girl sitting in an audience seat, her feet barely able to touch the ground beneath her, with anticipation of her favorite hero coming out on stage to release the damsel from her ordeal? Are there to be no more couples out on date nights striving to find better communication patterns only to find themselves somehow depicted on stage? Are there to be no more day trips to see the glorious theatre where all beauty is indeed in the eye of the beholder? One day, will Hamlet say his last “To be or not to be?” These glorious moments that have written and rewritten culture along with shaping individual human experiences are stripped away slowly but surely.

In an age where these screens are unavoidable, dominating even the simplest parts of our lives there has been a lack of authentic, live entertainment leaving the world to ask the question: why even bother? Is there anything inherently special about live entertainment that cannot be obtained through the press of a button? Specifically: does a live theatre performance provide any substantial gain to the experience for an audience member? In order to answer this question effectively, there first must be a working understanding of the mechanics of good theatre. This understanding can be gained from the analysis of Aristotle’s *Poetics*, which is considered one of the very first literary reviews of comedy, poetry, and tragedy. Adding on to that are several contemporary studies of theatricality by Gabrielle Cody, Meiling Cheng, Josette Féral, Ronald P. Bermingham, and Freddie Rokem, each of which studied the countless ways theatricality not only exists but also affects the audience. After that review, understanding play scripts and their attempts to create unique manners in which to provide theatre gives insight to a playwright’s

ability to craft theatricality. This craft can be then applied and continuously reviewed.

The Poetics

Aristotle's *Poetics* is one of the very first literary reviews on the structure of dramatic presentations. He breaks down the substance of performance into six categories that are prevalent within any show: action, character, ideas/thought, language, musicality, and spectacle (Hatcher). Since the publishing of Aristotle's analysis over two millennia, many have argued which is the most crucial element to that of a good performance. And although some may need more developing than others, they all add a certain taste that cannot be replaced with another factor and therefore all remain essential to the composite of a compelling script. To that end, every component has its proficiencies and deficiencies. Action for example, as described by Aristotle, cannot contain just any sort of action to be compelling (Aristotle). Their relationship to each other is what makes it compelling. That relationship specifically provides for something in which the audience can connect themselves to: hence the *pity* that is aforementioned. Catharsis is the prime motivator for an audience. By definition, catharsis means "the process of releasing, and thereby providing relief from, strong or repressed emotions" (Catharsis). In order for the action that is most engaging to come to fruition, first the relationship of the characters must be established: therefore, the heart, soul, and personality of the character need exist (Aristotle). Then the audience is able to come alongside the character and interact based upon their own experiences to have an enjoyable experience. Aristotle affirms that there are several methods in which to incorporate these philosophies into a written word, and describes several cases with the *Poetics*. Yet, he was the first to say that the best way is through the natural course of action presented to a character by the writer (Aristotle). For it is not only the characters and their relationships that are interesting, rather the conflicts that an audience can relate to. How that is

presented to the audience is equally important and entertaining. The very words in which the characters use create their demeanor, their inflection, and therefore their perspective within the world they live (Aristotle). Each syllable, each sound, each minute letter is a reflection on the character at large, and the further a playwright studies and incorporates this into his/her written word, the greater the piece will be.

Spectacle

The last requirement Aristotle mentions as essential to the creation of great literature is that of spectacle. Spectacle by definition is “a visually striking performance or display” (Spectacle); in other words, a spectacle is engaging, entertaining, compelling. Spectacle are the components that enhance the desired piece at hand. It in fact can be described as the entertainment itself: for it provides the *awe* factor an audience seeks to display. Various colorful costumes, light shows, elaborate dance numbers, etc. are the immediate pleasures an audience admires. Spectacle is traditionally thought and taught as theatricality. Interestingly enough, Aristotle believed this specific factor to be the least essential characteristic.

Fear and pity may be aroused by spectacular means; but they may also result from the inner structure of the piece, which is the better way, and indicates a superior poet. For the plot ought to be so constructed that, even without the aid of the eye, he who hears the tale told will thrill with horror and melt to pity at what takes Place. (Aristotle).

Aristotle understood that what rivets an audience isn't the display itself, although that may get them going. Instead it is the soul connection that is made between them. Whether they are aware of it or not, the audience will connect to the piece based upon the relationships and the heart of the characters themselves. Aristotle specifically condemns those who detract from that connection: “and one that conduces to grandeur of effect, to diverting the mind of the hearer, and

relieving the story with varying episodes. For sameness of incident soon produces satiety, and makes tragedies fail on the stage” (Aristotle). His argument isn’t that spectacle is what makes good theatre but is merely a tool, and one that is quickly and easily used to distract bad writing. This entire study of an ancient text questions the validity of modern ideas. More specifically, it probes contemporary pieces in their credibility of quality especially within their own research.

Contemporary Studies

Aristotle redefines the general perception of what *theatricality* in the sense of the word is, including its relevance to the art form—is it in fact relevant at all? In order to determine relevance, however, first a clear definition must be established. Plenty of artists have spent numerous hours searching for that perfect, clear answer but have come up short. Jeffrey Hatcher in his book “The Art of Playwriting” analyzed the *Poetics* himself to help identify those elements. On spectacle he stated, “It’s easy to confuse the concept of spectacle with that of bigness... It’s whatever looks neat onstage...” (Hatcher). This could be anything—literally anything: the wave of a hand as the stage lifts, the costume change of a character on stage, or the incredible light show provided with a musical number. Simply it is anything that amazes the audience, which explains Aristotle’s warning further. If the entirety of the show produces constant *wows* for the audience at the expense of the actual plot and character development, then it is no longer considered good.

Take the musical currently on Broadway as an example: *Moulin Rouge!* This show in everything it does technically is unbelievably astounding. As a whole, the technical performance is incredible: e.g. the lights tightly, accurately, and quickly hit the actors in every scene while never once losing the conceptual design. The set changes are incredibly fluid and never once lose the audience as to location or even time of day. The jukebox style music selected easily keeps the audience entertained. They all have their own advanced elements and yet distinctly tell the

audience exactly what this world is like. The performance itself is an entire spectacle; and yet the storyline is unfortunately underdeveloped. As a derived piece from a beloved movie, the characters are incredibly shallow and carry little motivation for their action. Thus, the plot of the storyline is infrequently justified by action, with a small rise in development only existing in Act II. This show with its high-budget, raunchy display of a non-empathetic love story will barely sustain itself outside of Broadway. Hatcher helps to relieve some of that pressure created by Aristotle's warning. "Spectacle makes the audience say 'Wow.' A big one or a small one—it's all context" (Hatcher). It doesn't have to be an in-your-face rock concert in order for it to be *spectacular*. As Hatcher describes, it can simply be the lighting of a match in the midst of complete darkness. These little moments which create an awe are those to be most excitable. They merely add to the already captivating performance.

Spectacle vs. Theatricality

These moments can exist anywhere: they are not unique to the world of theatre. A cinematic phenomenon for example easily can be described as a type of spectacle. Animation, Claymation, CGI are just a few types of examples that are specific to that of the cinematic world. If indeed these moments exist in other fields of media, perhaps the element of spectacle is not what defines the theatre or its *theatricality* after all. In a discussion on the webpage *Interartive*, a place for discussion about contemporary art, Christina Grammatikopoulou analyzes Roland Barthes' definition of theatricality. Barthes, a celebrated literary scholar, describes theatricality as "theater-minus-text, it is a density of signs and sensations built up on stage starting from the written argument; it is that ecumenical perception of sensuous artifice—gesture, tone, distance, substance, light- which submerges the text beneath the profusion of its external language" (Barthes). This definition reads very similar to that of spectacle, but Grammatikopoulou takes it

one step further. She defines it by saying, “Theatricality includes performativity, but goes beyond it... there is no doubt that the reception of the text by the actors or the performer –who will perform it according to how they perceive it- and the audience, creates an ever-changing dynamic” (Grammatikopoulou). In essence, theatricality is described as the reception of the text through either the performer, the audience, or both.

This introduces a completely different aspect into the understanding of theatricality. Instead of it being specific to an object or a design, it can be found through the expression and reception of an interpretation of the art. Entirely different to the set maneuvers or radical appearances in design, in this definition theatricality is found through the specificity of an actor’s choices within the moment, and beyond that the audiences’ reactions to those choices. Including the audience requires an entirely different element that is separate from the world of cinema or various media. Freddie Rokem specifically studied the power of a spectator in a journal article. In it he says, “One of the defining characteristics of a theatrical event is the fact that it takes place in the presence of spectators, in front of a live audience” (Rokem). Even modern TV comedy has moved away from this classification due to the expense, and resorted to laugh tracks instead. A live audience provides an energy, unobtainable in any other form and flows through any piece which is being observed. The reactions provided by the observer shape the way in which a performance must be handled. For example, a sleepy matinee audience consisting of 60 members requires a much different response than a riveting, wild audience consisting of 200 members on a Saturday night. Rokem further divulged this power of the spectator by exploring its existence within the performance itself.

Examining scenes where witnesses have been added on the stage where this is not necessary, at least not in order to "tell" the scene on the stage according to the text, makes

it possible to sharpen the theoretical issues of witnessing on the stage. The basic argument ... is that this adds a dimension of theatricality on the basis of which the spectator begins to interpret the performance. (Rokem).

Who would imagine that the observance of an observer by a first observer would greatly enhance and inform the experience of said first observer? Yet, we constantly take cues from our surroundings in general life as a survival tactic, so it follows that the same trait would be applied in such a setting. This relationship between the audience becomes crucial for both the experience of the performer as well as for the audience member.

Live Theatre Compared to Other Live Art

The factor of a live audience, however, does not distinguish theatre itself from other audience-based art; e.g. art showings, concerts, festivals, etc. Besides its delineation from screen-type entertainment, what specifically separates the experience of the live theatre from that of any other live entertainment? Hatcher briefly touches upon this when he states, “The spectacle comes from our knowledge that this is happening live, and that the actors could drop the bottle. It’s not a movie; there aren’t any retakes. The *live* aspect of such an action lends the bottle toss its spectacular quality” (Hatcher). Although he is still under the umbrella of Aristotle’s idea of spectacle, Hatcher recognizes the *live* nature of theatre and expounds upon that. Specifically, the idea of improvisation. Anything can happen within the stage, despite it being rehearsed. Due to a number of factors including the audience engagement (as previously mentioned), there can exist a nature of extemporization in that one small change can affect the larger part of the performance. A common phrase among many theatre artists is that ‘no two shows are the same’ – a true statement due to these varying conditions. The level of rehearsal combined with the wary

flexibility and the engagement of spectators is what reels not just the audience members, but even performers and technicians into the art form.

The True Definition

Although this specification down to the minute details can help to separate theatre from other forms of entertainment, there is something unsatisfactory about what has been said thus far. Gabrielle Cody and Meiling Cheng studied various perceptions of theatricality over several centuries and came to the conclusion: “What’s clear is that there can be no one definition for theatricality, since the term is steeped in specific periods, cultures, and practices” (Cody). Furthermore, there are definitions based on people-groups: those who exist within the world of entertainment, or even at a further extension: art, and those who do not.

The ‘theatrical’ assumes a heightening, even an unmasking and denuding, of the so-called ‘natural’ and ‘decent’ through exaggeration, explicit eroticism, sentimentality, and blatant or subtle disguise, all of which dramatize age-old fears of excess, artificiality, and inauthenticity traits that have also animated a range of deadly binaries. (Cody).

Anything that is an over-exaggeration or *dramatized* is entitled as theatrical. Does that make it theatrical in nature? It depends on who you ask, and when. Josette Féral went to great lengths to understand what theatricality by its true definition was.

To define theatricality, or the specificity of the theater, is not only to attempt to define what distinguishes theater from other genres, but to define what distinguishes it from other kinds of spectacle-dance, performance art, or multi-media art. It is to bring the nature of theater itself into focus against a background of individual theatrical practices, theories of stage-play, and aesthetics. It is to attempt to find parameters shared by all theatrical enterprises from time immemorial. (Féral).

Essentially, theatricality in its true nature is any element that separates live theatre from other art-forms, other entertainment, other media. Whether that be the live audience, the observance of character/plot action, the magnificence of the design work, or anything else relating to the world. Certainly, these studies relate to an application that already exists within the productions themselves. Examining current scripts is the first step in fully understanding the results aforementioned.

Application in Current Scripts

With all this analysis of theatricality, it's important to recognize these varying definitions in the actual workings of a script or production. Due to the numerous styles of theatricality, there are in fact numerous styles of application. Arguably, the most important one is at the beginning: the writing of the script itself. Where does the theatricality begin to exist within the text? Tectonic Theatre Company, headed by Moises Kaufman, was formed to explore this on a deeper level. Their two most famous plays: *The Laramie Project* and *Gross Indecency: The Three Trials of Oscar Wilde* have won several awards for their exploration of history through their process. Their mission: to find facets in which to tell the story beyond a playwright just sitting down and writing (About). And their goal is to share this methodology with others within the theatre-creating realm; so, they published their book *Moment Work* which explains in detail their process of creating shows of this nature. Specifically, they try to breakdown into singular moments, from one person and expanding to multiple people. These individual moments slowly become more and more intricate as they add varying elements including (but never limited from this list): costume pieces, props, various lighting techniques, story-telling ideas, etc. (Kaufman). In *Gross Indecency*, Kaufman discusses his desire to explore "how to create a theater piece that could encompass all the different stories, and yet have a coherent, dramatic through-line" within the

introduction of the piece itself (Schurmann).

Gross Indecency is unique in its portrayal and theatrical structure due to the many documents, letters, and news articles through which the story is told. All of the actor's lines are composed of headlines, quotations, and various journal entries that were found in the process of creating this play. And this is introduced from the very beginning of the story: "*The actors come onstage. The actor playing Oscar Wilde holds up a copy of De Profundis and reads: ACTOR.*" This is from *De Profundis* by Oscar Wilde: 'Do not afraid of the past...' (Schurmann). First the actor is identified as an actor, and names the character which he will play aloud to the audience directly. Another part of this show that is creative is the way in which the Narrators are written. This production is meant for a cast of 9 men, each of which playing varying parts, including the one playing the titular role of Wilde. And this is addressed in the script as Narrator 1, 2, 3, etc. and leaving the actors to mine through their lines to discover which character is which. This type of doubling is an interesting feat that creates an extra level of discovery for the audience, reeling them into the story further.

Gross Indecency is not the only play to have a doubled cast. Consider the roots of theatre, when Thespis first stepped out to perform for himself. Doubling casting was always used to convey the story. So, it is no surprise that the idea is very common among several plays, simply because it allows for two things: (1) a smaller cast which is much more affordable and (2) that added sense of theatricality which the audience seeks in this art form. *Peter and the Star Catcher* is quite a famous and more recent work that is known primarily for its doubled cast. Although the script does not denote the doubling through the naming of actors or narrators specifically, it contains a casting note in the beginning section that states: "Actors doubling in roles is *terrific fun* when it serves a dramatic purpose, and this play was conceived with specific doubling in

mind” (Elice, emphasis added). With a provided list of suggested doubling, the script then proceeds with regular character names to more clearly identify the story. Another amusing element that comes along with this story is the lack of set and props. Again, in the introduction of this production the show describes that it is meant to be used with minimal props, and that the various actions the characters are doing can be mimed or imagined through a piece of rope for example. It adds a comedic element that truly enhances the story itself, and within the script descriptions are clearly made for what is occurring within the character’s world so that the actors have very detailed knowledge of the events and can use their imagination appropriately. Rick Elice, the author, describes this as *Story Theatre*, saying:

The dozen actors would play everything-sailors, pirates, orphans, natives, fish, mermaids, birds... even doors, passageways, masts, storms, jungles. They would also narrate action and memory, giving each of them a privileged relationship with the audience. This would encourage the audience to be more than spectators; it would invite them to play along, to participate, to imagine. (Elice).

And the relationship created between the audience and actors has become incredibly successful, it was nominated for Best Play 2012 Tony Awards. Story theatre has become the writing style of the contemporary age, and used over and over in recent plays because of that specific connection it makes with audiences.

Peter and the Star Catcher was not the first show to exclude the use of props in shows, however. Most people recognize the symbol for theatre: the happy and sad face. The symbol stems from the Ancient Greek roots where masks were the only *props* used to perform. Going back to the early 1900s, Thornton Wilder’s *Our Town* was conceived on the concept of little set and props itself. Telling the story of a small little town and the effect that can have on a life, the

play begins with the stage directions “No curtain. No scenery. The audience, arriving, sees an empty stage in half-tight. Presently the STAGE MANAGER, hat on and pipe in mouth, enters and begins placing a table and three chairs downstage left...” (Wilder). Introduced as a crew member as opposed to a character or even as an actor, this title separates the entire show distinctively. Add on that, the use of merely a couple of chairs and ladders to represent the entire neighborhood; and again, miming of actions instead of using props to help the story. Wilder’s purpose here is to relieve distraction from the actual events that occur on these characters, and how they are able (or unable) to respond to them. His purpose is to focus on their stories alone. His introduction of this idea catapulted several plays into this limited form, in order to engage the audience entirely on the words and give those words importance.

Another show that relies heavily upon doubling is *The 39 Steps*, which has a cast of characters above 20, and a cast of actors to be four. A wonderful part of this show is that it embraces the comedic nature that can come from the doubling affect, and titles two of its characters as “clowns” (Barlow). Specifically, the script delineates the clowns as the only two to play all roles besides the titular role of Richard Hannay and the women, played by the singular

SALESMAN 1. Certainly.
 HANNAY. Thank you.
(HANNAY takes the paper. Pores into it. Looks up to see both men staring at him. They grin unnervingly.)
 SALESMAN 2. Think I'll pop out to the buffet car. Finished?
(snatches paper from HANNAY)
 Fancy anythin'?
 SALESMAN 1. No thank you.
 HANNAY. No thank you.
 SALESMAN 2. Right you are.
(He leaves the compartment. Squeezes past.)
 SALESMAN 2. Excuse me. Sorry. Sorry.
 SALESMAN 1. Sorry. Sorry.
 HANNAY. Sorry.
(SALESMAN 1 glances out of the window.)
 SALESMAN 1. Good Heavens! Place is stiff with police!
(HANNAY freezes. SALESMAN 1 pulls down window. Calls out.)
 Excuse me Constable! Caught the West End murderer yet?
(SALESMAN 2 appears in a police hat.)
 POLICEMAN. We'll catch him, don't you worry sir!
 SALESMAN 1. That's the spirit!
(POLICEMAN changes into porter's hat.)
 PORTER. All aboard for the Highlands! Next stop the highlands!
(Changes into PC hat.)
 POLICEMAN. Anything suspicious let us know sir!
 SALESMAN 1. Oh yes. Don't you worry!
(PC changes into porter's hat.)
 PORTER. All aboard! All aboard!

(SALESMAN 1 puts on paperboy hat.)
 PAPERBOY. Final edition sir? Final edition.
(PORTER changes into SALESMAN 2 hat.)
 SALESMAN 2. No thank you!
(SALESMAN 2 puts on porter hat.)
 PORTER. All aboard! All aboard!
(PAPERBOY puts on salesman hat.)
 SALESMAN 1. Alright, alright!
(PORTER puts on policeman hat.)
 POLICEMAN. Keep your eyes peeled won't you sir!
 SALESMAN 1. Certainly will constable!
 POLICEMAN. Don't forget sir!
 SALESMAN 1. No I won't constable.
(changes into paperboy hat)
 PAPERBOY. Read all about it!! Read all about it!!
(POLICEMAN puts on porter hat.)
 PORTER. All aboard! All aboard!
(PORTER puts on police hat.)
 POLICEMAN. Anything suspicious, let us know sir.
(PAPERBOY changes into SALESMAN 1.)
 SALESMAN 1. Will do, constable.
(POLICEMAN puts on porter hat.)
 PORTER. All aboard! All aboard!
(SALESMAN 1 changes into MRS HIGGINS hat.)
 MRS HIGGINS. Is this the 9.41 to Reading?
 PORTER. Platform Twelve!
 MRS HIGGINS. Thankoo!
 PORTER. All aboard let's be havin' yer!
(blows whistle)

Fig. 1 Pages 30-31. Barlow, P. *The 39 Steps*. New York: Samuel French.

female actor. To ensure its comedic nature, the script requires certain costume elements or prop elements that allow the clowns to change between characters within lines of each other. Figure One is an example of the characters flipping back and forth, with the respective stage directions. Although doubling does not have to produce a comedic effect, as seen through *Gross Indecency*, it can certainly have its benefits and enhance the story through certain manipulations of that sort.

There are infinitely more variations on the term *theatricality* in practice in both contemporary and eclectic texts. Even the very idea of men playing female roles in Shakespeare's day is a version of theatricality that existed for them, despite the overbearing rules of society that may have produced it. In theatre today, the use of acts has become a medium through which separation or a lack thereof is used to enhance the experience. For example, *Come From Away*, a recent musical currently playing on Broadway runs for approximately 100 minutes is a one act, preventing the audience from the ability to have a break about half-way through the show. Instead they must endure the entirety of the story in much the same way that the characters had to endure their stay in an unwanted location (Come). *The Humans*, another recent production, is a one act structure that strays from the traditional system of traditional playwriting format in order to imitate more natural human dialogue and explores the dilemmas of an average American family (Karam). Even the nature in which *Hadestown* begins, with the actors simply acknowledging the audience and taking a breath before proceeding the performance is innately identifying the inherent process of storytelling. Audiences crave that connection, the ability to be favored and seen as important by the production is what lures them back in every time. Therefore, the next question is how to create that craving in the audience with the elements as they have been studied in both current and antique texts.

Methodology

The final product of this project was to create a full-length play incorporating elements of theatricality based off of research and noting their challenges, difficulties, benefits, etc. As there are several forms of theatricality aforementioned, the focus was to find and apply specific elements of theatricality related to the art of playwriting. Those elements included unique true stories, Biblical text, doubling of cast, and a three-act structure. Some of these elements were determined by the stories that had been chosen. Three stories were selected: (1) the story of Habakkuk from the Bible because of its resounding answer to an age-old question and common neglect by the community within which it lives; (2) the story of my father because it has yet to be told and is the story of a miracle; (3) the story of a fellow actor because not only is it a story of a miracle as well but also because of its unusual path to get to the final result. All three of these stories are compelling on their own, and would make for a challenge to be told in a theatrical sense while also providing a lot of opportunities to thrive. Thorough research of these stories was done to gain the most information possible from each of the subjects. For Habakkuk: several analytical readings of the book as well as studies on the era of time surrounding the story. For my father: several analytical readings of his blog along with some personal interviews and past experience. For the actor: an attempt at interviews, and a personal testimony. Unfortunately, this person was less able to provide information beyond the original testimonial due to distance. In lieu, recollection and theatrical/creative license replaced the lack of knowledge.

The next step in creating the project was developing a structure. Due to three stories coexisting with several similar elements to each other, it had been decided that a three-act structure would be the option for this project. A three-act structure breaks from the typical two act structure normally found within contemporary plays, and the correlation of three stories and

three acts seemed rather intriguing. After having decided upon this an analysis of various three-act structures was done, predominately informed by an article by Chris Huntley, author and creator of Dramatica. Huntley created a software program that essentially does deep analysis. In an article he wrote, he describes various structures including The Syd Field Paradigm, Robert McKee methods, and John Truby's "Twenty Two Building Blocks" (Huntley). Within this article is Christopher Vogler's "The Hero's Journey" which, for the purposes of this project, became very helpful. In the end, a structure adapted from Vogler's structure by Sean Gaffney was used to identify key points within the story, refine important and nonessential details, and ultimately combine the stories into a compelling manner. This outline was created over the period of several months in order to best incorporate the stories in a thematic and sensible way. The creation of the outline in detail can be seen in the images of notes taken within Appendix B.

In the midst of creating the outline, it was decided that in order for the stories to correlate well, the premise of the script is a group of actors portraying these stories together. Once that was decided an outline was formed that intertwined the three individual stories together, and was followed primarily into the writing of the script. A few adjustments were made to better accommodate the need for telling the story fully. Due to the doubling nature of the cast, a suggested cast of actors is provided in order for the best possible interpretation of the script. This was created under the learned knowledge that although theatricality requires much freedom, freedom must first exist within created boundaries – an idea that was cultivated after the very vague first draft. That idea carried forward into many choices throughout drafting the script. This allotted full freedom into each individual story despite the relationship that existed between the three of them, and therefore allowed for the original elements of theatricality to really shine through. One of the elements of theatricality chosen based upon the stories given was the

incorporation of Biblical text. An example of such is excerpted from Act One of the script:

HABAKKUK

How long, Lord, must I call for help, but you do not listen?

ATARAH

How long, Lord, must I call for help, but you do not listen?

ESTHER

How long, Lord, must I call for help, but you do not listen?

ALL

How long, Lord, must I call for help?

HABAKKUK

“Look at the nations and watch—

DONAVAN

He’s speaking for God, now.

JOSHUA

Got it, thanks.

HABAKKUK

“Look at the nations and watch— and be utterly amazed. For I am going to do something in your days that you would not believe, even if you were told.

(ATARAH stirs.)

“I am raising up the Babylonians, that ruthless and impetuous people, who sweep across the whole earth to seize dwellings not their own.

As seen through the above excerpt, the language of the fellow actors was generated in a sense that would match the main character from whom the biblical text was given. The book of

Habakkuk only gives a soliloquy, so the other characters were added to provide a more engaging environment that better represents the ideals placed within the original text.

The First Draft

The first draft presented several issues that were addressed and fixed. The first issue was the specificity of language. Because the idea of theatricality is the inherent goal of the project, there was a lot to be left up to anyone for interpretation in regard to setting. The loose descriptions inevitably became vague and unclear. Although the script demands new choices from everyone who would be involved in the project, the lack of specificity causes the reader to be more confused about the setting of each scene. This was adjusted to better fit the location that best represented the setting while still allowing for creative freedom. An example excerpted from Act One can be seen below; the first is that from the first draft, the second is that of its changes:

SCENE FOUR

AT RISE

A desolate land. The people wander the earth as though to gain something, potentially food or anything that could be of value. Wary of every move that another human being makes, occasionally arguments and fights ensue. HABAKKUK begins to become hysterical in his prayers, shaking others and grasping for anything to steady his trembling.

SCENE FOUR

AT RISE

Two scenes exist: the one of the students reading the book within the bible study and that of the

ISRAELITES; several thousand years ago. A desolated wasteland: the ISRAELITES' home. It is reminiscent of the desert of which they wandered for 40 years. The people wander the earth as though to gain something. Wary of every move that another human being makes, occasional arguments and fights ensue. HABAKKUK begins to become hysterical in his prayers, shaking others and grasping for anything to steady his trembling.

The second issue that was to be addressed was the dream-coma sequence between Donovan and the group of actors. Again, the level of specificity wasn't high enough for the original thought of the playwright to be passed on to the reader. So, to address this situation the playwright adjusted the sequence to better fit the appearance of the acting troupe. Instead of merely hinting to what the scene could be like, a much more descriptive set of actions was inserted. The previous text listed the action as:

He goes into his bedroom, and crashes. The effects of the drugs, while not present on the characters, still engage the surroundings. As DONAVAN falls asleep, all ACTORS enter the stage and interact with DONAVAN's sleeping self. He knows their movements but is unable to respond. After a moment, he wakes up in a cold sweat.

This was better adjusted to read:

He goes into his bedroom, and crashes. The effects of the drugs, while not present on the characters, still engage the surroundings. DONAVAN falls asleep. All ACTORS enter the stage and interact with DONAVAN's sleeping self which doesn't respond. Some

actions include fluffing his pillow, adjusting his legs for comfort, tucking the blanket in, fixing the hair on his head so it's out of his eyes, etc. DONOVAN's character then sits up in bed and looks around at the ACTORS who are interacting with him as if though he is still asleep. DONOVAN then stands and begins to watch the ACTORS as they continue their same movements to the empty space where DONOVAN previous lay, as if he was still there. They all begin to scream and warn the empty space to wake up, wake up, wake up! Then, they are crying as though he is severely hurt. They pray fervently over the space, trying to comfort the space with words, etc. DONOVAN watches this for a moment before trying to break the ACTORS from their movements, unsuccessfully. Simultaneously the ACTORS begin to step away from DONOVAN's bed as he lays back in the bed the same way he began. After a moment, he wakes up in a cold sweat.

This adjustment allowed for the theatrical element and idea of the playwright to remain while still providing creative freedom for any future director/producer.

The largest problem within the first draft that needed to be addressed was the language of the Habakkuk scenes. These scenes were written in accordance to the original Biblical text, which by itself would be understood. Due to the other stories that contain contemporary language, the difference in speech for these scenes is instead very presentational and didn't read well within the context. Once more with theatricality being the prime goal, the adjustment decided upon was to show a transition between the contemporary characters reading the text to the actual text being relayed. To understand some of these changes, below are two editions of some of the Habakkuk scenes.

First draft.

ISAAC

(dragging his concubine behind him)

If he is so, he is a false prophet for the Lord cares not for us!

HABAKKUK

Why do you make me see iniquity, and why do you idly look at wrong?

ISAAC

(throws the woman to his feet)

You have disgraced my house long enough! You have produced no fruit, provided no gain but merely displeased my wives in your beauty.

ATARAH

Sir, I have merely followed your wishes. For you took me from my father's house while I was in my youth, bound me up in rope, transported me across several seas to a land I had never known, and kept me until my youth had been taken from me. Your men as well as yourself—

ISAAC

Silence! No more will your words fall on my ears.

(He exits. JOSIAH gazes upon her.)

JOSIAH

Come, my dear. You have the beauty of an angel, and should be treated as what you are.

(He pulls her off.)

ESTHER

Habakkuk, tell me you see this wrong. Tell me that God has restored to us a new

ESTHER (con't)

promised land, tell me we will be protected from all other evils.

HABAKKUK

Destruction and violence are before me; strife and contention arise.

Revised draft.

JOSHUA

Seriously? Please, translate.

DONAVAN

Okay, fine.

HABAKKUK

Why do you make me look at injustice? Why do you tolerate wrongdoing?

DONAVAN

Better?

JOSHUA

We'll see, keep going.

ISAAC

(throws the woman to his feet)

You have embarrassed me long enough! Your barrenness has provided nothing of value,
and your beauty mocks my wives.

ATARAH

Sir, I have merely followed your wishes.

ISAAC

Nonsense.

ATARAH

When I was a child, you stole me from my father's home. You bound me, transported me across the ocean to a country I had never visited.

ISAAC

Quiet! I can't listen to this anymore.

(He exits. JOSIAH gazes upon her.)

JOSIAH

Come, my dear. You are angelic in beauty, and should be treated so.

(He pulls her off.)

ESTHER

Habakkuk, tell me you see this wrong.

HABAKKUK

Destruction and violence are before me; there is strife, and conflict abounds.

Further Steps

Due to the nature of writing, the largest problems presented themselves within that first draft, and from that point forward the project became much more about fine tuning several details. These details included the nature of the language of each character, to ensure each character was distinct in his/her voice, that the speech was natural, and that the thought process behind the words could be developed by an actor. This was tested through the process of recording several pages of various text with actors who were completely blind to the context of those pages. This allowed the playwright the freedom to understand how much information could be understood and then interpreted. Some of the dialogue was then adjusted to read more naturally based off of the interpretations of the recordings, and that was used to further enhance

dialogue in various other scenes. An example of some edits is given below.

First draft.

GRACE

I just don't think it wise.

TREVOR

Why must you be so stubborn

(He attempts to kiss her once more, more passionately this time. She allows it for a moment, but then pulls back.)

GRACE

Really, I'm not in the mood tonight.

TREVOR

I don't believe I asked.

GRACE

I'm sorry?

(He tries once more, but she prevents it.)

I'm not going to do this now.

Revised draft.

GRACE

I just don't think it wise.

TREVOR

You don't like it?

GRACE

I do, but you know how much we're struggling right now, Trevor.

TREVOR

I'd rather not talk about finances tonight.

GRACE

Alright. What about the Sheila Mason giving birth next week? I'd promise I'd be there, which means I'd need you to bring Faith to school.

TREVOR

I don't want to talk logistics either.

GRACE

Well then, what?

TREVOR

Just a quiet peaceful evening.

GRACE

I appreciate what you've done, but I have a headache, and would rather go to bed.

TREVOR

Come on... It's been so long.

(He attempts to kiss her once more, more passionately this time. She allows the sweetness for a moment, but then pulls back as a ferociousness within him grows.)

GRACE

Really, I'm not in the mood tonight.

TREVOR

I don't believe I asked.

GRACE

Excuse me?

TREVOR

What's yours is mine, Grace.

GRACE

What are you talking about?

TREVOR

We made an agreement to each other—

GRACE

To be by each other's side, Trevor. And yet, look at us. Our family is so broken, and you don't even see it.

TREVOR

I work hard to take care of this family, to provide for you.

(He tries once more, but she prevents it.)

GRACE

I'm not going to do this now. I'm going to bed now.

These edits were made to better articulate the humanity and authenticity of these characters.

From that point, a large step was the song selection. As this play was written not to incorporate any complex structures (unless so desired by the director), the music that was selected was chosen to best fit not only the themes present, but also to fit the capacity of an acapella sound. Hymns, not only could easily fit the theme of the script, but they also would easily be incorporated into the script, and are frequently sung acapella as it stands. The title *Come What May* was a very specific choice relating to its theme, because of the need for the

characters to be content in all things, to trust in the Lord for their provision, and to ask and even beg for vision throughout those hardships. The first hymn that was selected immediately was *It Is Well*. This classic hymn has a blatantly obvious correlation to the themes directed. The second hymn that was selected was *Great is Thy Faithfulness*, as a second choice to *Be Thou my Vision*. Although this hymn has a great message, the lyrics didn't fit the particular moment for the moments in the script as much as *Great is Thy Faithfulness*. Instead *Great is Thy Faithfulness* provides the message that the characters are learning in the moment, and thus better fit the overall arch. The third song selected was *Come Thou Fount*. This hymn was chosen because it encompassed the overall journey that the characters had reached by the end of their story. Finally, in order to complete the story, it had been decided to blend these hymns together into their own song for a final, to fully bring the story full circle and hopefully create that same cathartic experience for an audience. Although the song selections themselves were done early on in the process, the composition specific to this script was one of the last pieces created. After that piece, all that remained was the overall examination of the project. A copy of Act One has been provided for perusing within Appendix A.

Further Questions

After this entire process, there are several questions that present themselves in this specific capacity. The largest question to be explored is whether or not these elements of theatricality actually translate. Although elements of theatricality are being applied as seen fit, these elements cannot be truly known for their effectiveness until an entire production is produced with the interpretations of the various designers, actors, and directors. This can be tested in a number of ways: first with the comparative reading of those who are familiar with dramatic texts and those who are not, the second with that of a staged reading or several, then

with workshop shows requiring the audience's response, and finally a full and complete production. Each of these would enhance the level of intimacy and realism for the audience and allow for them to acknowledge what is truly theatrical.

Some other questions that could be reviewed are comparing the various types of theatrical elements within productions, for example the theatrical choices made by the playwright in comparison to those specific to directing or those specific to design. There is a distinct difference between them, and could potentially have a different effect on audiences. Another potential area to pursue would to look into how these elements numerically reel in audiences; if attendance is up when these elements are incorporated. All of this would indeed provide the need to continue to explore various previous studies as well, and potentially further explore even ancient texts such as *The Poetics*.

Conclusion

There is a difference between theatricality and creativity. Creativity is using the imagination to create, simply put. In contrast, theatricality is engineering a story or production through a highly focused lens and process using creativity to fulfill a specific purpose. There are several elements of theatricality that can be and have been reviewed discussed and applied in a numerous amount of ways. For this specific project, Aristotle was the basis from which to begin exploring with his analysis of excellent theatre in *The Poetics*. From that, many contemporary studies have found several different aspects to be the authentic definition of theatricality: some of which relate to directing, some of which relate to producing, and some of which relate to playwriting. These studies helped to further define theatricality for the purposes of this project which then took the information found and applied it to the realm of playwriting. Lots of discoveries were made throughout that process. The development of a clear outline, with

compelling stories, the application of that outline into the script itself which produced several key problems in the first draft. Those issues were made present by the creation of the draft and were addressed effectively in subsequent drafts through the editing process. The largest takeaway from this process was imagination must be given its limits, creativity needs to be bound to something before it can take flight, otherwise it does not make sense to anyone but the one who wrote the piece.

Appendix A: An Application of Various Theatrical Forms.

COME WHAT MAY

A Creative Retelling of True Stories

By: Sarah Michelle Beattie

CHARACTERS

TOBIAS

Tobias' Story

A man who continuously wants to leave his past behind him, and find his true self in whatever makes sense within his surroundings.

TREVOR

Tobias' father. A pastor. Known for his charismatic charm in the congregation, he very easily is able to sway anyway to be on his side.

GRACE

Trevor's wife. A beautiful woman. Although she may have seen it all, she carries herself as though she were still innocent to the world.

DIANA

Tobias' elder sister. She is a free spirit, but still terrified of the world outside of the one that she knows.

FAITH

Tobias' younger sister. She is predominately innocent. Any evil she encounters, she tries to justify for them.

JOSHUA

Tobias' best friend. Struggles with personal identity, trying to find the best answer to his unfulfilled life.

EMMA

Tobias' wife. Coming from her own past, she has learned many lessons along the way.

DONAVAN

Donovan's Story

An ambitious man, who is constantly trying to forge the things that upset him. Instead he focuses on the good within his life as something to hold onto.

MOTHER

Donovan's mother. A workaholic mom who is not really in tune with her son's life.

DAD

Donovan's dad. A man who despite his incredibly loyalty, has been passed over and over in his lifetime.

JARED

One of Donovan's several bosses.

MASTERS

An energetic coworker.

LUCAS	Donavan's mentor. A man who has fought many battles within his life, but has remain steadfast through them all.
HABAKKUK	<i>Habakkuk's Story</i> A prophet who is desperately trying to understand the events that surround him.
JOSIAH	An Israelite.
ESTHER	An Israelite, Josiah's wife.
ISAAC	An Israelite leader.
ATARAH	A Gentile.
ISHTAR	Babylonian royalty. A governess.
LAKHMU	Babylonian royalty. A governor.
ENSEMBLE	Silvia, Mathew, Margaret, Tryston, Kyle, Bekah, Carol, Angela, Kait, James, Brad, Meagan, Lily, Mariah, Servant, Nurse, Dennis, Man 1, Woman, EMT, Mama, Judge

SUGGESTED CAST OF CHARACTERS**Actor 1 - Male**

Tobias
Isaac
Masters

Actor 2 - Male

Trevor
Joshua
Ishtar
Jared
Man 1

Actor 3 - Male

Donavan
Kyle
Josiah

Actor 4 - Male

Habakkuk
Mathew
Dad
James
Dennis

Actor 5 - Female

Silvia
Bekah
Mother
Diana
Mary
Meagan
Woman

Actor 6 - Female

Grace
Carol
Kait
Sally
Atarah
Mama
Mariah
Nurse

Actor 7 - Female

Margaret
Angela
Faith
Esther
Angie
Lily
Emma

Actor 8 - Male

Tryston
Lakhmu
Lucas
Brad
EMT
Judge

Author's Note:

With the intention of the cast of eight, there are some scenes in which not every actor is required to deliver a line. However, this does not prevent their presence from the stage: they could become part of the set, interacting with the characters on a subconscious level, or merely be spectators. A cast of characters is provided above.

This was created with the intent of theatricality being the prime motivator. Every choice made was a choice of script theatricality. After just finishing an Alexander based exercise, I urge you to continue with that intention. Be creative in your choices: don't allow preconceptions hold captive your thought. This is especially important with transitions; the descriptions are merely a guide for the scene locations. This script tells a story, it is up to you to decide *how* to tell it. Play first, decide later.

COME WHAT MAY

ACT ONE

SCENE ONE

AT RISE

A hollow space. A group of figures slowly walk on in the shadows, and begin to fill it.

ACTOR 1 (sung acapella)

When peace like a river, attendeth my way,

ACTOR 2

When sorrows like sea billows roll,

ACTORS 1 & 2

Whatever my lot, Thou hast taught me to say:

ACTOR 3

It is well, it is well with my soul.

ACTOR 4

It is well...

ACTORS 5 & 6

(It is well...)

ACTOR 4

With my soul.

ACTORS 5 & 6

(With my soul.)

ALL

It is well, it is well with my soul.

ACTOR 2

And Lord haste the day,

ACTOR 3

When the faith shall be sight.

ACTORS 2 & 3

The clouds be rolled back as a scroll.

<i>The trump shall resound,</i>	ACTOR 8
<i>And the Lord shall descend.</i>	ACTOR 1
<i>Even so, it is well with my soul.</i>	ALL
<i>It is well...</i>	ACTOR 4
<i>(It is well...)</i>	ACTORS
<i>With my soul.</i>	ACTOR 4
<i>(With my soul.)</i>	ACTORS
<i>It is well, it is well with my soul.</i> <i>It is well, it is well with my soul.</i> (Silence. No longer singing. In unison.) There once was—	ALL
A story.	ACTOR 2
A song.	ACTOR 3
A telling.	ACTOR 1
A life.	ACTOR 4
Three lives.	ACTOR 5
(Correcting.)	

ACTOR 6

Three stories.

ACTOR 1

Three songs.

ACTOR 2

One telling.

(An actor steps forward.)

ACTOR 3 (DONAVAN)

I just want to be a youth pastor.

(The next steps forward.)

ACTOR 4 (HABAKKUK)

Why God, why?

(The next steps forward.)

ACTOR 1 (TOBIAS)

Don't tell me who I am!

ACTOR 6

Three lives. Three stories. Three songs. One telling.

(The actors abstractly transitions the space into that of a very formal church sanctuary and become the characters below. Modern time.)

ACTOR 2 (TREVOR)

It is this telling that compels us to understand the full scope of God's plan for our lives. Psalm 118:24. "This is the day the Lord has made, let us rejoice and be glad in it." Rejoice! I say it again: rejoice, Church! God has a beautiful and wonderful plan for your life. You shall be blessed!

(The congregation disperses.)

SILVIA

Have you seen the Wilson's new baby, yet? He is the cutest thing, I just want to eat him up! I know, I know. I could just take him home and watch him for the whole day.

MARGARET

I know! He is just so adorable, and the way he smiles is just so cute, I cannot get over it!

MATHEW

I was on this hiking trip last week and, man it was so incredibly dope. We went water-skiing and mountain-bike riding, and I have to tell you, the ladies... They were all up in that joint, if you know what I mean.

TRYSTON

It really was awesome, bro. We had the best time. Totally wish you could have been there.

Oh yeah, the ladies were hoooooot.

KYLE

Dang, I wish I could've been there. Mountain-bikes? You guys probably didn't even get halfway to the top!

TRYSTON

No, you don't understand. It was like a whole different level. That's right! We were so soaked, it was freaking awesome.

BEKAH

And it rained pretty much the entire time.

CAROL

This homemade bread recipe I found, Angela, you have to look into it. Truly, best bread I've ever had, and it was so simple to make. I must tell you, the first time I made it, though, it flopped! I completely forgot to let it rise the second time, the bread was so flat.

ANGELA

I've been searching for something like that. That's amazing.

I've done that before too.

(All the conversations slowly fade to the main dialogue.)

TOBIAS

Dad, I'm going to chill with Zeke tonight.

TREVOR

Youth group is this evening.

TOBIAS

I don't need to be there every single time.

TREVOR

Your mother has prepared a wonderful dessert for everyone.

(Somewhere else in the room.)

DONAVAN

So, I'm thinking about applying to this internship...

MOTHER

(Distracted.)

Is that so?

DONAVAN

I'd really get the chance to flourish there.

MOTHER

Why don't you think about it for a little while?

KAIT

Donavan!

DONAVAN

Oh hey, Kait!

(Somewhere else in the room.)

DIANA

Mom, is there anything we have to do today?

GRACE

Your father asked me to make some dessert for tonight. Would you like to help?

DIANA

Oh, can we make that banana cake?

ANGELA

No, no. We've got to make that ultimate crème pie!

DIANA

That's a good one.

GRACE

We'll see what he says.

TOBIAS

Seriously?

TREVOR

Your attitude, son—

SALLY

Hey Toby, let's go outside!

TOBIAS

Coming! (to TREVOR) I'm going now.

TREVOR

We'll discuss this at home.

TOBIAS

(taking SALLY's hand)

Yeah, whatever.

(They exit.)

KAIT

So I've been reading up on Hebrews to get ahead on tonight's study.

DONAVAN

What did you think?

KAIT

It's wonderful. I love seeing the connection between the Old and New Testament.

DONAVAN

It is pretty neat, right?

KAIT

I'm excited to hear you teach again.

(She exits.)

DONAVAN

Pastor Jordan?

TREVOR

Yes, Donovan?

DONAVAN

I was wondering if you would consider being a reference for me?

TREVOR

What for exactly?

DONAVAN

Well, there's this internship over at Grace Baptist Church that I think I could really get a lot of experience.

TREVOR

I'm familiar with the name.

DONAVAN

They're a fairly new church, but they've grown quite a bit since they started. And the pastor there is incredibly wise. I'd love to be able to study under him.

TREVOR

You've got a good head on your shoulders.

DONAVAN

Thank you, sir.

GRACE

Trevor, the girls are ready to leave. I'm going to head out.

TREVOR

Come give me a kiss.

(She does so.)

GRACE

You coming with?

TREVOR

One minute.

DONAVAN

So, is that a yes?

TREVOR

Why don't we sit down and have a conversation about it soon?

DONAVAN

Yes, of course, I'd love to tell you more about it.

GRACE

Trevor?

TREVOR

Coming, love.

END OF SCENE ONE.

SCENE TWO

AT RISE

The Jordans' home. A small dining area consisting of very plain furniture. That evening. GRACE is cooking in the kitchenette. TREVOR is sitting at his desk, reviewing papers.

Pretty good turn out today.

GRACE

Mm.

TREVOR

I spoke with Marcel after the service.

GRACE

Yes.

TREVOR

She was mentioning that her boys are in their teething phase, and she was struggling with getting sleep and comforting their pain and all that...

GRACE

And?

TREVOR

Just made me miss those times with our kids.

GRACE

Ah.

TREVOR

Don't you?

GRACE

Miss the days of endless nights of little sleep? Not particularly.

TREVOR

It wasn't all that bad, though. They were incredibly cute.

GRACE

Mhm.

TREVOR

(He gets up to grab a drink from the refrigerator. As he does he intimately hugs GRACE.)

GRACE

Whatchya doing there?

TREVOR

Just hugging my beautiful wife.

(He slides out the beer from the fridge.)

GRACE

Do you really need those tonight?

TREVOR

I don't need a scolding this evening.

GRACE

Not scolding. Just worried.

TREVOR

(Back to his desk.)

Well, I don't need you to worry about me.

GRACE (yelling off)

Girls! Dinner is ready.

(To TREVOR:)

Did Tobias mention if he would be back for dinner?

TREVOR

I told him to be home by 5.

GRACE

It's 5:45.

TREVOR

(Takes a swing of his drink.)

That boy.

GRACE

Grant him some grace. You can be a little hard on him sometimes.

TREVOR

I don't want him struggling like we have.

GRACE
We get by.

(DIANA enters.)

DIANA
Mom, is everything alright?

GRACE
Your father is just a little stressed.

TREVOR
I'm fine. Where's Faith?

DIANA
She was just finishing up her makeup.

TREVOR
I don't understand how many times I have to say this to you all. Dinner must be promptly at 5:30.

(yelling off:)
Faith, come into the dining room now.

DIANA
Dad, if Donavan is leading tonight, then what do you have to prepare for?

TREVOR
Sit at the table.

(FAITH enters. Everyone sits at the table as GRACE places the food.
TREVOR grabs another beer.)

GRACE
Sloppy joes tonight. Didn't have much in the fridge.

FAITH
Ugh, I hate sloppy joes. Can't I just grab myself a bowl of cereal or something?

TREVOR
You will eat what your mother has prepared for you.

FAITH
It's going to ruin my dress.

TREVOR

Eat the food, dammit!

GRACE

Trevor, not in front of the girls.

(a beat.)

Will you say grace?

TREVOR

You know what, I'm not hungry. I'm going to bed.

(He leaves the table and exits off.)

GRACE

You haven't eaten anything all day!

TREVOR (off)

I don't care.

GRACE

Girls?

(She offers her hands to DIANA and FAITH, who each take one and they all bow their heads.)

Heavenly Father, thank you for this food you have provided for us. May it bless us and nourish us. Amen.

DIANA

Amen.

FAITH

Amen.

(They begin to eat in silence. Shortly after they do, TOBIAS enters blowing a kiss to SALLY, off, and enters the house.)

GRACE

Toby, it's good to finally have you home.

TOBIAS

Sorry I'm late, mom.

GRACE

How is Sally?

TOBIAS

She's fine.

Just fine?

GRACE

Mom.

TOBIAS

Alright.

GRACE

Sloppy Joes?

TOBIAS

Unfortunately.

FAITH

Isn't that what was for dinner last night as well?

TOBIAS

You would know if you were ever here.

DIANA

Diana.

GRACE

Oh come on. If Dad knew fully just how much Tobias was gone, he'd flip the table.

DIANA

Right, because his anger is *always* righteous.

TOBIAS

You know your father does love you.

GRACE

He sure has a funny way of showing it.

TOBIAS

(TREVOR reenters.)

TREVOR

I forgot my drink...

(Sees TOBIAS.)

Well look...

(Picks up the drink.)

Where were you, boy?

Out with Sally. Again.	DIANA
Diana, please.	GRACE
I told you to be home by five.	TREVOR
So?	TOBIAS
Why are you late?	TREVOR
Does it matter?	TOBIAS
I want you to account for your whereabouts.	TREVOR
Trevor, it really is no big deal.	GRACE
Do not interrupt me.	TREVOR
I was out with Sally, I don't see what the big deal was.	TOBIAS
Where?	TREVOR
Like you care.	TOBIAS
Tobias, don't be rude.	GRACE
Seriously, do you care? Do you care where I was? What I was doing?	TOBIAS
Don't talk back to me, boy.	TREVOR

TOBIAS

If I told you what I was honestly doing, would you even bat an eye?

TREVOR

I'm warning you—

TOBIAS

—Would you take two seconds to acknowledge what I had been doing—

TREVOR

—Mind your words—

TOBIAS

Or would you immediately *assume* that it was wrong?

TREVOR

That's enough!

(TREVOR smashes his bottle with such fierceness, he doesn't notice that he has smashed it upon DIANA's head. GRACE screams as DIANA collapses out of the chair and lands head first into the ground.)

GRACE

Trevor, go upstairs!

(She instinctively goes to DIANA.)

TOBIAS

What in God's name—

(TREVOR grabs him and lifts him up.)

TREVOR

NO MORE! I'm sick of the disrespect in this house!

(TREVOR drops TOBIAS, who falls to his knees sharply, and exits.)

GRACE

(Holding DIANA)

Faith, call 911. It's going to be okay, honey, you're going to be okay. Every time, Tobias. Every time... You know the last thing we need is for you to bait your father.

END OF SCENE TWO.

SCENE THREE

AT RISE

The church basement. A week later. The chairs are arranged in a circle. DONOVAN sits by himself, looking over his notes. TOBIAS and SALLY enter giggling.

TOBIAS

I told you, he just ran like a scared little girl.

SALLY

Poor guy.

TOBIAS

Oh, he'll be alright. Isn't that right, Joshua?

JOSHUA

(Entering.)

Okay, okay. Let's get one thing straight here. I was not *running*.

TOBIAS

No that's true, he was hopping.

SALLY

Dear, Lord. You can't handle a woman well can you?

JOSHUA

It was our first date!

TOBIAS

I don't think that helps your case any, bud. You should take notes from the master.

(He pulls SALLY around and gives her a big kiss.)

That my friend, is how it's done.

SALLY

Stop embarrassing yourself.

JOSHUA

Alright, alright... I give up. Tobias, you can have the mantle of expertise in the dating world.

TOBIAS

Wow, it's such an honor. I must say that I was not expecting this award. I would like to

TOBIAS (con't)

thank my parents back at home. Yes, Kathy and Will, you're such beautiful people. I'd also like to thank my beautiful wife...

(SALLY bows.)

And last but not least, I'd like to thank my best friend.

(JOSHUA steps forward.)

Earl Hammonds. What a stud you are brother! Keep it up.

JOSHUA

Where does it all come from?

TOBIAS

You wouldn't want to know.

JOSHUA

Yeah, you're probably right.

(DIANA and FAITH enter.)

DONAVAN

Alright, folks, if everyone could take their seats, please, we're about to begin.

(Everyone sits in a chair within the circle. There are more chairs than there are people, as if more people are involved in the group.)

TOBIAS

Wow, Donny. Finally get the chance to shine in the big light, eh?

JOSHUA

Why are you all of sudden Canadian?

TOBIAS

Because I use "eh" once, I must be Canadian.

DONAVAN

Yes.

JOSHUA

Aha!

TOBIAS

Pulling out all the jokes, I see?

DONAVAN

That's why they pay me the big bucks. Welcome to youth group everybody. It's nice to

DONAVAN (con't)

see some new faces here. Willis, welcome. And some old faces not seen recently. Tobias, welcome back.

TOBIAS

Please, call me Toby. Or Tobs. Or Tobster. Or Professor Awesome. Whatever suits your fancy.

DONAVAN

Right. Well, I will be leading the study for the next couple of weeks.

(TOBIAS boos.)

Due to the overwhelming support, I may continue after that. This is just a trial run.

TOBIAS

(Aside.)

Get a load of this guy.

SALLY

Would you be quiet?

DONAVAN

First, I'd like to start off with a little exercise. Everyone stand up and grab a partner.

(TOBIAS immediately grabs SALLY's hand and pulls her up. DIANA and FAITH stand. JOSHUA stands and extends his hand in offering to FAITH.)

JOSHUA

M'lady?

(She shrugs, and places her hand in his. DIANA is paired with DONAVAN, everyone else pairs off.)

DONAVAN

Now I need one partner to stand behind the chair, and one partner to stand in front of it.

(They all do so.)

Great. The person sitting in front of the chair, please stand up and sit down at your leisure, when I say begin.

(He then walks around and whispers something into the ear of each person who is standing behind a chair, and then comes back to his spot.)

Begin.

(TOBIAS, DIANA, and JOSHUA all begin sitting and standing at their own pace until SALLY pulls the chair out from under TOBIAS right before he is about to sit down.)

TOBIAS

Ow! What was that for?

SALLY

Sorry.

(Before he notices, the same thing happens to JOSHUA.)

JOSHUA

Hey... well that's just mean.

DONAVAN

You don't trust them now, don't you?

TOBIAS

To leave the chair there? No.

DONAVAN

Okay. Now everyone behind the chair promise that you will not move the chair from them.

SALLY

I promise.

FAITH

I promise.

DONAVAN

I promise. Great. Now let's go again.

TOBIAS

For what? Just so that I can fall on my ass again? No thank you.

SALLY

I promised I won't.

TOBIAS

Fine.

(They begin standing and sitting at their own pace. Then ANGELA pulls the chair out from under JOSHUA and he tumbles. A second after, the same happens to TOBIAS.)

TOBIAS

Damn it!

DONAVAN

Hurts doesn't it.

TOBIAS

Says the one who hasn't fallen down!

DONAVAN

I mean it hurts to have Sally promise you that she wouldn't do it again, and she did it anyway.

TOBIAS

Yeah, sure.

SALLY

I really am sorry.

TOBIAS

Oh, I don't blame you.

DONAVAN

This was just an exercise. My question to you is: will you keep sitting in that chair?

TOBIAS

Of course not.

DONAVAN

And why is that?

JOSHUA

Because you'd never know if the chair would be there or not, regardless of what they may have said.

DONAVAN

Feels like a backstabbing, doesn't it?

JOSHUA

That's it.

DONAVAN

So, then my question to you is, if this were the case consistently, would you trust this person?

TOBIAS

Not with my chair.

DONAVAN

What about for something else? Maybe like your keys? Or babysitting your cat?

JOSHUA

Don, you need to get a life if you have people babysitting a cat.

DONAVAN

Sorry, trying my best here.

FAITH

No, I wouldn't trust them. I probably wouldn't like them at all.

DONAVAN

That's exactly right. Everyone take a seat.

(Everyone does so, TOBIAS cautiously eyeing SALLY.)

SALLY

I'm not going to do it again, I promise.

TOBIAS

That's what you said the first time.

DONAVAN

I want you guys to remember that feeling. Now open up your books to Habakkuk 1.

JOSHUA

That's a book? Like in our Bible?

DONAVAN

Crazy, huh? There a whole book in here that you never even knew about.

FAITH

Probably, because he never reads it.

JOSHUA

Oh come on. I know them. Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers... Numbers... Numbers...

TOBIAS

You want numbers? Like: one, two, three?

JOSHUA

I'm laughing hysterically.

FAITH

I think the word you're looking for is Deuteronomy.

JOSHUA

That's it. But I know the important ones too: Mathew, Mark, Luke, & John.

DIANA

You could argue that because they're in the Bible, they're all important.

JOSHUA

No one's on my side? Really? Willis, would you be willing to defend me?

DONAVAN

Why don't you read Habakkuk 1 for us, Josh?

JOSHUA

I don't think I'd even say it right. HAbAKKUK? HAbAKUKK? HaBAkkuk?

DONAVAN

Okay, nevermind. I'll read it. "The oracle that Habakkuk the prophet saw."

(The actor playing HABAKKUK steps off to his own corner and begins earnestly praying.)

END OF SCENE THREE.

SCENE FOUR

AT RISE

Two scenes exist: the one of the students reading the book within the bible study and that of the ISRAELITES; several thousand years ago. A desolated wasteland: the ISRAELITES' home. It is reminiscent of the desert of which they wandered for 40 years. The people wander the earth as though to gain something. Wary of every move that another human being makes, occasional arguments and fights ensue. HABAKKUK begins to become hysterical in his prayers, shaking others and grasping for anything to steady his trembling.

HABAKKUK

O Lord, how long shall I cry for help, and you will not hear?

(A couple begins to argue over a scrap of food.)

Or cry to you 'Violence!'

(One Israelite pushes another down to the ground, grabs the food, and makes a run for it.)

and you will not save?

JOSHUA

Can't you give it to us in, like, English?

DONAVAN

This is English.

ESTHER

Habakkuk, why must you incessantly pray to a God who does not care for us any longer? He provides no manna for us to eat, no quail for us to feast upon. We are no longer his favored people.

JOSHUA

No seriously, I'm not sure I am going to be able to understand what these people are saying...

DIANA

It's not KJV, you should be fine.

JOSIAH

Why must you squander your time on him?

ESTHER

He is a prophet.

ISAAC

(dragging his concubine behind him)

If he is so, he is a false prophet for the Lord cares not for us!

JOSHUA

Seriously? Please, translate.

DONAVAN

Okay, fine.

HABAKKUK

Why do you make me look at injustice? Why do you tolerate wrongdoing?

DONAVAN

Better?

JOSHUA

We'll see, keep going.

ISAAC

(throws the woman to his feet)

You have embarrassed me long enough! Your barrenness has provided nothing of value, and your beauty mocks my wives.

ATARAH

Sir, I have merely followed your wishes.

ISAAC

Nonsense.

ATARAH

When I was a child, you stole me from my father's home. You bound me, transported me across the ocean to a country I had never visited.

ISAAC

Quiet! I can't listen to this anymore.

(He exits. JOSIAH gazes upon her.)

JOSIAH

Come, my dear. You are angelic in beauty, and should be treated so.

(He pulls her off.)

ESTHER

Habakkuk, tell me you see this wrong.

HABAKKUK

Destruction and violence are before me; there is strife, and conflict abounds.

MARY (off)

Adulterous! Adulterous!

HABAKKUK

Therefore the law is paralyzed...

MARY

(Enters carrying a stone)

Adulterous! We must not let such a disgusting sin continue. For once we do, we allow the evil one to dwell in our presence, and Yahweh leaves us behind.

(Picks up a stone, hands to ESTHER.)

Who would let this occur? Even Moses permitted this kind of divorce.

(Picks up a stone to hand to HABAKKUK. He doesn't take it.)

Will you be the reason the great country of Israel falls to another conqueror? Pick up a stone.

(JOSIAH drags ATARAH onstage; suddenly it appears as though we are in a courtroom. JOSIAH adjusts his clothing.)

JOSIAH

You have defiled your household. You have committed the worst of sins. According to the laws of Moses, you are to be stoned.

(JOSIAH, ESTHER, and MARY all stone ATARAH; who has so little energy that barely any sounds are audible from her. HABAKKUK weeps. JOSIAH takes ESTHER's hand and leads her off. MARY follows suit. HABAKKUK whispers over ATARAH who lies motionless. ISAAC enters, and noticing ATARAH runs towards her.)

ISAAC

(Lifting ATARAH in his arms)

Who did this? Who did THIS?

HABAKKUK

Justice never prevails.

ISAAC

Worthless! You call yourself a prophet but have left my mistress to be mauled. How can you be trusted with the sanctity of our nation?

(ISAAC places ATARAH as though to bury her, after which he storms off. HABAKKUK returns to her immediately, once again whispering over her body.)

HABAKKUK

The wicked hem in the righteous, so that justice is perverted.

ISAAC

(Enters, pulling JOSIAH by the ear)

What have you done- tell me immediately!

JOSIAH

I have done nothing wrong. It is your woman who has sinned.

ISAAC

You have used her. Was she yours to touch?

JOSIAH

What does it matter?

ISAAC

She was not yours! You had no legal right to her.

(He begins to beat JOSIAH. ESTHER screams offstage, then comes running on.)

ESTHER

My husband! My dear, Josiah. Leave him be!

(She attempts to stop ISAAC from his barrage, but in his rage ISAAC pushes her aside, and she falls limp. He sees the bodies that surround him, and runs off in the other direction.)

HABAKKUK

How long, Lord, must I call for help, but you do not listen?

ATARAH

How long, Lord, must I call for help, but you do not listen?

ESTHER

How long, Lord, must I call for help, but you do not listen?

ALL

How long, Lord, must I call for help?

HABAKKUK

“Look at the nations and watch—

DONAVAN

He’s speaking for God, now.

JOSHUA

Got it, thanks.

HABAKKUK

“Look at the nations and watch— and be utterly amazed. For I am going to do something in your days that you would not believe, even if you were told.

(ATARAH stirs.)

“I am raising up the Babylonians, that ruthless and impetuous people, who sweep across the whole earth to seize dwellings not their own.

(ISHTAR enters the stage, followed by LAKHMU. They solemnly survey the land around them.)

ISHTAR

Israelites, welcome to the greatest kingdom to ever been created. If you submit and serve the gods correctly, your lives will be blessed. All bow before Lakhmu.

(Silence. All but HABAKKUK already are on the floor. HABAKKUK refuses.)

HABAKKUK

“They are a feared and dreaded people; they are a law to themselves and promote their own honor. Their horses are swifter than leopards, fiercer than wolves at dusk. Their cavalry gallops headlong; their horsemen come from afar. They fly like an eagle swooping to devour;

(Like playthings, ISHTAR commands JOSIAH, ATARAH, and ESTHER to fight one another. They do so weakly.)

“They all come intent on violence. Their hordes advance like a desert wind and gather prisoners like sand. They mock kings and scoff at rulers. They laugh at all fortified cities. Then they sweep past like the wind and go on— guilty people, whose own strength is their god.”

ISHTAR

(to HABAKKUK)

All who refuse will be executed.

(ISHTAR and LAKHMU exit with JOSIAH and ESTHER in chains.)

HABAKKUK

Lord, are you not from everlasting? My God, my Holy One, you will never die.

ATARAH

(Gaining strength.)

They're coming for us, are they not? The Babylonians? They will rip this nation apart.

(No response.)

Are you going to let them tear us to pieces?

HABAKKUK

You, Lord, have appointed them to execute judgment; you, my Rock, have ordained them to punish.

ATARAH

Your eyes are too pure to look on evil; you cannot tolerate wrongdoing.

HABAKKUK

Why then do you tolerate the treacherous? Why are you silent while the wicked swallow up those more righteous than themselves? You have made people like the fish in the sea—

ATARAH

—like the sea creatures that have no ruler.

HABAKKUK

The wicked foe pulls all of them up with hooks,

ATARAH

He catches them in his net,

HABAKKUK, ATARAH

He gathers them up in his dragnet; and so he rejoices and is glad.

(ISAAC enters with a sacrifice. He lays it on the ground at his feet, kneels, and lifts his hands above his head.)

HABAKKUK

Therefore he sacrifices to his net and burns incense to his dragnet, for by his net he lives in luxury and enjoys the choicest food.

ATARAH

Is he to keep on emptying his net, destroying nations without mercy?

(ISAAC notices her.)

ISAAC

Atarah, come home where you belong.

(no response)

You know you cannot find joy in anything else.

(no response)

Come where you will be provided for.

(She hesitantly steps to him.)

Know what fortunes have come to you in this harsh world. Know that there is no better place for you.

(She takes his hand, and exits with him.)

JOSHUA

Wait, I don't get that last part.

DONAVAN

Which part exactly?

HABAKKUK

Is he to keep on emptying his net, destroying nations without mercy?

(The ISRAELITES fade into the background as they become those of the bible study.)

JOSHUA

That part.

DONAVAN

That's talking about the persecution from the Babylonians, the way they would conquer and destroy. It was a trying time for Israel, and Habakkuk witnessed it with his own eyes.

(As if out of nowhere, the youth group circle is recreated.)

God kept His promise to the Israelites: since they had gone astray, He allowed them to reap their crop as He told Moses He would do.

SALLY

Wouldn't that be cruel, though?

DONAVAN

If He had abandoned them, perhaps. But if you read through the Old Testament, every single time the Israelites cried out to the Lord after previously forgetting everything He had done for them, the Lord responded and saved his people. Every single time. And that's where we are going to leave it tonight, folks. Next week, continue reading chapters two and three.

(They break.)

TOBIAS

I just can't understand... if God is love, then he could never want anything even potentially bad to happen.

JOSHUA

True, but I mean think about it this way: God says he's like our father, right?

TOBIAS

Yeah.

JOSHUA

You know when Jesus does his big speech on the mountain and all, and he's says something like, "if you who are evil give good gifts to your sons, then how much more will your heavenly father give you?"

TOBIAS

Sure.

JOSHUA

Well it's like that.

TOBIAS

I don't get it.

JOSHUA

Our father in heaven is just like our father on earth, but times a thousand.

TOBIAS

If that's the case, then I want nothing to do with him.

JOSHUA

Right, with your dad being the perfect preacher and all. Dude, you've got the best dad.

TOBIAS

Whatever.

JOSHUA

What do you mean?

TOBIAS

Sure my dad's great. We can't go out past ten o'clock, we can't even look at a girl without being scolded, we're always dragged to every event, every sickness, every congratulatory celebration.

JOSHUA

Nobody's life is perfect.

TOBIAS

No, you're right. It's not like we're being kicked around at home, right?

JOSHUA

Jeez, man. Back off.

TOBIAS

Sorry, I'm just sick of all the rules.

DONAVAN

(noticing the commotion)

Everything okay over here?

TOBIAS

Yeah, everything's dandy. Sally, let's go.

SALLY

I'm going with Lucille tonight, Toby.

TOBIAS

I said let's go.

(He grabs her somewhat fiercely by the arm, and they both exit.)

END OF SCENE FOUR.

SCENE FIVE

AT RISE

A few nights later. DONAVAN's family dinner table; it has some style to it and isn't nearly as simple as that of TOBIAS' home. But it's main purpose is more of a function than a decoration. A small house. FATHER enters.

You're back.

DONAVAN

For dinner.

DAD

Is that all?

DONAVAN

(No response.)

It's good to see you.

DAD

It's good to be home.

DONAVAN

Do you know how long you'll be here this time?

DAD

Not long.

DONAVAN

That bad huh?

DAD

I'll let your mother explain.

DONAVAN

Okay... Looks like I'm going to get honor roll again this year.

DAD

That's good.

DONAVAN

Would you like me to bring your things upstairs?

Oh, no that's fine.

DAD

How was Nick?

DONAVAN

I wasn't staying with Nick.

DAD

Ah. Hotel?

DONAVAN

Mhm.

DAD

(MOTHER enters.)

Ah, you're back.

MOTHER

As requested.

DAD

Why don't we eat, then.

MOTHER

Is Craig joining us?

DONAVAN

No, sweetheart.

MOTHER

Just the three of us?

DAD

Is that alright?

MOTHER

Just wish we could do this all together.

DAD

Right.

MOTHER

DAD

Well... Let's eat.

(DONAVAN grabs the food from the fridge, places it on the table, and they all begin to eat.)

MOTHER

Wait, we forgot to say grace. "Dear Lord, thank you for this glorious day you have bestowed on us. I pray that we will continue to praise you with every small thing we are entrusted with. Bless our food. Amen."

DONAVAN

Amen.

DAD

So, have you decided on a school yet?

DONAVAN

Still thinking, but I'm pretty sure I'm going to attend Redemption College.

DAD

You're sure? MU has offered more money in scholarships.

MOTHER

Don't pressure him.

FATHER

I want you to be aware of all the options.

DONAVAN

Thank you, but I am looking at it. RC just has more of the classes that I'd like to take; the program seems more suited to what I'm looking for.

DAD

That's good, at least.

DONAVAN

I think I'll have enough to pay off my first semester right off the bat too.

MOTHER

Donavan, there's something your father and I would like to discuss with you.

DONAVAN

Oh?

MOTHER

Your father and I are getting a divorce.

DONAVAN

Does... Does Craig know?

DAD

I'm going to tell him after dinner.

MOTHER

That won't be necessary.

DAD

You already told him?

MOTHER

This afternoon.

DAD

You'd think I'd have the right to tell my own son.

MOTHER

One of them is right here.

DONAVAN

I know it's been kinda rough here the past few years, but *divorce*?

MOTHER

We can't seem to see eye to eye on things. Except for this.

DAD

We made an agreement.

MOTHER

Yes, and I'm keeping up my end of the bargain. I pray you'll do the same.

(She exits.)

DONAVAN

I really thought things would change.

DAD

Me too.

DONAVAN

You weren't even gone that long this time. What, three weeks?

DAD

Hotels aren't cheap.

DONAVAN

What happened to Nick? I thought you'd stay with him.

DAD

Nick and I had a... disagreement. He's in favor of your mother's choice. Decided he wasn't going to take me in again.

DONAVAN

Where will you go?

DAD

I don't know. But I better. Let me know which school you pick.

(DAD exits, MOTHER reenters.)

DONAVAN

What the hell happened?

MOTHER

Language.

DONAVAN

I'm sorry, I just... I don't understand.

MOTHER

There are things that occurred, hun, that you don't know about.

DONAVAN

Such as?

MOTHER

I don't know what you expect me to say.

DONAVAN

Maybe explain this whole thing to me?

MOTHER

It's really quite complicated, honey.

DONAVAN

Fine. I'm going to go work on my homework.

END OF SCENE FIVE.

SCENE SIX

AT RISE

A few nights later. JORDANS' dinner table. It is heavily decorated for a romantic scene. Fresh food, candles, flowers, etc. TREVOR has is cleaning as GRACE walks through the door, surprised by the scene before her.

TREVOR

How's my baby doing today?

GRACE

What's all this?

TREVOR

Thought we could use a night to ourselves.

GRACE

The kids?

TREVOR

They're out.

(Pulls out a chair for her to sit.)

Here.

GRACE

Thank you.

TREVOR

I wanted to apologize for the other day.

GRACE

You've started drinking more frequently.

TREVOR

The stress of running this congregation must be getting to me.

GRACE

You know if you need to talk about anything, I'm here.

TREVOR

I was thinking we could try to get away for a little while. Maybe for a weekend, just the two of us. Where would you like to go?

GRACE

What did you have in mind?

TREVOR

I don't know. A beach, perhaps. Maybe something further away.

GRACE

We can't exactly afford much.

TREVOR

(kisses her)

I know, but I'd like to make it special. A moonlit walk by the ocean side...

GRACE

I'm not so sure.

TREVOR

(kisses her again)

Some roses would be nice...

GRACE

What about Faith? She doesn't have a car and needs someone to find a way to work.

TREVOR

She has friends.

GRACE

None that would give her a ride. She's tried several times, you know.

TREVOR

No, I didn't.

GRACE

Well either their schedules don't work with hers or they don't have a car either.

TREVOR

Still, I'd like to do something nice for the two of us. Kind of like this.

GRACE

I just don't think it wise.

TREVOR

You don't like it?

GRACE

I do, but you know how much we're struggling right now, Trevor.

TREVOR

I'd rather not talk about finances tonight.

GRACE

Alright. What about the Sheila Mason giving birth next week? I'd promise I'd be there, which means I'd need you to bring Faith to school.

TREVOR

I don't want to talk logistics either.

GRACE

Well then, what?

TREVOR

Just a quiet peaceful evening.

GRACE

I appreciate what you've done, but I have a headache, and would rather go to bed.

TREVOR

Come on... It's been so long.

(He attempts to kiss her once more, more passionately this time. She allows the sweetness for a moment, but then pulls back as a ferociousness within him grows.)

GRACE

Really, I'm not in the mood tonight.

TREVOR

I don't believe I asked.

GRACE

Excuse me?

TREVOR

What's yours is mine, Grace.

GRACE

What are you talking about?

TREVOR

We made an agreement to each other—

GRACE

To be by each other's side, Trevor. And yet, look at us. Our family is so broken, and you don't even see it.

TREVOR

I work hard to take care of this family, to provide for you.

(He tries once more, but she prevents it.)

GRACE

I'm not going to do this now. I'm going to bed now.

(He begins to grab her more fiercely, she attempts to get him off but she cannot remove his grip.)

TREVOR

You are my wife: *body* and soul are mine.

(TREVOR begins to touch her in aggressive and uncomfortable ways.

GRACE tries to cry out, but he prevents her from doing so. After a couple of moments, she is on the floor, with him on top her. He stands.)

All I ask is for something in return.

(He exits. She sobs silently on the floor. TOBIAS enters, sees her, and immediately comes to her side.)

TOBIAS

Mom, oh my god, Mom, are you alright?

GRACE

I'm... I'll...

TOBIAS

Did he do this to you?

GRACE

Tobias, don't.

TOBIAS

Did *he* do *this* to you?

GRACE

He will break you.

TOBIAS

I can't stand one more second in the same house as him. Not like this.

GRACE

Please, don't leave me.

TOBIAS

I could never leave you, Mom.

(He picks her up in his arms.)

Don't you worry I've got you.

(He carries her off.)

END OF SCENE SIX.

END OF ACT ONE.

New Balance: Riprice in the Lord
Recovery
Recovery

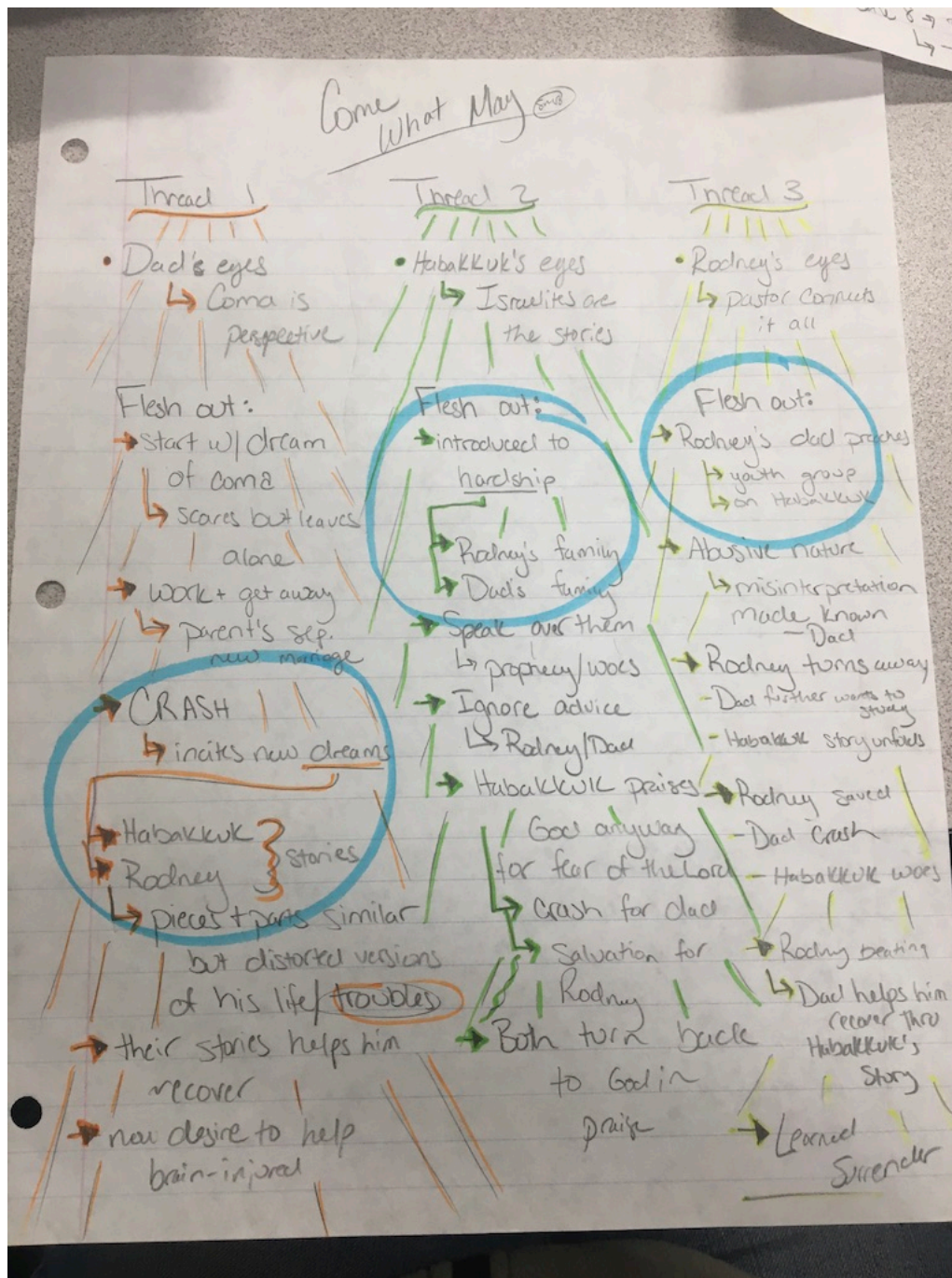
Tag: Learned Surrender

↳ Great is Thy Faithfulness
OR? blend of all three?

What is the overall story?

- learned surrender

↳ Regardless of any circumstance
I will praise the Lord



Thesis

Habakkuk	/ Rodney Testimony	/ Dad's Testimony
Ch 1	Family life	Family life
Ch 2	Straying / Accident	Accident
Ch 3	Redemption	Healing

Act One → At home

Act Two → Violence

Act Three → Glory to God

Act One

<u>Habakkuk</u>	<u>Rodney</u>	<u>Daddy</u>
① - Prayer →	- Priest →	- Christian Mom
② - Warning	- Abuse	- Divorce
③ - Anger	- leaving	- School

Act Two

<u>Habakkuk</u>	<u>Rodney</u>	<u>Daddy</u>
Prophecy over Sins	- meet gay guy - encounter Lord - encounter thugs	- accident

Come What May
~~And There No Other~~

Hook / Teaser
 Normal World / Setup
 Catalyst
 Big event (Act 1 climax)
 Various Strategies / Quest
 Pinch / Midpoint Crisis
 Escape Clause
 Strategies / Quest 2
 Crisis / Act 2 climax
 - Wafer (feels weight of crisis)
 Act III Climax
 New Balance
 Tag

3 Act Structure

Habakkuk

Hook → verses 1+2: Crying out to God
 World Setup → verses 3-4: Israelites sin, violence, discontent
 Catalyst → verse 5: God has a plan
 Big event → verses 6-11: Chaldeans/Babylonians are coming
 Strategies → verses 12-1: anger - but wait upon an answer
 Pinch → verses 2-5: Write the vision → tell the prophecy
 Escape Clause → verses 6-20: Woes to Babylonians

Strategies → verse 1: pray
 Crisis → verses 2-3a: God showed up
 Wafer → verses 3b-8: Support of who God is → mighty, powerful, in control
 Act III climax → verses 9-16: all God has done
 New Balance → verses 17-18: rejoice in the Lord
 Tag → verse 19

Daddy!

Hook → I have a purpose/calling

World Setup → broken family, grandparents as parents
church life

↙ Catalyst → parent's divorce

Big event → desire to be a youth pastor

Strategies → work hard, friending people, etc.

Pinch → dream of the coma

Escape Clause → high school graduation → off to college

Strategies → working 80 hours

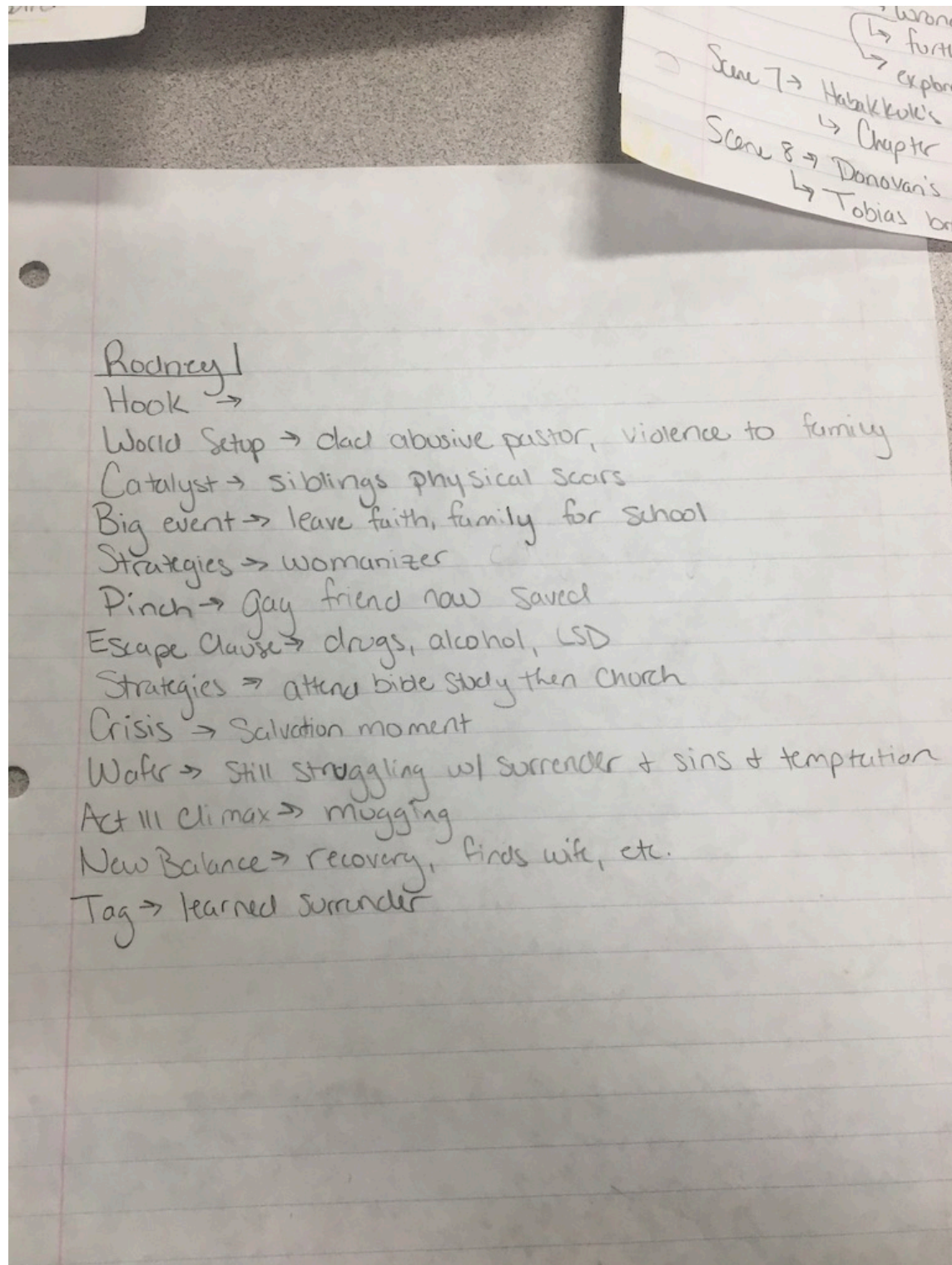
Crisis → Car accident

Wafer → month coma, paralyzation, speech aphasia

Act III climax → original dreams lost

New Balance → help the brain injured → all because of God
provide encouragement

? Tag → blog? what is his happy ending?



CWM

Hook, Normal World Setup, Catalyst, Big event (Act I climax), Strategies, Pinch/Midpoint Crisis, Escape Clause, Strategies, Crisis (Act II climax), Wafer, Act III Climax, New Balance, Tag

→ Hook: It is Well Hymn acapella song
↳ introduces cast of characters

→ Normal World Setup:

Habakkuk's Struggle w/ Israelites
Rodney's Struggle w/ faith + family
Daddy's struggle w/ family + purpose

→ Catalyst: Habakkuk is told God has a plan
Rodney sees siblings scars
Daddy's desire to b/c youth pastor } happened to them

→ Big Event: Prophecy of Babylonians → passive
Rodney leaves family → Active
Dad's parents divorce (officially) → passive

→ Strategies: Habakkuk complains
Rodney womanizes
Dad works too much } negative responses

Great is thy Faithfulness?

- Pinch: God tells Habakkuk more
Rodney's gay friend is now saved
Dad's dream of his career } there's more to the story
- Escape Clause: Babylonian wars
↳ could be over but it's not
Rodney does drugs, alcohol, etc
Daddy moves away for school
- Strategies: Habakkuk wait upon the Lord
Rodney attends church + bible study
Dad works even more } positive response
→ negative response
- Crisis: God showed up
Saved
Car accident
- Come Thru Fount
- Wafer: Who God is
Struggle w/ surrender
Physical ailments
- Act III Climax: God's majesty shows up
Mugging / Beating
Dreams of future lost

Come What May OutlineACT ONE

Scene 1 → It is Well Hymn

Scene 2 → Church service

↳ introduce Father/pastor

Tobias } relationship
Donovan }

Scene 3 → Family Life (Dinner table)

↳ further understand Tobias family dynamics

Scene 4 → Youth Group

↳ Establish Donovan's youth leader desires

↳ further extend Don + Tobias connection

↳ introduce gay friend

↳ introduce Habakkuk storyline

Scene 5 → Donovan family

↳ disparity w/ parents

↳ define purpose "?"

↳ relationship to Grandparents

↳ work a lot

Scene 6 → Church service

↳ wrong Habakkuk msg

↳ further tension

↳ explore further

Scene 7 → Habakkuk's true story

↳ Chapter One

Scene 8 → Donovan's parents divorce

↳ Tobias breaks from family

ACT TWO

- Scene One → Great is Thy Faithfulness
Scene Two → Tobias' college life
↳ womanizer, alcohol, acting career
Scene Three → Donovan working too much
↳ free time studies Habakkuk
Scene Four → Chapter 2
Scene Five → Donovan's dream
Scene Six → Tobias working
↳ Gay Friend now saved
Scene Seven → Donovan's crash
Scene Eight → Tobias attends bible study / church
↳ Tobias' salvation

ACT THREE

- Scene One → Come Thou Fount
Scene Two → Recovery (Don)
Scene Three → Habakkuk Chapter 3
Scene Four → Tobias struggle w/ surrender
Scene Five → Donovan helps brain-injured
Scene Six → Tobias' mugging
Scene Seven → Tobias recovery
↳ Donovan helps him
↳ study Habakkuk together
Scene Eight → Hymnal Blend

Come What May Outline 2.0ACT ONE

- ✓ Scene 1 → It Is Well / Introduce Acting Troupe
 - Church service: intro pastor/dad, tobias, donovan
- ✓ Scene 2 → Tobias family dinner / abuse
- ✓ Scene 3 → Youth Group / Habakkuk intro
 - intro donovan leadership + family problems
- ✓ Scene 4 → Habakkuk Ch 1
- ✓ Scene 5 → Donovan: family structure + divorce
- Scene 6 → Tobias: further abuse + exit

ACT TWO

- Scene 1 → Great is Thy Faithfulness / Donovan: working life
- Scene 2 → Habakkuk Ch 2
- Scene 3 → Tobias: College / working life
 - Donovan dream sequence
- Scene 4 → Tobias: gay friend salvation / personal salvation
 - Donovan: crash

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