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SF PERUSALS

subculture

by Steve Yockey

A Samuel French Acting Edition



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FOUNDED 1830
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[every little thing]

[every little thing] was commissioned by Lisa Paulsen at Emory University's Playwriting Center in Atlanta, Georgia. It appeared as a part of the Spitting Game project in Emory's Brave New Works Festival on February 14, 2009. Directed by Snehal Desai. With the following cast:

DAVID. . . . . Greg Lockett
STEPHANIE. . . . . Chelsea Kaplan
JIMMY . . . . . Alec Fox
WOMAN. . . . . Ellen McQueen

LIST OF PLAYERS

DAVID – a painfully 'visually oriented' young man, hipster, bed head, jeans and a T-shirt.

STEPHANIE – a sensible young woman, very, very put together, sleek, high heels and lipstick.

JIMMY – a frustrated young man on the prowl, tired, idealistic, better looking than he thinks.

WOMAN – a woman, a bit older, relaxed, confident; like a bittersweet reminder of an easier time.

NOTES

[ ] in the script indicate overlapping dialogue.

Everything up to and including the Woman's monologue is direct address to the audience; very isolated, a bit "Brechtian" if you will. Everything after is starkly human.

Projections play across the actors during everything up to the Woman's monologue: a mash-up of pornography, runway, teen dramas, romantic comedies and a collage of Internet chats. The projections stop abruptly before the Woman begins speaking.

Fast, faster, fastest – monologue – release.

(Three people in their early twenties stand in a row facing the audience. A fourth person, a somewhat older woman, sits in a chair nearby casually watching.)

(The projections begin.)

(The three people breath in and then out. Again, they breath in and then out. A third time, in and then…)

JIMMY. So here's the thing, I'm officially boycotting the Internet. Boycott.

STEPHANIE. We're going out tonight, some of my girlfriends I mean, and me, I mean of course I'm going too, I'm part of 'we.'

DAVID. Say what you will, I'm a fan of pornography. People. Having sex. On screen. I fucking love it.

JIMMY. Hear this: I have been on exactly 17 first dates in the last two months, all guys from the internet. All liars.

STEPHANIE. And we all, all of the girls, we sort of call or text to pre-plan what we're going to wear [when we go out.]

DAVID. [I wanna' say the idea of] it is really what gets me, but that's not it.

JIMMY. I'd rather sit at home and play "Candyland" with myself than go on one more first date with some dick I met online.

STEPHANIE. Not like coordinating, but, just getting everyone on the same page. Do you know?

DAVID. My girlfriend, huh, she got all weird about it. She says she's not coming over anymore. Just because, okay, just because I like to have it on when we, well when we fuck, ya' know?

JIMMY. Listen, I think it's great that there is this fast, mass, massive way for people to meet that might never have met in this "thing" called the real world, to get together, but mark my words: trouble.

STEPHANIE. Because the worst thing in the world is when you dress casually and everyone else is dressed to impress. Which has happened, and I don't like that. I don't like it.

JIMMY. This is me on my soap box: A shiny new brand of dishonesty is being bread out there, a symptom of easy [anonymity.]

DAVID. [I know guys are a] lot more visual than women, but she doesn't want to hear that. She doesn't want me to watch it. Not at all. Just the two of us, that should be [enough. Whatever.]

STEPHANIE. [One time I] showed up at this bar in jeans and a shirt, hair just kinda', ugh, my friends were all wearing skirts, looking very good, and, I mean, not a guy there looked at me all night. You've heard the one about the three girls who walk into a bar? Two of the girls a pretty and one of them, well, isn't or whatever, and the bartender says, ugh, I don't know why I'm, I don't even like that joke.

JIMMY. Think about [this…]

STEPHANIE. [I am] that joke. Was [that…]

JIMMY. [When you're] talking to someone online, they have time to think about how to respond, they have time to craft a response, to look things up for reference, to change, to figure out how best to offer you what you're looking for, to become that thing. Tricky.

DAVID. When I'm watching really hot porn, it's, there's something in it that makes me feel closer, and obviously more, something that really just gets me, uh, up and running.

STEPHANIE. So that night out, it was bizarre because when we all dress the same, I get attention. I don't want to sound, I don't care how it sounds, I get attention from guys. That I like.

JIMMY. Scary. Not just the Internet, texting too, this rapid fire transaction. Who is on the other side of it? Who's that guy anyway? A lot of the time, you don't [really know.]

DAVID. [And it's not] like I need it or anything, I don't have to have porn to, ya' know, perform or whatever. And she knows that. I used to never watch it, then a little. I do watch [it more now.]

JIMMY. [I'm no Luddite, but] things are moving just a little too fast when you chat with someone so much online that you think you're in love only to meet them face to face and [have nothing to say.]

STEPHANIE. [And it's not like] anyone did anything on purpose, I mean, I'm making it a bigger deal than it is, was, I could have gone home, but being in for one night just because I didn't look like, well, whatever the rest of that sentence [is I guess.]

DAVID. [She doesn't] get that the videos [make it so much better, I get harder, seriously, so fucking hard.]

STEPHANIE. [But I vividly remember, vividly, the way that I was outside of] the, [what, the group.]

JIMMY. [How are] you gonna' sit across from me at dinner after we have talked online about the virtues and wonders of *The Great Gatsby* and tell me, face to face, you don't know anything about F. Scott Fitzgerald? He wrote it.

DAVID. And, okay, maybe she can go, sure, it's like, the sex is almost better when she's not there, between you and me.

STEPHANIE. And one of those guys [that night…]

DAVID. [Strictly between] you and me.

STEPHANIE. He said what's with your "boring" friend? About me he said that. Like I'm waiting in the corner at a sock hop for someone to ask me to dance. And you know, you just know what "boring" really [means.]

JIMMY. [We're having] dinner, drinks, conversation and every little fake thing is peeling away.

STEPHANIE. [It doesn't] [mean "boring."]

DAVID. [I've never really] [thought about it.]

JIMMY. [Every little bit] [of his game.]

STEPHANIE. [And the worst] thing, I didn't even know him, but it felt so, look, I know I look good. I just wasn't dressed, up, or whatever.

DAVID. *(laughing to himself…)* The sex is better when she's not there.

STEPHANIE. Oh god.

JIMMY. Oh god.

DAVID. Oh my god.

STEPHANIE. And so, lesson learned, I realized something very important. I can control never having to feel like that again. And it's simple. Look better than my friends.

*(***STEPHANIE** *self-consciously adjusts her appearance.)*

JIMMY. That is incorrect. To sit there and lie about yourself. You don't have to be smart, I'm not saying you have to be smart. Just not stupid. And more importantly, be in real life whoever you were when we were talking online. Jesus, it's like Los Angeles is taking over the world, and I don't mean Los Angeles, I mean the idea that you have in your head when I say "Los Angeles." It's in there, you know what I mean.

DAVID. When I'm watching a good video, really getting into it, I don't even imagine anything, [fantasize, I can sit back, take things at my own speed. Really get into it. And not think. Just watch the video go by and my body responds. I don't even pay a lot of attention to what I'm doing, ya' know, physically, to myself. It feels good, but my brain kinda' hangs there, disconnected, and this base kind of thing just, just…]

STEPHANIE. [And so I lost 10 pounds, which maybe I didn't need to do, but it felt like doing something, and bought some new clothes and realized, boom, [[just like that: if I can get my friends to text me photos of what they're wearing out, I can do just a little more. Maybe not enough to notice, but enough for guys to notice.] Which, frankly, doesn't take much if it means shorter, tighter or a bit more, I don't know, just a bit more.]]

JIMMY. [[My heart, all right, my heart cannot take anymore of this artifice and inflation. I admit that I am at a loss sometimes when it comes to dealing with people and the internet makes it easier, but how many times do I have to go through the same horribly deflating let down as whatever's been built up in an unseen]] [void is slowly torn down piece by piece by the real life incarnation that can't live up to the invention.

DAVID. [I'm not even there, not even involved, just a body, I'm gone inside these women on the screen, my cock in my hand, everything on] [the inside of my chest just pulls up, collapsing, like it's being sucked out through the back of my neck and I hear my own breath.]

STEPHANIE. [And all of the girls were willing to do it,] [it was so easy because it seemed fun.]

JIMMY. [So what am I] [supposed to do?]

DAVID. [And pause this part of the tape, the] best part, all my muscles tense up, [my body rigid and stuff.]

STEPHANIE. [So I always cheat a bit more,] I can't help it, [the attention just, just feels so good.]

DAVID. [And everything gets faster, my breathing,] [the rhythm with my hand…]

JIMMY. [You have to play the game,] go through the, jump [through the hoops.]

STEPHANIE. [And no one's] gonna' [ignore me.]

DAVID. [My heartbeat,] [faster.]

JIMMY. [Fucking hoop] [after hoop.]

STEPHANIE. [And no one's gonna'] [call me names.]

DAVID. [And slippery,] [mm, yes.]

STEPHANIE. [Because I know how] [to look good.]

DAVID. [Yes. Yes.]

STEPHANIE. [I look good.]

DAVID. But [it feels so good. So fucking good.]

STEPHANIE. [But then I catch myself] [in the mirror and...]

JIMMY. [What choice do] [I have?]

DAVID. [Ah fuck yes!]

(The projections stop. **JIMMY** *looks away, annoyed.* **STEPHANIE** *stares ahead, eyes wide.* **DAVID***'s breathing is fast and erratic. It slows and calms during the following. As the* **WOMAN** *speaks, the attention of the other three is drawn to her…)*

WOMAN. This summer I spent some time in India. I travel a lot, so I don't often have those 'culture shock' moments. A city is a city, all that, cell phones, traffic, noise. The people are different, that's all. But one afternoon, my car, and I use that term as loosely as possible, my car broke down on a rural stretch of road. And I was angry. Just angry. No one wants to hang around a dirt highway, in the heat, waiting for rescue in the indefinite future, especially when you don't speak the language. And my computer battery was dead so I couldn't even get any work done. Just really frustrating. But while I'm sitting there in the middle of nowhere, no cell reception, no nothing, I'm absentmindedly fiddling with my wedding ring, which I do when I get nervous, just twisting it around and around and I look up…I see an elephant. An elephant. Just standing there, a real elephant, big, too, bigger than you'd think from the movies. I've never been to a zoo, not since I was a kid anyway, and I'm not an animal lover, but there was something so, I don't know, I just kinda' stopped. Stood there, staring. A real elephant on the side of the road. I basically ignored my driver and walked over, but it didn't move. I slowly reached out and it still didn't move, but one of its big eyes followed my hand all the way until I touched its trunk. It was coarse and leathery as I rubbed up and down. Then the elephant flapped its ears some, lifted up its trunk and gently wrapped it around my shoulder. My driver said something in Hindi, but he sounded miles away. I looked right in the elephants' eye and it looked back at me. This huge animal, this thing I've seen on television or in movies more times than I can count, was touching me, seeing me. And I looked at my hand against its head. My wedding ring in clear relief against the gray.

(She holds out her hand examining her ring, a sweet admiration.)

WOMAN. *(cont.)* And, as silly as this sounds, I saw my husband, but the way he was when we first met. When he asked me out after an English seminar in college. How he held my hand that first night and I didn't know anything about him and I wanted to know everything about him, but we had barely spoken and there was so much to learn. And we had so much time to learn it all. I swear, I swear that was the most intensely real moment that has ever happened. I just started crying, in a good way, I can't even tell you why. I think about it all the time. It's just in there, that memory, waiting for any quiet moment to take hold. An elephant on the side of the road in India. An innocence that maybe doesn't exist anymore. Maybe never really existed. Oh that's awful, but what if it never really was as gorgeously uncomplicated as I remember. But I like to think it was.

(She looks at the three of them for the first time since launching into her story.)

When it's quiet, I like to think people can still connect like that.

(Pause. All of the characters breath out of sequence, but slowly and obviously they all come into sequence with the Women's breathing pattern. They also now see each other, are aware of and hear each other, speak to each other.)

*(***DAVID** *shakes out his hand…)*

DAVID. And once I'm done, catch my breath, look at the screen…and it's different. That image of a woman being, frozen, seems a little duller, less fantastic. Kinda' plain. It'll look better again, when I need it to look better, but right now, spent, maybe I can really see it. It's not sexy. It's just sex. A picture of sex. And it's far away. This is the part where someone else would touch you and you'd feel something. That's not happening.

STEPHANIE. But when I look at myself in the mirror, before I go out for, where ever, I feel this gnawing thing. It's not guilt or whatever, I mean, it's not that. But I look at myself and think, does all of this make me pretty? Am I pretty? Or just better sport.

JIMMY. The other thing that sits with you, is this awful hope that even though there's a lot more information, opportunity to lie, the right person might be one click away. [One click.]

STEPHANIE. [Because] you have to do something, to, to compete, I [don't know.]

JIMMY. [And that's] a tough hope to throw [away.]

DAVID. [And if] she doesn't come back, is this all I've got?

STEPHANIE. That sounds so…

JIMMY. Oh god.

STEPHANIE. Oh god.

DAVID. Oh my god.

JIMMY. So I guess I'll keep looking.

DAVID. Alone. Watching. Just [watching.]

STEPHANIE. [I mean, look,] we all do what we can, even if none of it's…

End of Play

sucker punch

sucker punch was commissioned and produced by Dad's Garage Theatre Company in Atlanta, GA. It opened on January 20, 2007 as a part of *8½ x 11: Sex, Drugs and Rock 'n Roll.* Directed by Mike Katinsky. With the following cast:

MAGGIE. . . . . Eve Krueger
DARLA . . . . . .Lauren Gunderson
MR. SANDERS. . . . . .John Benzinger

LIST OF PLAYERS

MAGGIE: a woman in her 20s, all business, all the time
DARLA: a woman in her 20s, childlike, raging, confused
MR. SANDERS: a man in his 40s, caught and anxious to deal

NOTES

[ ] indicates overlapping dialogue

The setting for the play need be nothing more than a couch, or even the idea of a couch.

The handgun should be as large and imposing as possible, even cartoonish.

The entire pace should move quickly; fast and rollicking. But Darla's final monologue should spin into something fleeting, lifted, something else all together.

(From darkness, two women are mid-conversation, very tense.)

(During the following exchange, a spot light grows illuminating only **MR. SANDERS**. *In the middle of the floor, he is bent over on his knees unconscious. He is in his underwear, gagged with his hands tied behind his back. A fit man, he is bleeding from the head.)*

MAGGIE. Where are you going!

DARLA. You, you saw him, he was being crazy, he's crazy. I'm outta' here.

MAGGIE. Calm down Darla, we don't have the money yet.

DARLA. He hit me, nobody fucking hits me Maggie. Not anymore.

MAGGIE. He's under control now.

DARLA. You even don't care, do you? You're in there doing your [nails.]

MAGGIE. [We can't] leave without the money.

DARLA. You're just like Mom.

MAGGIE. What does, what? Don't talk to me like [that, Darla.]

DARLA. [Quit telling] me what to do! You always [do that!]

MAGGIE. [Shut-up!]

(The light slowly spreads out to envelope the entire stage. **MAGGIE** *and* **DARLA**, *two attractive women, stand together near a couch in a hotel room. They are both in sexy outfits, short skirts, high heels, very provocative.* **DARLA** *chews gum, smacking. She has a black eye.)*

DARLA. At least you used to check in and make sure everything was okay. Now you just wait outside. I mean I'm hoppin' around in here all by myself with this guy. He could've killed me.

MAGGIE. Stop being so fucking dramatic.

DARLA. Look at my face, look what he did. I'm not… he's waking up.

MAGGIE. I'm serious Darla, don't make [such a…]

DARLA. [He's waking] up.

*(***MR. SANDERS** *mumbles. They just look at him.)*

MAGGIE. Okay, just play it cool, okay? We'll leave soon, okay? Just let me get what we deserve.

DARLA. I don't even… fine.

(He screams something unintelligible through the gag.)

MAGGIE. Welcome back sleepy head.

*(***MAGGIE** *crosses to him, removing his gag.)*

DARLA. Tell him to be nice. And not to talk with his mouth full.

MR. SANDERS. What the fuck are you doing!? How long are you gonna' keep me like this! Do you have [any idea…]

DARLA. [Tell him] to quit yelling!

MAGGIE. Quit yelling or I'll hit you again.

MR. SANDERS. No, no, no, I'm sorry, I'm sorry. Just, just untie me.

DARLA. No!

MAGGIE. I'm not sure I should do that after your little outburst earlier. Your little behavioral [aberration.]

MR. SANDERS. [Look, I] know, I know I lost control. I'm sorry if I scared you, I didn't mean to break anything. You [won't…]

MAGGIE. [Are] you under the impression that we care if you bust up this fancy hotel suite?

MR. SANDERS. I thought [you…]

MAGGIE. [That was] rhetorical Mr. Sanders as we don't give a good god damn about your room, it's your room, now let me tell you where the issue began: you paid for the basic package. I'm not sure if that's because

you are cheap, poor, uncertain, a jerk, a novice or any combination of the above; however, the basic package does not include abuse. And when you punched Darla in the face, well that [was…]

MR. SANDERS. [You've] got to be joking, [right?]

MAGGIE. [I'm sorry,] what did you [say?]

MR. SANDERS. [You have] no idea what you're doing here, right? Do you know what they do to girls like you in prison?

DARLA. [Yes.]

MAGGIE. [Yes.]

MR. SANDERS. I'm serious!

MAGGIE. And how would that conversation go? "Oh Mr. Policeman, after I paid them to have sex with me, these two women subdued me to stop me from beating them up. Please don't tell my wife."

DARLA. *(sing-songy…)* We found your wedding ring.

MAGGIE. Wife doesn't like the hard stuff?

DARLA. *(still sing-songy…)* We found your gun too.

*(***MAGGIE** *produces a large gun and pushes him back hard with her shoe on his chest and squares the gun at him.)*

MAGGIE. Does she like your big [gun?]

DARLA. [Bet you] never hit her when you can't get it up at home!

MR. SANDERS. You're not gonna' shoot me.

MAGGIE. *(slowly trailing the gun down his chest and into the front of his underwear)* Oh really, I'm not?

MR. SANDERS. You couldn't fucking shoot me [if you…]

DARLA. [One more] word and she will shoot you in the back of the head, and if you wiggle around, it won't matter, she's a real good shot, just, bam! She used to practice on rabbits when we were little, and rabbits are fast. Faster than you.

MR. SANDERS. Jesus, it's not even loaded.

*(***MAGGIE** *and* **DARLA** *exchange a glance.* **MAGGIE** *pulls*

the trigger with the gun still at **MR. SANDERS***' waist. It clicks with a hollow noise.)*

MAGGIE. Damn it.

*(***MR. SANDERS** *laughs and* **MAGGIE** *hits him with the gun.)*

DARLA. Hit him again!

MAGGIE. *(tossing the gun on the floor in disappointment)* All right Mr. Sanders, clearly threatening you with an empty gun isn't going to get us anywhere.

DARLA. And we can't find your money. I'm mean we've looked [everywhere.]

MAGGIE. [Shut-up!]

DARLA. What?

MR. SANDERS. Fuck you. I'll beat the shit out of you.

MAGGIE. Aw, you like hitting girls?

MR. SANDERS. Fuck you.

MAGGIE. You like hitting girls?

MR. SANDERS. So the fuck what!

MAGGIE. You're getting pretty angry, huh? Okay…

(A moment of reflection, then…)

Okay, look, this is a business agreement and it doesn't need to get antagonistic. You have a need and we want payment, it's all terms now, right? Mr. Sanders, you booked the basic package, which you got. And I'm sorry that you couldn't… 'complete the transaction.' But you don't get to hit Darla. That's only available in the advanced package. The more expensive selection. You've got 18 minutes left, so just [tell me…]

MR. SANDERS. [Are you,] so, so wait, if I pay more, I can hit you? How much to hit [you?]

MAGGIE. [Now pay] attention, you can't hit me. But for the right price, Darla is another [story.]

DARLA. [I don't] want to get hit, what are you [doing?]

MR. SANDERS. [How much?] Then how much for some

more coke and some quality time with her?

MAGGIE. Is there more coke?

DARLA. Sometimes I feel like I might as well not talk at all, like maybe I'm a little bunny rabbit. Like somewhere inside me I have floppy ears and a little tail.

MAGGIE. Darla.

DARLA. It's in your purse, but the coke is why he couldn't 'complete the transaction' in the first place. Tell him he shouldn't do other people's drugs, that's not okay!

MAGGIE. Darla.

DARLA. Stop talking to me like a little kid Maggie. Every time: "Darla." "Darla."

MAGGIE. We can talk about this later, when Mr. Sanders is finished.

DARLA. "We can talk about this later…"

MAGGIE. God! What is wrong with you tonight?

DARLA. Nothing. I'm sweet and adorable, like a little bunny.

(She sits, crossing her arms, looking away.)

MAGGIE. Not the fucking bunny thing Darla, Jesus Christ.

MR. SANDERS. I don't care about the fucking coke, that's okay, just, I'll pay you whatever, just leave me alone with her. Oh my God leave me alone with her. How much? $300, $400?

MAGGIE. Whaddya' think Darla?

DARLA. I think I'd be a soft, white bunny, with a little pink nose.

MAGGIE. Darla! Whaddya' think about his offer?

DARLA. His offer?

MAGGIE. His offer.

DARLA. I'm serious, stop playing around. My face already hurts.

MAGGIE. That's so sweet. Darla suffers from an intense case of low self-esteem. It's sad really, I try to tell her how

special she is, but she tends not to know what she's worth.

(She gingerly rubs her hand along **DARLA***'s cheek.)*

A beautiful face like this, she can't let you mess it up for a pittance like $400. I mean, we're gonna' be out of work for at least a few days while she heals up. How would we manage? So I would think $1,000 would get you what you're asking for now. $1,000 for your last 13 minutes. How does that sound?

MR. SANDERS. You said 18 minutes!

MAGGIE. Well all this negotiating, I mean tick tock. And you'll tire yourself out pretty quick I'd [imagine.]

MR. SANDERS. [I, I don't,] fuck, I don't have that much.

MAGGIE. Mr. Sanders, I must confess to some minor confusion on my part. Did you perhaps take us for inexpensive dates?

DARLA. We're not cheap!

MAGGIE. That's right, we're upscale. Decidedly [upscale…]

DARLA. [I'm not] cheap you son of a bitch!

MR. SANDERS. That's right, just keep screaming at me. I'm gonna' hurt you like you can't imagine.

DARLA. Wrong!

MAGGIE. Not if you can't pay the price.

MR. SANDERS. All right, okay, I can pay it, I've got it, I'll pay it.

MAGGIE. *(trying to cover her surprise)* The full $1,000?

MR. SANDERS. Yes. Yes! Only after, you can have it after. Every single cent. After.

DARLA. *(pulling a triumphant* **MAGGIE** *aside, quickly, quietly…)* I thought you were playing him, are you being serious? I can't do that, why would you, are you serious?

MAGGIE. I love you honey, but business is business. And this is our business.

DARLA. Business is…this isn't charging for me to make out with boys behind the movie theater, this isn't even

selling me for sex. This is some other kinda', and you don't even know if he really has the money! Look at me; I don't want to do this.

MAGGIE. But what if he does have it? Think about it; it'll only hurt a little and you're getting half of $1,000. We can take some time off with that much.

DARLA. Only hurt a little?

MR. SANDERS. Oh it's gonna' hurt more than a little.

MAGGIE. You're not helping.

DARLA. I won't do it.

MAGGIE. Look, you're gonna' do it okay? I don't know where this newfound prudishness has come [from, but…]

DARLA. [Prudishness!?] You want to let him beat me for money.

MAGGIE. You've done everything else?

DARLA. Uh! Sex stuff, not, not this. And only because you said it's the only thing we can do, or else we have to go back to Kansas. I'm not going back there. But this is, is why we left in the [first place!]

MAGGIE. [That's right.] And haven't I looked out for you?

DARLA. But I'm always the one who has to do the, the "things." Why not you? You do it! Why me and not [you?]

MAGGIE. [That's] ridiculous, why would it be me? I've always carried you around. I brought you here with me. I saved you; you owe me and I want this money.

DARLA. I'm not a punching bag!

MAGGIE. Don't be stupid! I'm tired of talking. Especially in front of some guy we don't even know that you tied up.

DARLA. You're the one that hit him! Twice!

MAGGIE. To help you!

MR. SANDERS. Fuck, this is ridiculous. This would be funny if it wasn't so fucked up.

MAGGIE. [Shut-up!]

DARLA. [Shut-up!]

MAGGIE. You know, think of it like this… Dad used to beat you, a lot, and okay, that's not fair,

DARLA. You always hid in the pantry, locked me out when he was angry.

MAGGIE. Well I didn't want to get hit! We couldn't both hide in there; he would have found us both. But listen, this guy is willing to pay for it. You're already used to it right?

*(***DARLA** *tries to pull away, but* **MAGGIE** *grabs her arm…)*

So really it won't be so bad. And it will help us. And we probably won't have to do it again anytime soon. Darla, every moment we have together now, away from how things were back home, every moment is precious. Think of it that way, like a little sacrifice…so we can be happy.

DARLA. That's a really… pretty thought Maggie.

MAGGIE. And it's a lot of money. And I want it. You're gonna' do this, right honey?

DARLA. You're really gonna' make me?

MAGGIE. Yes.

(Pause. During the passage, a hot white glow light grows on **DARLA***.)*

DARLA. Can we do some more coke first? It'll help me hold still better. And I can think of other things, it helps me think of other things. Like when we snuck into that Heart concert when we were little, before they got all soft-rock, when they were still hard and we drove all the way into the city, to that club and everyone was sweaty and pushing together and we did coke for the first time, from that guy with the gloves with no fingers and I couldn't move and Anne and Nancy Wilson were so amazing and they were sisters just like us and so strong and we thought we could do anything if we could just get out of that fucking town and I'll only do a little, just a little, I promise, but then I can close my eyes and sometimes I feel like I'm in a crowd of people, no, a big

field, one with tall grass, like back home but nicer, grass all the way up to here and it's brushing on my fingers, like I could run my hands around in circles and feel it on my palms, or if I were a little bunny, then I'd be so small; I'd just disappear into the field, be swallowed up the people and the grass and the music and go away, all alone, all by myself and maybe I'm not me, if I'm a bunny, and I can hide on my own and I'm not even here at all, when it's like that, I can barely feel a thing.

MAGGIE. Darla?

(The light vanishes abruptly.)

DARLA. Can I do some coke first please?

MAGGIE. Okay, let me find it. You know I can't say no to you. But hurry, okay? Tick tock.

MR. SANDERS. Here we go. Here we go.

*(***MAGGIE** *begins to go through her purse.* **DARLA** *picks up the gun off the floor.)*

DARLA. I love you Maggie.

MAGGIE. I love you too little sis…

*(***DARLA** *smashes the gun over the back of* **MAGGIE***'s head and she falls to the ground unconscious. She grabs the purse and begins to leave.)*

MR. SANDERS. Wait! Wait! Please untie me, fuck, don't leave me like this. How am I supposed to, don't leave me like this, please, I'll pay you, I'll pay you [whatever you…]

(She hits him in the head with the gun, knocking him to the floor.)

DARLA. [You're fucking] lucky there are no bullets in that gun. Pay her when she wakes up. I'm not a fucking rabbit and I'm not for sale anymore.

(She exits. Blackout.)

End of Play

kiss & tell

kiss & tell premiered at Vital Theater Company in New York, New York as a part of the Vital Signs Festival. It opened on December 6, 2007. Directed by Bob Cline, with the following cast:

BRANDON. . . . . .Chris Van Hoy
ZACK. . . . . Caleb Damschroder
SUSIE . . . . . .Rachel Mewbron

LIST OF PLAYERS

BRANDON – a male college student, awkward-cute
ZACK – a male college student, polished, flirty
SUSIE – a female college student, brash, sarcastic

NOTES

[ ] in the script indicate overlapping dialogue.

The entire play takes place in a pool of light. No set pieces, no sound, no props – with the notable exception of a sledgehammer.

(Lights up on a pool of light. **SUSIE** *and* **ZACK** *sit on one side of the light, lounging on the ground.)*

SUSIE. I can't believe we're actually sitting here; we should just go before he comes back.

ZACK. It's fine.

SUSIE. I've never hung out in a tool shed. Did you see the shelves of different drills and saws by the door? What if he's a psycho killer?

ZACK. Oh for fuck's sake, it's not a tool shed, it's, like, a little back house. He just doesn't want his parents to know we're drinking. A lot.

SUSIE. You owe me big for this.

ZACK. He seems so sweet.

SUSIE. Psycho killer.

*(***BRANDON** *enters.)*

BRANDON. Hey, I checked in the kitchen, there's no more beer left. Sorry.

ZACK. That's okay; let's just get back to the game. Susie, you picked "dare."

SUSIE. Ugh.

ZACK. And I dare you to kiss Brandon.

BRANDON. Um…

SUSIE. That's all?

(She sits up and pulls her hair back. **BRANDON** *laughs.)*

I can do that in my sleep. You ready?

BRANDON. I'm good, I'm okay.

SUSIE. All right, here we go.

(She leans in towards him, eyes closed, provocative. He leans towards her, eyes open, nervous. **ZACK** *lights up and adjusts his position for a better view. Before their*

faces get too close, the moment freezes into a tableau. **BRANDON** *tilts his face out a bit, not towards the audience, but removed from the scene.)*

BRANDON. In this moment, there is this strange feeling in the pit of my stomach. I'm trying so hard to hide it, to look really natural about it, so they don't think I'm weird or anything. But this is definitely a new kinda' thing for me. I never really had any friends before, I know how that sounds, but my parents are really, protective, I guess that's the word for it. And college is my, I don't know, my first chance to try and fit in, to try to, I don't know. But it isn't going well, everything's so hard, I don't know how to be around other people, they seem, not like me and I can't make myself fit. But that's, so I have to fake it, to try and figure out how I'm supposed to be. And I meet these two and they're fun, they seem to like me, and we get alcohol and come back to my house, even though we have to hide form my folks. This is what people do, right? A first stab at being, I don't know, normal. Her mouth is so close; I can feel her breath a little. There's all of this kind of anxious tension wrapped around the whole, around everything, dripping off of everything. And our lips meet. There is something cool about it, cold about it, not wet; dry and uncomfortable. Something not right, but I do what I think I'm supposed to do. The whole time I'm staring at a row of screwdrivers hanging on the wall behind her, all different sizes, counting them over and over again. Still [somehow I…]

SUSIE. [I can't] believe how lame [this is.]

ZACK. [She won't] ever really [kiss him.]

BRANDON. [I don't] know how it should feel and so I just…

(The tableau breaks as **BRANDON** *kisses her. Briefly. He then sits back away form her and she is left hanging in the kiss for a moment. She opens her eyes and quickly recovers.)*

SUSIE. See, no big deal.

ZACK. You're blushing.

SUSIE. I'm not!

BRANDON. I don't want to sound; I'm just a little uncomfortable. You guys play this game all the time?

SUSIE. [Not, really.]

ZACK. [Sure we do.]

(pause)

We play it all the time.

BRANDON. All right…okay.

ZACK. We don't usually have to hide in a tool shed though.

BRANDON. Well I mean, we can stay out here and drink or we can go into the main house and not drink with my parents. I don't think you'd like them.

SUSIE. At least it's bigger than my apartment. And only a little creepy.

ZACK. Awww, no. It's just, ya' know…industrial.

BRANDON. My Dad's in heavy construction. I was, I spent time alone a lot as a kid, so I used to play in here all the time.

ZACK. Really?

BRANDON. Sure. I'm pretty familiar with most of the things in here. But just, just don't touch anything. He doesn't come out here much, but he knows where everything in here is supposed to be and he's still got a temper.

ZACK. We won't touch a thing, [I promise.]

SUSIE. [Come on] boys, my turn, it's my turn!

ZACK. This should be interesting.

SUSIE. Truth or dare?

ZACK. Me?

SUSIE. You. Truth. Or. Dare?

ZACK. Dare.

SUSIE. Brilliant, turn about is fair play. I dare you to kiss Brandon.

That's the dare.

ZACK. That's not very cool to rope our host into the dare again, now is it, Susie? You don't care, do you Brandon? It's a silly game. In a fucking tool shed.

SUSIE. Blah, blah, you don't mind, do you Brandon?

ZACK. You don't have to say yes [just because…]

BRANDON. [It's no big] deal, right? A game. I can, I mean, I'll play.

(Pause. **ZACK** *smiles.* **BRANDON** *drops his head self-consciously.)*

SUSIE. Perfect.

BRANDON. But I've never really, just, you're not gonna' tell anyone, right?

ZACK. [Wouldn't dream of it.]

SUSIE. [Absolutely not.]

(She moves from between them.)

Nothing leaves here.

BRANDON. I guess.

ZACK. Maybe we should drink a little more?

SUSIE. You don't need to drink anymore and we already drank everything.

ZACK. Okay.

BRANDON. Maybe we should just…

*(***ZACK** *and* **BRANDON** *awkwardly lean toward each other.* **SUSIE** *watches intently. She positions herself to watch.* **ZACK** *shift a little to block her view. She adjusts again with a smile.* **ZACK** *and* **BRANDON** *both close their eyes. Before their faces get too close, the moment freezes into a tableau.* **ZACK** *tilts his face out a bit, not towards the audience, but removed from the scene.)*

ZACK. In this moment, he is close enough that I can smell him; his cologne or aftershave, whatever, it's intoxicating. Sandlewood and something…something sweet. Maybe vanilla? And his eyes are closed, so I close mine as we drift closer and closer. I've been watching him on campus for a few weeks. Not in a stalker way

or anything, but he is really attractive and always by himself for some reason. I could never figure out why, which just adds to the curiosity. When Susie agreed to invite him out, we both new the plan. I was so glad when she agreed to come back to his house too, but now I wish she hadn't. I almost hope that she'll look away, let me have this kind of intimate thing. Of course she doesn't, she wouldn't do that, but I hope for it anyway. And as our lips meet, I think how it's all working out so perfectly. But the contact between our mouths erases everything from my head. This kind of pulse, this pressure that makes me want to press harder. Something I can feel all through my body, my mouth wet from his mouth, his tongue, everything suspended in the air above our heads. My brain is flooded with all of these vaguely romantic ideas that I never let myself. Never let myself…But I can't help it. It's fuzzy and warm, but it all snaps away as soon as we break, still…

SUSIE. This is exactly what Zack [wanted.]

BRANDON. [I've never] felt anything [like this.]

ZACK. [I don't] want it to stop.

(The tableau breaks as they kiss softly, briefly. They pull apart just a little bit, opening their eyes and looking at each other. Then kiss more deeply, intensely. The moment is broken after **SUSIE** *begins laughing and clapping. They pull apart,* **ZACK** *pleased,* **BRANDON** *self-consciously.)*

SUSIE. Good work.

ZACK. Good kiss.

BRANDON. Oh, I don't know, [it was…]

SUSIE. [You really got] into that [one, huh?]

ZACK. [I'll say.]

BRANDON. No, I just got [kinda'…]

SUSIE. [I'm a little] jealous.

ZACK. You should be. I told you I was right.

SUSIE. Zack was so sure you were into guys, but I told him you [were just a…]

BRANDON. [I'm not, I'm, I've] never even kissed anyone before.

ZACK. Oh come on.

BRANDON. I'm serious.

SUSIE. Oh! I can't wait to tell Jenny, she owes you twenty bucks.

ZACK. She's never gonna' believe me. Especially the part about the tool shed.

SUSIE. Hey, I'm a witness. I'll [stand up and…]

*(***ZACK** *and* **SUSIE** *laugh.)*

SUSIE. [Take a] breath [Brandon.]

ZACK. [It's no big] deal man, calm down.

BRANDON. But I only did [it because…]

(He rushes out of the light.)

SUSIE. [Oh Brandon,] come back!

ZACK. God, what's the problem, he didn't seem to mind the kiss?

SUSIE. You know, some guys don't like to admit certain things about themselves.

ZACK. You don't really think that was his first kiss, do you?

SUSIE. No. He kissed me first, right?

ZACK. You know what I mean.

SUSIE. We're in college, how could that be his first kiss? We're practically grown up for fuck's sake. I mean, I was still right that he's kinda'…

(She makes a gesture for "crazy" with her fingers.)

He has to hide in his parents' tool shed to drink.

ZACK. You're being a bitch.

SUSIE. I can't believe we got him to kiss you.

ZACK. Don't be mean.

SUSIE. You've got to be kidding.

ZACK. *(touching his lips)* Besides, maybe it was special.

SUSIE. What're you, in love?

*(***BRANDON** *enters again, dragging a large sledgehammer behind him, scraping along the ground. He stops just outside the light.)*

ZACK. Stop it. Brandon? Come back in here man, seriously.

SUSIE. What do you have?

BRANDON. I'm pretty familiar with most of the things in here.

SUSIE. Oh don't be upset, we were just playing a game. Just like [you said.]

BRANDON. [I don't want] you guys to tell, I didn't want. I don't want this to happen.

SUSIE. See, this is what I'm talking about.

(She whispers…)

Crazy.

ZACK. We were just saying, it can't really be your first kiss, right?

BRANDON. *(very quiet)* It was my first kiss.

ZACK. Why would anyone wait that long?

SUSIE. Well, maybe an ugly person, but you're a good-looking guy. Bizarre, but good-looking.

ZACK. Really good-looking.

SUSIE. Or we wouldn't have picked you to play in the [first place.]

(They begin laughing again. **BRANDON** *lunges into the light.)*

BRANDON. [It's not] funny!

(He rears back the hammer, about to bring it down towards **ZACK**. **ZACK** *starts to turn towards* **BRANDON**, *a smile still on his face.* **SUSIE** *leans back, hands on the floor. The moment freezes into a tableau.* **SUSIE** *tilts her face out a bit, not towards the audience, but removed from the scene.)*

SUSIE. In this moment, Zack is almost looking at me. He has this smile on his face, this amazing smile and I can tell he really likes this guy. It's the only reason I agreed to the stupid game in the first place. The sound that Brandon makes when he starts to swing the, the hammer, the sound of the effort, it catches Zack's attention. He starts to look away from me, look towards Brandon, but his face only makes it about half way before the head of the hammer catches his chin. There is an awful noise, fucking awful, as it just kind of rips his jaw off. It all comes off, almost like it's detachable, like it's supposed to come off. For a minute, everything freezes and there's nothing, like it's not real. But then Zack makes this sound that, that maybe would have been a scream but instead it's this muddled, confused noise from his throat, this gagging noise from the missing bottom half of his face. And then blood starts up, pouring out everywhere, everywhere, waves of it spilling out on the floor. He falls over on the floor, trying to make it stop with his hands, looking up at me, eyes pleading, but I don't know what to do, I don't even scream.

I look up at Brandon; he's holding the hammer in both of his hands, breathing really heavy and crying. I feel like I'm looking at him, no, like I see him for the very first time as he pulls the hammer back over his head again. I don't even try to move. My brain is caught in this loop, this one twitch of thought that keeps coming and coming, again and again, I can't think of anything else. He brings the hammer down towards my face with this guttural, animal sound, and the thought is still in my head slamming around behind my eyes, all I can think: it was just a game. I mean…

*(***BRANDON.** *Still holding the hammer poised, struck suddenly by heavy breathing…)*

No one's gonna' know.

ZACK. *(still smiling, speaking over* **BRANDON***'s heavy breathing…)* I don't even feel it, not in a real way, just a cracking noise in my ears and the dark of the tool shed disappearing, my body moving involuntarily, my hands, but I don't see it, only this light pouring into my eyes as they spiral open.

SUSIE. *(looks out into the audience for the first time, tears falling…)* It was only a kiss.

End of Play

dizziness & loss of breath

dizziness & loss of breath was commissioned by Lisa Paulsen at Emory University's Playwriting Center in Atlanta, GA. It appeared as a part of the Spitting Game project in Emory's Brave New Works Festival on February 14, 2009. Directed by Snehal Desai. With the following cast:

SARA. . . . . Camille Bullock

ALISON . . . . . Chelsea Kaplan

LIST OF PLAYERS

SARA: a young woman, very practical, still stylish and maybe a bit provocative; a bit hard, but it's a cover

ALISON: a young woman, a little more rough and tumble, not in appearance but in demeanor; somewhat sad

NOTES

[ ] in the script indicate overlapping dialogue.

At the very least, the bass from the music playing downstairs at the party should be audible in the bedroom, a soft blanket around the play.

Labored, difficult and dizzy.

(A bedroom of some sort. Night. The lights are turned out but light from the hall enters to mix with light from a large window on the far wall. **ALISON** *stands in front of the window looking out.* **SARA** *sits on the bed, leaning back, looking at the ceiling. They are both holding drinks in red plastic cups.)*

*(***ALISON** *rolls her head over to also look at the window…)*

ALISON. *(inhaling deeply…)* What are you looking at?

SARA. Shhh.

(pause)

ALISON. What are you looking [at?]

SARA. [Be quiet.] I'm having a, one of those, a…

(pause)

It's so beautiful tonight.

ALISON. What?

SARA. Everything.

ALISON. That's what you're looking at…'everything?' How can you look at everything? It's everything. It's, it's…I wanna' go back downstairs.

SARA. This party is kinda' lame.

ALISON. *(laughing…)* I wanna' go back downstairs.

SARA. Fine.

ALISON. And I think we should ditch these guys; there are so many guys down there. Are you coming?

SARA. Huh?

ALISON. What's wrong with you, are you coming back to the party?

SARA. The sky tonight, it's so…vast, it's bigger than anything I could ever even, I mean it's almost hard to look at, like you can't look at it all. All of the shapes [and…]

ALISON. [It's the] sky, you're stoned.

SARA. [Mm hm.]

ALISON. It's actually kind [of…]

SARA. [Yes.]

ALISON. Something [to…]

SARA. [I can] feel my hand, I can feel the veins in it. Rigid. Like wire.

ALISON. Stoned.

SARA. You're stoned. Where did I even get that stuff? I can't remember. It was amazing.

(She laughs. **ALISON** *crashes back down onto the bed.)*

ALISON. What the hell are you looking at? And don't say the sky.

SARA. The neighbors' house, that mailbox. That mailbox across the street.

ALISON. Which one?

SARA. The ugly one.

ALISON. They're all ugly.

(She laughs to herself…)

SARA. Across the street, with the stone swan on top? Oh god. I feel bad for it. Someone knocked its' head off.

ALISON. Good. They'll have to take it down.

SARA. I kinda' like it now.

ALISON. There's no head. It's got no head. Whoa, where did, where did all these bruises come from? I look [like a…]

SARA. [You fell] on the stairs.

ALISON. I fell on the [stairs?]

SARA. [I think] the sky has never looked like it does right now, never in the history of the universe, in all of time, this sky is utterly unique and, and I can stand here and see it and I can hear the blood in my ears. Can you?

ALISON. I think that's just so…so…

ALISON. Can you feel the vibrations from the music? It makes me, when I was little, I'd play records. I actually had a record player, right? Some strange little thing left over from my when my Mom was little. A tiny pink record player for 45's.

SARA. I had a little CD boom box thing.

ALISON. I want to go back to the party.

(She rises and falls to the floor. Starts laughing.)

Oh my God.

SARA. M'are you okay?

ALISON. I'm fine, I just got dizzy, sorta' spinny. And this room is really quiet. You can barely hear the music downstairs.

SARA. This isn't even my room.

ALISON. This isn't your house.

SARA. Right. Right, I know that, I [have a…]

ALISON. [Did] I tell you about, [about…?]

SARA. [It's kind] of dark in this [room, did you…]

ALISON. [You said] to leave the lights off.

SARA. Did I really?

ALISON. I think you, no, maybe I said we [should…]

SARA. [I'm going] to sleep with Charlie tonight.

(She catches herself, covers her mouth. **ALISON** *points and laughs…)*

I know, I know. He has, I don't know, nothing eyes, easy, kind of still and, well there's not much going on in them, you know? Easy.

ALISON. What about Dave?

SARA. Oh, it's not like I'm gonna' date Dave. He's just fun, he gets it.

ALISON. He's been sending you messages all night.

SARA. He does that when it gets late.

ALISON. Did I ever tell you about my little record player?

SARA. Yes.

ALISON. To play 45's?

SARA. It was pink.

ALISON. Yeah, it was! I would turn it up so loud. That crackling sound would almost cover up the music. That record noise…like a, like a layer of dust on the song. Why Charlie?

SARA. Like someone spilled sand in the music.

ALISON. Why are you going to sleep with Charlie?

SARA. Well he's nice. He brought me to the party.

ALISON. Bad reason.

SARA. It'll feel good.

ALISON. He doesn't look like it would feel good. And I don't like…what's his name? What's the name of the guy who brought me?

SARA. Something. Something like…I can't remember. My face feels like it's [going to…]

ALISON. [I, I can't] stand up. [I think I…]

SARA. [Oh Alison, do] you ever wonder what would happen if you didn't have a face, if no one could look at you and, and, think of all the things you could get away with, that, that would be so amazing, if no one could look at you and see you, really see you and everything was new and mysterious [somehow.]

ALISON. [But you] wouldn't have a face.

SARA. Oh Alison, think of, that's not what I'm talking about! Shut-up, just shut the fuck up, that doesn't even matter!

(pause)

ALISON. I don't feel good, Sara. My head hurts. Everything feels so slow.

SARA. Alison, I want you to tell me the truth. Okay? Really though. Really. Do you think I sleep with too many guys?

ALISON. I don't know. No, not if you want to I guess. Do you like Charlie?

SARA. Oh I don't mean him, I mean all of the…I feel like everyone looks at me like I, I don't, no one looks at me much actually, not at me, you know how people kind of look around you when they're talking, that's better than looking right at you [though if…]

ALISON. [No one] thinks of you as a…

SARA. I don't care anyway.

ALISON. Okay. Well I don't think of you that [way.]

SARA. [All] right. I don't care. I need to go find Charlie. I think he really likes me. He was so sweet on the drive over here. He said we could go whenever I wanted. Whenever I felt like it. And it's not like it even matters if he's good, or I don't care.

ALISON. He, he does seem nice.

SARA. Really nice.

*(***ALISON** *reclines on the floor where she fell, stretching.* **SARA** *stays at the window.)*

ALISON. Or at least not mean.

SARA. Okay what?

ALISON. I can feel the music downstairs.

SARA. I get it. You're right, we should go back down. Do I look all right?

(She takes her purse, opens it, looks at the mirror in the compact, smiles at her reflection.)

ALISON. You look good.

SARA. I do.

ALISON. You do.

SARA. Good. Let's get you up.

ALISON. No, no, just let me lie here for a minute, I can, I can feel the music from downstairs.

SARA. I know, you [said…]

ALISON. [Do you] even remember the name of the guy who brought me here?

SARA. Sure. His name was…his…he was wearing a green shirt. I remember that.

(Pause. **SARA** *crosses back to the window.* **ALISON** *is very quiet.)*

It's so big out there, like you could just disappear in it, you could wrap yourself up and not be anything anymore, just vanish. Oh, my hearts beating so fast now. And the moon, Alison, are you looking, are you looking? It's almost, almost…

(pause)

Sometimes I wonder if there's anything we can do to, to erase the, not erase but, if there's a way to really change how, I don't know, I can't concentrate but… if we could change ourselves, just a little shift in one direction or the other, that's all, because it seems like everything could be so beautiful, really beautiful if we could just figure out how to see the, focus in on why we so dislike, why we need to, huh…

(She laughs a little, shakes her head as if snapping out of something. **ALISON** *is still.)*

I don't even know what I'm talking about. That was… maybe we should head downstairs?

(She does not turn around. **ALISON** *is motionless; her eyes are open.)*

Are you still listening to the music? All right. We'll just stay up here, just a bit. I mean, if Charlie's already, if he's gone I can find someone. Guys are so easy, right? I can't get over this sky. Just a…hmmm…

(She sips her drink. **ALISON** *remains still.)*

End of Play

snuff film

snuff film was commissioned and produced by Dad's Garage Theatre Company in Atlanta, GA. It opened on January 26, 2006 as a part of *8½ x 11: The Birds & The Bees*. Directed by Kate Warner. With the following cast:

JACK . . . . . John Benzinger
JILL . . . . . Alison Hastings
SKIP . . . . . Joe Sykes
TOM . . . . . Steve Emanuelson
LAURIE . . . . . Eve Krueger

LIST OF PLAYERS

JACK: a man, a husband, curious

JILL: a woman, a wife, less curious

SKIP: a man, unrequited, all alone

TOM: a man, Laurie's roommate, cynical

LAURIE: a woman, Jack's sister, even more cynical

NOTES

[ ] in the script indicate overlapping dialogue.

The set is three distinct areas in equally spaced spotlights: a chair sitting alone, an armchair and a side table, and a bed and television set-up.

Everything keeps moving, moving, moving; the stage is never still.

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