

EXT. UNIVERSITY THEATER - NIGHT

Mabie theater, at the University of Iowa, sits along the Iowa River.

The lobby, facing the river, is two stories tall with glass windows. The lights are still on, so it stands out.

In the distance are the CITY SOUNDS including a SIREN.

Above are the stars in the sky.

INT. AARON'S ROOM - DAY

This room is part of a house where the tenants share a bathroom. It has one bed, a chair, a closet, and a very small chest of drawers. There is a 12" TV with an antenna on the dresser turned on to a morning news show.

AARON, male, 22, is dressing and getting ready for class.

On the TV is footage of the space shuttle Atlantis on the launch pad at Kennedy Space Center.

NEWS ANCHOR

And the countdown is on for the launch of the space shuttle Atlantis this afternoon. STS-30 is scheduled for liftoff at approximately 2:45p.m. eastern time today with a satellite headed to map the planet, Venus. It is the fourth launch of the shuttle since the tragedy of the Challenger three years ago. The crew of five include commander David Walker.

Aaron turns off the TV, zips his backpack shut, then grabs his Walkman before he exits.

INT. HALLWAY - DAY

It is a small hallway on the second floor of a house with four rooms that leads to a common bathroom.

Aaron exits his room and quietly heads to the stairs downward.

He's halfway to the stairs when another door opens and MICHAEL, 21, male, exits his room in a bathrobe with a towel headed in the other direction.

They pause and look over each other.

AARON
You just getting up?

MICHAEL
(shyly)
Yes, slept a bit late.

AARON
Rough night?

MICHAEL
A great night.

Aaron makes sure no one else is in the hall with them and gently puts a hand on Michael's shoulder.

AARON
Thank you.

Michael smiles. They move closer when they hear rumbling from one of the other rooms and step back.

MICHAEL
See you in class.

AARON
Sure.

Aaron exits down the stairs.

Michael watches him fondly then heads to the bathroom.

EXT. IOWA CITY STREET - DAY

This residential street is filled with houses on each side. Some have "ROOM FOR RENT" signs in the window.

Aaron exits a house and starts walking towards campus. He pauses when he gets to an intersection.

CAROLINE (OFF)

Hey, Aaron.

Caroline, female, 21, meets him at the intersection. They cross and start walking together.

AARON

How are you?

CAROLINE

Good. You look good, all things considered.

(he smiles)

No blood stains?

AARON

(winks)

No, not even a scratch.

CAROLINE

That's good. You look better than I felt.

AARON

Really?

CAROLINE

Yes, I didn't want you to die.

AARON

Thank you.

CAROLINE

How many more deaths are there for you?

AARON

Just one.

CAROLINE

I imagine your days will be a lot easier for you then.

AARON

Well, I can't deny I won't miss the fighting.

CAROLINE

You didn't get hurt, did you?

They are approaching a stop for Cambus. There are several STUDENTS, various, already in line.

AARON

Oh, I took a few bruises here and there, but it's all for the best.

CAROLINE

Take one for the team.

AARON

Sort of.

They are at the stop.

CAROLINE

You taking the bus?

AARON

No, I'm going to get some breakfast at Carson's first.

CAROLINE

I'll see you on Monday.

She waves at him as he continues towards downtown as the bus comes around the corner towards the stop.

AARON

Hope so. Take care.

CAROLINE

I hope you survive!

AARON

Me, too.

There are some odd looks from the others as the bus comes to a stop.

Caroline smiles, knowing what she has done.

Aaron wryly smiles and heads off.

INT. ALEX'S APARTMENT - DAY

This is a small but full apartment. The bedroom and the living room are combined with a kitchen space and bathroom. There are clothes, pictures, and several personal items around the apartment.

The wall calendar says this is May 1989.

ALEX, 20, male, doesn't smile much, not the person indicated in the photos and personal items, is sitting alone at a desk. He has some books open on the desk, several notebooks and folders stuffed with papers, and a yellow notepad. He repeatedly checks the notepad.

The phone RINGS and he's surprised. He slowly picks it up.

ALEX (TO PHONE)

Hello? Hi, how are you?

(pause)

That sounds good. How's Dad's knee? He'll be happy he's in the garden again.

(long pause, sad)

I'm doing okay. Alan's apartment is working out pretty good. He's workshopping in Minneapolis for the semester so it's good for both of us. Yes, I have another appointment today. We talk about it a lot. I don't have any of those nightmares anymore. No. Really, I'm doing fine.

(rubbing his forehead)

How about next weekend? Yes, that will work. Classes finish at 1:30 on Fridays so, any time after 2:00 will work. Ok, I'll call again on Thursday. Ok. I love you. Talk to you soon.

Alex hangs up the phone and sits in silence for a moment with a hand on his forehead considering his options.

Finally, he checks his watch, then exits the room.

There is a handwritten note on the desk that starts with "I'm sorry."

INT. CAMBUS - DAY

The bus is about half full when it comes to a stop.

Alex gets on, finds a spot at the back of the bus where no one is close, and sits down before it continues.

INT. UNIVERSITY CLASSROOM - DAY

Aaron is among one of 20 STUDENTS, various, in the classroom including KATIE, female, 19, ANDREW, male, 21, and Michael.

PROFESSOR REAGAN, male, 45, is at the front of the class pacing back and forth.

REAGAN

For London the 17th century was a whole new era of rule. In 1600 London alone had a giant population of 200,000 and led the world. That year Charles, the first, became King of Great Britain and ruled until 1649. He was the second son of James, the 6th, and Anne of Denmark, and was not originally intended to take the throne giving England more than a bit of drama at the throne, not just on the stage.

(MORE)

Katie slyly slips a note to Aaron as she watches the professor.

REAGAN (CONT'D)

English society was heavily divided into social classes, with the nobility at the top, followed by the gentry, and then the middle class. In some ways it was very much like we have it in the 20th century here.

(MORE)

Trying to not make it obvious Aaron looks at the note. It is a heart with "tonight 8:00 Airliner?" inscribed on it.

REAGAN (CONT'D)

Unknowingly setting an example
of what the fledgling overseas
colonies would mimic the middle
class was growing with merchants
and farmers

(MORE)

Aaron is flattered, writes something on it and slyly hands it back to her.

REAGAN (CONT'D)

This was also the beginning
of the British East India Company.

Katie reads it and looks sadly back at him.

Michael watches and Andrew rolls his eyes.

INT. COUNCILOR'S OFFICE - DAY

DOCTOR SCHEIE, male, 50, is seated at his desk.

Alex is in a chair across from him.

SCHEIE

So, it sounds like this week
has been good for you.

ALEX

Well, it's been so busy. I
haven't had a lot of down time
to think about what happened.
Just trying to adjust to a new
way of doing things.

SCHEIE

What about those moments you
talked about?

ALEX

(rubs his forehead)
They happen once in a while.
just, whenever.

SCHEIE

What does it feel like?

ALEX

(pause)

It feels like someone hits a
pause button somewhere.
Everything just stops. I just
wait for it to start again.

INT. OLD CAPITAL MALL - DAY

It is fairly busy with STUDENTS and other PEDESTRIANS, various,
going about their business.

JOHN, male, 25, exits an Osco's pharmacy with small package of
goods, checks his watch, and heads off.

CALVIN (OFF)

John! Hold up.

John stops and is soon joined by CALVIN, male, 19 and they start
to walk along the mall.

JOHN

How's it going?

CALVIN

OK, just picked up some photos
I had developed at Osco's.

JOHN

Any good?

Calvin opens the envelope and starts to flip through the prints.

He occasionally shows them to John.

CALVIN

Ouch.

JOHN

Out of focus.

CALVIN

Yeah, it happens now and then.
(holds one)
Look at this.

JOHN

Oh, wow, give that to Laura
tonight. She could use that
in her portfolio.

CALVIN

(another photo)
This is awesome.

John stops and looks at the photo in detail.

JOHN

Hell, I could use that one.

CALVIN

It's really an intense moment.
I thought you were going to
really take him out.

They sit on a bench and go through the photos.

JOHN

Well, maybe.

CALVIN

You two have hated each other
since day one. One more night.

JOHN

Thankfully.

(MORE)

Calvin looks up and sees FRED, male, 24, walking through the
mall. He quickly hands John some more photos.

Fred glances over, sees John looks away as he passes.

The distraction works and John does not see Fred pass.

Calvin relaxes.

JOHN (CONT'D)

This is a really good one of Mandy, too. You really have a talent for it.

CALVIN

Thanks.

John stops at a photo of Fred. Fred is posing for the camera in a fancy suit and tie.

JOHN

You took this one?

CALVIN

Sorry. He was posing like he always does and it just got the best of me.

JOHN

(in disgust)

Well, I suppose the subject makes a difference.

INT. UNIVERSITY BUILDING HALLWAY - DAY

It is between classes so there are many STUDENTS and FACULTY, various, in the hallway.

There are several signs for University of Iowa Hawkeye teams in the area for raising school spirit.

A class exits one room, and Aaron slowly walks down the hallway with Andrew and Michael. Michael is carrying a trumpet case.

ANDREW

(to Aaron)

Dumb ass.

AARON

What?

ANDREW

Katie's been hitting on you all semester. She's sending you note in class and you turn her down.

Aaron shakes his head and Michael laughs.

AARON

I can't tonight. It's been
Scheduled for months and it's
not like I can just skip it.

ANDREW

In a few weeks class is over
and it'll be your last chance.

AARON

So why start something now?

ANDREW

(to Michael)

Is he really that dumb?

MICHAEL

Well. I mean, I'm...?

ANDREW

Screw her now, worry about
that later. Or, better yet,
give her my name and I'll
screw her instead!

AARON

Yeah, sure.

ANDREW

I knew I could count on you.

Andrew heads into a classroom. Aaron and Michael watch him go
and Michael shakes his head. They walk towards the stairs.

AARON

Why do we hang around him?

MICHAEL

I think that's the first question
on the final exam.

AARON

Hope it's multiple choice with
none of the above as one of
the answers.

MICHAEL
Always pick D.

AARON
I heard it was C.

MICHAEL
That explains why my grade was
so bad.

They walk down the stairs.

On the next level DAVID, male, 18 and KELLY, female, 18 are
talking near a classroom.

KELLY
Sometimes I wonder about him.

DAVID
Yeah, I still don't know what
to make of him. I have to admit
when he takes off his hat he
seems to age about 20 years.

KELLY
(laughs)
That's a pretty good description.
I need to get to History 101. See
You in Economics later.

DAVID
Yeah, you too. My name's David,
it's nice talking to you Kelly.

KELLY
Wait! How did you know my name?

DAVID
It's printed on the back of
your shirt.

Charmed by him she smiles, waves, and heads off to class.

Aaron and Michel get to the main floor and exit the building as
EMILY, female, 18, and KENNEDY, male, 19, cross the main
entrance heading down the hall.

KENNEDY

So, any plans for Friday?

EMILY

I have one more night for signing. It's the final performance tonight.

KENNEDY

Is that hard?

EMILY

Well, it's pretty intense, I have to admit it, but once you get into the flow of things, it's not too bad.

KENNEDY

How do you keep up with so much? I mean, it's not just English, it's, you know, that.

EMILY

Well, the translation's the same no matter what's being said.

KENNEDY

I guess I hadn't thought of that. What if they screw up?

(MORE)

Emily tells him it doesn't matter how they say it in American Sign Language.

KENNEDY (CONT'D)

Did you just curse at me?

EMILY

(laughs)

No! I just said it doesn't matter. The translation's still the same.

She asks him what he's doing over the weekend in ASL.

KENNEDY

That was definitely a dirty word.

EMILY

I was just asking you what you were doing this weekend.

KENNEDY

A bunch of us are going to see a flick.

EMILY

Something new?

Kennedy is talking to her but watching other students in the hall.

KENNEDY

There's a new Indy Jones movie coming out.

EMILY

Another one?

KENNEDY

Yes, this has Sean Connery as his dad in it.

EMILY

Wow. It sounds fun.

KENNEDY

It should be great. We can't wait for it.

EMILY

Who are you going with?

KENNEDY

Ron, Jeff, Maria, Claire, Barb. A bunch of us. We saw Field of Dreams last weekend. It takes place here in Iowa.

EMILY

I heard.

KENNEDY

We decided after finals we were going to make a trip up to Dyersville. I hear they left the field there.

EMILY

It sounds fun.

KENNEDY

It'll be a blast. You should try and go sometime. We can't wait. There's also a new Robin Williams movie soon.

EMILY

I love Robin Williams.

KENNEDY

Claire does too.

EMILY

Oh?

KENNEDY

Yeah, she can't wait. It sounds kind of serious though. The Dead Poets something.

EMILY

I'd love to see that.

KENNEDY

We'll probably all see that at Old Capital Mall.

EMILY

Sounds good.

KENNEDY

It'll be great.

(sees someone off)

Hey, there's Claire. Good luck. I'll catch you later.

Kennedy runs off calling for Claire.

Emily stands by herself watching him leave for someone else. Her shoulders drop and she slowly walks away on her own.

EXT. STUDENT UNION - DAY

There are a dozen PROTESTORS, various, with signs marching outside the east entrance to the student union.

Their signs, and comments, say it is dangerous for the CIA to be recruiting students. They shouldn't be allowed on the campus.

NICHOLAS, male, 20, and DOUGLAS, male, 20, are walking along the street towards the union.

PROTESTOR #1
No spies on campus!

PROTESTOR #2
Who will they spy on next?

Two Iowa City POLICE OFFICERS, males, 30s, get out of their squad car and approach the protestors as Nicholas and Douglas cross the intersection.

OFFICER #1
Stand back, stand back.

PROTESTOR #1
We have the right to speak.

OFFICER #1
Yes, but you can't be blocking the entrance, OK? Just stay back and stay clear.

Nicholas and Douglas are close to the protestors. They stop and watch.

PROTESTOR #2
The CIA is corrupting the country!
We saw that with Zap Gun Reagan
and the Contra in Iran just a few
years ago.

OFFICER #2
Alright, people need to get through here. Stand back.

The officers start to herd the protestors out of the way.

Nicholas and Douglas glance at each other, sigh, and, in unison, enter the Union without a word.

PROTESTOR #1
(at Nicholas)
They'll be watching you!

INT. STUDENT UNION CAFE - DAY

There are signs inside that interviews with CIA representatives will be held in the 3rd floor conference area.

In the lounge area there are several groups of STUDENTS, various. Some are playing games, chatting, or watching a big television.

Alex is sitting by himself watching a group at a table playing Dungeons and Dragons.

In line at the Café in the basement of the Union, Nicholas and Douglas are buying some snacks.

Nicholas taps Douglas on the shoulder and points off. Aaron and Michael exit the Cafe.

Douglas raises his eyebrows at Nicholas and nods.

They get their snacks in bags and exit.

EXT. IOWA RIVER PEDESTRIAN BRIDGE - DAY

Alex is slowly crossing the walk bridge outside the Union. He pauses and, quietly, stares downstream.

EXT. IOWA RIVERBANK - DAY

There are occasionally JOGGERS, BIKERS, STUDENTS and FACULTY, various, going by.

Aaron and Michael are walking along the riverbank.

MICHAEL

I've seen every main stage production this year. You all broke the record.

AARON

(bashful)

Thank you. It's been pretty intense since the day we started. It's been affecting the house.

MICHAEL

You could feel it in the house. I was surprised there were warnings of the violence.

AARON

Well, Joe, our director, talked about that. He wanted us to make it real with a choreographer.

They are just outside the Mabie Theater building.

MICHAEL

The love scenes were, too. There were lots of people in the audience trying hard to hold it in. Some weren't doing so good.

Aaron stops and looks at Michael.

AARON

Were you?

MICHAEL

Maybe.

AARON

You old softie.

MICHAEL

Don't tell anyone. It'll hurt my reputation.

AARON

Your secrets are safe with me. Heading over to Hancher?

MICHAEL

Yes, rehearsal in 20 minutes.
You going out tonight?

TAYLOR, male, 20, comes around the corner of Mabie building listening to music on his Walkman.

AARON

Don't know. It's final show
so we'll strike the set after.
It'll be late.

They see Taylor nearby.

MICHAEL

Catch you later.

AARON

See you.

(MORE)

Michael hurries off towards Hancher auditorium.

Aaron turns to Taylor.

AARON (CONT'D)

How's it going, Taylor?

TAYLOR

Well, good. Excited?

AARON

As always. What are you listening
to today? New Kids on the Block
or Milli Vanilli?

TAYLOR

(laughs)

Don't insult me. What are you
playing on yours these days?

AARON

We Are The Champions.

TAYLOR

After this show we are all
champions. Just trying to look
forward today.

AARON

Forward through one final show.

TAYLOR

The show must go on.

INT. MABIE THEATER LOBBY - DAY

With one wall made of glass windows the two-story lobby is open and sunny. There are several tables and chairs in the lobby and exits to classrooms, the main stage, theaters A and B, and the offices.

Near the doors to the main stage or signs warning of violence in the production.

There are STUDENTS, various, scattered in the lobby including MANDY, female, 20, at a table with LAURA, female, 20, NATHAN, male, 19, John and Calvin.

CALVIN

But a gang war makes it very up
to date.

JOHN

I suppose that's better than
Hatfield's and McCoy's. What a
nightmare that would have been.

LAURA

No way in hell am I wearing bib
overalls and a straw hat for
any show.

MANDY

Makeup, that's what I say. Lots
and lots of makeup because I am
brushing my teeth every day.

JOHN

Wait a minute! Seriously? You
brush your teeth every day?

Mandy sneers at him.

They all get a good laugh. Aaron and Taylor enter and join them.

NATHAN
(to Aaron and Taylor)
Have a seat.

Taylor and Aaron join them.

AARON
What's up?

MANDY
Hi, lover.

There is a general round of nudges as Arron shyly sits down.

TAYLOR
I hate to tell you this, but
I saw your boyfriend downtown
the other night. Looking that
good I'm sure he was going to
see somebody somewhere.

Aaron is worried but doesn't say anything.

MANDY
That bitch is dead messing with
my boyfriend.

CALVIN
It's a massacre.

AARON
I'm not your real boyfriend,
but I play one on stage.

JOHN
(to Mandy)
All things considered, you might
not want to add that to your
dating profile. Love me, you
die. Call me.

NATHAN

The scary thing is down south
that might attract someone.

LAURA

(to Tyler)

How's it going, killer?

TYLER

Not this again. I'm not the
villain here.

Emily enters the lobby. She stands just outside their circle and
watches them.

JOHN

It's your fingerprints that
would be found on the vial and
the knife.

Tyler gets up and exits.

Emily looks at the empty chair tempted to sit down

MANDY

What was that all about?

AARON

He's really dug into the part.

JOHN

Damn method actors.

NATHAN

Brando and Hoffman won Oscars
that way.

MANDY

I love this theatre.

JOHN

I can tell you even pronounce
it re.

Another round of group laughter.

LAURA

Almost call time.

They all exit leaving Emily standing and feeling alone.

INT. STUDENT LOUNGE - DAY

The lounge is small and packed. There are four couches, lockers, vending machines, and doors leading to dressing rooms.

Alex is seated on a couch reading MacBeth.

Taylor, angry, enters and gets a can of pop from the vending machine. He sits on the sofa across from Alex and opens the can.

Alex looks at him in surprise.

ALEX

Taylor, you're drinking pop now?

TAYLOR

(short)

Why not?

ALEX

Two hours before a performance?
It's a long show. Remember how
that acid got to you during
that rehearsal?

Taylor looks at the can, then puts it down.

TAYLOR

You're right. I guess it's my
vice. I love the soda so much
I don't think about how bad it
makes me after. Thanks, Alex.

ALEX

Sure, glad to help.

TAYLOR

I think it's just from the shit
they were giving me.

ALEX

Who?

TAYLOR

Laura and John were on me about my character.

ALEX

Like with Joe from the early rehearsals we had?

TAYLOR

Yeah, that crap again.

ALEX

I hope you won't let it get to you anymore. It's the last night.

TAYLOR

It'll be okay. They brought up some things I'd rather not get into.

ALEX

I know that feeling.

TAYLOR

Oh, yes, that's right. How are you doing?

ALEX

(rubs his forehead)

Doing ok.

Taylor moves across and sits next to Alex.

TAYLOR

I remember the things you told me when you got back, you missed a whole semester. What about the rest?

Alex rubs his forehead and looks at him.

ALEX

I have moments, some better than the others.

TAYLOR

You need anything?

ALEX

I don't know. I guess it's all just day by day. Take my meds regularly. That should help.

TAYLOR

What are you on?

ALEX

Phenobarbital.

TAYLOR

That's tough stuff.

(Alex nods)

That's a depressant, isn't it?

ALEX

(flatly)

Yeah.

TAYLOR

Give me a call if you need to, ok? I'm home most nights.

ALEX

Thanks, Taylor. At least having a production like this gives me something else to think about.

TAYLOR

One more long and complicated Show for us all.

ALEX

(checks his watch)

I suppose I should get everything opened up, check out the props cabinet, make sure everyone's here on time.

TAYLOR

You're the boss.

ALEX

Until Pam and Joe get here.

TAYLOR

I'll give it to you anytime.

ALEX

Oh, Pam is awesome.

TAYLOR

Yeah, I can't complain about Pam,
but Joe is another matter.

ALEX

I'm not really sure what his
story is.

TAYLOR

What happened between him and
Fred? What's between them?

ALEX

I don't know what it is. After
the first week Joe started
changing things for him. Fred
managed to get some of the most
memorable lines in this play
changed to his character.

TAYLOR

I couldn't believe that. What
was it? Blackmail? Anything?

ALEX

I don't know.

TAYLOR

Kathy really got the shaft. She
really got run out.

ALEX

I felt so sorry for her. She
deserved better.

TAYLOR

And John, he has to face him
off on stage. Some nights those
scenes are pretty intense.

ALEX

Just keep him and Fred apart off stage. Separate dressing rooms wasn't easy. We only have two downstairs and with a cast this big it wasn't easy. At least they both want to keep their distance.

TAYLOR

Luckily the blades aren't sharp.

ALEX

(looks away, pause)

True.

TAYLOR

But I've seen their faces some nights. It's pretty intense.

ALEX

I better get going.

ALEX

You'll do fine.

TAYLOR

Take care, man.

ALEX

Sure, see you in makeup, soon.

TAYLOR

Sure will.

Alex exits.

Taylor is tempted to down the soda.

INT. BACK HALLWAY - DAY

This is a long hallway with many cabinets, bulletin boards, classrooms on one side and stages on the other.

Alex enters from the stage doors and heads to a cabinet marked "PROPS 04." He unlocks it and starts to check the contents.

He pulls out a box with several props inside. He counts them even though he knows the numbers.

He checks deeper into the cabinet then stops at a sight.

He reaches in and pulls out a knife. It is a prop knife; the blade is not sharp and is retractable. He can't take his eyes off of it for a moment.

He turns slightly and sees his reflection in the window to one of the classroom doors. He stares at himself.

He pulls the rest of the props from the locker and heads for the main stage.

INT. MAIN STAGE - DAY

It is a large theater and house. The house is empty and clean with row after row of seats.

Just inside the house, stage right, is a single wooden stool.

The stage has several platforms, curtains and panels that can slide in and out for scene changes. The panels provide the setting for a busy, lower-class part of a city.

The stage, and parts of the house, are covered with graffiti of all styles and colors. Most noticeable are sections marked "WAR", "PEACE", "LOVE", "HATE", "LIFE" and "DEATH".

There is the feeling of gangs in the styles and colors.

Alex, carrying a clipboard, is checking the stage and makes sure everything is in the correct position for opening. He exits the stage.

INT. BACKSTAGE - DAY

Backstage there are tables, racks, and general items used in this and other productions.

Just off the stage is a desk with a light, a chair, a script and several lists and schedules on it.

Alex puts down the clipboard and checks a mic and headphones wired to the desk.

JIM, male, 19, and J.R., male 19, are here getting the screens ready to be pushed on stage and pulled off. They are testing to make sure the screens move smoothly. Everything looks good so they approach Alex.

JIM

All good in our world.

ALEX

Great. Sometimes I was worried screen A was going to slide right off.

JIM

I take offence at that.

ALEX

Nothing personal. I just saw some of those rollers. They've been through a lot of productions.

JIM

Not ours.

ALEX

Couldn't be in better hands.

(MORE)

Jim and J.R. turn back to the screens and nod at Nicholas and Douglas checking on a curtain.

ALEX (CONT'D)

Watch for buckets.

Jim and J.R. pause, turn their thumbs down, then move off. Pam, female, 23, approaches Alex.

PAM

Hey, Alex.

ALEX

Hi, Pam. So far everyone is here.

PAM

Great. I stopped and ordered up everything we need for strike.

ALEX

Sounds good. I was getting ready to make the rounds.

PAM

Can you check on something extra real quick?

ALEX

Sure.

PAM

See if the warning notices are still up. Just in case.

ALEX

I think so. I'll make sure.

PAM

Thanks. You're doing great.

ALEX

I appreciate it.

PAM

I better check in at the booth.

Pam smiles and exits.

Alex opens the desk drawer and pulls out several signs reading "WARNING! This performance contains extreme violence. Caution is advised."

Alex gathers everything up then looks at Nicholas and Douglas.

ALEX

Strike food's on order.

Nicholas and Douglas give him the thumbs up.

Alex checks a list on a clipboard as he exits.

INT. LOBBY - DAY

Alex enters the lobby and spots two warning signs near the entrance to the main stage.

Calvin exits the bathroom and joins him.

CALVIN
Fun and violence in one night.

ALEX
Well, not so much fun.

CALVIN
Oh, there's always something
fun somewhere. Don't prebuild
too much.

Alex tapes up a warning sign.

ALEX
I get the impression there's a
story there I don't know about.

CALVIN
(giggles)
Luckily for you. We were doing a
workshop show in Theater B last
semester. George wanted a platform
for the set and figured we'd build
the flat in the shop then just
slide it down the hall and into
theater B.

ALEX
Oh, no.

CALVIN
Oh, yes. He measured the hall
and figured it all out so we
built it and slid it down the
hall diagonally about 1:00am
the night before. It went great,
smooth as silk, until we hit
the door frame into the theater.

ALEX
Ouch.

CALVIN

Yup. Kind of forgot that door frame took a few inches off. Another 90 minutes unscrewing it, taking it into B, then tightening it all back up again.

Alex frowns and shakes his head in disbelief.

ALEX

Please tell me it was steady for the show.

CALVIN

Solid as a rock.

ALEX

Whew! I guess there were some things it was ok to miss.

CALVIN

At least with main stage there's plenty of room to maneuver.

ALEX

I hope.

CALVIN

I better get into makeup.

ALEX

Sure. See you later. Thanks.

Calvin exits.

Alex makes sure enough signs are up and slowly looks out the glass wall at the river.

INT. BACK HALLWAY - DAY

KATHY, female, 21 and SCOTT, male, 19 are in the hallway with mats doing stretching exercises.

SCOTT

How did the exam go?

KATHY

I went okay. He asked us about districts and voting for the essay part. It was clear that was where it was headed. I'm pretty sure about the final in a few weeks.

SCOTT

Good for you.

Scott starts doing pushups.

KATHY

How's journalism going?

SCOTT

It's hard. Other than midterms and finals there are no tests at all. 25 questions, all essay responses, on each.

KATHY

Bet Zimmerman fact checks every answer, too. Really need the brains for his classes.

Scott feels challenged. Starts exercising harder.

SCOTT

I'll spend a week just going over dates to remember.

KATHY

That will help. I'm signing up for Calculous 3 for the fall semester after break.

SCOTT

To quote King Lear, act 1 scene 5, line, 87, "Why?"

Kathy starts doing sit ups.

KATHY
(impressed)
It'll finish all the math and
science credits.

SCOTT
Calculous 3?

KATHY
Easy weasy for me. No problem.

She starts doing more intense sit ups.

He tries to keep up with her.

SCOTT
3 levels of calculous? I didn't
know it went that high.

KATHY
After trigonometry B it just
felt natural.

He stops and looks at her. His shoulders drop.

SCOTT
3? B? I suppose you took algebra
Z and residential topology
is next for you.

KATHY
To quote Hamlet, act 3, scene
3, line 87, "No."

She smiles as she gets up and heads off.

SCOTT
I made that last one up.

KATHY (OFF)
I know.

She exits.

SCOTT
(pauses)
Touche.

INT. DRESSING ROOM #1 - DAY

Along each wall are tables with mirrors in a U shape with an entrance at one end and a bathroom at the other.

There is a chalk board near the entrance with the words "May 12, 1989, FINAL SHOW" at the center. There are also several other comments by some of the cast and a crude drawing of a knife dripping blood.

The tables are full of cast members putting on makeup and all have very modern-day clothes for costumes, jeans, leather jackets, and t-shirts, with distinct markings and gang colors.

Aaron, John, Nathan, and some of the others have signs indicating one gang.

Mandy, Laura, Calvin, and others all have signs on their costumes indicating an opposing gang.

Taylor, and a few others are neutral and show no gang membership.

Mandy's finished with her makeup and flossing her teeth with incredible attention to detail.

John is carefully peeling an apple, throwing away the peels, then dividing the core into squares.

JOHN
(to Mandy)
Looking good tonight, baby girl.

MANDY
Every time you say that I only
pray for one thing.

JOHN
A big inheritance?

MANDY
That I was adopted.

They all laugh at her comeback.

Ken, male, 19, enters looking hot and sweaty. His clothes are ragged and worn. He goes to a small shower in the back, turns it on, and steps into it clothes and all.

AARON

Ken's here.

CALVIN

Only 20 minutes late this time.

He's getting better.

(to himself)

She sells seashells down by the
she shore. Shit. Seashore!

JOHN

(to Mandy)

Some nights you look so good I
wish you were adopted, too.

NATHAN

Incest is best, put your daughter
to the test.

LAURA

Well, it didn't take long for this
performance to go into the gutter.

Joe, male, 25, and Pam enter the room.

JOE

Strike that language.

PAM

Speaking of strike, set strike
about 90 minutes. We should
finish about midnight.

(generals boos)

Alex and I will pick up the
food for after.

There are general cheers.

Ken gets out of the shower, still looks like a mess, puts on a robe and furiously starts getting ready with makeup.

CALVIN

(to himself)

She sells seashells down by the seashore. Better.

(faster)

She sells seashells down by the seashore. She sells seashells...

Joe walks over to Aaron and Mandy.

JOE

Ok, you two, this is it. I can't tell you enough how good last night ran.

AARON

Thank you.

MANDY

It felt great last night.

JOE

You had the audience in the palm of your hands. There were quite a few of them holding back the tears during your final scenes. some of them weren't holding.

(to Aaron)

You weren't holding back. Even from the directors' seat in the house I could see it in your face.

Aaron pauses and swallows hard.

AARON

Thanks.

JOE

One more night and then it's done. You can get all of it out of your system. Just hang on.

Joe moves off and Mandy looks at Aaron.

MANDY

You, ok?

AARON

Me? Sure. You know, it's just the emotion of the play.

MANDY

(quietly)

You had tears in your eyes when you died last night. You've never gone to that level before.

AARON

It was really hitting me last night. We've been rehearsing for months, two weeks with full, or almost full, houses, and I just thought, like, there's more there. Something in this play that I missed.

MANDY

Honestly, I've learned something from this play. You could too.

Aaron looks at her bewildered as she gets up and walks off.

Joe goes to Taylor, who is lost in thought.

JOE

Taylor, I got a few things for you tonight.

TAYLOR

OK.

JOE

What if, just once, we really make him the villain.

Taylor's shoulders drop.

TAYLOR

He's religious. He's helping people who are hurting. The tragedy isn't his fault.

Taylor is shaking his head defiantly.

The others are listening.

JOE

Just imagine the drama. Imagine the tension that could add to the play. Really, Taylor, just for this final performance. Just for me.

(MORE)

Taylor reluctantly nods.

JOE (CONT'D)

Great, let's do it this one time.
(pats Taylor on the back)
For the drama.

Joe and Pam exit.

They all are finishing the makeup process.

LAURA

Well, I think that's about it for me.

JOHN

Looking good.

CALVIN

You dirty old man.

JOHN

And proud of it.

General laughs.

JOHN

Anything that moves...

LAURA

From what I hear it's some things that don't.

They all laugh as they stand and check their costumes.

Laura picks up a yellow bucket from her station.

Aaron and Mandy stand and pat each other on the backs.

AARON
(excited)
Our last goodbye?

MANDY
Goodbyes are the hardest thing
to do.

All exit but Nathan, Taylor and Ken.

INT. BASEMENT HALLWAY - DAY

Nicholas and Douglas are having a quick snack in a small office.

Emily is alone just sitting watching the actors prepare.

John and Laura, carrying her yellow bucket, come around a corner.

JOHN
So, how did it work out with
the apartment?

LAURA
It's ok as long as I stay away
from him. The landlord won't do
anything but the next time he
comes knocking on my door-
(MORE)

John and Laura stop as Fred comes out of the door headed for dressing room #2.

John glares at Fred in anger.

Fred walks past without looking at them.

Laura pauses unsure of what to do.

LAURA (CONT'D)
(slowly)
Next time he comes knocking on
my door at 2:00 a.m. asking for
change I'll report him and, they
say, he's out.

JOHN
(looking at the door)
Good for you.

INT. STAIRWELL - DAY

Laura and John enter from the basement and head upstairs to the stage.

John is somber and looking up.

LAURA
I saw that look.

JOHN
Yeah, I don't hide it anymore.

LAURA
One night and it's done. A week or two and he'll graduate and he's going to be gone forever.

JOHN
I hope the door hits his ass on the way out.

LAURA
He's really been divisive. Half the cast hates him and the other half adores him.

JOHN
Most of them don't actually have any scenes with him.

LAURA
How do you think Kathy feels?

JOHN
We talked about that. She was really frustrated at Joe, too, for letting this bozo walk all over him.

LAURA

I wondered last night just how far
it was going to go.

(she stops and looks at him)

Those characters hate each other
at every point. During those scenes
there was so much contempt in your
voice I wasn't sure how much of it
was performance and how much was
pure anger towards him.

JOHN

I can't deny. I'm having a bit
of trouble telling the
difference myself.

She shakes her head worriedly.

LAURA

Just stick with the script

JOHN

Just keep your bucket handy.

Laura nods, then they exit onto the stage.

INT. DRESSING ROOM #2 - DAY

This dressing room is much like the other but a bit smaller.

Jason, male, 19, KIN, female, 22 and some OTHERS, various, have
signs indicating one gang.

Mary, Tanya, Adam, and others all have signs on their costumes
indicating another gang.

Scott, Kathy, Terry and a few others are neutral and show no
gang membership.

Mary and Kim are next to each other and helping with the final
touches.

MARY

You got a bit of a smudge there.

Kim looks at herself in the mirror and fixes what she missed.

KIM

Thanks.

MARY

How do I look?

They look at each other closely.

KIM

I wish I had your nose.

MARY

Some mornings I do, too.

Scott finishes his makeup and sits on a small mat on the floor. He gets into a yoga position and starts concentrating.

Adam hasn't put on any makeup and is repeatedly stretching his lips.

Fred enters and goes to an open spot as if it were originally made for him. He moves everything out of the way and puts his personal items in place. He starts chewing on an apple.

FRED

(to Mary)

How are you tonight?

MARY

The show must go on. Ready to make history.

FRED

I'm sure I will.

Mary and Kim look at each other and roll their eyes in disgust.

Pam and Joe enter.

PAM

Welcome everyone. The bad news about final shows is set strike about 90 minutes. We should finish about midnight. Alex and I will pick up the food for after.

There is a muted response from the cast.

Jason stops and takes a deep breath.

Adam pats him on the shoulder.

ADAM

Nervous?

JASON

Always.

ADAM

You're doing great.

JASON

Ever been on a show you wanted
to just keep going?

ADAM

We actually did Mary Poppins my
first year here. Of course, that's
not like this show.

JASON

There is no show like this show.

Joe moves in close and whispers with Fred.

JOE

How are you feeling?

FRED

Ok, I've made it so far.

JOE

No issues at all on stage. How
about off?

FRED

(privately)

One in class this morning. Nobody
thought it was a big deal.

JOE

(pauses)

You're strong. Once more.

Fred takes a deep breath, nods, and Joe exits.

INT. DRESSING ROOM #1 - DAY

Taylor is finished with his makeup and checking in the mirror.

TAYLOR
(to himself)
You are not the villain.

Ken finishes his makeup and his costume and is ready to perform. He looks like he's been ready for hours.

INT. MAIN STAGE - DAY

The cast is filtering onto the main stage.

Alex is at his desk checking his mic and headphones.

ALEX (to mic)
Testing, you there Pam? 10-4,
loud and clear. I'll make
the rounds.

Alex takes off the headset and checks his clipboard.

Nicholas and Douglas are at their screens.

Laura comes walking by them with her bucket.

LAURA
Hi Nick, hi Doug.
(MORE)

They smile at her until they notice her bucket. She sets it down off stage and starts away.

LAURA (CONT'D)
Keep an eye on it, ok?

They look at the bucket with worry then slowly approach it, hesitate, then look inside. They sigh in relief and go back to their screens.

Emily enters from a side door leading to the stairs.

EMILY

Hello, Alex.

ALEX

Hi, Emily. How are you?

EMILY

Ok, ready for tonight?

ALEX

I am. Doesn't that get your wrists tired?

EMILY

(smiles)

No, I've been doing it long enough. I'm used to it.

ALEX

Great. I admire the concentration.

EMILY

Thank you.

(MORE)

Alex picks up a clip board and checks her name off on a list.

EMILY (CONT'D)

I didn't realize I was on your list.

ALEX

Sure, you're a part of this show and just as important the rest, even Fred. I may not know sign language but I could give him a hand sign.

(she laughs)

Great. I'll catch you later.

EMILY

Sure.

Alex walks off and she watches him go.

There are actors and stagehands, getting ready .

Aaron, Calvin, and Nathan are rehearsing a nasty fight scene on one portion of the stage. Near them is VICTOR, male, 28, a choreographer, watching them rehearse.

VICTOR

Ok, just make sure when you strike at that point you've balance on your left leg. It will make the fall easier.

NATHAN

And take the knife with me.

VICTOR

Landing on your back will give the audience something to cringe at. A gasp or two.

CALVIN

We got it.

VICTOR

Safety, safety, safety.

NATHAN

That's the last thing I hear before I die.

In an over-the-top performance he falls over and dies.

Aaron and Calvin give him a thumbs down.

CALVIN

After that I don't feel so bad I killed him.

AARON

If you wouldn't I would have.

NATHAN

I'll haunt you both for that.

More are coming on stage, and they start to gather in the center.

MANDY

My new family.

LAURA

Like a family.

SCOTT

Let's get rolling.

MARY

I'm still nervous.

SCOTT

You'll be fine.

LAURA

Break a leg.

MARY

Does anyone know where that saying comes from?

CALVIN

I do, but I'll look like a nerd if I tell you.

Emily is off stage by the stool watching them.

TANYA

You already look like a nerd.

CALVIN

Ok, then, well, it's believed--
(stops as they all turn
to face him)
I guess this isn't the time or
the place for full frontal nerdity.

JASON

(to Calvin)

Good save.

Joe and Pam enter.

JOE

Oh, my, what a motley crew we
all are tonight.

Taylor is off to one side concentrating when Aaron passes him and pats him on the shoulder.

AARON

Hey, Taylor, time for the pep talk. Let's go.

Taylor is surprised and they move to the center of the stage.

JOE

Ladies and Gentlemen, I can't tell you how excited and proud I am to have had the chance to direct all of you in this production. It can be hard to tell a tale that everyone knows and find ways to keep it fresh, and I have no doubt we have done that every night in the past two weeks. Thanks to Karen, our designer, for giving it this modern twist. It was her idea. And thanks to you, for not being afraid to break the hearts of the audience. So, tonight, we give it one final telling. At least the final for us, but one that the audience will never forget. Thank you all.

There is a general round of cheers and applause.

JOHN

Once more into the breach.

MARY

Cry havoc and let slip the dogs of war.

AARON

Something wicked this way comes.

CALVIN

Damn the torpedoes, full speed ahead. Oops, just got a bit carried away with the war cries.

They laugh and Fred enters upstage.

FRED

One moment! Remember, the most
important line is still mine.

(MORE)

Fred walks through the crowd and they all part to give him space. Some despise him, some aren't bothered.

He stops center stage with Mandy and Aaron on each side of him and addresses an empty house.

Kathy looks away and shakes her head.

FRED (CONT'D)

For never was a story of more
woe, then that of Juliet,

(Mandy)

and her Romeo.

(Aaron)

INT. BACKSTAGE - NIGHT

Alex is working his way around making sure everyone is ready.

INT. LOBBY - NIGHT

The lobby is full of PATRONS, various, are waiting at the box office windows.

Amongst them is a COUPLE, male and female, 40s.

INT. BACKSTAGE - NIGHT

Nathan is at the prop table picking up his prop knife. He tucks it in his belt, checks himself in a mirror, and exits.

INT. LOBBY - NIGHT

Kelly and David are waiting.

INT. DRESSING ROOM #1 - NIGHT

Mandy and Laura are in the dressing room checking over their costumes.

LAURA

So, this is your final show at UI theater. A few weeks graduation and then off to work with your dad?

MANDY

(pause)

Not sure yet. Need to get some cash before I can do anything.

LAURA

Plenty of jobs out west.

Mandy shakes her head, then adjusts her costume.

INT. BACKSTAGE - NIGHT

There is one prop left at the table.

Alex reluctantly picks it up.

INT. LOBBY - NIGHT

Nathan and Jason are on the 2nd level of the lobby looking down showing their gang colors and signs.

Calvin and Ken, showing their gang colors, are on opposite sides to help set the atmosphere.

Alex casually walks by and hands Calvin his prop.

Calvin looks at it guiltily.

INT. BACKSTAGE - NIGHT

Taylor is pacing nervously backstage. Aaron approaches him.

AARON

Friar Laurence, any quick prayers for the show tonight?

TAYLOR

May the Force be with you.

AARON

I'll buy that.

INT. LOBBY - NIGHT

The box office opens, and Kelly and David get the first tickets.

INT. THEATER (INTERCUT) - NIGHT

Fred is standing off stage near Alex's desk.

Alex is going over his checklist and has the headphones on.

ALEX (to headphones)
Everybody's in place, I gave
Calvin his prop again, he
still forgets it on the table.
I know. You think? Oh, and Emily
is ready. Yes, tonight, too.
(listens)
Just doesn't seem like there's
so much to worry about with
tonight, being the final show.
Yes, ready, willing and able.
That, too.

(MORE)

He hides a short giggle as Fred approaches.

ALEX (CONT'D)
We're going dark in ten minutes.

The main doors open, and the audience filters through from the lobby into the house.

FRED
I'm ready.

ALEX
Yes.

FRED
You're final show, not as much
to follow up with tonight?

ALEX
It seems so relaxed all around.
Same cues, same scene changes,
It just feels...calmer.

FRED

I would suggest something.

Alex looks at him confused and a bit worried.

ALEX

Such as?

FRED

Watch the show.

(Alex relaxes)

At least for my performance.

Without a word Fred leaves Alex in silence.

Nicholas and Douglas are near the screens when Laura passes them and grabs her bucket. She hurries off with it.

The lobby is empty.

The house is full, no empty seats, and the audience is looking through the programs and having quiet conversations.

Emily sits on the stool near the audience.

Kelly and David are chatting.

The house lights dim, and the house goes silent.

Aaron (ROMEO), John (LORD MONTAQUE), Nathan (MERCUTIO), Mandy (JULIET), Laura (NURSE), Calvin (TYBALT), Taylor (PRIAR LAURENCE), Jason (BENVOLIO), Kim (LADY MONTAQUE), Mary (LADY CAPULET), Tanya (SERVANT), Adam (BALTHAZAR), Scott (PRINCE), Kathy (PAGE), and others are either just off stage waiting for their cues, backstage watching, or in the dressing rooms.

The stage lights come on and Fred enters from upstage and walks to the center.

Kathy glares at him backstage.

FRED (CAPULET)

Two households, both alike in dignity,
in fair Verona where we lay our stage
where ancient grudge, breaks to new
mutiny, where civil blood makes
civil hands unclean.

(Taylor watching)

From forth the fatal loins of these two
foes a pair of star-crossed lovers
take their life;

(Alex at his desk)

whose misadventured piteous overthrows
do with their deaths bury their parents'
strife. The fearful passage of their death
marked love,

(Aaron breathing deeply)

And the continuance of their parents
rage, which, but their children's end
naught could remove, is now the two
hours' traffic of our stage. The
which if you with patient ears

(Emily alone signing)

attend, what here shall miss, our
toil shall strive to mend.

John, Kim and Jason are off stage waiting for their cue.

Nicholas and Douglas roll out a screen. Laura's bucket, recently
cleaned, is nearby.

John is watching the stage and cringes every time Fred speaks.

FRED (CAPULET) (OFF)

What noise is this? Give me my
long sword, ho!

MARY (LADY CAPULET) (OFF)

A crutch, a crutch! Why call
you for a sword?

John prepares himself. His glare at Fred shows pure anger and
resentment.

JOHN

(mumbles)

As if no one else could do it.

FRED (CAPULET)

My sword I say! Old Montague is
come and flourishes his blade in
spite of me.

John tightens his grip on his sword, grits his teeth, and goes on stage with Ken and Jason behind him.

John's eyes would cut through Fred when they are on stage.

JOHN (MONTAGUE)
Thou villain Capulet.

KIM (LADY MONTAGUE)
Thou shalt not stir a foot to seek
a foe.

Scott, Cindy and Kyle enter the stage after a brief pause. Scott is shocked they missed their cue and fumbles briefly.

SCOTT (PRINCE)
Rebellious subjects, enemies to peace,
(MORE)

John and Fred stare accusingly at each other. There is more than just characters acting here.

SCOTT (PRINCE) (CONT'D)
That quench the fire of your pernicious rage
On pain of torture, from those bloody hands
Throw your mistemper'd weapons to the ground,
And hear the sentence of your moved prince.
(MORE)

John and Fred both pause, waiting for the other to drop his weapon first. John angrily drops his sword. Fred finally lets his sword go.

SCOTT (PRINCE) (CONT'D)
If ever you disturb our streets again,
Your lives shall pay the forfeit of the peace.
For this time, all the rest depart away:
You Montague; shall go along with me:
(MORE)

John feels triumphant. Fred grinds his teeth.

Everyone but Scott, John, Kim and Jason exit.

JOHN (MONTAGUE)
Who set this ancient quarrel new abroad?

INT. DRESSING ROOM #1 - DAY

The play can be heard on the speakers. Mandy and Laura are trying to relax. Laura is showing her nervousness. Her empty bucket is beside her.

LAURA

Almost ready.

They laugh and get ready to go to the stage.

TANYA (SERVANT) (on speaker)

To supper; to our house.

AARON (ROMEO) (on speaker)

Whose house?

TANYA (SERVANT) (on speaker)

My master's.

AARON (ROMEO) (on speaker)

Indeed, I should have asked you that before.

TANYA (SERVANT) (on speaker)

Now I'll tell you without asking:
my master is the great rich Capulet;
and if you be not of the gang of
Montagues, I pray, come and crush
a cup of wine.

LAURA

There it goes.

MANDY

What?

LAURA

All that disaster, the tragedy,
because of the damn houses. The
House of Capulet and the House
of Montague. Fucking houses.

MANDY

Battle of houses.

LAURA

Poison of the houses more like.
What if one of them would have
said screw the houses and gone
out on their own? History would
have changed, a tragedy averted.

(pauses)

On the other hand, if they had
left their houses, we wouldn't be
doing this play. Come on Mandy,
the stage is waiting for us.

Mandy and Laura, with her bucket, exit.

Emily is just stage right on her stool telling the story in sign
language. There is a tight spotlight on her.

MARY (LADY CAPULET)

Nurse, where's my daughter? call her
forth to me.

Emily is studying the audience.

LAURA (NURSE)

Now, by my maidenhead, I bade her come.
Where's this girl? What, Juliet!

It appears no one in the audience is looking at Emily.

MANDY (JULIET)

How now! who calls?

Jason, Nathan and Aaron, holding a water jug, are in Dressing
Room #1.

On the speakers is an exchange between Juliet and the Nurse.

AARON

(drinks)

My throat's dry.

JASON

It sounds okay.

AARON

Thanks. Sometimes I just get caught
up in everything.

NATHAN

You're Romeo in Romeo and Juliet.
It's easy. Maybe if you were Romeo
in a Bob Shakespeare play, or
Hank Shakespeare, it'd be easier.

JASON

Steady breathing is the hardest
part for me. The first few
rehearsals I was having a heck
of a time with that. It really
caught up with me for a few today.

AARON

I figured if I gave you an extra
moment, just a pause, you'd catch
your breath.

JASON

I caught that. Thanks for covering.

They pause and listen to the speakers.

MANDY (JULIET) (on speakers)

Now, good sweet nurse,--O Lord, why
look'st thou sad?

LAURA (NURSE) (on speakers)

I am a-weary, give me leave awhile:

NATHAN

You should have seen me doing my
first audition in Acting 1. A
scene from Rosencrantz and
Guildenstern Are Dead. I was
gasping for breath when I finished.

JASON

I bet Kevin loved you for that.

NATHAN

Yeah, gave me a C on it. Worst
part was in the written critique
we wrote B, crossed it out, then
wrote C instead.

JASON

Damn critics. They can stick
their thumbs up their asses.

AARON

Ouch.

JASON

Big scene for Mandy coming.

AARON

Take a deep breath and go for
it. The drama makes it work.

Nathan pauses then laughs. They stop and look at him.

NATHAN

Sorry. Remember that first reading?
(MORE)

Jason and Aaron know what he means and smile.

NATHAN (CON'T)

I still say she said fart.

JASON

Where fart thou, Romeo?

AARON

She swears she had it right.
Wherefore art though, Romeo.

JASON

I know, I know, but I was sitting
right next to her.

MANDY (JULIET) (on speakers)

Nay, come, I pray thee, speak; good, good
nurse, speak.

NATHAN (to Aaron)

I still think it was you who made
the fart sound.

AARON

Never. I swear it wasn't me. I
think it was Laura.

JASON

I bet Willy Shakespeare turned over in his grave after that one.

AARON

Or just farteth once or twice.

They all enjoy the moment.

NATHAN

I'm sure Shakespeare farted a few times. Some things don't change that much.

JASON

Other things do. Hell, then only men were on stage. Juliet as a guy.

Aaron loses his humor. Nathan and Jason continue laughing.

LAURA (NURSE) (on speaker)

Jesu, what haste? can you not stay awhile?

NATHAN

Oh, yes, kind of takes some of the romance out of it, doesn't it? Fag boys on stage?

Aaron listens to them intently.

JASON

I don't know. You should see this guy in my Criticism of Broadcasting class. Hell, I thought he was a girl the first week of classes.

NATHAN

You were hitting on her, him, weren't you?

JASON

I deny everything.

NATHAN

Really?

Jason sways back and forth with a limp wrist.

JASON (with a lisp)
Where fart thou, Romeo?

NATHAN
No, thanks. Quit the faggot talk.
Makes me sick.

JASON
Alright.

Aaron is staring at them.

NATHAN
Glad we're out of town before
Pride Week.

MANDY (JULIET) (on speakers)
Let me be satisfied, is't good or bad?

JASON
Hear that? We're on in a few
minutes. Let's climb.

Nathan and Jason exit.

LAURA (NURSE) (on speakers)
Well, you have made a simple choice;
you know not how to choose a man: Romeo!

Aaron, embarrassed and confused, pauses before he exits.

Nicholas and Douglas are pulling a screen back from the stage.
They almost walk over Laura's yellow bucket and jump out of the
way.

Alex is at the desk looking off at the stage rubbing his
forehead when Aaron approaches.

AARON
How we doing?

ALEX
Everyone hitting their marks. You
ready for it?

AARON
(shows prop knife)
Yes, here we go again.

ALEX
(looking at knife)
Just be careful.

Alex turns back to the stage and Aaron flexes the prop knife.

AARON
You got it.

ALEX (to headset)
He's here.

Alex nods to Aaron who gets ready to enter the stage.

NATHAN (MERCUTIO) (OFF)
Men's eyes were made to look, and
let them gaze; I will not budge
for no man's pleasure, I.

Aaron hears his cue and enters the stage.

CALVIN (TYBALT) (OFF)
Well, peace be with you, sir: here
comes my man.

Alex watches the stage with a look of fear in his eyes.

NATHAN (MERCUTIO)
But I'll be hanged, sir, if he wear your livery:

CALVIN (TYBALT)
Romeo, the hate I bear thee can afford
No better term than this,--thou art a villain.

AARON (ROMEO)
Tybalt, the reason that I have to love
thee doth much excuse the appertaining
rage to such a greeting: villain am I
none; therefore farewell;

Tybalt pulls out his knife.

AARON (ROMEO)
Gentle Mercutio, put thy rapier up.

NATHAN (MERCUTIO)
Come, sir, your passado.

There is a brutal fight on stage between Tybalt and Mercutio.

Romeo tries to stop it but Tybalt swings under his arm and stabs Mercutio.

NATHAN (MERCUTIO)
A plague o' both your houses! No,
ask for me to-morrow, and you shall
find me a grave man. Why the devil
came you between us? I was hurt
under your arm.

AARON (ROMEO)
I thought all for the best.

NATHAN (MERCUTIO)
A plague o' both your houses!

Nathan dies slowly.

Jason and Calvin help Nathan, as the dead Mercutio, come off stage.

Once backstage they hand Alex the prop knife.

Calvin waits off the stage while Jason and Nathan head down the stairs.

Alex, tormented, stares at the prop, then puts it on the table as he hurries to the desk and slips on the headphones.

AARON (ROMEO)
Alive, in triumph! and Mercutio
slain! fire-eyed fury be
my conduct now!
(MORE)

Calvin re-enters the stage.

Jason is in the dressing room watching Nathan sitting with his feet up relaxing and feeling confident.

AARON (ROMEO) (CONT'D) (on speaker)
Now, Tybalt, take the villain back again,

On the stage Tybalt and Romeo are in a face off.

CALVIN (TYBALT)
Thou, wretched boy, that didst consort
him here, shalt with him hence.

AARON (ROMEO)
This shall determine that.

Mandy and Laura are backstage watching.

Fred and Kathy are in the Dressing Room #2 checking their
makeup. John enters and realizes he's in the wrong room.

KATHY
Hey, John.

JOHN
Ooops.

KATHY
No problem.

Fred clears his throat and looks away.

On stage Aaron and Calvin start their fight.

JOHN
(to Fred)
What?

FRED
I said nothing.

JOHN
Yet you say so much.

KATHY
Including lines you stole from
other people.

FRED

It just makes sense that one of those responsible for the tragedy should say it.

KATHY

Everybody had it wrong for centuries, thankfully Fred set it right.

FRED

Just an observation.

The stage fight gets more intense.

David and Kelly are entranced.

The couple watch uncomfortably.

JOHN

You don't really give a damn, do you? You don't care about the production. You just want it all to be about you.

KATHY

That's right.

FRED

A better, tighter show and we all win.

JOHN

(to Ken)

He's not going to change. Let's go back upstairs.

Kathy takes a step to Fred, but John holds her back.

KATHY

(to Fred)

Well, who the hell made you so powerful.

JOE (OFF)

I did.

(MORE)

They all stop and look at Joe in surprise as he enters.

The audience, the couple, David and Kelly, are frightened by the intensity of the stage fight.

JOE (CONT'D)
I made the decision.

KATHY
Why?

JOE
Yes, I decided to change
the lines.

KATHY
Hell with it.

JOHN
(at Joe)
Shit. Why? What made him
so special?

JOE
I've known him a while. I know-,
the problems he's had. I wanted
to help him, so I did.

JOHN
So, he's that damn good?

Joe looks at Fred but does not want to give it away.

KATHY
(to Fred)
I guess you're just that good.

Kathy turns to exit.

FRED
(quickly)
I stutter.
(MORE)

Everyone stops and slowly turns to Fred.

FRED (CONTINUED)

When I was 5, I started to stutter. First my parents thought it was just because I was new in school and afraid. They thought it would get better as I got used to it. It didn't.

(sits down, ashamed)

It got worse. They started taking me to doctors, all kinds. Hey F-F-F-Fred, they called me. The older I got the worse it got. In 5th grade I could barely speak at all. My muscles would tighten up so bad, or I'd struggle so much to speak it'd look like a seizure. In junior high I barely spoke at all.

(staring into the mirror)

I tried asking a girl to a dance, Well, I wrote her a note, was what I did. Her response, written out, was N-N-N-O. I went to therapy, lots of therapy and doctors. I finally started talking, slowly, without a stutter, but never at school. I eventually was able to speak when I read out loud. For years I could speak fine only as I was speaking as someone else, not me.

On stage Calvin is killed by Aaron.

JOHN

So, you learned to act.

JOE

He was finally breaking through that barrier. He was able to speak off the stage.

KATHY

And the more experience he got the better.

JOE

It seemed...right. What better way to help him then giving those lines?

FRED

I'm afraid the rest came with it. The pomposity of being Lord Capulet. The ego. I started to feel better for what I'd done. Maybe better then what I really was.

JOHN

Or not.

(faces Fred)

You're also the best actor I've ever seen. You were off book on the first rehearsal. You made it look so easy. I had to work harder than ever to keep up with you. I had to act better to try and match you. I hated you for being so much better.

JOE

So, now, we all know.

KATHY

Well, all of us who need to know.

FRED

And I stand ashamed of my deeds.

(to John and Kathy)

Is it possible, with your forgiveness, to end this feud?

Mandy is watching Laura and shaking her head.

Emily is signing the play in front of the stage.

Her face is flat. She sees none of the audience close is watching what she's doing.

SCOTT (PRINCE) (OFF)
And for that offence, immediately
we do exile him: let Romeo hence
in haste, Else, when he's found,
that hour is his last.

The stage lights go down and the house lights rise for intermission amongst applause by the audience.

Alex checks his watch as the intermission starts.

A few of the cast pass by him headed for the stairwell and down.

Kelly and David go to the lobby close together.

The Couple stay seated chatting together.

ALEX
15 and we're off.
(to headphones)
Yes, Pam? Sure, it's all lined
up and good. We can raid Hy-Vee,
get it all in one shot and be
back here in about 30 minutes.
All right.

In Dressing Room #1 several members of the cast are going in and out of the room taking bathroom breaks, checking their costumes or make-up, etc.

AARON
So far so good.

NATHAN
Only a few fatalities.

CALVIN
Only the good die young.

AARON
It's not my fault, well, not
for both of you, anyway. Still,
nobody headed for the river
tonight at least.

MANDY

Not that again.

LAURA

What the hell?

TAYLOR

Oh, my, I hadn't thought about him since last year.

NATHAN

Who? What happened?

JOHN

We were doing Final Sunrise on mainstage. Bob Gantry was the lead role. Nice guy, really excited, but he was just not having a good night. Missed his cues, dropped a few lines, it kept throwing him off. He took it bad. After the show he was so frustrated he ran out, got on his hands and knees and stuck his head in the river.

LAURA

I don't believe that falls under method acting.

CALVIN

Seriously?

JOHN

Yes, seriously. On the bank of the river pounding the water.

CALVIN

Oh, my, God.

AARON

He really lost it.

LAURA

Was his performance that bad?

JOHN

It didn't go well. The audience stopped applauding midway through the curtain call. They were polite enough that when everyone finally got on stage for a bow they started applauding again.

MANDY

That was a rough night.

NATHAN

What happened to him?

Laura sees Taylor's shock and guilt as John speaks.

JOHN

I found him out there with his head in the river. I talked him down about it, calmed everything over. He came back the next night, gave a top-notch performance, too, but that was enough for him. He decided maybe acting wasn't the career path he wanted. Lost touch with him after that.

AARON

Last I saw him he was at Carver. Doing something with training in track and field.

JOHN

That sounds good. Athletics, something like that should be good for him.

NATHAN

At least it's further from the river.

JOHN

Exactly.

CALVIN

Maybe he was just hungry for
a duck?

Checking the stage Alex looks at his watch. He grabs his
clipboard and enters the stairwell to the basement.

Emily is sitting alone in the stairwell when Alex enters.

ALEX

Hi, Emily. We're at the halfway
point. Ready to take your spot?
(MORE)

He heads down the stairs but when she doesn't answer he stops
and looks at her. She looks sad and mumbles something.

ALEX (CONTINUED)

What's going on?
(she shakes her head)
No, really, what's happening?

He sits on the stairs next to her.

EMILY

Oh, nothing, only an hour or so
left and it's done.

ALEX

Is there something I can get you?
Do you need something to drink?
Some water?

EMILY

(sighs)
No, it's not that. It's just
that it's so big and I'm...
so small.

ALEX

What's that supposed to mean?
You're just as important as anyone
else in this cast.

EMILY

I'm not a part of this cast. I'm
just an outsider.

ALEX

No, you're not. You're helping people. You're helping people who could never experience a play like this.

EMILY

Not tonight. Like always I'm just out there by myself. No one's watching.

ALEX

You don't know that. You can only see who's close to you because of the spotlight so they can read you. There could be someone out there, further back in the house, who's only chance to experience Shakespeare is through you. You're more important than anyone on that stage.

(pauses, thinking)

And you have it harder than anyone. They've got to know their part and their part only. You've got to be ready with all of them.

EMILY

Maybe I'm just being selfish.

ALEX

You've committed yourself to helping the deaf communicate. It's not selfish to feel the need to belong..

He's struck by his own words.

EMILY

Thank you.

ALEX

There're some people depending on you. Get ready so I can check your name off the list.

Alex waves his clipboard, and they stand.

EMILY

I'll be there.

Alex checks her name on the board and heads down as Emily exits onto the stage.

Scott and Kathy enter the back hallway, and Kathy immediately starts doing stretches. Scott looks at her in shock then gets on the floor and starts making smaller moves.

SCOTT

Great show so far.

KATHY

A big finale.

SCOTT

What are you going to do after?

KATHY

I feel like jogging around the park once or twice?

SCOTT

(stops)

The city park? After the show?
Late tonight?

Scott tries doing sit-ups slowly.

KATHY

Sure.

SCOTT

Twice?

KATHY

Or something else.

SCOTT

What's that?

Scott struggles for a sit-up and is surprised Kathy is close to him.

KATHY

Once to Hancher and back.
Loser buys us a round.

She jumps up and runs off.

Scott watches her go then stands feeling like a true prince and walks off.

Dressing Room #1 is filled with Aaron, Mandy, Laura, John, Taylor and others.

LAURA

(to Mandy)

Last show. Nervous about graduation?

MANDY

No, I'm ready.

LAURA

Still got a job set up for summer
where your dad works?

MANDY

I keep thinking about these two.
About Romeo and Juliet. What would
have happened if they'd left the
house? If they had decided to say
screw the families and be true
about their love.

Aaron starts listening.

LAURA

That's calling for a lot. I mean,
standing up against your family
like that was probably unheard of
in their time.

MANDY

In their time, yes...

LAURA

(gets it)

But not your time?

(MORE)

Mandy slowly shakes her head.

LAURA (CONT'D)
That's not easy.

MANDY
I don't think following a dream
ever is.

Mandy's shoulders drop as it overwhelms her.

LAURA
What are you going to do?

Mandy doesn't know.

Aaron is listening and thinking about his own choices.
Alex enters.

ALEX
Five minutes.

AARON
(jumps)
I'm ready.

Alex exits for dressing room #2.

JOHN
All good.

All but Mandy, Aaron, Laura and Taylor check their makeup and costumes and exit.

Laura gets her bucket and walks to Taylor.

LAURA
(offers her hand)
Come on, hero.

Taylor looks at her slowly. Then smiles and takes her hand as they exit.

Mandy rises and looks at Aaron.

MANDY
Ready?

AARON
(deep breath)
To the great beyond.

MANDY
Or die trying.
(MORE)

They rise and hug each other.

They head for the exit when Alex enters looking for them.

MANDY (CONT'D)
On our way.

ALEX
One thing.

The lobby is empty.

The house is seated.

Emily seems even more lonely at her stool with no one on stage.

She scans the audience, but no one is looking at her.

The audience is seated, and the lights go off except for the single light on her.

The 2nd act begins.

Mandy, Taylor and Ken are on the stage in Friar Laurence's cell.

Alex is at the desk trying to concentrate.

MANDY (JULIET)
That is no slander, sir, which is a truth;
And what I spake, I spake it to my face.

KEN (PARIS)
Thy face is mine, and thou hast slander'd it.

MANDY (JULIET)
Are you at leisure, holy father, now;

TAYLOR (LAURENCE)

My leisure serves me, pensive daughter, now.

KEN (PARIS)

Juliet, on Thursday early will I rouse ye:
Till then, adieu; and keep this holy kiss.

Ken gives her a gentle kiss on the lips.

Mandy shakes her head distastefully as he exits.

Ken exits and smiles at Aaron and Adam waiting just off stage for their cue. They smile and give him a thumbs up.

MANDY (JULIET)

Come weep with me; past hope, past help!

TAYLOR (LAURENCE)

Ah, Juliet, I already know thy grief;

Aaron is enthralled by Mandy's lines. He turns away from the stage but still hears her. His hand on his heart.

MANDY (JULIET)

Unless thou tell me how I may prevent it:
And with this knife I'll help it presently.

(MORE)

Alex cannot avoid what Mandy says. He starts to sweat, his heart pounding.

MANDY (JULIET) (CONT'D)

Or my true heart with treacherous revolt
Turn to another, this shall slay them both:
Give me some present counsel, or, behold,
this bloody knife

(MORE)

Aaron has made a decision. He turns confidently to the stage.

Alex, breathing heavily, is in turmoil.

MANDY (JULIET) (CONT'D)

Be not so long to speak; I long to die,
If what thou speak'st speak not of remedy.

Aaron and Adam are near the desk.

Alex sees them and tries to hide his nerves

ALEX (to Aaron)
Hang on.

AARON
I'm good. Are you alright?

ALEX
I'm ok. You look more excited
than you did opening night.
Figured you'd be used to it
by now.

AARON
I am. This is ending tonight,
but I'm ready to face something
new. I learned something new,
even on the last day.
(MORE)

Alex looks at him confused, Aaron whispers to him.

AARON (CONT'D)
Don't be afraid.

Alex steps back and takes a long look at him.

Alex hears something in the headphones, points to Aaron and Adam, and they head towards the stage.

KEN (PARIS) (OFF)
The boy gives warning something doth approach.

Hearing their cue Aaron and Adam take to the stage.

Alex heads back to the desk and checks his cue list. He realizes there is nothing left for this performance. He looks backstage unsure of what to do.

Nicholas and Douglas pull back the screen for a scene change.

Laura's bucket is almost knocked over.

Alex quietly sits back and watches the play.

AARON (ROMEO)
do not interrupt me in my course.
Why I descend into this bed of death,

Alex rubs his forehead and can't take his eyes off the stage.

ADAM (BALTHASAR) (OFF)
I will be gone, sir, and not trouble you.

AARON (ROMEO) (OFF)
So shalt thou show me friendship.
and farewell, good fellow.

Adam comes backstage and stands aside to wait for his cue.

On stage Aaron opens the tomb.

KEN (PARIS)
(Comes forward)
Stop thy unhallowed toil, vile Montague!
Can vengeance be pursued further than death?

AARON (ROMEO)
Tempt not a desperate man, leave me.

KEN (PARIS)
I do defy thy conjurations,
And apprehend thee for a felon here.

AARON (ROMEO)
Wilt thou provoke me? then have at thee, boy!

They fight.

Nicholas and Douglas stand off stage bored.

KATHY (PAGE) (OFF)
O Lord, they fight! I will go call the watch.

Kathy exits the stage and joins Adam.

On stage Ken is stabbed and drops to his knees. He hits hard and there is a flash of true pain on his face.

KEN (PARIS)

O, I am slain!

(grinding his teeth)

If thou be merciful, Open the tomb,
lay me with Juliet.

Ken dies on stage.

AARON (ROMEO)

For here lies Juliet, and her beauty makes
This vault a feasting presence full of light.
Death, lie thou there, by a dead man interred.

(MORE)

Aaron takes Ken into the tomb and lays him amongst the bodies.

AARON (ROMEO)

How oft when men are at the point of death
have they been merry! which their keepers call
a lightning before death:

O my love! my wife!

Alex is looking at his wrist.

In Dressing Room #1 John is listening to the play on the
speakers. Laura enters and drops into a seat.

JOHN

You okay?

LAURA

Wish I had my bucket.

Laura runs to the bathroom and bends over the sink.

AARON (ROMEO) (speakers)

Arms, take your last embrace! and, lips,
O you the doors of breath, seal with a
righteous kiss

(MORE)

On stage Aaron is alone grieving in the tomb.

Alex is numb.

AARON (ROMEO)

Here's to my love!

(drinks)

O true apothecary! Thy drugs are quick.

Thus with a kiss I die.

Aaron collapses on stage. There is a long pause on stage and the feeling something should be happening.

Nicholas nudges Taylor who jumps and realizes he's missed his cue. He almost stumbles onto the stage.

Nicholas and Douglas look at each other and shrug.

Taylor hurries on stage.

TAYLOR (LAURENCE)

Saint Francis be my speed! Who's there?

ADAM (BALTHASAR)

A friend, and one that knows you well.

TAYLOR (LAURENCE)

Go with me to the vault.

ADAM (BALTHASAR)

I dare not, sir My master did menace
me with death, if I did stay to look
on his intents.

TAYLOR (LAURENCE)

Fear comes upon me: O, much I fear some
ill unlucky thing. Romeo!

(advances)

Alack, alack, what blood is this,

(enters the tomb)

Romeo! O, pale! The lady stirs.

Mandy sits up. There is a gasp from the audience.

The Couple are watching enthralled.

David and Kelly are holding hands.

MANDY (JULIET)

O comfortable friar! Where is my Romeo?

TAYLOR (LAURENCE)

I hear some noise. Lady, come from that
nest of death, come, come away.

Alex is sweating.

MANDY (JULIET)

Go, get thee hence, for I will not away.

(Friar exits)

What's here? a cup, closed in my true love's
hand? Poison, I see, hath been his timeless end:
I will kiss thy lips; haply some poison yet doth
hang on them, to make die with a restorative.

(kisses him)

Thy lips are warm.

(MORE)

Alex is shaking his head, desperate for Juliet.

Remaining still as Romeo there is a tear in Aaron's eye.

MANDY (JULIET) (CONT'D)

Yea, noise? then I'll be brief. O happy dagger!

(MORE)

Alex is looking at his own wrist.

MANDY (JULIET)

(snatching Romeo's dagger)

This is thy sheath;

(stabs herself)

there rust, and let me die.

Alex shakes as if he's been cut.

Mandy falls near Aaron's body.

Scott enters the stage.

SCOTT (PRINCE)

What misadventure is so early up,

That calls our person from our morning's rest?

Fred, Mary, and the Capulet gang members enter the stage.

TERRY (WATCHMAN)

Sovereign here lies the County Paris slain;
And Romeo dead; and Juliet, dead before,
Warm and new killed.

Alex is looking at his reflection off stage and rubbing his forehead.

FRED (CAPULET)

O heavens! O wife, look how our daughter bleeds!
This dagger hath mistaken--for, lo, his house
Is empty on the back of Montague,--
And it mis-sheathed in my daughter's bosom!

Alex hears the parents' grief. It is hitting him hard.

MARY (LADY CAPULET)

O me! this sight of death is as a bell,
That warns my old age to a sepulcher.

John, and the Montague gang members enter the stage.

JOHN (MONTAGUE)

Alas, my liege, my wife is dead to-night;
Grief of my son's exile hath stopped her breath:
What further woe conspires against mine age?

SCOTT (PRINCE)

Look, and thou shalt see.

There is a long moment of silence as they all grieve the death of Romeo and Juliet.

Alex's heart is taken by them.

JOHN (MONTAGUE)

O thou untaught! what manners is in this?
To press before thy father to a grave?

SCOTT (PRINCE)

Seal up the mouth of outrage for a while,

TAYLOR (LAURENCE)

(not the villain)

Romeo, there dead, was husband to that Juliet;
(Aaron quiet)

(MORE)

TAYLOR (LAURENCE)

And she, there dead, that Romeo's faithful wife:

(Mandy's body unmoving)

You, to remove that siege of grief from her,
Betrothed and would have married her perforce
To County Paris: then comes she to me,
And, with wild looks, bid me devise some mean
To rid her from this second marriage,
Or in my cell there would she kill herself.

(Alex pulls off the headphones)

Then gave I her, so tutored by my art,
A sleeping potion; which so took effect
As I intended, for it wrought on her
The form of death: meantime I writ to Romeo,
That he should hither come as this dire night,
To help to take her from her borrowed grave,
Being the time the potion's force should cease.
But he which bore my letter, Friar John,
Was stayed by accident, and yesternight

(John nods at Fred)

Returned my letter back. Then all alone
At the prefixed hour of her waking,
Came I to take her from her kindred's vault;
Meaning to keep her closely at my cell,
Till I conveniently could send to Romeo:
But when I came, some minute ere the time
Of her awaking, here untimely lay
The noble Paris and true Romeo dead.

(Emily signs without missing a line)

She wakes; and I entreated her come forth,
And bear this work of heaven with patience:
But then a noise did scare me from the tomb;
And she, too desperate, would not go with me,
But, as it seems, did violence on herself.
All this I know; and to the marriage
Unto the rigor of severest law.

SCOTT (PRINCE)

We still have known thee for a holy man.
Where's Romeo's man? what can he say in this?

Alex sees one of the prop knives on his desk. He puts his clipboard on top of it to hide it.

KATHY (PAGE)

He came with flowers to strew his lady's grave;
And bid me stand aloof, and so I did:
And then I ran away to call the watch.

SCOTT (PRINCE)

Where be these enemies? Capulet! Montague!
See, what a scourge is laid upon your hate,
That heaven finds means to kill your joys

FRED (CAPULET)

O brother Montague, This is my daughter's
jointure, for no more can I demand.

All but Fred and John lower their heads.

Slowly the lights start to dim except for one spotlight on Aaron
and Mandy.

JOHN (MONTAGUE)

But I can give thee more: For I will
raise her statue in pure gold; That while
Verona by that name is known, There shall no
figure at such rate be set As that of true
and faithful Juliet.

John extends a hand to Fred. Fred is caught off guard by John's
gesture, pauses, and then slowly shakes John's hand.

FRED (CAPULET)

As rich shall Romeo's by his lady's lie;
Poor sacrifices of our enmity!

The spotlight fades from white to blood red on the bodies of
Mandy and Arron.

Fred turns to Kathy, nods at her, then, with others, bows his
head.

Kathy takes a deep breath and gives all her heart to the line.

KATHY (PAGE)

A glooming peace this morning with it brings;
The sun, for sorrow, will not show its face:
Go forth, and speak of these sad things;

(MORE)

KATHY (PAGE) (CONT'D)

Some shall be pardoned,

(Alex)

and some punished: For never was a story of
more woe Than this of Juliet and her Romeo.

The spotlight fades out leaving the theater dark.

All the actors exit the stage. Ken is limping and Calvin and Nathan help him off.

The lights come on to an empty stage.

The audience starts to applaud.

Part of the cast runs out on stage and takes a bow.

Ken is helped by the others.

The applause grows.

More of the cast except Aaron and Mandy come out on stage and bow.

The applause gets bigger.

David, in tears, smiles at Kelly.

The actors on stage look for Aaron and Mandy and are surprised when they don't enter.

ALEX (to headphones)

They're coming.

There is an uncomfortable pause on stage.

AARON (OFF)

You, too.

Aaron and Mandy have come into the house from the lobby and pause where Emily is seated.

MANDY

Join us.

Emily is wide eyed as they take her hands.

She looks around and sees the full cast onstage looking at her and applauding.

Emily, stunned, takes her hand and they escort her onstage.

They all take hands for one final bow.

The entire audience rises for a standing ovation.

Alex nods as Emily smiles with the rest of the cast.

The lobby is filled with the audience slowly filtering out. Some are on the benches and chairs talking, some waiting to use the restroom, some in groups talking about the play. They are all praising the performance, and some have been emotionally moved by the finale.

The Couple are sitting at a bench smiling as they see the looks on people's faces.

There is cheering and applause from some of the crowd as Mandy comes walking through the lobby still in her costume. Some people pat her on the back and shake her hand for a job well done.

She sees the Couple and walks to them. They rise and applaud she gets to them.

MANDY

So, Mom and Dad, what do you think?

MOM

(hugs her)

You were beautiful.

DAD

(hugs her)

It was brilliant. You probably didn't catch it, you were so focused, but when you pulled that knife on yourself there were people in the audience that gasped.

(Mandy smiles proudly)

More than a few tears.

Mandy blushes and looks around at the crowd.

MOM

We all know the way the story ends, we all knew it was coming, but you and Romeo still had our hearts.

MANDY

Thank you, mom.

DAD

I'm so glad for you, Mandy. You were so great, but I can't wait to get you home where you're safe.

Mandy looks at them for a long time then takes a deep breath.

MANDY

Can we talk about that?

DAD

Sure.

MOM

What's up?

MANDY

Here, let's have a seat.

(MORE)

Mandy escorts them to a table and the three of them sit down together.

MANDY (CONT'D)

I wanted to talk about that. I mean, coming home after graduation.

DAD

Sure, just a few weeks away and then get you a job for a few months, at least. They are already taking applications for sons and daughters for summer.

MANDY

I know we talked about that, and it would be easiest, I'm just not sure.

MOM

About what?

MANDY

Dad, I know you've been there for 30 years, it's what you are used to and you think it's the best place. I know it's where you think I should go, but I'm just not sure it's best for me.

(they are both caught by her honesty)

You've been there so long, it means so much to you and that's great. I'm proud of what you've done and that you've accomplished so much. It's just this.

(points to her costume)

I can do this. I'm confident about this. I'd like to at least try to make it happen professionally.

MOM

You mean New York? Or California?

MANDY

Eventually. I mean, I understand the reality of it. It's not going to be easy, there's a lot of competition to get seen out there. It's crazy, it may not even be 100% safe at first, but I need to at least try. I'll start in Chicago, there's lots of great theaters and production companies there. I'll try that first. It's only about 4 hours away. Please understand.

Mom looks at Dad, he is obviously surprised by her decision.

DAD

Your brother works there. He's worked there since high school.

MANDY

I know. It's good for him, he met his wife there, but I'm sorry, Dad.

DAD

It's safer there. Guaranteed work.

MANDY

Yes, and that's great, you can't get that everywhere, but it's just...I need to at least try. Who knows, in a year I may be applying there, it's not impossible.

DAD

You may also be starring in a Broadway play a year from now. It's not impossible.

MOM

Mandy, I saw what you did crossing that stage tonight. You had the audience believing in you, they felt with you and some of them cried for you.

DAD

And, it wouldn't be fair for you not to try.

He hugs Mandy tight and she smiles.

INT. STAGE - NIGHT

The stage strike at first seems chaotic. The cast, no longer in costume, and crew are dismantling the sets and screens that were used through the production. The graffiti is being cleaned off the walls and most of the parts are catalogued to be used again in other productions.

RON, male, 45, the official Theater Stage Manager is in charge making sure everything gets handled properly.

Ken, his knee wrapped, and Kathy are taking apart some of the frames for a screen and rolling up the tarp.

KEN

It seems so fast. This has been such a big part of all our lives for months and now, after a few hours, it's gone.

KATHY

Not gone. Just not on stage anymore. How's your knee?

KEN

I got a pack from downstairs on it? It's getting better.

Nicholas and Douglas move a larger portion of the set into a section backstage. They see Laura's yellow bucket sitting to one side. They approach it slowly and carefully look into it, then at each other.

LAURA (off)

There it is. Thanks.

Laura steps in and picks up the bucket and walks off with it.

Nicholas and Douglas look at each other and sigh in relief.

Aaron enters and looks around. He smiles and walks to where Emily is almost finished cleaning off the "LOVE" graffiti from the wall. Emily is smiling as she works.

AARON

Hello, Emily.

Arron grabs a rag and starts cleaning.

EMILY

Hi, do you always feel this way after a production?

AARON

Not always. Sometimes.

EMILY

I wasn't sure what to expect.

AARON

I'm glad you were here. It took everything we did up a notch.

EMILY

Thank you for including me.

AARON

Thank Alex.

(Emily turns to him)

We all knew you were out there, you deserved it, but he was the one who really made it happen.

EMILY

I loved your voice.

AARON

Thank you.

EMILY

Did you ever think about singing?

AARON

I tried once. Honestly, I couldn't carry a tune if it were strapped to my back like a parachute.

EMILY

I'm sure you're making that up.

AARON

Trust me.

They finish clearing the graffiti.

EMILY

Where's Alex?

AARON

He's with Pam. They're getting some strike food for after. Then you'll really see what it's like.

Aaron sees Scott moving part of the scenery away and goes to help him.

Emily sees the stool she sat on still sitting in front of the stage.

Emily walks to the stool and fondly looks at it. She looks at the empty house, wondering if there was anyone in the audience, she just hadn't seen who was watching her.

She looks back to the empty desk where Alex had been sitting.

She picks up the stool and heads off.

The stage is almost completely empty.

INT. SCENE SHOP - NIGHT

The Scene Shop is a wide-open space where most of the hard work in set construction is done. There are many tools, table saws, worktables and other equipment in the room.

Ken and several others are putting away equipment.

Emily walks in carrying the stool.

CALVIN

Hey Emily. Great job.

Emily is caught off guard by his approach.

EMILY

Oh, uh, thank you.

CALVIN

I'm sorry it took so long. We should have done something on the first night. I think we just got caught up on everything. I'm sorry.

EMILY

Well, thank you.

CALVIN

You're welcome. You're a part of us.

Ken walks off.

Emily is overwhelmed. She puts down the stool and exits the building.

After a moment Calvin comes back and finds the stool abandoned. He looks around but sees Emily has gone.

He picks up the stool and walks off with it.

INT. LOBBY - NIGHT

On the 2nd floor is a large lounge area used for classes, workshops, meetings, etc.

Today it is open for the cast and crew to celebrate their work. There are several platters of food, soda, and water that Pam and Alex have brought in to celebrate.

Alex watches as the cast and crew enter the lounge and start to relax and enjoy the food.

Alex casually walks over to Calvin.

ALEX
Have you seen Emily?

CALVIN
I saw her take off about 20
minutes ago.

ALEX
Did she know about this?

CALVIN
I'm sure she did. We were all
talking about it.

Alex's shoulders drop as he helps himself to some food.

The entire cast and crew, except Emily, are here relaxing.

JOHN
How many playwrights does it take
to change a lightbulb?
(general responses)
(MORE)

JOHN (CONT'D)

You aren't changing anything.

(laughs)

How many directors does it take to change a lightbulb?

(general responses)

The first thing is to figure out why it needs to be changed.

(laughs)

How many actors does it take to change a lightbulb?

(general responses)

One to change the bulb and two to say how they would have done it better.

(laughs and applause)

How many stage managers does-

(claps hands)

Done! To Pam and Alex.

Hearty applause as attention goes to Pam and Alex. Alex shy's away a bit and Pam points her attention to him.

MANDY

The unsung heroes of theater.

PAM

And bravo to Alex here. He made my job a lot easier.

More applause and nods back at them.

NATHAN

It's been a great production with great people.

Aaron gets up and they all turn to him.

AARON

As much of a pleasure as it is, the play, or, in this case, the bathroom, can no longer wait.

CALVIN

All of us down wind, salute you!

They boo as he exits to the stairs and heads down.

Aaron is walking through the lobby heading up to the café from the restroom.

He glances out the lobby windows and sees Michael approaching.

They wave at each other, and Aaron waits until Michael enters.

MICHAEL

How'd the final show go?

AARON

Good, it went good. Actually, I was hoping we could talk.

MICHAEL

Sure. What's up?

They go sit on a bench in the lobby.

AARON

I've been thinking a lot about what this play is about. Romeo and Juliet. They want to be together, it's important to them, but they have to hide it because there is so much pressure from everyone else. So much anger from outside. I couldn't help but wonder about us.

MICHAEL

(not surprised)

About the feeling of having to hide.

AARON

Yes. We see each other all the time, we talk every day, after last night I can't be the only one wanting more.

MICHAEL

(pause)

Honestly, no. I've been thinking about that, too.

They look at each other deeply.

AARON

I'm willing to try more.

MICHAEL

I think we could do that. We could both learn a lot.

AARON

What about...others?

MICHAEL

I've never been one to hide anything.

They stand, look deeply at each other, then share a soft kiss.

The party is breaking up and some have exited.

JOHN

Great. Lots of good opportunities in Chicago.

FRED

Second City started there before Toronto.

JOHN

Toronto, Canada, eh?

FRED

Oh, eh, that's a fact, eh.

MANDY

Thankfully they are still there. I'm nervous enough about going to Chicago. I'm not about Canada. Eh?

They are laughing when Aaron and Michael enter. Mandy sees them and holds back her smile.

AARON

Hey, everyone.

They acknowledge him happily.

LAURA

Hi.

AARON

I really wanted you all to meet Michael. He's a musician here at UI and I originally met him at Hancher. The big thing is, and you're the first to know, he's my boyfriend.

They all look at the couple and there is a moment Aaron is unsure of how they'll react.

Mandy points to the table.

MANDY

Welcome, Michael. have a seat.

CALVIN

Sure, come on.

Aaron and Michael, holding hands, sit at the table and are welcomed.

Jason and Nathan look at them unhappily and quietly exit.

JOHN

What do you play?

MICHAEL

Trumpet, primarily, but a few others here and there.

JOHN

Many talents. Just like our wonderful friend Aaron.

They are all excited to meet Michael. Aaron feels the companionship of his friends.

More people have left but Mandy, Aaron and Michael are still seated at the table while Pam and Alex have started putting things away and cleaning up.

Nicholas and Douglas are sitting off to one side.

MANDY

You're the best ex-boyfriend
I've ever had. You two, take
care of each other.

AARON

I was thinking of what you said
before. You knew, didn't you?

MANDY

Yes.

AARON

How?

MANDY

My roommate talked about this
couple she saw uptown one evening.
She said they looked so happy
together. Just her instincts.
Two days later she was in the
audience of this play. In another
dimension she heard Shakespeare
laughing.

Aaron and Michael laugh with her.

AARON

See you in class on Tuesday.

MANDY

You bet.

Mandy smiles, knowing they are good, and exits.

AARON

(to Pam and Alex)

Thanks for everything. You
two made it work.

Pam and Alex thank them and Aaron and Michael exit.

Pam and Alex finish cleaning up the area.

PAM

You really did great, Alex.

ALEX

Me? Well, thank you.

PAM

Really, you were fantastic.
I know it wasn't easy for you.

He stops and looks at her.

ALEX

It's been some rough nights.

PAM

I can only imagine what you
were going through. It was quite
a fall you had last summer.

ALEX

That's what I'm told.

PAM

You don't remember any of it?

ALEX

(rubs his forehead)

No. I remember a few minutes
beforehand, going very fast,
smiling, I was actually enjoying
it. Then, nothing for a
long time.

PAM

(points to his hand)

You do that every time you pause
for something.

ALEX

(forces his hand away)

Some psychological aftermath.
I understand that's where
I landed.

PAM

You weren't in pain?

ALEX

No, I never felt anything. I just remember a few weeks later getting home from the hospital.

PAM

I'm sorry.

ALEX

My dad took some photos of me in the hospital when friends visited me. I'm sitting there talking to them.

She smiles with him and moves closer.

PAM

I can't imagine what it's like.

ALEX

You know, I don't remember it happening. I don't remember them visiting me, but I know it happened.

PAM

Are you OK?

ALEX

Physically it's what it's going to be. I have moments where I really have to think about what's happening. Where I'm at and what other people are saying to me. I'm hoping, as time goes on, it'll get better, maybe stop happening.

She shakes and puts a hand on his forehead.

PAM

You need anything?

ALEX

I guess just time.

PAM

I know that surviving accidents like that can cause other problems. There are things that can be harder to deal with than the physical injury.

He looks at her for a long time.

ALEX

Yes. Those thoughts do happen.

PAM

Don't let them take over.

ALEX

With this play that feeling ends. One tragedy for this family is enough.

Pam slowly nods.

PAM

You be good, ok? There are plenty of people looking out for you.

ALEX

Thank you, Pam.

PAM

Well, that's enough drama for today. Let's finish everything and get home.

ALEX

I agree. Out damn spot!

He cleans the last bits of food off the table, and they hurry to put everything away.

Nicholas and Douglas are about to exit the room.

NICHOLAS

I thought the drama was supposed to be on the stage.

DOUGLAS

All the world's a stage.

NICHOLAS

And everyone's making it up as they go.

DOUGLAS

Worse. One half thinks it's a comedy and the other half thinks it's a tragedy.

They exit.

INT. LOBBY - NIGHT

The lights are on, but the only person left is Alex closing the 2nd floor lounge doors.

He comes down the stairs and heads towards the main doors when he stops and looks around the room fondly.

He stops when he sees near the main door to the theater a stool like the one Emily had been on.

His shoulders drop, he takes a deep breath, then exits the building.

EXT. THEATER BUILDING - NIGHT

Alex exits the theater building and walks to the river. He looks out at the dark waters, listening to the wind, lost in thought.

EMILY (OFF)

Alex, wait!

Alex turns and Emily comes running from the building to greet him.

ALEX

I thought you'd left.

EMILY

Well, I did, but, it kind of scared me, what happened on stage. It was what I wanted,

(MORE)

EMILY (CONT'D)

but it still worried me. Then I had second thoughts. I had to come back. I'm glad I'm not too late.

ALEX

Well, we are already finished.

EMILY

I'm glad I'm not too late to see you. Yes, look, what you said to me, you reached out to me. Aaron told me. That moment, I've never felt like that before, was because of you.

ALEX

You were important to

EMILY

So are you.

(MORE)

Alex looks into her eyes unable to speak.

EMILY (CONT'D)

Could we, well, could we just walk together for a while? Maybe someplace downtown we could have a seat for a while?

ALEX

(smiles)

I'd like that very much.

They start to walk away but Emily stops him looking at the theater.

The building shines in the night.

EMILY

You think theaters sleep at night?

ALEX

No, theaters always have stories to tell, they've been telling

this one for 400 years, so they
never sleep. At night a sky full
of stars as the audience.

She looks at him deeply then kisses him on the cheek.

He smiles and takes her hand.

They walk off along the river.

FADE TO BLACK

For Megan