

Crumbled House: a Coming-of-Age for the Suburban Child

By

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Theatre and Performance

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Notes Toward Artistic Aims:
Ramblings of first-time playwright.

In the beginning of writing my play during the end of Spring 2019, I was influenced by an all-female play called *The Wolves* that performed at Purchase in October of 2019. It solely focused on a highschool all-girl soccer team with each character having their own history with the others, as well as individual personal strengths and weaknesses they try to overcome. This is what inspired me to create *Crumbled House*, a show in which the weight is on the main characters dealing with their conflicts both all on their own and as a group. The catalyst for the conflict is that one of them is leaving and may never come back, or not for a long time.

It is a challenge that the more I learn about how to write thoroughly for story structure, and the do's and don'ts, the less I enjoy writing my play. The more talent I've seen, and the more I've tried in my own way to make friends with the other students in playwriting class, the harder and more disappointing that path has been for me. I don't know what I want or what I am supposed to do. I like to write, but I barely do enough throughout the week. It's hard. I feel like I'm wasting away my youth sitting in a dark corner and becoming depressed about where I'm going and what I'm supposed to do. I hoped to become an actor, writer, director and producer. Now I just want to write and draw. I want to make connections, I want to get into creating comics and into the industry. But I don't have any good ones. Not yet.

September 11, 2020: I've been envious because I've heard about other students' senior projects that already have a cast, a director, and a crew, while I have none. I'm upset because of the lack of experience and time I have to know how to make connections with theatre directors, actors and managers. And I'm in a writer's block, trying to write something I'm not even comfortable with. I don't know when I'll ever be done because I constantly distract myself with social media, video games and streaming services. I want to succeed. I don't want to write a

solo-performance, but I have no experience and have done little research about children. I don't know what I am doing! Or what to research on!

September 17: I hope I'm doing the right thing by writing this script. I really do.

September 23: I think my thesis statement should be connected to *The Breakfast Club* and *Dear Evan Hansen*. I only have so much time now.

September 29, 2020: I want this to be my first drama, a coming-of-age story about four middle-schoolers dealing with one of their friends moving away and how they confront it. The movie *The Breakfast Club* really influenced me after I performed a monologue for Andrew, the Jock. He lets out his stress over high expectations from an insecure and insensitive father, causing him to hurt another student and ends up in detention in the process. I wanted to try. COVID definitely made motivation to realize this project more difficult, let alone figuring out auditions, the chance for a stage production, or choosing a stage manager, designer, or director.

October 2: I was doing research on the play *Dear Evan Hansen* because it's a popular play which is a coming-of-age story. But as I read the book version, (since the play is closed due to COVID), I realized that this play is not similar to mine. It is a play about a guy who writes false letters to a dead bully to be noticed and loved from another family. My play is about four friends who embrace the change of moving away and growing up from children to high schoolers.

October 14: I've been trying to find scholarly articles through the SUNY Purchase Library but to no avail. I'm taking an alternative route and using good research.

October 16: I was watching the film *Stand By Me*, and the pistons of similarities are already going off.

October 29: I've completed the first full length draft of the play! I talked with Professor Champagne about my uncertainty about how I wanted to end the play. She suggested I try a few different endings. I just picked the nicest one but my heart is itching for an ending that's bleak and another that's bittersweet like the ending of Stand By Me. But I want a happy ending! I want to be happy, what's so wrong with that?

November 6: I showed my Playwriting Professor Carreno my full length draft of the play and she gave me her terrific honest criticism and questions.

November 21: I've met with my Advisor. I was planning to voice Bobby's character myself, but there were four actors who needed to be part of a senior project, so it's okay. I'm extremely upset about it, but this is a scenario that is out of my hands.

November 23: Read the edited first scene of Crumbled House and had it read to my Playwriting class tonight. The criticisms came mostly from the professor and assistant professor. They think the dialogue I gave to the kids when they curse feels off because they say when you're a kid the way they swear should be often out of context. I was upset, I feel like I failed and believe that my writing is shit. But they don't know that my own brother, who is eight, swears like this! Is this what I am? A shite writer? A poor homework producer? Better yet, the professor told me that I needed to write "the secret" for Allie, WHY? But I did it, and I think it worked.

December 8: Last Friday I had my first cold reading with my cast and my advisor. We still do not have a director, and the script still needs to be tweaked. I still haven't completed my contextual essay. The character Sam needs some more work which was pointed out by the actor. I was a little embarrassed whenever I took the reins in the cold read. It was uncomfortable when there were different ideas that were presented by the actors, the advisor, and when I was

explaining the topics I discussed with my Playwriting I professor. I didn't want Allie's mother, Iris, back in the show and figured it would be easier to have her presence be there, but from afar. Lenora had a different idea and suggested that I keep the mother in and perhaps double-cast the character. It's frustrating because we don't have a fifth actor and I don't know how that will work.

December 10: I met with Vinny Granata, my director today, and he was really nice. I really hope that the play goes well.

In retrospect currently, I feel very up and down about the results of my play and the pre-production at hand. The pieces are coming together but I have severe crippling doubts about the play. I have to complete it and do the best I can to make the play as good as possible. I wish I had been more productive and had taken more time to complete the script, and had done my assignments sooner rather than later, but I didn't. Here I am, simply trying, and I will ride the waves to do that.

This play is supposed to be the culmination of everything Purchase has taught me to display the knowledge I've acquired, but I'm not a four-year Purchase student. I was a transfer, someone who spent three years at Rockland Community College under a system that lacked full fledged passion and resources within the classes and my major. I've been loving my new found college life since I've been accepted, but the truth is, I wish I had begun as a Freshman here, not a Junior. I wish I hadn't started my studies here at the age of 21. I feel like an old fool. Yet this old fool will have written a happy ending, because who doesn't love that?

Coming-of-Age Stories;

Here and Back

How many movies, TV series, graphic novels, and versions of *Harry Potter* have there been? For decades, there are always stories about the young, the vulnerable, and the stereotype of adulthood. It has been tried and failed by different generations of writers. A coming of age story connects to everyone in the different mediums in the world. In this essay, I will discuss films and plays that I think interestingly and fairly represent the adolescent experience, and that helped inform my work on *Crumbled House* to some degree. The play encapsulates the change of growing up and the struggles transitioning into adulthood.

As I created the script for my play, *Crumbled House*, in addition to reflecting on my own experiences, I thought back on several films, a play, and a comics series that addressed young people figuring out their relationships, in and out of crises. In this essay, I also consider the impact the current crisis, the pandemic is having on young people and on myself. The works I will discuss below all informed my work in some way. The sources include the films *Stand By Me*, *The Breakfast Club*, Sarah deLappe's play *The Wolves*, and the Cartoon Network's *Craig of the Creek*.

The Breakfast Club (1985) is about five highschoolers stuck in a Saturday detention for different reasons. They create bonds from social and home pressures. They express their problems with one another, and become a group of unlikely friends in the 80's. John Hughes, director of *The Breakfast Club*, observed, "My generation had sucked up so much attention and here were these kids struggling for an identity. They were forgotten."

Although this movie is over 30 years old, the social anxiety in these teens can be relatable. Andrew is a jock who was influenced by his father's toxic masculinity to hurt other students. Allison is a goth girl who is random and bizarre and is hated by her parents. John is a

delinquent who is abused by his father and always gets into trouble. Claire is a rich girl who constantly lies and teases, and believes she can only stay in the rich popular group. Brian feels the pressures of his perfectionism, to the brink of suicide.

In an interview, Roger Ebert noted, "Kids are smart enough to know that most teenage movies are just exploiting them ... They'll respond to a film about teenagers as people. Both of these movies are about the beauty of just growing up. I think teenage girls are especially ready for this kind of movie, after being grossed out by all the sex and violence in most teenage movies."

Stand By Me (1986) is a movie adaptation of Stephen King's short story *The Body* (1982). Grown up Gordie writes his memories about his life in the 1950's. Flashback as four twelve-year old friends in the late 50's hang out in a treehouse. They smoke, talk shit, but they're all friends. They want to find the body of Ray Brower, a missing boy who's been rumored to be hit by a train. The first person to find the body will be rewarded and be famous. Gordie is the baby of the group and is protected by the oldest badass kid, Chris (River Phoenix), Teddy, the military nut and Vern, the goofy big kid. During the entire story, they saw this as a great adventure. The moment they find Ray's body, they grow up a little. In the end, when they come back home, the town they live in is a little smaller than they remembered, and it's the last time they really hang out as a group. In the end of the film, the narrator said, "Friends come in and out of your life like busboys in a restaurant."

The Wolves was written by Sarah DeLappe in 2016. It's an all-female play that was performed on campus in the Fall of 2019. The show focused on a nine all-girl highschool soccer team with each member having their own history with each other and personal strengths and weaknesses they try to overcome. The character's names are not given; we know them only by

their Soccer numbers. We learn about them from one player being an outsider of the team, one being a perfectionist, to an untimely death of another. They all talk like actual young highschool girls and there was a lot of unscripted and organic dialogue that gets to the point of the story. It made every moment of that play endearing and heartbreaking.

The show *Craig of The Creek* on Cartoon Network released on TV in 2018. The show is so wholesome and endearing. It's an episodic show on Cartoon Network where it's about Craig and his friends Kelsey and JP. There are different kids throughout the creek and their lack of understanding about the real world gives the episodes creative outlets of understanding everything. In multiple descriptions of the show, the creek is a kid utopia from 8AM till dinner time. All the kids have their own groups, adventures, and games they create.

In an interview with the creators Ben Levin and Matt Burnett on ComicBook.com, they were asked what was the elevator pitch? The response was,

“The basic logline of the show was about Craig and his friends going on adventures in the untamed suburban wilderness known as "the Creek," where he meets tribes of kids who rule over bike ramps and tree forts. The idea was ... basically we were talking about how when we were kids, we both grew up on the East Coast and in our neighborhoods there were these small patches of woods and even in my case, the woods was a half mile at best, but when you went in there as a kid it felt like you were in a whole other world, and so we wanted to capture that and make a show about kids, every day after school going into a whole other world that is the Creek, feeling expansive and forever. They can meet all sorts of different types of kids and have all sorts of adventures, even though it's really just a small place that's just between two houses.”

The subject is further discussed on LaNeysha Talks with Jeff Trammell, Head Writer of *Craig of the Creek*. “The crew and creators are always open to listen to each other's ideas, and they want to hear representation they want to see in the show that they don’t see in other shows,” Trammell explains, “be it from your grandmother saying a line that you’ve heard before. The crew come from different places in the US, Florida, New Jersey, Detroit. It affects the characters they write and the dialogue the characters say. They want everyone to feel seen. They want every character to be like a kid, sibling, or parent that you knew while growing up.

“For kids, it’s easy to know, “I was the kind of kid that liked to play with the mud,” and you’d see background characters that create everything out of mud. One kid would like sports, Toman, who trash talks everyone. I liked to pretend to be rich, The Tea-timers, there are so many kids in the creek that reminds you of you.”

Later on in the interview, LaNeysha and Trammell began discussing their favorite episodes of *Craig of the Creek*. For the head writer, “there are so many, some that haven’t come out yet, but power punchers, that came from me and my dad, beating streets of rage together.” LaNeysha’s favorite episodes was Jessica of the Creek, reminds her of being the middle child and having a younger sibling, “I love you, but you annoy me.”

On a more serious note. As much as the examples and discussions about coming of age stories have an importance for any age, what’s happening today cannot be ignored. Since March 2020, quarantine has been affecting the entire world, but mainly all the children and young adults today. My little brother at home can’t stand being on Zoom at home. Whenever he goes to school, he can’t play outside, has to wear a face mask and can only do his homework on a computer. He hates it and it is hard for him. Most kids his age can’t play together without

keeping a face mask on, which isn't healthy. When wearing a face mask for long periods of time, that person is inhaling their own carbon dioxide, a toxic chemical that is meant to be expelled out of one's body.

On The Telegraph, the discussion of the long term effects for kids during quarantine has been discussed. “For children, routine and school structures throughout the day normally keeps the kids in a healthy mindset, but since the virus has happened, online learning is more prominent. Being social with friends, family is now being separated in social distance and face masks. It is a disruption.”

“All of this comes down to heightened anxiety. Some children who have social problems or other forms of disabilities will “exacerbate” from home anxiety, ocd, etc. Cognitive restructuring, growing up with this might cause trauma and difficulty. The way to help the children and teens, home activities, figure out a solution to anxiety. Mainly children do not know the understanding, but it will be good to understand what “myths” goes on in a child's mind to help them.

In a CBS interview, Lisa Miller noted, “The lasting effect on the children’s development during quarantine is unknown.” Other causes were discussed, like Separation anxiety, lack of sleep. Miller continued, “Kids with disabilities, food insecurity, marginalized communities, parenting issues, off the grid, homeless children. It’s really terrible for them. The more stress a caregiver has, the less he/she is able to give a child positive back and forth support, love and attention, the more the child suffers.

According to Miller, children in European orphanages suffer the most in this case. Dr. Fisher/Fischer, ‘even in a crowded house, as we all are here in apparent isolation, parents who

are trying to work, while the children put up with homework. Still, there's no time given to the children back and forth that nurturing sense of return. In the early upbringing of physical and mental upbringing for children under five years old and older, this can cause severe cognitive delays, behavioral issues, addiction and substance abuse issues, problems with relationships, authority. Many children that are dealing with this is deemed by therapists and psychologists as "Toxic Stress"

Intense prolonged adversity, the long term mental health affects really dire. It's not only mental but physical. There's a higher rate of diseases, diabetes, death, etc. The numbers of children already affected are really large.

The reflection of growing up and the changes in it over the decades aided in my writing for *Crumbled House*. *Craig of the Creek* is aimed at the importance of attachments, and hold onto the memories of their friends. *Stand By Me* aims at the perspective of the world can change at any moment of time. Some friendships don't last forever, but that's why it's important to appreciate every moment there is. With *The Breakfast Club*, you could make friends in all different places in life. These lessons are essential to the story.

Pandemic or not, there is always a chance to have someone deal with their own coming of age story. That term helps anyone grow, from being a kid, a teen, a young adult, a grown up, to an old person. There's always time to grow up in a positive light.

A coming of age story connects to everyone in the different mediums in the world. Although it is not about the play, it's about the staging. It has been a tough year for all ages of life, but the lessons from the coming of age genre reminds us that no one is alone, and someone somewhere has a connection right outside your door.

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Technical Essay:

The Final Progress

During the rehearsal process, everyone needed to be flexible. A consistent day and time to meet was established. We met every Friday afternoon at 2:30 PM to go over the script. If there was anything technical or story-wise that needed to be changed, I'd do so. If there was anything the director or the actors were confused about, I would answer if they asked me. Throughout the entire process, I made a mental note to myself that I would keep quiet and let the director be in charge and let him and the cast handle the ups and downs of the production.

There was a frustrating misunderstanding with the rooms we wanted to use to film the show. The only room available was essentially a class room where we had to place our shoes in cubbies. Regardless, the meeting went on. On April 11th, the cast met in person for the first time for a rehearsal/runthrough. Our plan was to film the entire show. There were moments where it did get tough, but that's what happens in any form of production. I sometimes felt like I'd made mistakes with the script but Vinny and the cast made great creative adaptations with the blocking. I had so much fun watching everyone playing in the opening scene. It was like watching kids play for real.

After the first meeting, Vinny, Marianna, and I created a list of props we would buy by the following Sunday. We were given a grant for \$275 for the show. The main prop expenditure was a series of blankets, pillows, and a stuffed animal at Target, fake flowers, and three burgers from McDonalds on the final day of shooting. Marianna bought a megaphone and small cardboard shields, and Vinny bought bandanas for the cast. The cast brought their own change of clothes, blankets and pillows to make the set feel like a place where kids could play.

April 27th: Vinny and I and the cast brainstormed on the scene blocking, timing, and camera movements. There had been times on Zoom and in person when the lines needed to be cut, so the filming of the scene made sense to the viewers. It was a collaborative process. The

only problem weighing the whole show down was line memorization. The line accuracy wasn't an issue, just as long as the audience understood the point of the show. Improvised dialogue was okay. Unfortunately, three out of the five cast members kept messing up important lines that were forgotten while rehearsing. It was the only frustrating part of the show. Also, having the actors not being seen in the camera shot was difficult to deal with.

I left for a while to purchase the McDonalds food for the scene and for the cast to eat afterwards. By the time I returned, everyone had almost their entire lines memorized, and I was so proud. The entire filming process was really good and everyone made sure they kept really quiet so the microphone could hear the actors on "stage".

Before the premiere, I split the grant money between Marianna, Vinny and myself. Vinny took care of the editing of the show and we communicated our thoughts on the editing process for the show. He sent it to Jack Tamburri, the Director of the Purchase Theater Conservatory to prepare the premiere on Vimeo for April 23rd at 9:00PM.

In my artistic aims essay, I worried about wasting my time over the project, but I didn't. I had fun purchasing props. I had a nice time reading the script with the cast via Zoom and having a director who had a mutual vision about the show. I still have an internal struggle with writing every day, but I wrote my first play and I'm proud. I have connections with other actors and a director now. Last Fall, I took some writing suggestions as food for thought from my advisor and my playwriting professor. Their advice unintentionally confused me about the show's direction

for a while. In the end, I stuck with my original choices and ending, which was to make a feel-good story with emotional moments and a happy ending.

I'm happy my play became a production. I was in a really bad place in my life before the pandemic. Although it made the process longer and harder, it still was completed. I wish this semester wasn't the last one for me. I hope that any students who have problems like I had, can have the strongest support from teachers, collaborators, friends, and family. To think that I focused on acting before playwriting for this project, and I learned that all I wanted to do was write my own story, and I did. Mission accomplished.

Play:

Crumbled House

Scene 1

(It is a summer afternoon and the sunlight is a soft orange and red in the suburbs in Nyack, New York. The setting and main stage is Allie's treehouse, with Allie's home upstage left. Allie and Sam set up the fort right side of the treehouse. Bobby and Lisa prepare their own fort on the left side.)

ALLIE

Three years of a long standstill, the Ricky's and the Nirvana's come to duel once more! Today's choice is made by me! Allie of the Deep, whose land is sinking far from her precious treasure! The fort shall not be taken, places everyone!

BOBBY

Today is the day I get to choose the next game. Fifty losses, this time I will beat you!

SAM

Incorrect, it'll be mine!

ALLIE

Five, four, three, TWO, ONE!

(Team Bobby and Lisa; Bobby takes a big foam sword, Lisa has a slingshot. Team Sam and Allie: Sam holds a pillow, and Allie wields a foam axe).

BOBBY

(fake Scottish accent)

You may take our land, you may take our legos, but you will never take away our freedom!

LISA

We can just build it.

SAM

Not this time!

ALLIE

(demonic-like voice)

We'll be taking over now, dummies!

(They fight and laugh, Bobby and Lisa's fort topples down)

LISA

Nooooo....Fort Rickey! I won't forget this, as long as I live, you scheming shit face!

ALLIE

You've said that before, and on and on, why don't you let this go and lose?

BOBBY

This calls for some sweet vengeance! You two are going down, monsters! Drop dead, Allie!

ALLIE

Bring it, Bobby boy! I missed dragging you out and pumping lead in your eyes from the edge of my blade!

(Bobby and Lisa wreck Allie and Sam's fortress and take their foam weapons in the process.)

SAM

This can't be! After months of winning, we're losing! Is this the end for Fort Deep Nirvana?

ALLIE

Not, yet. Today is the day to be zapped by a plasmic bolt!

Allie points her axe at Bobby and Lisa. Allie raises her axe but her watch beeps. She looks at it, she lowers her weapon.

F-in hell.

Sam rebuilds the fort. Bobby kicks Allie's leg.

BOBBY

Allie, I can't move!

LISA

Shield! Fire rocket!

Allie snaps back into playing mode, and Sam blocks Lisa's attack.

SAM

Force field! Bshoom!

BOBBY

I now eat force fields, OMNOMNOM!

Sam falls down and laughs, Bobby and Allie get into a pillow fight with pieces from their forts until Allie's watch beeps again.

ALLIE

Pause guys! Mom just made dinner

They continue playing.

Guys!

Knocks bang from the bottom door of the treehouse, Allie claps her hands three times.

LISTEN TO ME!

Bobby Lisa and Sam freeze, Bobby stands up.

BOBBY

Come on! We were just winning, let's just finish it!

ALLIE

We can do that after we eat.

BOBBY

We'll be doing something else by the time we're all done! I'm not leaving until you quit!

The sunlight slowly changes from orange and red to purple and blue, evening has come. IRIS,

Allie's Mom, knocks on the bottom door of the treehouse and enters.

IRIS

Kids! I'm making burgers tonight, the rest of you are invited to eat over if you want. Lisa, Sam, are you treating each other well? Bobby! Don't you look scruffier! It's great to see you all after so long, so let's get to eating! Allie and I need to have the mom and daughter talk.

LISA

Works for me, holy shit! Food!

IRIS

Language!

LISA

Sorry, Ms. Ferguson. This is something I didn't miss. I'm eating!

Lisa exits the treehouse stage left, Sam walks to Allie.

SAM

whispers

Allie, is your mom serving meat again? I don't like meat.

ALLIE

laughs

Nah, she'll probably make a weird joke adults think we get. Look, I think I smell corned beef down there. Just eat that, dude.

SAM

'Kay. Sorry about your loss, Bobby boy.

Sam exits, Iris still hangs by the bottom of the treehouse

BOBBY

Ohh, that little shit. I was just about to win, Allie, you always do! I never get a win at home either!

mimicking girl voice

"Oh Bobby, you're so little! It's not your older sister Wendy's fault she's so strong. You haven't reached poo-berty yet!" Whatever that means.

ALLIE

Yeah, yeah. 'Tell ya what, the first one to finish their plate wins the game.

BOBBY

Bring it!

Bobby exits. Allie begins to walk towards the treehouse latch, but Iris stops her and enters the treehouse. Allie feels a little small.

IRIS

Hang on, Allie, I won't take long.

ALLIE

Okay? What is it? Is it the end of the world?

IRIS

Have you told them about the move to Brooklyn yet? I told you a month ago about this, and you still haven't said anything?

ALLIE

I can't tell them that! We're in different schools, and that made Lisa and Bobby really mad where they didn't talk for ages! It's August and school is so close. It'll make things worse.

IRIS

Aliana, it's worse to wait for the last second. This is painful, I know how you feel! You have to tell them tonight. You can have dinner whenever you're ready.

Iris exits the treehouse. Allie wipes her eyes, stomping on the ground. She spots Sam's backpack in the front right corner of the treehouse and takes two nerf blasters out. She stops to slowly look around the treehouse.

ALLIE

I have to tell them tonight, there's no avoiding it. But right after this!

Inhale

Hey everyone, it's payback time!

Allie yells and exits the treehouse. BOBBY, LISA, SAM, and ALLIE come back into the treehouse.

Allie holds the nerf gun in her hands.

SAM

You cheater! We're supposed to be ninjas, not army men! And I only have two Nerf blasters, dickface!

Lisa swipes the nerf gun out of Allie's hands and runs to Sam

ALLIE

Hey! Give 'em back!

LISA

Oh dearie me, Allie, a thief taking away from another thief, too much for you?

SAM

And sweet Jesus, your mom is really bad at making corn.

ALLIE

Don't you diss my mama!

BOBBY

Hey, I saw you feed your dog your food when your mom and her friends left the table!

ALLIE

And she'll never know!

(Allie throws her hands up)

What? You wanna go?

BOBBY

Yeah I wanna go! Bring it!

(Allie and Bobby pillow fight and Lisa gets the foam axe and starts striking the two.)

LISA

Nobody move! You have the right to remain silent!

ALLIE

Wrong game, Lisa! Wrong game!

SAM:

Oh yeah! Guys I got my iPad~!

(Allie and Bobby stop fighting. Lisa hits them again and stops.)

Y'all wanna watch Hulu or something?

LISA

Dad's gonna track us if we watch anything if we go on his account.

SAM

Sis, it's the only way we get to watch horror movies!

BOBBY

Yeah, don't be a snitch, Lisa!

(Lisa grabs a pillow and smacks Bobby with it)

LISA

My twin bro doesn't have the intelligence of a weed cracker like you. But he must understand he can't mess with our dad, unlike you!

BOBBY

Oh yeah? Pillow fight!

(Allie rolls away from the brawl, Sam's eyes are glazed on his iPad, but Lisa smacks Sam behind his head and takes a pillow and joins the fight.)

ALLIE

Um...guys, there's something I gotta-

LISA

Are we sleeping over, Allie? I didn't bring any of my stuff! So let's use the pillow cases as ropes!

SAM

Ropes? Are you going to hang us, dumbasso?

(Allie walks around fidgeting her hands while Bobby, Lisa, and Sam are pillow fighting. Bobby takes notice.)

BOBBY

Allie, what's up with you?

LISA

Yeah, your hands got the fidgeties! Do you have to throw up? My dad said shoving two fingers through your throat gets it out a lot quicker-

ALLIE

What the shit? No! I'm moving to Brooklyn!

SAM

What?

LISA

When? I-I mean, Why?

ALLIE

Five days. Because my mom got a new job.

BOBBY

(quietly crushed)

Oh, wow...

(The group pauses what they're doing. Bobby stops moving around and looks down, Sam wipes his glasses, Lisa lays on the ground.)

LISA

You're moving. Three years go by and now you're moving to Brooklyn borough?

ALLIE

Yeah...

BOBBY

(Confused)

Where's Brooklyn?

SAM

It's one of the five boroughs in New York City.

(Bobby slowly turns his hands into fists)

BOBBY

Oh... is it far?

LISA

Dude! It's a day away from here!

SAM

You don't know that! It's like an hour!

LISA

No!

SAM

Yeah!

BOBBY

(snaps)

What the fuck? Shut up! This isn't true!

(Sam flinches and runs behind Lisa, she glares at Bobby and he calms down a little)

ALLIE

Mom said we can just...y'know, have fun until then? I'm so sorry I'm, like, throwing this on you.

I know it's a lot, but...

(Sam moves away from Lisa, avoids Bobby and stands in front of Allie)

SAM

Um, as long as you keep calling us every day and we meet three times a year, including my birthday, Allie, I'll still be your friend.

ALLIE

I'm way ahead of you on that! You'll be seeing me again on Thanksgiving, which is in four months from now!

LISA

This is... ok, I guess! We can work it out! Sam, you mean OUR Birthday, I still haven't forgotten what you did to my plot book

(Lisa takes out a small notebook from her pocket which is burned to a crisp)

SAM

I keep telling you it was an accident, we were eight and I didn't know hand sani's are flammable!

LISA

You say that now...

ALLIE

Guys, let's finish off the night with some Gushers, Nerds Ropes, and a Nerf War!

SAM

My favorite!

LISA

YEAH!

ALLIE

Yo, Bobby! I bet I can eat more Gushers than you.

BOBBY

You're leaving in just a few days, and we're having gushers for that?

ALLIE

Bobby?

BOBBY

You can't do this shit, Allie! I'm gonna go home now.

(Bobby grabs his backpack and pillow, Lisa stands in front of him)

LISA

What the hell is your problem? Do you wanna get hit?

(Bobby's fist uncurls and gently moves Lisa to the side and opens the treehouse latch)

BOBBY

Nah, I should go home, I already got my fill of surprises. Next time, why not tell us you won't be coming back after another three years, Allie?

ALLIE

That's not fair, Bobby!

(Bobby exits.)

Scene 2

(Outside of the treehouse, stage right, Allie is tossing a baseball in the air in the backyard)

ALLIE

(murmuring a song)

"My daddy always says, 'you gotta be with the weird ones, flipping people out with their crazy A-tastes, son.' Boopy doo-doop, that's life for you!

(Sam and Lisa enter stage left through the backyard gate)

SAM

Allie!

ALLIE

Sammy!

SAM

What were you singing?

ALLIE

A made up one about my dad, it's stupid and I just can't get it out of my head!

LISA

Cool, cool. So! Guess what we're doing today?

ALLIE

Another fort battle?

LISA

Nope! We're going to outer...space-pace-pace-ace (echo)! Today is Sam's choice.

SAM

I'll set up the tinfoil hats!

ALLIE

Being brother and sister must have its perks. (Bobby walks stage left through the backyard) Yo,

Bobby!

BOBBY

Allie!

ALLIE

That's me! But, what the hell was that last night?

BOBBY

What? Because my sister was picking me up?

ALLIE

Nevermind. Are you ready for Sam's surprise?

BOBBY

I don't know, Al. I just feel so weird because-

ALLIE

-I'm moving away soon?

BOBBY

No... It's something else...

ALLIE

Oh, I see! You're jealous I'm moving into the city!

BOBBY

No! That's not it at all!

ALLIE

Yu-huh it is!

(Lisa runs up to the treehouse with a red mini-megaphone)

LISA

Guys!

(High pitched screech emits, Bobby and Allie cover their ears)

I stole this megaphone from my dad! Let's go before he starts screaming for it!

ALLIE

After you!

(Allie and Bobby join Lisa to go into the treehouse)

Scene 3

(Sam sets up a soapbox center stage holding the mini-megaphone)

SAM

Okay guys, listen up! First kid to break this here box, gets to be ruler of the house for ten minutes!

LISA

Outta the way! I got a sword.

ALLIE

Foam Axe, go!

Bobby:

Wait! I wanted the foam axe.

ALLIE

Too bad, Bobby! You can use the shield!

BOBBY

But it's bent up, broken, and tiny!

LISA

Give to me, Bobby! I shall combine my Lego Staff with your bent shield and turn it into a cannon! Haha! The kingdom is all mine, and I shall call it... Lisa's Keep!

SAM

Never! It shall be called www.screwyourself.com!

(Bobby uses his strength and picks up all the pillows and throws it at everyone)

BOBBY

You won't be the victor, Sam!

(Allie body slams Bobby into the ground and Sam ducks out of the way.)

ALLIE

Got you now, Bob.

BOBBY

Get off!

ALLIE

Nah!

LISA

Second dibs!

BOBBY

No!

SAM

It's official! The winner is me, you all lose!

ALLIE

You cheated! This game is flawed!

SAM

Nu-uh! My game, my rules!

LISA

Get him!

(The trio gang up on Sam, knocking the wind out of him)

SAM

My ribs...this isn't supposed to happen...

BOBBY

Ha ha! I win!

LISA

I declare a game change!

SAM

No! Lisa, you know today was MY day to decide what we do! Back then, it was always Bobby's and Allie's decisions, and now it's mine!

LISA

No! It's mine!

(Lisa gives Sam a noogie and Bobby stomps on the box)

ALLIE

Everybody STOP!

(Sam shoves Lisa off him)

ALLIE

What's the big deal, Sam? Usually you're pretty chill about playing like this.

SAM

I...I'm sorry guys. I just wanted to do something my way before you go...i'm not really good at creating games that well.

LISA

Yeah, that makes sense...

BOBBY

Sam, it's okay! This was actually good. My brothers and sisters at home would throw rocks at the wall. Your game's fun!

ALLIE

Sam... it's not for, like, six days! Let's stop for a sec. I'll go get some juices, ok?

SAM

(Smiling, he says softly)

'Kay...

(Allie exits, Bobby looks out to see Allie exit the stage, Sam and Lisa embrace for a moment)

LISA

Um, if you guys moved away, where would you want to go?

BOBBY

Um, I like where I am now since dad left. But I heard from Wendy that Arizona is awesome! I just wanna steal a horse and ride into the Grand Canyon-

SAM

-but with a flying ship!

LISA

Yeah! It'll have a roller coaster to travel, and gems and solar panels to power it up!

BOBBY

Yeah, but riding a horse would be awesome!

SAM

No, horses suck, they can just fall in a hole and die!

BOBBY

No! The horse would fly, with rockets on its hooves!

LISA

Like a Pegasus?

BOBBY

Yeah! But with metal wings, and ice blue hair!

LISA

Really?

SAM

Yooooo!!

BOBBY

I KNOW!!!!!!

(Allie enters the treehouse with a couple of juices)

ALLIE

Eyyy!!!

(Tosses juice to Sam)

SAM

Eyyy!!!

(Tosses juice to Bobby)

BOBBY

Wooooo!!!

(the last juice is tossed to Lisa)

LISA

You guys are weird...

(cut to black)

Scene 4

(The next morning, Allie is pulling flowers out of the ground and putting them in a paper bag and throws it into the treehouse, a skunk growl echoes. Lisa enters.)

ALLIE

Shitty skunk, get out of there! Yo, you're here early Lis. Where's Sam?

LISA

WAIT THERE'S A SKUNK?

ALLIE

Mom said to wait here and she'd be taking care of it after packing. So, wassup?

LISA

Oh, Sam and I watched a movie last night with a sitter. It was great but Sam's still sleeping 'cause we were up 'till 1:00.

ALLIE

Oh, I see! You still Miss Night-Owl?

LISA

Hell yes! I stayed up for two days once and I didn't even feel tired! Last night this was different, I was up till like, three-something, thinking. I just can't (beat) when you leave, I don't know if I can hang around Sam and Bobby like we do. I'd be the only girl around, and I just can't let go of this thing in my gut. I don't know!

ALLIE

You don't get it, Lisa! I love this town, my treehouse, and you guys! I want to live here forever. Then mom had to come over while I was making a Fluffernutter and said, "Pack your bags,

sweetie, we're moving! It's going to be great, you'll make new friends and get out of this dingy house," I didn't want to think that it was true. I hit me like a truck thinking how much I was going to miss hanging out with you three. I don't want to go to a new school, and what if the other kids are shitheads? What if my new home is even worse? I don't know!

LISA

Oh my god Allie, shut up! It's ok, do you remember last year when Tobin was moving and the gym kids acted like he died? But he wasn't and he visited the school every other month. For me, I'm just bummed out, but it's not the end. Jeez, you, Bobby, and Sam need to stop acting like it's the end of the world, but it's not! Alls I'm sayin' is, you keep your old friends, but don't stop makin' new ones.

ALLIE

I'd like that. I can totally make an indoor treehouse, and when I make new friends. I'll bring you, Sam, and Bobby over and we'll all play with my city friends!

LISA

That's more like it! Now, when you go to New York, tell me if there's a Robbie or Frida there, 'cause they're my cousins. I think you'd get along with them.

(Bobby enters through the gate)

BOBBY

Morning! What are you two talking about?

LISA

School stuff, New York. What's it to you?

BOBBY

(Frown)

Really, Lisa? Where's Sam?

ALLIE

Lisa ditched him at the house to get his beauty sleep.

BOBBY

Oh that's slick, Lis.

(Lisa glares at Bobby and takes out her notebook and clicks her pen and begins to write. Sam runs to the entrance)

SAM

Lisa! Why didn't you wake me up?

LISA

I'm not your mom, bro. You can get up on your own or use an alarm clock!

SAM

I was gonna!

LISA

But ya didn't! You sleep late all the time! You slept so much during school that Ms. Gulch put a tarantula on your ear, and you still didn't wake up!

(Allie and Bobby laugh, while Lisa has her arms crossed and Sam slowly realises this event.)

SAM

I had a fucking spider on me!? That's when I dreamt I was being crushed by squirrelcupine!

LISA

Yeah, it was great seeing you squirm like that, but you're not getting me! You gotta do better or-

SAM

Y'ain't gonna do shit! Besides, I'm the math and science wiz! I cast the spell of love and gratitude over my studies. Right, Bobby?

BOBBY

Dude, I just like playing basketball, dunno why you and Lisa are complaining about this.

SAM

Can we just go inside the treehouse now?

ALLIE and LISA

No.

SAM

Why?

ALLIE

There's a monstrous, rabid, red-eyed skunk, that wants to feast on our blood!

SAM

Cooooool!

BOBBY

Y'want me to get it?

ALLIE

Nah, mom's getting a broom.

(Iris enters the scene holding a snare pole and a cardboard box.)

IRIS

Ok, now WHERE IS IT?

ALLIE

Mom, you know where.

IRIS

I'm going into fray. Kids, if I'm not back out of here in the next minute, have become one with the stench.

(Iris puts on a gas mask and stomps up the treehouse steps. Rattling inside ensues.)

ALLIE

Drama-queen.

SAM

Godspeed, you magnificent creature. I've never seen a skunk before, but I've seen pics, what about you guys?

BOBBY

It's a monstrous striped foaming beast! Oh man, Allie's mom is gonna have to take a ketchup bath, like in that one movie?

ALLIE

Ew! That's like bathing in chunky blood!

BOBBY

You “ew” yourself, Allie! It’s like Fort Rickey arose from the blood of it’s enemies, churning
into one place, a sanctuary for warriors!

LISA

Bobby, get serious, Iris could die!

SAM

No she won’t! She’ll just be blinded by the skunk’s gas and throw up or something.

ALLIE

That’s even worse! I’m going up there!

(Allie dashes up to the treehouse, but a loud screech and a thump comes from the end of the
stage, Iris exits the treehouse)

IRIS

The deed is done. The skunk has left no stench, you can play up there now. Once we’re in the
city, the rats will be the only problem there!

(Iris chuckles and exits stage left. Leaving the four kids in an uncomfortable mood.)

Scene 5

(Lisa stands center in the treehouse, one light shining on her)

LISA

Change is a blooming cycle, in which none of us have a clear motive as to where it takes us, my friends, and brother. There are many things I don't like. On this day, day three, the midway point in this uneven week, I will have the best game of all. Will they enjoy it? Will they be ready? I hope so. Because it's time...for....TRUTH OR DARE: Spring Mode! Starring, (Mild) Bobby, (unpleased) Sam, and... (excited) Allie!

(Bobby, Sam, and Allie are seated in the center, three more lights shine on them, audience clapping sound bite, the sound ends abruptly when Lisa pretends to play the trumpet.)

ALLIE

Brought to you by a live audience!

BOBBY

Everytime with the solo speech!

SAM

Wait, where did all the lights come from?

BOBBY

Don't question it, it only makes it worse.

ALLIE

Sam, remember when she sang for eight minutes straight about whales being endangered because of aliens? Bobby interrupted her and she got really sad.

SAM

Oh, yeah! She always did love the sound of her own voice.

LISA

Samuel! You get to be the first to choose! Truth or Dare?

SAM

Umm....Oar.

(Pause. Allie laughs, Bobby chuckles)

LISA

What? Or?

SAM

Oar!

LISA

That's what I just said! Wai- are you a fucking dummy? We don't have an oar.

SAM

Then I'll make one!

LISA

No! You get dare, I shall come up with one right now. I dare you to spin around for 30 seconds, then end it by doing a split!

SAM

Okay. Here I go...

(Sam spins around while Lisa, Bobby, and Allie chant Sam's name)

LISA

Ten seconds left!

BOBBY

Puke, Sammy! Do it outside to see how far it goes!

ALLIE

Ew, Bobby!

LISA

That's so gross! Sam, three, two, one, finish!

(Sam falls to the ground, tries to do a split and fails)

ALLIE

So close!

BOBBY

Barely.

LISA

Alright, Allie, truth or dare?

ALLIE

Give me the awesomest dare you got!

BOBBY

You wish.

LISA

I dare you to hang upside down while singing Green Day's September!

ALLIE

I don't know that song.

BOBBY

Yes you do

ALLIE

No I don't.

BOBBY

Yes you do!

ALLIE

NEIN!

(Lisa takes out her phone and plays an instrumental version of Wake Me Up When September Ends. Allie slowly starts to hum. Bobby and Lisa smirk at each other.)

LISA

Do it.

(Allie does a head stand, she messes up the song a bit)

ALLIE

Summer has come and passed

The something, something never last

Wake me up when September ends

Like fathers blah, blah, blah,
Ga, ga, ga gone so fast
Wake me up when September ends-
I can't do it!

(Allie falls down on her face, but quickly straightens up. Sam and Lisa laugh and clap, but
Bobby doesn't.)

LISA

That was hilarious. Bobby! Truth or dare?

BOBBY

I'm gonna go with dare.

LISA

Well, Bobby boy! I dare you...to tell...the truth!

BOBBY

Wait, what? No!

SAM

Wait, you can do that!?

LISA

You can in my book! I've been waiting for a while to do this.

BOBBY

Nope, I'm out. I wanted to go for dare, so I'm sticking with dare!

LISA

(Takes out her notebook and flips through to a page.)

Ok. That's fine, I guess you'll be accepting the punishment to clean the entire treehouse at the end of tonight?

BOBBY

You wouldn't.

LISA

Oh, I would. First, you missed out on my Halloween dare, you're avoiding my dare again on the week Allie's leaving, lastly, you're being mean! In my book these are criminal offenses. So we'll stick with three truths! (Lisa laughs) Aw, don't be such a sourpus, Bob.

ALLIE

Jeez, the tension is on tonight!

SAM

(whispers)

Allie, what does she mean about Bobby missing out on her game?

ALLIE

(whispers)

Last year, Lisa dared Bobby to throw egg shells at the Halloween parade floats. When they got there, he threw the shells at Lisa instead of the floats and ran away. Hearing this now, she probably held onto that all year and created the ultimate revenge game on him.

SAM

Oh...

LISA

Drumroll please!

(Drumroll proceeds from the background from Allie and Sam)

LISA

Thank you! Bobby, do you pee in the bed?

BOBBY

No.

LISA

That was an easy one. Next, on Halloween, why did you throw egg shells at me instead of the float I told you to throw at?

BOBBY

I didn't do it.

LISA

You can clean up skunk poop, then.

BOBBY

I did it because my sister, Wendy, was driving on that floaty-thing. If I threw 'em, she'd know and would kill me! Also it was funny in my head and it was priceless!

ALLIE

Oh...that makes sense! Wendy was always working weird jobs for people.

LISA

Last truth! Tell me this, Bob. Why are you being a grumpy jerk? Also, When Allie leaves, will we still be friends?

BOBBY

Hey, that's more than one!

LISA

It's a two-parter, now dish!

BOBBY

Fine. What kind of question is that? Of course we'll hang out, that's my answer. Bing, bang, boom. I was being a grump, 'cause, I ate some Gluten. Gives me a bad mood.

LISA

Ooh, now I don't think that's really truthful to me~! See, the only times you hang out with us are here, not in school. Whenever we invite you to eat at lunch, you never come. When Allie is around, you're always there for her, but not us. Why?

(Bobby is silent)

ALLIE

Bobby?

BOBBY

I'll hang out with you guys whenever you want, how 'bout that?

LISA

Bobby, you didn't answer the question truthfully.

BOBBY

Okay then! Maybe I like Allie 'cause she's my best friend, 'kay? She's gonna be gone, why should I care? Maybe I don't know why my throat and my stomach keeps hurting! Maybe I'll miss how she makes us laugh, being in the treehouse, her mom making food for us, it's all great!

LISA

And?

BOBBY

(Screaming)

What the fuckin hell else do you want to know? She doesn't make me feel alone! that's it. I'm done, goodnight everybody!

(Bobby tries to leave and Allie runs after to grab his hand)

BOBBY

Please let me go.

ALLIE

No, Bobby! Why are you acting so weird?

BOBBY

It's none of your business.

LISA

Why do you keep lying?

BOBBY

Why? WHY? Because I'm fucking angry! Is that good enough for you, Lisa? Or do you need to fact check it in your little diary? I don't know what to feel, but I sure as hell don't want it! It's like a piece of a keychain fell out of my pocket and smacked me in the face. (glares at Lisa and Sam) You two are only with me because you like being with Allie! I've seen how you two run up towards her in school, eating lunch everyday, nobody asks me! I'm just the angry kid who lives in the poor house! This is the only place where I feel like I don't have to think I'm in a nightmare, this is the dream! I hate change! Allie, my best friend, waited to tell us this whole entire thing in less than a week. Dick move!

(Allie picks up her chair and smashes it on the ground, Lisa and Sam back off, Bobby is frozen)

ALLIE

“Dick move”? You piece of shit, d'you actually think I want to move away? You tell me you like me and say you're angry at me and shove it to Lisa and Sam because who hangs out with me the most? I DON'T FUCKING GET YOU! Also, I don't wanna move! That's why I never said anything! I'm scared too and my mom tells me that I don't have a say in the matter. WHY IS THAT, BOBBY? Is it because I'm a kid and I'm selfish? I don't know! It's not fair for you to push everything on me, like I'm your parent that you never had. I'm just a few months older than you, dude! (crying)

I love this place, this is my home, and I don't wanna go! You think that I'm taking this so easily, did you forget how upset I was about it the night I told you? I don't get it? Why do you hurt me like this? Just go away! I'd- I- I- (sobbing)

(Sam and Lisa hold Allie)

BOBBY

Allie...

(Bobby tries to come close, but Lisa pushes him away)

LISA

Leave.

(Bobby leaves the treehouse)

End of scene

Scene 6

(The next day, a moving truck is parked in the distance. Bobby slouches at the end of the treehouse, the light is on him. Iris enters the left stage.)

IRIS

Hey Bobby.

BOBBY

Hi, Mrs. Iris.

IRIS

Did you get into a fight?

BOBBY

(Bobby scooches to the right)

How can you tell?

(Iris sits beside Bobby)

IRIS

Last time you and Allie fought, you didn't talk for three days and you slept on this spot overnight. You two were always stubborn, but loved being together. As far as I could tell.

BOBBY

But I did nothin' wrong! They pushed me about Allie, hanging out, moving. They know I'm right. If they don't see that, fuck them!

IRIS

Do you mean that?

(Bobby folds his arms tight)

BOBBY

...No.

IRIS

It's me you're mad at, am I right?

BOBBY

You're right! It's your fault she's moving! She's going to Brooklyn and never coming back! We'll never be friends again! And don't fuckin' say, "I know" or "that's life" because that doesn't help! You're just an adult, you don't know what it's like being a kid.

IRIS

I know, I'm sorry, Bobby. I never realized this was very unfair for you, Sam, Lisa, and my own daughter. This is the problem with being an adult, you forget the words you hate hearing from adults when you were a kid. I should have realized this.

BOBBY

I don't get what you're saying.

IRIS

Lisa and Sam might be having a rough time about this too, don't you think?

BOBBY

I really messed up.

IRIS

That's true, you've always been a sensitive child. Lisa and Sam, still like being with you, they follow you and Allie, I'd keep them around, if I were you.

Scene 7

(Lisa, Sam, and Allie open and stuff random toys in a few boxes, the mixed emotions from yesterday still lingers. Sam sits by the boxes, Allie cleans up the floor and Lisa fidgets around. Sam empties a box and sits inside it)

SAM

Guys! Let's ride to the north pole!

LISA

Sam, get out of the box. Allie, it's not gonna be so bad! We'll talk online and you'll be comin' on Thanksgiving anyway, right?

ALLIE

Yeah... but it was going to be at Bobby's house...

LISA

So much for that idea. We could make a new spot, like a big tent in our backyard. You can have Thanksgiving over at our place instead!

SAM

You could come over to our house, we can play with the foam swords, make forts and all?

ALLIE

Your backyard is nothing but a stone patio and a small garden, we'd just be inside and all the parents would bother us even more. Guys, It's not the same!

(Bobby enters the treehouse)

BOBBY

Guys!

(Sam opens his mouth to say something, but doesn't. Lisa continues to clean, Allie opens a box

and puts something away.)

ALLIE

What are you doing here?

BOBBY

Do you want some help with that?

ALLIE

No, I think we're good, thank you very much! Right?

(Lisa and Sam look at each other)

Right? Just get out, Bob. I'm sure you'll be glad that I'll be gone, right?

BOBBY

No! I have something to tell you.

ALLIE

I don't think I want to hear ANYTHING from you!

BOBBY

I'M SORRY!

(Silence)

ALLIE

You're what?

BOBBY

I screwed up, ok? I don't want to lose you, Allie!. I want to be with you forever and ever, no matter how far apart we are. I'm sorry.

ALLIE

Bobby... stop...

(Allie stops what she's doing...sniffs a little)

BOBBY

Lisa, Sam, I was wrong for saying you only care about Allie and not me. You two are a great team to be around.

(Allie runs and grabs Bobby in a strong hug)

ALLIE

Don't you ever talk badly like that ever again. You got that, Bobby?

BOBBY

Yeah...I promise.

(Lisa and Sam hug Allie and Bobby)

LISA

I'm sorry for pushing you into that stupid game! But don't be a jerk anymore, got it?

SAM

We're not letting either of you go!

BOBBY

Sounds great! But first...

(Everyone lets go, Bobby looks inside the box.)

we haven't decided which one rules the house. So, shall we?

SAM

One last time!

(Everyone runs into the crates of boxes, Sam and Bobby pull out foam swords, Lisa grabs a shield, and Allie grabs her foam axe)

ALLIE

Three, two, one...CHARGE!

(END)

CAST AND CHARACTERS

Allie: 11, leader of the group.....Marianna Steen
Bobby: 10, Allie's best friend.....Mauricio Gonzalez
Lisa: 11, Sam's twin sister.....Sarah Louis
Sam: 11, Lisa's twin brother.....Sammy Kropf
Iris: Allie's Mother.....Joann Maxwell

CREW MEMBERS

Producers.....Vincent Granata, Marianna Steen and Joshua
Fink

DIRECTOR

Vincent Granata

PLAYWRIGHT

Joshua Fink

Image of the play: [IMG_0511.HEIC.heic](#)