

THE PIGEONHOLE:
STEREOTYPES AND THEIR ADVERSE EFFECTS ON THE DISCOVERY OF
SELF AND THE FIELD OF THE HUMANITIES

A Project
Presented
to the Faculty of
California State University Dominguez Hills

In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Masters of Arts
in
Humanities

by
Kimberlee R. Mendoza

Spring 2008

UMI Number: 1456050

INFORMATION TO USERS

The quality of this reproduction is dependent upon the quality of the copy submitted. Broken or indistinct print, colored or poor quality illustrations and photographs, print bleed-through, substandard margins, and improper alignment can adversely affect reproduction.

In the unlikely event that the author did not send a complete manuscript and there are missing pages, these will be noted. Also, if unauthorized copyright material had to be removed, a note will indicate the deletion.

UMI[®]

UMI Microform 1456050

Copyright 2008 by ProQuest LLC.

All rights reserved. This microform edition is protected against unauthorized copying under Title 17, United States Code.

ProQuest LLC
789 E. Eisenhower Parkway
PO Box 1346
Ann Arbor, MI 48106-1346

Copyright by

KIMBERLEE R. MENDOZA

2008

All Rights Reserved

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

To my father, Dr. Kenneth W. Coulson, thank you for all the support you provided me throughout this project. I truly appreciate your encouragement in my education and for always believing in me.

To Professor Harold Marienthal, I am truly grateful for your mentorship in this program. At times your candid observations about my work were hard to hear, but I am a better student and writer because of you. Thank you so much for everything.

To Professor Dennis Leggett, thank you for getting me back on track when I was ready to give up. Your support made all the difference.

To the Faith Drama Team for donating their time to workshop and help strengthen my play. I truly appreciate all your hard work and dedication.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	PAGE
COPYRIGHT PAGEii
APPROVAL PAGE	iii
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS.iv
TABLE OF CONTENTSv
ABSTRACT.vi
CHAPTER	
1. INTRODUCTION.	1
2. REVIEW OF LITERATURE.4
Humanities and the Self.	4
Humanities and Playwriting11
Humanities and Stereotyping.15
3. METHODOLOGY.20
4. SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS.33
WORKS CITED.	35
APPENDIX: <i>THE PIGEONHOLE</i>	39

ABSTRACT

The Pigeonhole: Stereotypes and their Adverse Effects on the Discovery of Self and the Field of the Humanities explains what is meant by the term "humanities," and dissects the stereotypes human beings often impose on one another based on gender, race, financial stability and social status. This paper recognizes humanities as the understanding and science of the self. Incorporating countless sources and studies on stereotypes, this project illustrates the adverse consequences of preconceived notions, showing how they contribute to the breakdown of people's sense of self and their ability to express themselves artistically. This is a critical subject because the fundamental purpose of the humanities is to study what it means to be human. This project includes an original one-act play that strives to demonstrate the grave implications of stereotypes for the health and development of the self, as well as, the liberation inherent in breaking free from predetermined classifications.

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Playwriting is an art form like no other medium. It brings to life the inner workings of an artist's mind, addressing his or her personal values or an issue of great concern or importance. In my independent study of playwriting at California State University-Dominguez Hills, one key theme of American theater has emerged. These scripts are most often used as springboards for authors to promote a subject dear to their hearts and central to their identities.

There are several famous illustrations of this point. In his play *The Crucible*, Arthur Miller demonstrates the destructive nature of a paranoid U.S. government. In *A Long Day's Journey into Night*, Eugene O'Neill addressed the degrading impact of his dysfunctional family on his sense of self. In *Six Degrees of Separation*, John Guare expresses a dire need to embrace life outside the bounds of social rank and status. In *'Night Mother*, Marsha Norman contemplates the core of self-identity and what it means to truly be alive. *The Glass Menagerie*, by Tennessee Williams, is steeped in symbolism about identity and its

significance. After much research, it is clear that much of American playwriting is devoted to the study of self and its importance to society as a whole.

When determining the subject of my own play, I applied this all-important guideline. Accordingly, it occurred to me that stereotyping impedes an individual's sense of self and humanity in general. Stereotypes are distorted, biased views that assume a person's identity based on gender, race, financial status, religion, or appearance. In my play, *The Pigeonhole*, I sought to explore how stereotyping gradually breaks down the reality of a person's true self. I intend to show how these harmful assumptions force their target to do one of two things: a) become the person society says he or she should be, or b) rebel and accept the consequences. Those that choose to fulfill society's prophecy stunt their human development and individuality. They are thus stripped of the opportunity to discover who they truly are.

The study of self through playwriting is not confined to modern America. For centuries, authors have known that self-discovery and personal growth are extremely important. In the words of perhaps one of the greatest playwrights of

any era, William Shakespeare, "To thine own self be true" (Wells and Taylor 659).

Despite their self-awareness, playwrights have often fallen victim to stereotyping too. Observing this, it is my goal to show how artists in this medium have dealt with the stereotypes that threaten the quality and acceptance of their work. In addition, this paper explores the meaning of self and its relationship to the humanities. It also addresses typical stereotypes and their impact on both the self and humanities, with special emphasis on playwriting. And my own script, *The Pigeonhole*, will further demonstrate how stereotypes stunt the development of any thoughtful, creative human being.

CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Humanities and the Self

The study of humanities is essentially an analysis of self discovery and a glimpse into the mechanisms of another's soul. Authors Richard Jarno and Thelma Altshuler write, "The fundamental purpose of humanities is to help [one] find the definition of being human" (3).

Learning about the arts, a student often encounters the burden of mankind, expressions of angst and joy, and the power of self-discovery. Jarno also stated, "The humanities. . .teach us first and foremost that unless we open ourselves to what they offer, we can never know all about what being human means" (Jarno and Altshuler 4). Each artistic piece is as unique as a fingerprint. The basis of art is a sequence of "schemas." A schema is what psychologist Rod Plotnik calls a "mental category," which affects "how we interpret things" (584).

The Crucible was written by Arthur Miller only eight years after the horror of the Holocaust was fully realized. Bigsby suggests that Miller's religious background may have altered his perception of the world, adding a definite

posture to his work. "For a Jew, such as Arthur Miller, the lessons of the camps could be nothing less than profoundly disturbing" (Modern American Drama 72). In his script, Miller examines the dark implications of taking another's life and the power that man has to do so. In fact, many of his plays, including *After the Fall*, *All My Sons* and *The Death of a Salesman*, incorporate cultural distortion and its consequences for social development. Bigsby writes, "From the beginning [Miller] acknowledged society's claim on the self" (Modern American Drama 76). Being familiar with an artist's background is not necessary to appreciate his or her work, but it can shed light on the story's vantage point.

Many of the humanities rest on this pattern of covert self-disclosure. An example of this is found in examining the work of Vincent van Gogh. One cannot help but see how the various versions of his wheat fields reflect the life of the man who painted them. The *Wheat Fields* are tales that reveal his heart—from the lighting he used, to the path's direction and personas that he portrayed. He painted *Wheat Fields with Reaper at Sunrise* and *Wheat Field with Crows* over a ten-month period. The differences portrayed in the paintings speak volumes about his world view during

that time. The color of the sky, the juxtaposition of man and nature, even the horizon all indicate Van Gogh's mindset at different points throughout his life. This work can be interpreted as a type of artistic journal, rather than just a series of paintings. Authors Rainer Metzger and Ingo Walther wrote, "[His paintings] were a means of illustrating and backing up his world view" (15). Examining the *Wheat Fields with Reaper at Sunrise*, an observer is drawn to the lonely reaper, toiling in the sun. The viewer is pulled into the picture by the painting's open perspective of a distant horizon of rolling hills. There are several paths, but only one—which is behind the reaper—leads out of the field. Though this path has a destination, it is stopped by a gray wall running along the horizon. The wall appears to separate the reaper from the colorful mountains and houses beyond. *Sunrise* is thought to have been painted during the time Van Gogh was in an asylum. The painting gives a sense of loneliness and the inability to achieve tranquility.

The *Wheat Field with Crows* draws the viewer's eyes to a dark and stormy skyline. Van Gogh wrote that the painting could "communicate to you what I am unable to put into words" (Metzger and Walther 243). The horizon is

undetectable, the painted shapes scattered and the distant focus of the horizon is unclear, making it undetectable and impossible to reach. The yellow wheat is slashed by brown streaks, which show the crop is probably dying. The sky is violent, as if a storm is imminent. All aspects of the painting seem to point to a fight amid the natural elements. Red paths lead no where and eventually run off the picture. Van Gogh suffered from hallucinations and depression. He shot himself in the stomach a short time after painting the *Wheat Field with Crows*. The internal torment he surely experienced is clearly illustrated in this painting.

Numerous other paintings, especially in the last century, are an exposé to an artist's soul. Modern art is more an attitude than a style. It is hard to define because it is more about the artist than about the piece itself. A person's sense of self and their place in life is often revealed in their artistic medium. Pablo Picasso said, "I paint forms as I think them, not as I see them..." (Hughes, The Shock of the New 32). His self-portraits were evidence of his growing ego. The more successful he became, the wider the eyes on his self-portraits became. Faaria Kherani, a student at Princeton University, wrote, "There

is always a relation between an artist's life and an artist's work. This is what sparks such interest in Picasso: his self-portraits are literally a revelation of his life."

The glimpse of self however can go beyond the visual. Music is also very telling about its artist. Lyrics are a clear reflection of a man's point of view and experience. Consider seventeenth century hymns. In 1873, Horatio Spafford sent his family on holiday aboard the S.S. Ville du Harve with the idea that he would join them later. The ship sank, the ocean claiming the lives of his four daughters. While on his way to meet his wife after the tragedy, the ship passed the location where Spafford's daughters had drowned. At that moment he wrote, "When sorrows like sea billows roll...it is well with my soul" (Osbeck 202) a line that eventually led to the writing of the famous hymn, "It is Well With My Soul." While people may have assumed something about his state of mind, the song gives the clearest picture of his faith and the peace he felt during his time of grief.

Each song has its own history that tells a story. The late Kurt Cobain sang lyrics that expressed a beleaguered soul. In his song, "Polly," one can see his pain. "Let me

take a ride...cut yourself, want some help, please myself, got some rope...Let me take a ride, cut yourself, want some help, help myself" (Cobain). But it isn't only lyrics in music that can portray the self. Sometimes the mere sound evokes the emotion expressed by the artist.

Ludwig Van Beethoven created most of his music without the ability to hear. His music was clearly a mood rather than just sound. Music expressed how he felt. Carl Ludwig Junker describes Beethoven's music like this, "Bethofen [sic] has greater clarity and profundity of ideas and expression—in short he speaks to the heart" (Grout and Palisca, A History of Western Music 521). A musical piece can reveal much about its composer and often about the one who produces the sound.

The examination of self can also be found in most literary works, such as, Toni Morrison's Sula. When presented with the idea of having babies, the character Sula said, "I don't want to make somebody else. I want to make myself" (Morrison 92). In a society where women's sense of self-worth was defined by their ability to procreate, Sula rebels wanting to only delineate her self. Many of Morrison's characters deal with race or gender issues. Ms. Morrison, being born in the 1930's, must be

exquisitely aware of prejudicial treatment in both of those areas, and her work reflects this awareness. Another example of revealing self can be found in Joseph Conrad's *The Secret Sharer*. The story follows a captain as he works to conceal a stowaway, Leggatt in his quarters. Leggatt is symbolic of the dark self in every man. In his story, Conrad shows the lengths a person will go to hide their demons and to protect their true self.

Orphaned, author Conrad lived a bleak life. Many of his darkest works came during a time when he was suicidal. (At one point he tried and failed.) The majority of his books can be linked to his life events. For instance, The Arrow of God reveals the author's involvement in gunrunning. At one point, he became the captain of a steamboat. This inspired his story The Heart of Darkness. He had a strong desire to illustrate human nature in his books. C.D. Merriman of Literature Network writes, "[Heart of Darkness] addresses the timeless struggle of man's self-deception and inner conflicts, influenced by Conrad's own sense of isolation from his past..." (par. 4).

Playwriting is another medium of literature which unveils the self. For example, "Tennessee Williams' characters found themselves pressed to the very edge of the

true societal world, face to face with their own desperation and with no resources beyond their powers of self-invention" (Bigsby, Modern American Drama 41). If the reader looks beyond the dialogue and props, he or she may feel the very breath of Williams' own angst and exhilaration.

The humanities can prove therapeutic for those who are in emotional pain. Someone struggling with a family member's drug problem may embrace the knowledge that they are not alone after reading O'Neill's *Long Day's Journey Into Night*. Alternatively, a light-hearted play like *Boomers* by Kerry Meads could help someone struggling with past mistakes, memories of war or difficulty accepting the aging process.

Humanities and Playwriting

Many modern American playwrights have striven for decades to define the term "self," and expand it into freedom and significance. Playwright David Ives wrote, "Learning to write for the theatre is learning to be a human being..." (McLaughlin 238). Most plays written in and after the nineteenth century deal with difficult, often heart-wrenching social issues. For many playwrights the

goal was not to provide good entertainment, but rather to present cognitive illustration. Playwright David Mamet once said, "Theatre has always been essential to human psychic equilibrium. [It] exposes us to decay, to the necessity of change" (Biggsby, Modern American Drama 223).

As with Mamet, the expression of human angst and adversity appears across all time periods. In studying Shakespeare, the same subjects arise: murder, lust, jealousy, rape, love, rejection, adultery and prejudice. On the other hand, each work also grapples with how to survive and enjoy life amid pain and turmoil. Each play is a snapshot of humanity's darkest demons and greatest joys. Playwright John Patrick Shanley said, "Plays are a reflection of who we are and what is going on with us" (McLaughlin 47).

Acting allows an individual to become another human being for a segment of time and perhaps discover something new about him or herself in the process. According to Biggsby, "To speak as another is for the moment to evade the self, which can be vulnerable" (Modern American Drama 18). Acting is much more than playing pretend. It is about heart and passion; about finding something inside a character

that the actor can identify with and share with an audience.

A theatrical script is unlike any other literary document. In the hands of a director, it becomes art in motion and gives life to the author's convictions. In the words of playwright, Romulus Linney, "A play... it's not music, it's not poetry, it's not dance, it's not narrative—it's about conflict [and] forces coming together" (McLaughlin 15). Writing for the theatre gives an author a chance to share their political and social views with an intellectually-engaged audience. Tennessee Williams once said, "I try to write all my plays so that they carry some social message along with the story" (Biggsby, Modern American Drama 33).

Williams sought to strengthen messages by setting them amid tension and turmoil, a place that most people can relate to on some level. This is a much more powerful experience for an audience member. Edward Albee said, "A serious play is holding a mirror up to people..." (McLaughlin 31). John Guare's *Six Degrees of Separation*, Tony Kushner's *Angels in America* and Lanford Wilson's *Lemon Sky* all address social dysfunction and prejudice. Marsha Norman writes about issues that affect women and David Rabe

looks at "the price some guys pay to be men" (Biggsby, Contemporary American Playwrights 283).

Humanities is defined by Professor Richard Hettlinger as, "...the opportunity for self-discovery and personal growth" ("Self-Discovery through the Humanities" 1). Playwriting fits nicely within these parameters. Well-known screenwriter and playwright, Milan Stitt wrote, "Cartwrights, shipwrights and playwrights are all skilled builders of vehicles meant to move people from one place to another" (Downs and Russin IX).

Theatre has evolved over time: the tragedy, the absurd, the musical, the comedy, and the literal. It is art in motion. "Unlike poetry, drama contains the additional element of an actor's living presence" (Jarno and Altshuler 29). A good script has the ability to make a person laugh or cry, even if he or she is not prone to emotional displays. Playwright Michael Weller writes, "I tend not to start writing until I have a fairly good strategy about how I am going to take an audience through the experience of an evening" (McLaughlin 69).

A play can persuade, inform, and entertain. Though playwriting is considered literature, it must go a step beyond the written page of a book. A play without an

audience is like a painting in a closet. It has not yet reached its full potential as an artistic piece. The full artistic expression of the playwright is not expressed until the play is performed. William Downs wrote, "Writing a play that doesn't get produced and seen is pointless" (Downs and Russin xvi). Theatre is the one medium that has the potential to embrace all aspects of the humanities. It can combine an incredible score, vivid sets, a philosophical message, and a powerful script with historical knowledge. In a play, each element of humanity can be carefully realized and expressed.

The Humanities and Stereotyping

Stereotypes are judgments of a person or group based on appearance, mannerisms, attire, or ethnic and religious background. Children are born innocent, but the behaviors they develop are a reflection of the attitudes, beliefs, and stereotypes they are exposed to in their immediate environment. According to psychologist Plotnik, "[Stereotypes are the] process by which we form impressions of and make judgments about the traits and characteristics of others" (582). But these are often unfair, biased opinions that lead to prejudice and discrimination. Once a

stereotype has been accepted, it is hard to change. According to Plotnik, most people are not aware that they have a set of their own, denying the fact when they are confronted about unfair judgments (583).

Martin Luther King, Jr. said, "We will have to repent in this generation not merely for the hateful words and actions of the bad people, but for the appalling silence of the good people" (Jacobus 162). King fiercely opposed discrimination against black Americans, but his fight struck even deeper. He stressed that all men are created equal, that all humans should enjoy the same liberties, and that stereotypes must be broken down in order for these truths to be realized. In most cases, stereotypes simply become self-fulfilling prophecies, stunting people's growth and placing them in a neat, non-threatening box. Studies have repeatedly shown that a child will rise to the level of achievement expected of him or her. In 2005 Dwight Elementary School, a "dilapidated four-story building" in a low-income area, won the No Child Left Behind Blue-Ribbon. The Hartford Courant reported that it triumphed because Principal Kathleen Greider "refused to accept the conventional wisdom that there is a limit to how much children who speak another language at home and come from

low-income families can learn...Children of Hartford will rise to meet high expectations."

In most cases, society would probably write off a school like Dwight based on its appearance, location and the socio-economic status of its families. But these stereotypes are a fallacy, as most are. Dr. James Jones wrote, "Stereotypes are prejudicial because they involve generalization" (Aronson). In this same vein, author Perry Hinton writes, "People do not believe [stereotypes] are false despite being told they are" (18). For example, there is no argument that many Italians are remembered as great painters. But a stereotype hypothesis would say that because Raphael, Michelangelo, and Leonardo da Vinci were all Italian, all Italians must be great painters. This example is not especially harmful. What if a young Italian man who desires a career in math is forced to get a degree in art? Or if an Asian woman is denied admission into an art school because she is not Italian? Social identity is a major indicator of self-esteem. This, in turn, affects how he or she contributes to society.

Richard Hettlinger prefaces his book by writing, "Humanities offers mature Americans unlimited opportunities for self-discovery and personal growth" (1). This is the

purpose of studying the art of others, to find something within each piece that resonates with his or her life. Socrates once said, "The unexamined life is not worth living... self-knowledge would seem to be an acquired virtue" (Lamm 1). Stereotypes work actively against self-exploration. They are essentially falsities that obscure an individual's true self. "Everyone is capable of living a more rewarding life, which is reason enough for studying the humanities" (Lamm 1). Stereotypes stack life's cards and influence a person to accept the hand that he or she has been dealt.

In the play *The Learning Tree*, the teacher states, "... ninety-nine percent of the Negro students don't go to college. They aren't college material... The few who are, and are lucky enough to get the money, usually wind up as cooks or porters anyway" (Aronson). Stereotypes leave nothing to natural ability or desires. They say, for example, that the color of one's skin can dictate how qualified a person is to learn, work, and thrive. Luckily, many playwrights have worked to change this assumption.

The shift toward freer theatrical expression came in the 1960s. Bigsby states in Modern American Drama that, during this decade, "stereotypes became a mask to be torn

away" (267). Theatre not only aired moral and political concerns, but also defied them. In 1997, a dramatic experiment took place in Washington, D.C.: Caucasian actor Patrick Stewart played Othello with an entirely black cast. This staging allowed both the audience and the actors to drop the preconceived stereotypes and get to the root of Shakespeare's characters. The "blackness" of Shakespeare's Othello became symbolic of evil (Othello, 1.1.88). Stewart said of the experience, "To replace the black outsider with a white man in a black society encourages a much broader view of the fundamentals of racism, and perhaps even questions those triggers - you know, color of skin, physiognomy, language, culture - that can produce instant feelings of fear, suspicion and so forth."

In order to foster growth and prosperity, society must clean its collective mental slate and allow artists to paint, philosophers to think and writers to write in a way that is not predetermined by their outward identities.

Like most modern American plays, my script *The Pigeonhole* examines the self and seeks to provide a visual example of the destruction caused by stereotyping. It encourages free thinking and bold self-expression.

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

Over the years, several plays have influenced my desire to write my own script. The most meaningful are the ones that make me both laugh and cry, that leave me with the desire to change for the better. Two plays in particular influenced my decision to write about the exploration of self: *The Glass Menagerie* and *Six Degrees of Separation*. Both of these pieces address the idea that people are often pigeonholed.

In *the Glass Menagerie*, the characters are lost in expectations of themselves and each other. They aspire to be someone and somewhere else. "Tennessee Williams' characters resist being incorporated into other people's plots" (Bigsby, Modern American Drama 42). The mother is lost between what she once was and what she has become. Tom is lost in what is expected of him and what he wants out of life. And Laura is lost in her predetermined future and in the entire scope of what it means to be human.

These characters all reflect the playwright's view of the world. As Bigsby writes, "I've never made any kind of adjustment to the real world... I'm not sure I would want to

be well adjusted to things as they are" (Modern American Drama 32-33). The characters in the *Glass Menagerie* are all artists who view life through glass. Their true identity is nowhere to be found, and their sense of self is broken.

In John Guare's *Six Degrees of Separation*, each of the characters is placed in his or her own societal box afraid of what moving beyond their designated role would mean. The play starts and ends with a revolving Kandisky. Guare describes the paintings: "One side is geometric and somber. The other side is wild and vivid" (3). The Kandisky painting revolves at the rise of the play and stops on the geometric and somber side. At the end of the play, it revolves again, this time stopping on the wild side.

The painting represents choices outside of assigned social roles. By the end of the play, each member is at a crossroad and must decide if they will die in his or her current position or learn to live. "The Kandinsky. It's painted on two sides" (Guare 120). Like the painting, everyone has two sides representing the choices they make in life. One side is contained in a box comprised of social class, race and age. The other side has no boundaries.

In *The Glass Menagerie*, the harm is done and fate determined. The characters all succumb to their

predetermined stereotypes. In *Six Degrees of Separation*, however, the audience has the opportunity to see what might happen if the walls crumble and people are allowed to choose their own destinies. It is this hope that creates an avenue for free expression and a new life.

In writing my own play, I wanted to show the latter - to give the characters and the audience a purpose to find something inside themselves that is not programmed by society or their relations.

To prepare for this task, I spent many weeks attending theatre, reading books about play structure, and studying scripts. As with any type of literature, often there is conflict at the core of the play. Whether or not a play is good may hinge on how this conflict is played out and resolved. Most plays have a climax and a resolution. A play is best described as a moving painting or a live novel - it is a story that literally comes to life.

Plays come in all shapes and sizes. Some are merely character sketches that can convey a message in less than twenty minutes. Others are one-act plays that focus intensely on one scene or situation, sometimes lasting as long as an hour. Then there are full-length plays, which

have two to three acts that average about two hours. *The Pigeonhole* can be accurately described as a one-act play.

In writing a script, a writer should concentrate on the five W's: Who (audience), where (setting), when (time), what (theme), and why (purpose). In order to create an effective script, the author must first decide who his or her audience is. Who is he or she trying to reach? Are they young or old, rich or poor, predominately black or white? My five W's for *The Pigeonhole* are the generation-X workers (who) sitting in a cafeteria (where) at noon (when) when a bitter employee takes them hostage (what) because he's been fired due to ageism (why).

Next, the playwright must determine where his or her play will take place and what time period it will be set in. This will affect all aspects of the production. For instance, the cost of period costumes, elaborate scene changes and a large cast would require a much larger budget than a small-scale, minimalist play set in one room.

The "why" of makes the play worthy of the stage. Even slapstick comedies with very little substance have a purpose, often to entertain and bring joy to the audience. Shortly after September 11, 2001, the TV show *Friends* saw a spike in its ratings, while many dramas fell in popularity.

Entertainment analysts believe this occurred due to the psychological state of most Americans following the terrorist attacks. Reality had enough drama of its own, and a show like *Friends* made people laugh and forget their worries. In this case, it is acceptable for a playwright to write with the foremost desire to provoke laughter.

Once the theme and purpose are established, a writer should then determine which type of play he or she plans to write. There are five major categories to choose from: 1) tragedy in which the characters grapple with serious situations and often the hero dies; (2) drama, in which the protagonist encounters grave obstacles to overcome; (3) melodrama, in which the author builds suspense through action; (4) comedy, in which the plot is usually light-hearted or humorous; and (5) musical, in which the actors dance and sing. *The Pigeonhole* can be accurately classified as a drama.

There are many strategies to better understand dialogue and collect ideas for a theatrical script. Many playwrights get their ideas from watching movies, observing people in public, reading, and attending others' plays. Ideas can come from these, as well as existing stories, personal experiences, songs or poems, personal beliefs, or

common life themes. Terrance McNally wrote, "Sometimes I have no idea where a play came from... it springs from my emotional insides." (McLaughlin 43).

In choosing my setting and characters for *The Pigeonhole*, I referred to the 1980s cult film, *The Breakfast Club*. The movie addressed stereotypes and expectations based on gender, finances and social status. The most famous line reads, "You see us as you want to see us, in the simplest terms, in the most convenient definitions. But what we found out is that each one of us is a brain, an athlete, a basket case, a princess and a criminal" (Hughes). I took this concept and applied it to my Generation X peers. I asked myself what the *Breakfast Club* characters would look and act like as adults. What stereotypes would they still be holding on to? Would they have grown or remained narrow-minded and insecure?

To many baby boomers, Generation X seems like a swath of lazy and apathetic adults. Even so, studies have shown that the opposite is true. *Forbes* magazine published an article stating, "The so-called Generation-X is the most entrepreneurial generation in American history..." (Celek and Zander 27). I sought to capture this perception in my script. Ageism can also lead to unfair stereotypes. *The*

Pigeonhole demonstrates how stereotypes can transcend how one was raised.

In attempting to illustrate the implications stereotypes have for society, I decided it was important to research what a play truly is. While I've been writing scripts for close to two decades, I knew it was imperative to explore the subject on a deeper level.

A traditional play should have at least one protagonist (the hero) and one antagonist (the villain), even if they are one in the same. The protagonist is a main character with a positive objective. This desire, and the journey the hero must make to achieve it, sets the stage for the play's conflict. Theatrical conflict can be broken into four categories: man versus man, man versus himself, man versus nature and man versus God. A protagonist must appeal to the audience, and His or her goal must make the audience care. An audience does not have to actually like this character, but they must relate to him or her on some level.

An antagonist is usually a stronger character than the protagonist. He or she is the one that blocks the protagonist from achieving the goal, creating the story's conflict. As mentioned above, sometimes a man's greatest

antagonist can be something inside himself. Characters like Macbeth and Othello had exterior enemies, but their more formidable foes were their own faults.

In *The Pigeonhole*, there are six main characters: Morgan, Tyler, Jason, Latisha, Amira, and Martin. They each confront their own antagonist: Bart, the gun slinging bitter old man, the insensitive Mr. Whitley and, of course, the invisible antagonist—the thoughtless use of stereotype.

Another important element of a good play is the flow of dialogue—how the characters talk to one another. Playwright Michael Weller said, “I hear people talking, and then I put down what they say” (McLaughlin 167). In a novel or screenplay, the bulk of the writing is descriptive narrative. But in playwriting, ninety-nine percent is conversation.

Conflict is vitally important to the success of a play. Arthur Miller writes, “The business of the play is to explore conflict and resolve it” (McLaughlin 20). Conflict is better described as the “problem.” What motivates the characters? What keeps the protagonist from achieving his or her goal? The conflict makes the play worth watching. Without it, a whole piece could be an aimless, meandering conversation.

A play in the traditional sense encompasses a beginning, rising action, a climax, a resolution and an ending. In the beginning, the characters and conflict are introduced. The conflict then continues to push the characters forward, building toward a climax and the peak of a problem. It is the point in the story when all characters must make a choice that will determine the final outcome. This brings the play to a resolution—how the characters will continue to live after these defining choices are made. In a tragedy, the resolution is often that nothing can be done to change a negative situation. In romantic comedies, a resolution could be a wedding or ride into the sunset. *The Pigeonhole* begins with Bart being fired by Mr. Whitley. Desperate, he holds six people hostage. While stuck in a small lunch room, the characters find themselves exposing their biased views and revealing their lives. In the climactic moment, Bart confronts Mr. Whitley about being fired, shooting Morgan by accident. The resolution comes when each of the characters assumes responsibility for their actions and accepts the others for who they really are.

Creating good characters makes a plot believable. Tennessee Williams writes, "If you're not interested in

those people, then it's a play that no one's going to be very interested in" (McLaughlin 82). The characters provide the framework for a play and the plot usually orbits around the protagonist(s). Things to consider when creating this character include: What is he or she like? How old? What does he or she do? What is his or her religion? How does he or she see the world? What is his or her major personality trait? How will this impact the rest of the characters? Who is the antagonist and what is his or her relation to the protagonist? Who else is needed to make the story run? Most plays need interesting and vibrant secondary characters to help the protagonist or antagonist reach their goals.

Even though most of a play's script is dialogue, some stage direction is needed. These notations tell the director where things are spatially on the set, how actors should enter and exit, and sometimes what body language is needed to convey an emotion. The direction is found in parentheses and is often italicized. Example: (*The MAN entered and sat at the desk*). Note the character name is in capital letters to capture attention. A playwright should not get too technical or specific in describing how the characters move onstage or express their feelings

nonverbally. Too many directions "call attention to themselves and distract the reader" (McLaughlin 183).

When writing a play, it is important to become familiar with typical stage lingo. For instance a "beat," is shorter than a "pause." Stage right is the actor's right when onstage. Down stage is toward the audience. Knowing these things can make a big difference when a director reads a script. A mistake many new writers make is forgetting to have an actor enter before they speak, or leaving a prop in a character's hand. This is a good reason to workshop a play before it goes to production.

There are different forms of scripts. Most formats are determined by whether or not they are intended for production or publication.

A typical published script looks like this:

ACT I

Scene 1

At the rise: A man sits in his rocking chair eating a cheese sandwich when the telephone rings.

MAN (*picking up the receiver*): Hello? (*Pause*) Yes?

(*WOMAN enters and crosses to the MAN.*)

WOMAN (*sarcastically*): Nice house.

However a professional script for the theater would probably look like this:

ACT I

SCENE ONE

(MAN enters and sits in his rocking chair, while eating a cheese sandwich.

His telephone rings.)

MAN

(picking up receiver)

Hello. *(Pause)* Yes.

(WOMAN enters and crosses to MAN.)

WOMAN

(sarcastically)

Nice house.

The second script is easier to read, but publishing houses don't want to spend the money on the extra pages. This accounts for the difference in appearance.

Each script should include individual pages with the following: title, character descriptions, time, setting, and production notes—including but not limited to props, costumes, lighting, and sound.

It is mandatory for any serious playwright to be willing to revise. A piece always has room for improvement. It is a good idea to read it out loud and workshop it with real actors to find flaws in the dialogue or action. Michael Weller says, "Be ready to do seven rewrites before it's ready to go, but don't show it until you can't think of anything that could be made better" (McLaughlin 248). After I wrote *The Pigeonhole*, I was able to workshop the script with my drama team, who identified several areas that did not work. For instance in one conversation, I had labeled Latisha an only child but then mentioned her brother's visit in a later bit of dialogue. In other plays I have written, I have forgotten to bring someone on stage or have them exit. Simple mistakes can be made when a script is not aired before being sent to publication or production.

CHAPTER 4

SUMMARY, CONCLUSION, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Playwriting is a valued art, conveying the convictions of writers for centuries. It is also an important aspect of the humanities. The theatre provides a snapshot of an era and of the problems of its time, becoming a manner of history. Its message is a mirror of the playwright's heart, incorporating elements of philosophy. A play addresses the very core of the humanities—an image of the self as a valuable entity that should be protected at all costs. This paper has tackled the concept of stereotyping and the wounds it inflicts on one's sense of self and humanity in general. Freedom is like oxygen to the human spirit, and being bound by one's role suffocates creative expression. *The Pigeonhole* promotes the need to view people as individuals, and to avoid judgments based on appearance, cultural background, residence, religious beliefs, or circumstances. This paper endeavored to show how narrow-minded views stunt the beauty of human development. The uneducated poor have just as much validity as a wealthy doctor. Every human life makes a valuable contribution to society.

This project has shown me that the world desperately needs to cultivate a deeper sense of empathy and compassion. The next generation should benefit from a breakdown of social barriers and freedom from stereotyping. In this spirit, playwrights should continue to produce literature that makes a difference. San Diego State University student Craig Everett wrote in his master's thesis, "The success or failure of any work of art depends on the artist's ability to communicate with an audience. And communication is effective if the artist has something to say" (98).

The Pigeonhole communicates a distinct message of unconditional acceptance. Further studies are needed to examine the psychological impact stereotyping can have on an individual, society, and the humanities as a field. The humanities are the study of mankind's creative expression of self. They hold up a mirror to our present and offer a photograph of our past. When writers, musicians and artists are able to break free of their expected roles, beauty and truth abounds.

WORKS CITED

WORKS CITED

- Aronson, Barbara F. "Racial and Ethnic Stereotypes in Literature." Taylor-Allderdice High School. Google. 15 May 2006.
http://www.chatham.edu/pti/Diversity_Resistance/Aronson_01.htm
- Ball, David. Backwards & Forwards: Technical Manual for Reading Plays. Illinois: Southern Illinois University, 1983.
- Bigsby, Christopher. Contemporary American Playwrights. New York: Cambridge University Press, 1999.
- Bigsby, Christopher. Modern American Drama, 1945-2000. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2000.
- Breakfast Club. Dir. John Hughes. Perf. Molly Ringwald, Judd Nelson, Emilio Estevez, Anthony Michael Hall, Ally Sheedy, and Paul Gleason. 2003. DVD. Universal Studios Home Video.
- Celek, Tim and Dieter Zander. Inside the Soul of a New Generation. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1996.

- Cobain, Kurt. Polly. Risa Song Lyrics Archive. 1991.
Google. May 2007.
<http://www.risa.co.uk/sla/song.php?songid=19331>
- Davis, Mark, ed. Annual Editions Social Psychology 5th Ed.
Connecticut: McGraw-Hill/Dushkin, 2001.
- Downs, William Missouri, and Robin U. Russin. Naked
Playwriting: The Art, the Craft, and the Life Laid
Bare. Los Angeles: Silman-James Press, 2004.
- "Dwight Earns Blue Ribbon." Editorial. Hartford Courant. 30
Sept. 2005: A.14.
- Everett, Craig. "What We Have Here is a Failure to
Communicate: A Project in Lighting Design for High
Spirits." San Diego State University. 1998.
- Grout and Palisca. A History of Western Music. 6th Ed. New
York: W.M. Norton and Company, 2001.
- Guare, John. Six Degrees of Separation. New York: Vintage
Books, 1994.
- Hettlinger, Richard. Self-Discovery through the Humanities,
Exploring Values. Washington D.C.: National Council on
the Aging, Inc., 1984.
- Hinton, Perry. Stereotypes, Cognition and Culture.
Philadelphia: Psychology Press, 2000.

- Holy Bible. New International Version. Thomas-Nelson, Inc.
2003.
- Hughes, Robert. The Shock of the New. New York: Alfred
Aknope, 1988.
- Jacobus, Lee. A World of Ideas. 5th Ed. Boston: Bedford
Books, 1992.
- Jarno, Richard Paul, and Thelma C. Altshuler. The Art of
Being Human. 5th Ed. Washington D.C., 1975.
- Kherani, Faaria. "Opening our Eyes: Picasso Lost in the
Dark." Picasso's Self Portraits. April 2005. Google.
May 2007. <http://blogs.princeton.edu/wri152-3/f05>
- Lamm, Robert. The Humanities in Western Culture. 4th Ed. New
York: McGraw-Hill, 2004.
- McCusker, Paul. Playwriting: A Study in Choices and
Challenges. Kansas City: Lillenas Publishing, 1995.
- McGarty, Craig, and Vincent Y. Yzerbyt, and Russell Spears.
Stereotypes as Explanations. New York: Cambridge
Press, 2002.
- McLaughlin, Buzz. The Playwright's Process. New York:
Watson-Guptill Publications, 1997.

- Merriman, C.D. The Literature Network. Jalic, Inc. 2007.
<http://www.online-literature.com/conrad/>.Google. April 2007.
- Metzger, Rainer, and Ingo Walther Van Gogh. New York: Barnes & Noble Books, 2003
- Morrison, Toni. Sula. New York: Plume Books, 1982.
- O'Neill, Eugene. Long Day's Journey Into Night. Clinton: Yale University Press, 1955.
- Osbeck, Kenneth. Amazing Grace. Grand Rapids: Kregel Publishing, 1990.
- Perry, John. Identity, Personal Identity, and the Self. New York: Hackett Publishing Company, 2002.
- Plotnik, Rod. Introduction to Psychology. 6th Ed. Pacific Grove: Wadsworth-Thomson Group, 2002.
- Schroeder, Fred. Joining the Human Race: How to Teach the Humanities. Deland: Everett/Edwards, 1972.
- Senior Center Humanities Program. Self-Discovery Through the Humanities. Washington D.C., 1984.
- Steinberg, Laurence. Adolescence. 6th Ed. New York: McGraw-Hill, 2002.

Stewart, Patrick. "Interviewed by Ray Greene." Worldwide Web. Washington DC: The Folgers Theatre, 1998. Google. 08 August 2006.

<http://www.rsc.org.uk/othello/learning/othello.html>.

Straczynski, Michael. The Complete Book of Scriptwriting. Cincinnati: Writer's Digest Books, 1996.

Wells, Stanley and Gary Taylor. The Oxford Shakespeare: The Complete Works. Clarendon Press. Oxford, 1988.

Williams, Tennessee. The Glass Menagerie. New York: Penguin Books, 1972.

APPENDIX

THE PIGEONHOLE

THE PIGEONHOLE

A One-Act Play

By

Kimberlee R. Mendoza

CHARACTERS

DWIGHT, 32 (M)

MARTIN, 40 (M)

TYLER, 26 (M)

MORGAN, 30 (F)

LATISHA, 34 (F)

AMIRA, 29 (F)

BART, 63 (M)

JASON, 52 (M)

TIME: The present, noon

PLACE: A lunchroom in an office building downtown

SETTING: In the middle of the stage is a long table with six chairs. On stage left is a counter with a few cabinets and a small refrigerator. On top of the counter are a coffee pot, some cups, and condiments. On stage right are a door and a working soda machine. Far stage right, on a separate stage or on the floor, is a small room and door that appears to be outside a boardroom.

SUMMARY: Six strangers from different backgrounds are suddenly forced to interact with one another after a bitter man takes them hostage.

PROPS:

Four Lunches	Change
Vending Machine Sandwich	Coffee in Pot
Bottle of Water	Sodas
Cups	Gun
Bullet	Fake blood

CHARACTER DESCRIPTIONS

DWIGHT DEWEY—Played quarterback in high school in the late 1980's. He was super popular and all the girls wanted him. In college ball, he hurt his ankle and had to quit the game, or so he says. If only he could be honest about his true identity. He is at the office building to install a new line and enters the lunchroom to grab a soda.

MARTIN TAYLOR—Some would probably say he is a geek. He works as a subcontractor for Whitley & Morgan Enterprises and has recently invented new software. He still lives with his mom and his teenage brother. People make fun of him for living at home, but his brother has AIDS and he is his caretaker. With his brains, he could have any life he wants but he chose his brother. He is to have a meeting after lunch to sell his new computer software.

TYLER FINCH—A security guard by day and punk rock guitarist by night. He pretends to be a big jerk, but inside he is really hurting. He was shunned by a fellow employee years ago, which has altered his perception about certain people. He gets angry when people put labels on him. He is on his lunch break.

MORGAN WHITLEY—A wealthy daddy's girl, who only attended college to party. She has yet to obtain a degree or find focus in life. Her favorite pastime is shopping and ordering people around. Most people assume she is extremely shallow, but that is because that's what is expected of her. She's been handed everything in life, but doesn't have an ounce of joy in the journey. She is actually suicidal and her whole act is a façade for what is going on in her heart. She would love nothing more than to be a normal girl, but she is afraid. She came to the office to grab a credit card from her VP father, but stops by the lunchroom to grab a cup of coffee first.

LATISHA CARTER—She's a Navy brat, who has lived in a wealthy white neighborhood for most of her life. Her entire life has been about the sense of not belonging. She is middle class and upwardly mobile. She is on her lunch break.

AMIRA AL-JAMIR—She is an Iraqi woman, who came over during the first Gulf War. Though much of her family is Muslim, she converted to Catholicism in the late 1990's when she met her husband, Sheth. She has had to endure a lot of broken windows, taunting and vandalism since the War in Iraq. She loves America and hates the fact most people assume the worst about her. She is a temp receptionist on her lunch break.

BART JORGENSON—He is a longtime employee for Whitley & Morgan Enterprises and has just been fired as company manager. He enters the lunchroom to retrieve his lunch from the refrigerator, but flips out when he finds out that Latisha is to be his replacement.

JASON WHITLEY—Morgan's father and Bart's former boss. He is wealthy and arrogant but loves his daughter. He served Bart his pink slip, but for him it was just another day at the office. He is brought in to save his daughter.

At the rise: BART stands far stage right with his back against a door as if he has just exited the boardroom.

(LIGHTS UP.)

BART

(shaking)

Fired? This can't be happening. *(Pause.)* Not to me. I put thirty years into this place. Don't they realize I'm two years from retirement? They couldn't wait two years? *(Pause.)* What will I tell my wife? She'll kill me. *(Getting angry.)* I should have seen it coming for years. They bring in all those computers and expect me to know how to use them. In my day, we used our brain. We didn't have to rely on some machine to do our thinking for us. *(Pause.)* Some kid, who can't see past the waves at the beach or the sale at the mall, will run this company into the ground. *(Pause.)* But what do I care? Let it burn.

(Spot off BART and up on LUNCHROOM. LATISHA is at the table eating. MARTIN enters and sits a few seats down with a bagged lunch. TYLER then enters with a vending machine sandwich and bottle of water. LATISHA and TYLER exchange hateful glances. TYLER sits in the last chair opposite her. DWIGHT enters and steps to the soda machine. HE digs in his pocket for change, but comes up short. HE walks to the table, slightly blocking the lunchroom door.)

DWIGHT

Excuse me, but does anyone have a nickel?

(The group looks at HIM, but no one responds. At the same time, MORGAN enters. SHE tries to get by DWIGHT to get to the coffee on the counter, but without knowing it, he blocks her path.)

MORGAN

Excuse me, but you're in my way.

DWIGHT

(turns around)

Hey, do I know you?

MORGAN

I doubt it.

DWIGHT

Yeah, I do. You're Morgan Whitley.

MORAN

And you're still in my way.

DWIGHT

We went to the same high school.

MORGAN

(dryly)

Yeah, yeah. You were big man Dewey, all-star quarterback and chick magnet. I'm so impressed. Now can you move?

(SHE pushes him out of the way and retrieves a cup and pours herself some coffee.)

DWIGHT

That's right. *(HE looks back at the change in his hand.)*
Hey, do you have a nickel?

MORGAN

(rolls her eyes)

I have a million nickels.

DWIGHT

Well, may I borrow one?

MORGAN

Why do people say that? *Borrow* one? It's not like you and I will ever see each other again. Are you planning to bring one to our twenty-year reunion? *(Beat.)* No. So, just say, "take." Can you *take* one of my nickels?

DWIGHT

It's only a nickel.

MORGAN

Is it? Apparently, it's more than that to you.

(MARTIN digs in his pocket and holds out a nickel to DWIGHT.)

MARTIN

Here.

DWIGHT

(taking the nickel)

Thanks, man.

(HE pops his money in the machine and chooses a soda.)

MORGAN

Dweeb to the rescue. *(Stirring her coffee, she looks DWIGHT over.)* Begging for nickels? You've come a long way, I see.

DWIGHT

(looks down at his uniform and shrugs)

Hey, it pays the bills.

MORGAN

What happened to college ball? Weren't good enough?

DWIGHT

(irritated at first)

Yeah, I was good enough. I messed up my ankle in my sophomore year. The doctor said it would become a permanent injury if I kept playing. *(Shrugs.)* So, I quit.

MORGAN

Pity.

DWIGHT

Still the same pretentious Morgan from high school, I see. Looks like some of us haven't grown much.

MORGAN

(crossing, pats his belly)

Looks like some of us shouldn't have.

(SHE takes a sip of her coffee and BART enters. DWIGHT leans against wall. AMIRA enters with her lunch and sits at the table.)

LATISHA

Hey, Bart. What are you doing up here? I thought your lunch break wasn't for another hour.

(BART snaps his head around.)

BART

They fired me.

(HE flings open the refrigerator and grabs his lunch.)

LATISHA

Fired you? They can't fire you.

BART

Aw, but they did.

LATISHA

I don't understand. I thought... *(Realizing.)* Oh no...

BART

What?

LATISHA

They called me in this morning and wanted to see if I'd be interested in a promotion. I'm a single mom. What could I say?

BART

(stares at her for a moment)

You took my job?

LATISHA

Not on purpose. *(Beat.)* I'm sorry.

BART

You're sorry. I can't go home to my wife. What do I tell her? She's a housewife. Always has been. We counted on *my* retirement.

LATISHA

So, it came a little early. You should celebrate. Go to Tahiti.

BART

No! You don't get it, do you? I'm 63-years old. Two years away from the money. They fire me now, I leave with nothing! *(Beat.)* That's just it. I'm nothing. *(Pacing.)* What do I do? *(Pause.)* How do I fix this?

(TYLER stands, tosses his trash, and starts to walk past BART. BART grabs TYLER's gun and sticks it in his own mouth. TYLER reacts by pushing BART's arm away. BART then levels the gun at TYLER.)

TYLER

Whoa! You don't want to do that man.

BART

Do what? Take my own miserable life. Who's going to stop me? You, Mr. Clean? *(Beat.)* Ha! You were in diapers when I started this place. And you're all taking over. All of you. I've watched friend after friend get fired, simply because the whippersnappers have computer skills. *(Waves gun around.)* Who cares! Management fails to see that your generation is missing one important detail.

TYLER

What's that?

BART

Loyalty. You'll be out of here as soon as you're bored. Me? Over thirty-two years of sweat is stained into the counters of this place.

LATISHA

Bart, put the gun down. You don't want to go out like this. You're a good man. What's Margie going to say?

BART

What's she going to say if I don't? (*Pause.*) That I'm a loser that can't provide for her any more. But if I do shoot? At least then she'll mourn me instead of hate me.

LATISHA

Don't be ridiculous. She'd never hate you.

BART

You don't know my wife.

TYLER

You obviously haven't thought this thing through. Now give me back my gun, before I take it and use it on you myself.

BART

You think I'm afraid to die? Go ahead, take my life. It will save me from facing her. And I'll go out a hero.

LATISHA

Give him the gun, Bart. He'll let you go. We won't say anything.

BART

No, I have a better idea. How about we all have a pow wow? I'd like to hear your philosophies on work ethic. I want to know what's so special about you thirty-somethings that makes people like me obsolete.

LATISHA

People like you?

TYLER

(*pipes in, but not heard*)

I'm 28.

BART

You know. Old.

MARTIN

(stands and tosses trash)

Um, do you think I could be excused? I have a presentation I can't miss.

BART

Do you work for the highest bidder?

MARTIN

Of course.

BART

Then sit down. You're part of the problem.

MARTIN

What problem? Look, I can't miss my meeting.

BART

Sit!

(MARTIN sits.)

LATISHA

I know you're not this guy, Bart. We've worked together for years. You're a kind man. Walk away.

TYLER

You should listen to Moesha.

LATISHA

(jumps up)

What'd you call me?

TYLER

What? I was siding with you. *(SHE stares at him and he puts up his hands in surrender.)* I'm sorry. Is Loquisha? Roisha?

LATISHA

Don't you dare start name calling cracker or its going to get a lot uglier than a gun in the hands of a bitter old man.

BART

(waves gun around)

Both of you shut up and sit down. I'm in charge here!

TYLER

(sits reluctantly)

You're going to regret this grandpa.

BART

I already do. *(Notices MORGAN.)* You think you can just stand there fancy britches? Sit!

MORGAN

I'm not a dog.

BART

What's your name?

MORGAN

Morgan Whitley.

BART

Your father, Jason Whitley?

MORGAN

(cocky)

Yes he is.

BART

Proud of it, are you? *(He aims the gun at HER.)* Well, I'm so glad you've joined us then. Your father's the one who signed my pink slip. *(HE motions to the table.)* Take a seat, princess.

LATISHA

Bart, please.

BART

Be quiet, you're giving me a headache.

MARTIN

I really need to get to my meeting. They won't wait.

BART

They'll have to. (*HE turns to LATISHA.*) So, tell me. What qualifications do you have to run my department? Besides the obvious.

LATISHA

The obvious?

BART

You're young, you're a woman and you're um...

LATISHA

I'm what?

BART

You're...

LATISHA

Just say it. I'm what? Black?

BART

Well, yeah. And they have an unwritten rule about diversity in the workplace.

LATISHA

It couldn't be because I'm an intelligent woman with a master's degree in accounting. Its nuts to assume I got it because of race. Please..

BART

Is it? Where'd you grow up?

LATISHA

Bart, I'm about to pop you. I'll have you know that I grew up on Coronado Island.

TYLER

Navy brat.

LATISHA

Oh, yeah okay. You figure just because I live in swank area, my parents must be in the military. Don't even get me started on you. Your bald head screams bigot.

TYLER

Don't act like you know me.

LATISHA

Oh, I know you all right. You beat up my brothers and sisters for amusement. Think you're an all powerful white god or something. But you're ignorant.

TYLER

(hits the table)

I told you, don't act like you know me. And I sure as heck don't know your brothers and sisters.

LATISHA

It's a figure of speech, moron.

MORGAN

Okay, this is all stimulating, but I have a nail appointment in an hour and the stench of the workingman is consuming the air in here. I need to go.

TYLER

The stench of the workingman? Oh that's ripe. Your smell isn't all that sweet either sweetheart.

MORGAN

Whatever. If you'll excuse me, I need to get going.

BART

No! Daddy is going to share some of my anxiety this morning. *(Wipes brow, looking uncomfortable in the small room.)* He assumes just because I'm old I can't do my job anymore. He had no problem dropping a man like me without blinking. But let's see how he feels when he thinks he might lose a daughter. *(He tugs at his collar, pacing and talks to himself.)* It's hot in here. *(Back to them.)* Look, I'm going to step just outside this door for some fresh air and to figure something's out. If you any of you try anything, remember I have nothing to lose. *(Waves gun around.)* Oh, and give me all of your cell phones.

MORGAN

Over my dead body!

DWIGHT

I think that's the point.

(THEY all dig their cell phones out and slide them across the table to BART, who scoops them up and exits.)

MORGAN

He can't keep us here.

LATISHA

Apparently he can.

(THEY all sit and there is an uncomfortable pause. EVERYONE looks around, fidgets, etc.)

MORGAN

(looking at her nails)

He has no idea how long it took me to get in with Michaela. She's the best, and it'll be weeks before she'll have another appointment free.

MARTIN

You're such a narcissist.

MORGAN

I'm what?

DWIGHT

Vain.

MORGAN

(rolls eyes at DWIGHT)

Like you'd know a word that big. *(To MARTIN.)* And I'm not vain. I just like to look good. You have no idea what it's like to be me.

DWIGHT

Why would we want to?

MORGAN

Huh! Simple. I'm gorgeous and rich. What's not to love?

LATISHA

(under breathe)

Try self-absorbed.

MORGAN

Oh and you're special? Admit it. Tyler was right about your dad being in the Navy. That's the only way someone like you could have that address.

LATISHA

Someone like me? (*Stands.*) I've about had it with all of you.

TYLER

So, leave. Bart's real happy with you right now.

LATISHA

(*sits*)

What's your story, security man? Why do you hate black people?

TYLER

Who said I hate black people?

LATISHA

Most skinheads do. I just want to know your story.

TYLER

Who's the bigot? (*Beat.*) You assume I'm a skinhead, just because my head's shaved, huh?

LATISHA

You assumed I'm poor.

TYLER

No, Bart assumed you were poor. I just stated the obvious.

LATISHA

And you don't hate black people?

TYLER

Hate is a strong word. I'm just keeping it real.

MARTIN

Can you guys all get off this black versus white thing? It makes me uncomfortable.

TYLER

Okay, let's talk about what it's like to go through life as a cherry.

MARTIN

I'm not a cherry.

TYLER

Oh yeah, who do you live with?

MARTIN

My mom. Why?

TYLER & MORGAN

Cherry.

(TYLER stares at MORGAN.)

MARTIN

I live there for a good reason.

MORGAN

Maybe he's gay.

TYLER

Yeah, I'd believe that about him.

AMIRA

Because he lives at home there must be something wrong with him?

MORGAN

Basically.

DWIGHT

Who says there is something wrong with being gay?

AMIRA

The Bible.

DWIGHT

The Bible also says something about bombing innocent people.

AMIRA

What's that supposed to mean?

MARTIN

Look guys, stop fighting. There's nothing wrong with me.

MORGAN

That's debatable.

TYLER

(approaches MORGAN)

And you don't live at home with your platinum card bill paying parents?

MORGAN

(shrugs)

Yeah, so. I'm a girl. It's different.

TYLER

Is it?

MORGAN

Of course. Girls stay with their parents until they get married.

TYLER

That's a little bias, don't you think? *(Looks at MARTIN.)* I mean, what's his name...

MARTIN

Martin.

TYLER

Old Marty lives with his folks and just because he's a guy you call him a cherry.

MORGAN

Trust me. I'm not a cherry.

TYLER

No, you're a tease.

LATISHA

(*under breath*)

I would have gone with slut.

MORGAN

Excuse me? Did you say something?

LATISHA

No girlfriend, you just go on doing your thing. You seem pretty happy enough with yourself.

MORGAN

You're a single mother and you're calling me a slut?

LATISHA

So, you did hear me?

MORGAN

I'm beautiful, not deaf.

LATISHA

Yeah, and those two things are so equal. Whatever.

DWIGHT

Look, we don't know when we're going to get out of here; can we all just play nice?

MORGAN

Is that why you got kicked out of football?

DWIGHT

What are you talking about?

MORGAN

Because you're gay.

DWIGHT

What?

TYLER

Ha! A gay guy can't be a jock. I bet you weren't even hurt. I bet you quit. (*Pause.*) Or maybe they kicked you out.

MORGAN

Is that true, Dwight?

DWIGHT

You saw me in high school; I had every cheerleader at least twice.

MORGAN

So, you were perpetrating a fraud to keep the heat off.
(*SHE walks up to him and rubs against him.*) You didn't have me. (*SHE trails his back with her hand.*) I'll do you for a nickel.

LATISHA

Told you she was a slut.

MORGAN

Come on, Dwight. Show me what you're made of. Are you a he or a he-she?

MARTIN

Leave him alone.

MORGAN

Looks like your boyfriend is coming to your rescue. Unless you have something you'd like to show me.

DWIGHT

Back off, Morgan.

MORGAN

Admit you left football because of your sexual preference and I'm vapor.

(Uncomfortable pause.)

DWIGHT

What if I am? People like you need to let people be who they are without treating them like a leper.

MARTIN

That's because you are. That's nothing to be ashamed of.

AMIRA

(under her breathe)

Even if it is wrong.

TYLER

What's that? We couldn't hear you?

AMIRA

Look, I'm sorry if I don't condone his lifestyle.

TYLER

We don't condone yours either.

AMIRA

You just got done yelling to Latisha about her not knowing you.

TYLER

Yeah, so?

AMIRA

Don't assume you know me either.

TYLER

Oh, I'm sure you're a friendly Muslim, right? If you are, you don't read your own Koran.

AMIRA

Not all Muslims are hateful terrorists and not all Iraqi's are Muslim.

TYLER

Yeah, okay.

AMIRA

Look, I'm sick of your attitude.

TYLER

My attitude? What attitude is that?

AMIRA

More than half my family was killed by Saddam Hussein. My family barely got out of Iraq alive. We were brought here to escape tyranny and pain. America, the free. America, the

fair. Yeah right. (*Jumps up, angry.*) We been taunted, spit on, hit, and hurt. Rocks with hateful messages have been tossed through our windows more times than I can count. My car has been covered in graffiti. My house almost caught on fire by burning flags dumped in my yard. All because people like you assume I'm a Muslim terrorist. (*Pause.*) I'm not even Muslim. Your asinine views are worse than any bomb dropped in this country.

LATISHA

She's right.

DWIGHT

Okay, it's getting a bit thick in here. How about we discuss the weather or something? Anything to ease an already tense situation.

TYLER

Because we don't care about the weather, do we jock strap? We're stuck in a room with people we wouldn't give two seconds anywhere else on the planet. (*Beat.*) Singing Kumbaya and hugging isn't going to happen. Deal with it.

LATISHA

That's quite the speech for a skinhead.

(*TYLER glares at her.*)

DWIGHT

I didn't say anything about Kumbaya. I hate that song.

(*EVERYONE slowly laughs, to their surprise.*)

MARTIN

What do you think he's going to do with us?

MORGAN

My guess is he'll shoot himself.

LATISHA

That's sensitive.

MORGAN

I'm just saying.

LATISHA

Well, don't. (*Pause.*) Bart's a good man. He's just messed up. I want him to be okay.

MORGAN

Well, if it's between him and me. I'm voting for me.

LATISHA

Yeah, I would have guessed that.

MORGAN

Who wouldn't say that? We all care about ourselves the most. Come on.

LATISHA

Yeah, spoken like a true toffee-nosed brat.

MORGAN

Excuse me? A what?

MARTIN

She's right, you know. You're all fighting because you have some personal agenda or misconception. Me, I see everyone the same.

MORGAN

Oh yeah, how did you see me when I walked in? (*Beat.*) Beyond a reality that is way out of your league.

MARTIN

I didn't think anything. I was thinking about what would happen in my meeting.

TYLER

Liar.

MARTIN

I'm not a liar. I really don't think anything about any of you. I stay clear of people for this very reason. People label one another and assume to tell me who I am. (*Points at Tyler.*) You. You said a moment ago that Latisha didn't know you. Who does really? Know each other, I mean. I bet

you all have secrets from even those you're closest too. Look at Bart. He can't even face his wife. If she truly cared about him, what would be the issue?

TYLER

Okay, enough pinhead. You can't see anything that isn't plugged into a wall. (*Pause.*) I've seen you when I lock up at night. You're the first here and the last to leave. You can't have an opinion about humans if you aren't one.

MARTIN

I rest my case.

TYLER

What case? That because I think you're a techno dork, the world stops moving? No. The world doesn't stop because we judge one another, but because we live by our trade marks.

MORGAN

I'm Christian Dior. (*Looks at LATISHA.*) Guess that makes you Wal-mart.

LATISHA

I'm about to come over there and slap that \$20,000 nose job right off your face.

MORGAN

(*covers nose*)

You can tell.

LATISHA

Oh my gosh.

DWIGHT

You know, if we'd all stop bickering, maybe we could find a way out of here.

LATISHA

He's right. Let's not try and save the planet, just get out of here.

MORGAN

I don't want to save the planet, just myself.

LATISHA

Figures.

DWIGHT

(looking at ceiling)

Maybe we could crawl up through the ceiling.

MORGAN

What? No way. I'm not crawling through some dusty vents in this dress.

DWIGHT

Then take it off.

(GUYS laugh.)

MORGAN

Oh, yeah. You'd like that wouldn't you. Guys are such pigs. *(Beat.)* Besides Dwight, wouldn't you rather see Tyler drop his pants?

DWIGHT

Shut up, Morgan.

(DWIGHT stands up on chair, just as BART enters.)

BART

What do you think you're doing? *(Levels gun at him.)* Get down, before I shoot you down.

DWIGHT

Man, you can't expect us to just sit here. We all have lives.

BART

Yes, well I don't. So, welcome to my world. *(Spots telephone cord in the wall.)* Do I need to tie you all up?

TYLER

You can't keep us here forever, man. And the alternative, well, you don't want to go there.

BART

How do you know what I want? *(Pause.)* Besides, I figured things out. I want someone to go get Whitley.

MORGAN

What? You aren't serious.

BART

I'm dead serious. *(Beat.)* They assume I can't do my job because I'm old...

LATISHA

You assume I can't do your job because I'm young. What's the difference?

BART

Look, just go get Whitley. *(Holds gun on MORGAN.)* I want him to see a gun held to your pretty face. Maybe I'll even squeeze the trigger.

LATISHA

They'll put you away, Bart. Jail is definitely worse than anything else that has happened to you today.

BART

On the contrary, I've never felt so alive. Maybe I've spent the last thirty plus years in the wrong profession. Inside, I always knew there was some evil screaming to come out.

MORGAN

It's always the quiet ones.

TYLER

He's lost it.

BART

Maybe I have. *(Beat.)* Or maybe for the first time I've found it. *(Crosses to MORGAN and puts the gun to her head.)* What if I just kill her now and let him come find her body.

(MORGAN'S eyes are wide, SHE is shaking.)

LATISHA

No, Bart, don't.

TYLER

She's right. You don't want to hurt anyone. Put the gun down, man.

BART

Or what? Do you really care? You all hate her. What should it matter to you if she is no longer part of this world? Pop! And she's out of your hair.

TYLER

Look, I'm frustrated too, but I don't want you to kill her.

BART

What kind of skinhead are you?

TYLER

Put down the gun.

(BART stares at TYLER for a long moment and then lowers the gun.)

BART

Good. I had to be sure that you cared enough to return. *(To TYLER.)* So, here's the deal. You go get Whitley. You tell him that if he isn't here with you in five minutes, a disgruntled former employee is going to kill his daughter. If you're longer than that or return with the cops, I'll kill them all. Understood?

TYLER

Yeah, I get it.

BART

Then go. He's at the end of the hall.

TYLER

I know.

(*TYLER exits.*)

MARTIN

(*looks at watch and sighs*)

Well, I missed my meeting. So much for grandeur.

LATISHA

What was it anyway?

MARTIN

I invented new software that would help them manage their codes. I was supposed to present it to the executive staff today. (*Pause.*) If they went for it, then I'd most likely get a promotion.

BART

Yippee for you.

MARTIN

Look, my life isn't all that easy. The reason I still live with my mom, is because my brother is sick with AIDS. His medical bills eat up more than we do. I needed that promotion. A no-show is worse than not wowing them with my product. They could fire me for wasting their time.

LATISHA

When Mr. Whitley sees you've been kidnapped, I'm sure you'll get another chance.

MARTIN

I hope so, because Whitley's partner was here from Hong Kong today. Who knows when he'll return?

BART

Stop your whining. I'm not feeling much sympathy right now.

(*TYLER runs in and BART looks at him.*)

TYLER

He's coming.

BART

(*moves by MORGAN again*)

Everyone sit and be quiet. I'm running this, got it?

(EVERYONE sits. BART stuffs the gun in the waistband of his pants. JASON enters and takes in the scene.)

JASON

What's going on in here?

BART

Have a seat, Mr. Whitley.

JASON

Look, I'm a busy man. I don't have time for games. *(Looks at MORGAN.)* Morgan, you know that. Shouldn't you be at the mall?

BART

Didn't the security guard tell you why we're here?

JASON

He said something about an angry employee threatening my daughter with a gun.

BART

Doesn't that mean anything to you?

JASON

It sounds like Morgan is up to one of her tricks again. *(Looking at MORGAN.)* And you know I'm not amused. I have a meeting in ten minutes and I don't have time for your drama.

(BART reveals the gun.)

BART

How about now?

JASON

You went all out this time, didn't you sweetie? *(Dryly.)* I'm impressed.

BART

Don't you care about your daughter's life, Mr. Whitley?

JASON

Of course I do. But I've also had to endure years of fake kidnappings, date rapes, and shoplifting.

TYLER

Apparently, someone is trying to get your attention.

JASON

Watch it young man or...

BART

Or what? You'll fire him too? No, I think enough people have been fired here today. Don't you?

JASON

Do I know you?

BART

Huh! You don't even remember, do you?

(*JASON shrugs.*)

I worked for this company for thirty-two years and the first time you acknowledged me is when you hand me a pink slip. (*Step forward.*) You don't even remember that?

JASON

You look vaguely familiar.

BART

Oh, you're a card. Thirty-two years in your service. What a wasted life! (*Puts gun to MORGAN'S head and cocks the trigger.*) You need to feel pain, Mr. Whitley. It's the only way that someone like you will wake up.

LATISHA

Bart, don't!

JASON

I don't find this funny anymore. I'm returning to my meeting.

MORGAN

Daddy, please.

BART

Don't leave, Whitley!

JASON

(turns to leave)

See you at home, Morgan.

(BART aims gun at her leg and shoots. MORGAN screams and grabs her leg. JASON turns back. His face drops, he looks numb. HE crosses to his daughter and helps her from the chair. TYLER assists him. JASON pulls his tie from around his collar and TYLER ties it around her leg. LATISHA grabs napkins and hands them to JASON. TYLER removes his jacket and places it around her shoulders. BART looks in shock.)

DWIGHT

You shouldn't have done that.

(BART falls to the ground, hugging the gun to his chest.)

TYLER

We have to get her to a hospital.

BART

(shakes head)

No, you can't leave.

TYLER

Come on, man. She could die.

BART

(in shock)

Tie it off. She'll be fine. I'm sure of it.

TYLER

What's wrong with you?

JASON

(crying)

Why'd you shoot her?

BART

(he stands and paces and then turns for the door)

I need to think. You all stay put. I'll be right outside.

LATISHA

(stands and walks to MORGAN)

How is she?

(JASON pushes her skirt up a bit and reveals the wound. TYLER examines it.)

TYLER

I think the bullet just grazed her thigh. *(Looking around.)*
See if you can find the bullet.

DWIGHT

(looks under chair and digs it out)

It's here.

TYLER

Good.

JASON

How do you feel, sweetheart?

MORGAN

A little dizzy and my leg is throbbing.

JASON

Just try and relax. We'll figure out how to get you some help, okay? *(Turning to TYLER.)* So, what are your plans to get us out of here?

TYLER

(shrugs)

I don't have one.

JASON

You're security around here. Don't you think you should have a plan?

TYLER

Whoa! I just walk around locking things up and securing the place.

JASON

Great job! For the record, you're fired.

(TYLER stands.)

TYLER

Figures. I try to help keep your daughter alive and you want to fire me. So typical of your kind. No wonder Bart is angry. You made him who he is today.

JASON

Excuse me?

TYLER

He works his tail off for you and you cut him loose a couple of years before his retirement kicks in. What's wrong with you anyway?

JASON

Hey, I don't make all the decisions around here. I answer to a board. If they decide his productive value is not up to the value of his paycheck—he's gone.

LATISHA

Productive value? Does that translate "old?" A little gray hair and he can't manage money anymore?

JASON

He's a loon. I'm glad they did it.

TYLER

And when he comes back in here, we'll make sure he knows that. Okay?

MARTIN

You really aren't the tough guy you try to be, are you?

TYLER

What would you know geek?

MARTIN

I know what I see.

TYLER

Oh, yeah, and what's that?

MARTIN

A heart of compassion.

TYLER

Maybe I just think she's cute. (*Looks at Latisha and talks with a sarcastic tone.*) Or maybe she's the right color.

LATISHA

Oh, so if the gun had been at my head, you would have looked the other way.

TYLER

Maybe I'd helped him.

LATISHA

You make me sick.

TYLER

The feeling is mutual.

DWIGHT

There's no sense to that Tyler. Morgan treats everyone like trash and Latisha seems to be a nice soul. Why would you judge her by the way she looks?

TYLER

(*looks away, angry*)

I have my reasons.

LATISHA

Skinheads operate from a heart of hate and yet, you showed compassion. Something doesn't add up.

TYLER

I hate you.

LATISHA

You don't even know me.

TYLER

You assumed that my attitude towards you had to do with my bald head. Maybe I just don't like you.

LATISHA

Oh yeah, why?

TYLER

You don't remember, do you?

LATISHA

Remember what?

TYLER

What church do you go to?

LATISHA

Calvary Full Gospel. Why?

TYLER

I came to your young adult group back in the late 90's. Back then, I had shoulder length black hair and an earring. When a spot opened up in the worship band, you made it very clear that I wasn't the type of person that played in church. (Pause.) You call me a bigot earlier because of my white bald head, but you're the worst kind of bigot there is. You're the kind that even Jesus yelled at. You're a Pharisee.

LATISHA

I'm sorry. I didn't know that was you.

TYLER

Would it have made a difference?

LATISHA

Maybe if I knew the truth.

TYLER

Truth, ha! When the last time any of us were truthful? You all have a problem. You hide behind your Prada (to MORGAN), your keyboard (to MARTIN), and your desires (to DEWEY); at least I'm keeping it real.

LATISHA

You've been walking around bitter all this time and never bothered to approach me with the truth. You dress like a skinhead, but you're not. (Beat.) You're the fraud.

TYLER

(jumps up and hits table)

Don't try me Laquisha, Moesha, or whatever your name is.

LATISHA

I'm not afraid of you. This façade of yours is getting old.

TYLER

How many times do I have to tell you all? You... don't... know... me! You never did.

DWIGHT

You just said that you're keeping it real. Then wear your true identity on your sleeve, because what we see is an imitation.

(TYLER crosses to DWIGHT and yanks him up by the collar.)

TYLER

Let's see what you got, college boy.

DWIGHT

(pushes him off)

Back off.

TYLER

Yeah, we'll see who the fraud is. You were some big shot in high school, but you couldn't hack it. Now what are you? A cable repairman?

DWIGHT

Telephone.

TYLER

Ooh—big difference.

DWIGHT

So, now you're judging me?

TYLER

(glancing at MORGAN)

Miss America over there had your number the minute she walked in this room. *(Pause.)* One look at you, and she knew you were nobody.

DWIGHT

I ain't nobody.

TYLER

You *ain't*, huh? *(Pause.)* I bet you spend ever moment off the clock, sipping beers and watching football. Or maybe you looking at their tight butts, am I right?

(DWIGHT looks mad, but doesn't respond.)

Every minute, every day, you think about if only I had the nerve to ask a guy out. Maybe if I'd done things different. If only I'd been honest with myself, maybe I could have gone through college and made something of myself. Maybe I could have been great. Instead you're pathetic. A big, fat loser. Forever hugging an orange couch and kissing a dog named Fiasco.

DWIGHT

Shut up man!

TYLER

You salivate over your neighbor Ken and can't stand to look in the mirror. *(Pause.)* Am I getting warm? I mean, you couldn't even get Morgan to give you a nickel for crying out loud.

DWIGHT

I'm warning you.

TYLER

Warning me about what? That if I make a wrong turn like you, I could be a loser too?

(DWIGHT leaps at TYLER and they start fighting. BART walks in the room and cocks the gun. DWIGHT and TYLER freeze mid punch.)

BART

Do I have to remind you who is in charge here? I am. I have the gun. Now sit down and shut up!

JASON

When are you going to let us go? Morgan needs a doctor.

BART

Maybe in ten minutes. Maybe in an hour. Maybe never. For once, I'm in charge, Mr. Whitley. So, can it.

(HE crosses to refrigerator and pulls out a bottle of water.)

MORGAN

(weak)

You're not going to get away with this, Bart.

BART

(looks around and then speaks softly)

I know.

MORGAN

Then why not end this now. Let us go?

(BART rubs his head, obviously loosing it.)

BART

I need more time.

TYLER

For what? The police to get here?

BART

To figure things out.

LATISHA

Bart, somebody was bound to hear that shot. You need to let us go.

TYLER

Leave. Then you won't have to figure things out.

BART

Leaving doesn't solve my problem.

LATISHA

Neither does this.

TYLER

What if Mr. Whitley agrees to give your job back?

JASON

Wait a min...

TYLER

(cuts him off, shaking his head and glaring at him)

Just suppose he could do that?

BART

But he can't. He said so himself.

(TYLER stares at JASON, knowingly.)

JASON

I could try.

BART

And why would you? It's not like I've made myself employee of the year here. No, I'll figure this out. You all sit and enjoy your meaningless lives. I have to get out of this tight space and think.

(BART exits.)

DWIGHT

Okay, he's gone. I think it's time we try to get up in the ceiling.

JASON

Morgan can't make it.

DWIGHT

One of us could go and get help.

MARTIN

If one of us is missing, he'll notice.

TYLER

Yeah, not a good plan, man.

DWIGHT

We can't just sit here and do nothing.

TYLER

I thought you we're used to doing that.

(DWIGHT starts to move towards TYLER again, but JASON stops him.)

JASON

Not again. He'll come in here and start shooting. *(Pause.)* I'm going to see if I can talk some sense into him. In the meantime, you two cool it.

(JASON exits. DWIGHT sits and places his head on the table. MARTIN and LATISHA quietly talk or think, not really paying attention to TYLER and MORGAN.)

TYLER

(crosses to MORGAN)

How are you feeling?

MORGAN

Like I've been shot.

TYLER

You need something to drink?

MORGAN

Sure. Thanks.

(Grabs a bottle of water from the fridge and hands it to her.)

Why are you being so nice to me? I treat you like dirt every morning.

TYLER

I didn't think you noticed me.

MORGAN

Yeah, I noticed. But it's kind of my thing to treat the working man bad.

TYLER

Aw, and I'm the working man?

MORGAN

Yeah. But maybe slumming wouldn't be so bad.

TYLER

(laughs)

Yeah, I was thinking the same thing about you. (Laughs.) Wouldn't daddy love me?

MORGAN

(smiles)

Yeah, he just fired you. (A bit more serious.) Can I ask you a question?

TYLER

That depends.

MORGAN

On what?

TYLER

I don't know. I just said that. Go ahead.

(THEY both laugh.)

MORGAN

Do you really hate Latisha?

TYLER

(sighs)

It's complicated.

MORGAN

We've got time.

TYLER

She made me question God.

MORGAN

Is that so bad? I mean, don't we all do that at some point?

TYLER

I got pretty destructive for a while. (Pause.) I'm lucky to be alive.

MORGAN

You're not really a skinhead are you?

(TYLER glances at LATISHA and then back to MORGAN. HE shakes his head "yes" and then smiles.)

TYLER

No. One of my band mates shaved my head while I was sleeping.

MORGAN

Nice guy. (Laughs.) Admit you're not really the bad guy you try to be.

TYLER

I'll admit it if you admit you're actions are out of desperation.

MORGAN

What? You're crazy.

TYLER

Am I? (Pause.) Your dad said there's a pattern to your drama. No one does all that unless they're seeking attention.

MORGAN

(snobbish)

I don't need anybody or anything. Just my daddy's Visa.

TYLER

I doubt daddy's money makes you happy.

MORGAN

(loud enough for all to hear)

Of course I'm happy. I drive a Beamer; live in an enormous house complete with indoor pool, coffee bar and personal maid. I have the best bling, gorgeous clothes and vacations in Europe every summer. I'm the happiest girl you'll ever meet.

TYLER

That's what you want people to think. If you put yourself in that box then you don't have to grow as a person.

MORGAN

You put Dwight, Martin and Latisha in a box. *(Looking at them.)* At least I have control over my own.

TYLER

Do you?

MORGAN

I can be whatever I want to be.

TYLER

As can they. *(Pause.)* So, are you happy?

(Voices are louder and everyone is paying attention.)

MORGAN

Let's talk about them for a moment...

TYLER

No, answer the question.

MORGAN

I told you. I have...

TYLER

I know what you have. But are you happy? (Beat.) Are you happy? (Pause.) Why can't you just answer the question?

MORGAN

You are a jerk.

TYLER

Just answer the question.

MARTIN

Leave her alone.

TYLER

No. Answer the question. Are you happy?

MORGAN

(frustrated, blurts)

No! No, I'm not happy! (Beat.) Happy?

(Uncomfortable silence.)

AMIRA

What is happiness anyway? No one is. We all get up in the morning, put on our clothes, jump in our cars and come to our jobs. We do that for eight hours and then return to our homes and start again the next day. The only thing that changes the cycle is...

MARTIN

Psychos named Bart.

AMIRA

Minus the name calling—precisely.

MORGAN

All I ever wanted was to feel love without conditions.

LATISHA

Don't we all?

MORGAN

People assume that just because I'm a rich girl that I have everything.

TYLER

I never thought that.

MORGAN

But I'm nothing close to my childhood dreams.

LATISHA

And what were those?

DWIGHT

Being a princess?

LATISHA

You're proving her point. Let her talk.

MORGAN

(almost shy)

Once as a small child, I saw a potter at the San Diego Fair. I begged my parents to leave me there so I could watch him. I stared for hours. Something about the craft of taking something as simple as clay and turning it into something beautiful... well, it amazed me. I decided then I wanted to be a sculptor. I even thought being an art dealer would be an amazing job. I used to dream about experiencing the visual expression of others on a daily basis.

DWIGHT

Who knew she could be so deep?

TYLER

Shut up, Dwight.

AMIRA

So, why don't you? Art schools are expensive, but you seem to have that covered.

MORGAN

I took a couple classes at junior college and really loved it, you know? *(Pause.)* But my parents... they didn't want that for me. They say no civilized person sits in a chair eight hours a day with dirty hands. My mom said I could go to school, but my sole purpose in life was to find a husband worthy of the Whitley Empire. Sculpting could be no more than a hobby. And art dealing, forget it. My father

tells me what to do and when to do it. All the drama? I want control over something. Yeah, I want to be noticed, but as someone besides my father's daughter; to make my own choices.

AMIRA

You have to be your own person. No one should ever dictate who you are.

MORGAN

I know—the box. I'm deep in it. (*Long pause.*) At what point do you wake up wondering who you are?

MARTIN

I was eighteen. I'd just been accepted to Calpoly, when my brother found out he had AIDS.

AMIRA

Oh man.

MARTIN

Talk about a struggle. People won't even touch him. A Y2K leper. They assume he's some gay whore or an addict. Yeah, it's been rough, but if taking care of him makes me a better person, so what if I'm not who I want to be. (*Looks at TYLER.*) I still live at home, but I'm a good person.

LATISHA

You're location, feelings of resentment, or wardrobe don't make you who you are any more than my skin color does. Who you are is in here. (*SHE hits her chest.*) We all look at each other through our own stuff, but that demeans who we really are. (*Beat.*) And what's worse is when we start believing it. That stunts our growth as human beings.

TYLER

(*pacing*)

I've got to get out of here.

AMIRA

We walked into the pigeonhole. Let's not remain here.

DWIGHT

(stands)

I'm with the security guard. We've got to get out of here.

AMIRA

(to MARTIN)

They do realize I meant that as a figure of speech?

TYLER

It's Tyler.

DWIGHT

Fine. Tyler, got a plan?

TYLER

Yeah, actually I do. You were in football, right?

DWIGHT

Yeah, so?

TYLER

You know how to tackle?

DWIGHT

(smiles)

Sure do.

LATISHA

Don't do anything that's going to get all of us killed, okay?

DWIGHT

We've got it covered. Just stay back.

(LATISHA moves on the floor next to MORGAN. DWIGHT and TYLER position themselves on each side of the door and motion for MARTIN to join them. MARTIN steps next to DWIGHT a bit nervous.)

Should we call him?

TYLER

(shrugs)

Yeah, I guess.

DWIGHT

Mr. Whitley?

(There is a gun shot off stage. All of the characters look around shocked. A dramatic pause and then JASON appears.)

MORGAN

Daddy! What happened?

JASON

He shot himself.

MORGAN

What?

LATISHA

No!

MARTIN

Oh my gosh.

(DWIGHT rushes out.)

JASON

Come on, sweetheart. He's dead. We can go now.

LATISHA

I think I'm going to be sick.

(TYLER walks to the trashcan and offers it to LATISHA.)

TYLER

Put your head down. It'll help.

LATISHA

(a bit shocked)

Thanks.

(JASON picks MORGAN up and starts for the door. MORGAN looks around and stares at TYLER.)

MORGAN

No, daddy. Put me down.

JASON

We need to get you to the ER.

MORGAN

Tyler will take me.

JASON

(looks at TYLER)

What? Don't be absurd.

(TYLER steps forward.)

MORGAN

I mean it, put me down.

JASON

I don't have time for your antics. I need to get you to the hospital and be back..

MORGAN

For your next appointment. Let me save you some time. Give me to Tyler.

TYLER

Its fine sir. I can take her.

JASON

It's not fine, and you're not taking her. I am. *(Looks at MORGAN.)* You're my daughter and you're.. *(He looks at TYLER.)*

TYLER

Unemployed. I get that.

MORGAN

Put me down now, or you'll never see me again.

JASON

You don't mean that. You couldn't last a day without my platinum card.

LATISHA

She'll be fine.

JASON

*(puts MORGAN down and glares at
LATISHA)*

Didn't we just give you the dead guy's job? I'd hold your tongue.

LATISHA

(crying and enraged)

The *dead guy*, as you so rudely called him, was my friend. And you can keep your stupid promotion. I wouldn't work one more day with a bastard like you.

MARTIN

Yeah, wouldn't want to wake up on your 63rd birthday and see a pink slip in your box.

JASON

(looking at MARTIN)

Unless you want to join them in the unemployment line, Mr. Taylor, you'd better keep your mouth shut.

MARTIN

I don't need you or your money. Your competition is going to love my software. *(Looks around.)* Thanks everyone.

TYLER

Go get 'em dweeb.

(TYLER winks. MARTIN smiles, nods and exits.)

JASON

Let's go, Morgan. You look pale.

MORGAN

You don't get it do you? I'm not going with you. If I pass out, die, whatever? I'm not going with you. I've done things your way. And this isn't drama; this is me taking charge of my life.

(TYLER clears his throat.)

Oh yeah, and I'm starting art school in the fall.

JASON

Don't start with me young lady or I'll stop feeding your account?

MORGAN

Go ahead. Then I'll be like every other college student in America. Eating Top Ramen and watching basic cable.

JASON

(stares at her, glances at TYLER and then back to her)

Fine, but call your mother and let her know what the doctor says. *(HE looks at his watch.)* Drats! I missed my three o'clock.

TYLER

Pity.

(JASON exits. LATISHA rushes out the door.)

LATISHA

(off stage)

Bart? *(Enters with cell phones.)* He wasn't there. Here.

(Lays phones on table.)

DWIGHT

She's right. I went looking for him and couldn't find him. There wasn't any blood, only a hole in the wall.

MORGAN

(smiled)

My dad did something decent for once.

TYLER

What do you mean?

MORGAN

He let him go.

DWIGHT

But we heard a gun shot.

MORGAN
It's not rocket science, Dwight.

DWIGHT
I'm not stupid, Morgan.

MARTIN
Sorry.

AMIRA
Would he do that? Let him go?

MORGAN
I don't know. Would a good man become psycho? Would I stand up to my dad or get in a car with an unemployed security guard? Would that same man offer a woman he hates a puke bucket? Or how about being nice to a nerd or teaming up with a jock? Face it, after today I'd believe about anything.

(TYLER picks up MORGAN and kisses her.)

TYLER
Yeah, me too.

(SHE smiles. TYLER, MORGAN AND AMIRA start to walk towards the door. DWIGHT pulls his wallet out and tries to put the bill in the machine. It doesn't take it. MORGAN places four quarters on the table. THEY exit. DWIGHT picks up the quarters and puts them in the machine as the lights fade.

(Black out.)