

NIDA National Institute
of Dramatic Art

BFA Acting Auditions
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Introduction

These texts are provided to you by NIDA as a useful reference for you. They are guide and are not prescribed. If you have a text that you wish to present to us that does not appear on this list, feel free to do so.

All texts are open to all applicants.

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HEIGHTENED TEXT AND LANGUAGE MONOLOGUES

its happenin'/but you dont know abt it

by Ntozake Shange

(for david)

these kisses are clandestine
no one can see them
i hold them in my hand
shd I be discovered/
i stick them in my hair & my head gets hot

under no circumstances
can the legs that slip over my hips
leave tellin marks/ scents
of love/ this wd be unpardonable
so i am all the time
rubbin my arms/ exposing myself
to river mists/ to mask the sweetness
you leave me swillin in

i cant allow you to look at me
How you do so i am naked & wantin
To be explored like a honeysuckle patch
When you look at me how you do so
i am all lips and thigh/
my cover is blown & the kisses
run free/ only to hover sulkin over
yr cheek/ while i pretend
they are not mine
cuz its happenin/ but you dont know abt it

this kisses they take a slow blues walk
back to me
in the palm of my hand
they spread out/ scratch kick curse & punch
til my skin cries/
kisses raisin hell/ in my fists/
they fly out mad & eager
they'll fly out mad & eager
if you look at me how you do so i am naked
& wantin/ if you look at me how you do so
i am all lips & thigh/
they gonna fly out mad & eager
they fly out & climb on you
the kisses/ they
flyin
if you look at me
how you do so

PRINCE HENRY - Henry IV pt 1

by William Shakespeare

PRINCE HENRY I know you all, and will awhile uphold
The unyoked humour of your idleness:
Yet herein will I imitate the sun,
Who doth permit the base contagious clouds
To smother up his beauty from the world,
That, when he please again to be himself,
Being wanted, he may be more wonder'd at,
By breaking through the foul and ugly mists
Of vapours that did seem to strangle him.
If all the year were playing holidays,
To sport would be as tedious as to work;
But when they seldom come, they wish'd for come,
And nothing pleaseth but rare accidents.
So, when this loose behavior I throw off
And pay the debt I never promised,
By how much better than my word I am,
By so much shall I falsify men's hopes;
And like bright metal on a sullen ground,
My reformation, glittering o'er my fault,
Shall show more goodly and attract more eyes
Than that which hath no foil to set it off.
I'll so offend, to make offence a skill;
Redeeming time when men think least I will.

HOTSPUR – Henry IV pt 1

by William Shakespeare

HOTSPUR My liege, I did deny no prisoners.
But I remember, when the fight was done,
When I was dry with rage and extreme toil,
Breathless and faint, leaning upon my sword,
Came there a certain lord, neat, and trimly dress'd,
Fresh as a bridegroom; and his chin new reap'd
Show'd like a stubble-land at harvest-home;
He was perfumed like a milliner;
And 'twixt his finger and his thumb he held
A pouncet-box, which ever and anon
He gave his nose and took't away again;
Who therewith angry, when it next came there,
Took it in snuff; and still he smiled and talk'd,
And as the soldiers bore dead bodies by,
He call'd them untaught knaves, unmannerly,
To bring a slovenly unhandsome corse
Betwixt the wind and his nobility.
With many holiday and lady terms
He question'd me; amongst the rest, demanded
My prisoners in your majesty's behalf.
I then, all smarting with my wounds being cold,
To be so pester'd with a popinjay,
Out of my grief and my impatience,
Answer'd neglectingly I know not what,
He should or he should not; for he made me mad
To see him shine so brisk and smell so sweet
And talk so like a waiting-gentlewoman
Of guns and drums and wounds,--God save the mark!--
And telling me the sovereign'st thing on earth
Was parmaceti for an inward bruise;
And that it was great pity, so it was,
This villanous salt-petre should be digg'd
Out of the bowels of the harmless earth,
Which many a good tall fellow had destroy'd
So cowardly; and but for these vile guns,
He would himself have been a soldier.
This bald unjointed chat of his, my lord,
I answer'd indirectly, as I said;
And I beseech you, let not his report
Come current for an accusation
Betwixt my love and your high majesty.

LADY PERCY – Henry IV pt 1

by William Shakespeare

LADY PERCY O, my good lord, why are you thus alone?
For what offence have I this fortnight been
A banish'd woman from my Harry's bed?
Tell me, sweet lord, what is't that takes from thee
Thy stomach, pleasure and thy golden sleep?
Why dost thou bend thine eyes upon the earth,
And start so often when thou sit'st alone?
Why hast thou lost the fresh blood in thy cheeks;
And given my treasures and my rights of thee
To thick-eyed musing and cursed melancholy?
In thy faint slumbers I by thee have watch'd,
And heard thee murmur tales of iron wars;
Speak terms of manage to thy bounding steed;
Cry 'Courage! to the field!' And thou hast talk'd

Of sallies and retires, of trenches, tents,
Of palisadoes, frontiers, parapets,
Of basilisks, of cannon, culverin,
Of prisoners' ransom and of soldiers slain,
And all the currents of a heady fight.
Thy spirit within thee hath been so at war
And thus hath so bestirr'd thee in thy sleep,
That beads of sweat have stood upon thy brow
Like bubbles in a late-disturbed stream;
And in thy face strange motions have appear'd,
Such as we see when men restrain their breath
On some great sudden hest. O, what portents are these?
Some heavy business hath my lord in hand,
And I must know it, else he loves me not.

AARON – Titus Andronicus

by William Shakespeare

AARON Ay, that I had not done a thousand more.
Even now I curse the day--and yet, I think,
Few come within the compass of my curse,--
Wherein I did not some notorious ill,
As kill a man, or else devise his death,
Ravish a maid, or plot the way to do it,
Accuse some innocent and forswear myself,
Set deadly enmity between two friends,
Make poor men's cattle break their necks;
Set fire on barns and hay-stacks in the night,
And bid the owners quench them with their tears.
Oft have I digg'd up dead men from their graves,
And set them upright at their dear friends' doors,
Even when their sorrows almost were forgot;
And on their skins, as on the bark of trees,
Have with my knife carved in Roman letters,
'Let not your sorrow die, though I am dead.'
Tut, I have done a thousand dreadful things
As willingly as one would kill a fly,
And nothing grieves me heartily indeed
But that I cannot do ten thousand more.

TAMORA – Titus Andronicus

by William Shakespeare

TAMORA Have I not reason, think you, to look pale?
These two have 'ticed me hither to this place:
A barren detested vale, you see it is;
The trees, though summer, yet forlorn and lean,
O'ercome with moss and baleful mistletoe:
Here never shines the sun; here nothing breeds,
Unless the nightly owl or fatal raven:
And when they show'd me this abhorred pit,
They told me, here, at dead time of the night,
A thousand fiends, a thousand hissing snakes,
Ten thousand swelling toads, as many urchins,
Would make such fearful and confused cries
As any mortal body hearing it
Should straight fall mad, or else die suddenly.
No sooner had they told this hellish tale,
But straight they told me they would bind me here
Unto the body of a dismal yew,
And leave me to this miserable death:
And then they call'd me foul adulteress,
Lascivious Goth, and all the bitterest terms
That ever ear did hear to such effect:
And, had you not by wondrous fortune come,
This vengeance on me had they executed.
Revenge it, as you love your mother's life,
Or be ye not henceforth call'd my children.

VIOLA - TWELFTH NIGHT

by William Shakespeare

VIOLA I left no ring with her: what means this lady?
Fortune forbid my outside have not charm'd her!
She made good view of me, indeed so much,
That methought her eyes had lost her tongue,
For she did speak in starts distractedly.
She loves me, sure; the cunning of her passion
Invites me in this churlish messenger.
None of my lord's ring? Why, he sent her none.
I am the man: if it be so, as 'tis,
Poor lady, she were better love a dream.
Disguise, I see thou art a wickedness,
Wherein the pregnant enemy does much.
How easy is it for the proper false
In women's waxen hearts to set their forms!
Alas, our frailty is the cause, not we,
For such as we are made of, such we be.
How will this fadge? My master loves her dearly,
And I, poor monster, fond as much on him,
And she, mistaken, seems to dote on me:
What will become of this? As I am man,
My state is desperate for my master's love:
As I am woman (now alas the day!)
What thriftless sighs shall poor Olivia breathe?
O time, thou must untangle this, not I,
It is too hard a knot for me t'untie.

QUEEN OF FRANCE – LOVE’S LABOUR’S LOST

by William Shakespeare (Folio 1623)

QUEEN No, no my Lord, your Grace is perjur’d much,
Full of dear guiltiness, and therefore this:
If for my Love (as there is no such cause)
You will do ought, this shall you do for me.
Your oath I will not trust: but go with speed
To some forlorn and naked Hermitage,
Remote from all the pleasures of the world:
There stay, until the twelve Celestial Signs
Have brought about their annual reckoning.
If this austere insociable life,
Change not your offer made in heat of blood:
If frosts, and fasts, hard lodging, and thin weeds
Nip not the gaudy blossoms of your Love,
But that it bear this trial, and last love:
Then at the expiration of the year,
Come challenge me, challenge me by these deserts
And by this Virgin palm, now kissing thine,
I will be thine: and till that instant shut
My woeful self up in a mourning house,
Raining the tears of lamentation,
For the remembrance of my Father’s death.
If this thou do deny, let our hands part,
Neither intitled in the other’s heart.

KING HENRY V – KING HENRY V

by William Shakespeare

KING HENRY V

We are glad the Dauphin is so pleasant with us;
His present and your pains we thank you for:
When we have march'd our rackets to these balls,
We will, in France, by God's grace, play a set
Shall strike his father's crown into the hazard.
Tell him he hath made a match with such a wrangler
That all the courts of France will be disturb'd
With chaces. And we understand him well,
How he comes o'er us with our wilder days,
Not measuring what use we made of them.
We never valued this poor seat of England;
And therefore, living hence, did give ourself
To barbarous licence; as 'tis ever common
That men are merriest when they are from home.
But tell the Dauphin I will keep my state,
Be like a king and show my sail of greatness
When I do rouse me in my throne of France:
For that I have laid by my majesty
And plodded like a man for working-days,
But I will rise there with so full a glory
That I will dazzle all the eyes of France,
Yea, strike the Dauphin blind to look on us.
And tell the pleasant prince this mock of his
Hath turn'd his balls to gun-stones; and his soul
Shall stand sore charged for the wasteful vengeance
That shall fly with them: for many a thousand widows
Shall this his mock mock out of their dear husbands;
Mock mothers from their sons, mock castles down;
And some are yet ungotten and unborn
That shall have cause to curse the Dauphin's scorn.

ANTIGONE – ANTIGONE

adapted by Merlynn Tong after Sophocles

ANTIGONE It is for you Polynices
That I am punished.

I love you.

If you were my husband,
Or even a son I bore.
I wouldn't have dared
To fight the law.

Another husband I could find,
And bear more sons by him.
But a brother of parents
Who have both perished,
How can I find another you,

Polynices, it is for this
That I am doomed to death.
All Creon can see
Is that I've sinned.
And it must be condemned.

How did I offend the Gods?
What holy laws did I break?
What world do we live in,
Where piety is branded as blasphemy?

Now that everyone has turned away,
Who will fend for me?

If my death pleases the Gods
Then so be it.
I have transgressed and I succumb.

But if I have been wronged,
I wish upon my enemies,
Thunderbolts of the heaviest assault.
And no cure for their endless agony.

Look upon me,
My ancestors,
And remember my name.

Today your royal blood is spilled
For honouring the Gods,
For honouring you.

HERALD – THE ORESTIA (AGAMEMNON)

by Aeschylus in a version by Tony Harrison

HERALD Blackness. Waveforce. Sea heaving and swelling.
Fierce thrashing galesqualls whistling from Thrace,
hurricanes blasting, rain lashing and pelting,
ship-prow smashing ship-prow, horned beast goring beast,
beasts with their horns locked butting each other.
You know when a collie not used to its charges
scatters the daft sheep every direction,
colliding, collapsing, that kind of chaos...
well that's how the waves were. Next morning
the Aegean had mushroomed with corpses and shipwreck.
Our ship though, amazing, still whole and undamaged.
Some god interceded, got our ship a pardon.
Our helm had been guided by the hand of some he-god.
Our ship was one that didn't get shattered.
Couldn't believe it escaping thaty wave-grave,
couldn't believe our life-lot so lucky.
We were shocked in the clear light of morning,
chewing the cud of the nightmare we'd lived through.
Our ship-throng had suffered a terrible thrashing.
If any of the others survived they'll be thinking
we're finished, finished, as we still do of them.
May everyting still turn out for the better.
Menelaus, let's suppose that he's made it,

let's hope he's still somewhere under the sunlight.
Zeus can't want the whole bloodclan blasted.
That's the truth you wanted. You've got it all now.

FEMI – The Sun, The Moon, and the Stars

by Dipo Baruwa-Etti

Mornin comes an' I get ready ta trek
From North Woolwich ta court.
On thuh bus, Tiff keeps pattin hur new weave
An Diya's paintin nails
Like they boutta go ta uh Burberry show,
But I can't stop thinkin bout
Thuh fright of lass night.

We arrive at court,
Where press lie out front.
They're like crocodiles,
Cold-blooded an' cravin meat.
They waited unduh watuh
Juss aftuh he died but now
creep out.
Their yellow eyes pokin about,
their teeth sharp ready ta bite
for clicks, hits, gains.
But not ta bring honour ta Seun's name.
If they wanted that,
they'd speak bout his talent.
How he wanted to be an architect.
Design buildins that'd last generations.
Instead they juss talk bout his end
like he ain't uh real person.

We enter thuh gallery.
Tiff spots Lexi an' beings ta head t'wards her.
But I can't.

Thuh haziness starts ta return
an' ma chest gets heavy
as I see hur.

I dunno why, but I Tiff an' Diya goin there
an' declare that I wanna sit away.

'Why?'

Tiff asks, but I ignore her an' go elsewhere.

They follow, Lexi lookin baffled,
as thuh show begins.

Day one.

Openin statements.

Thuh prosecution start.

They talk lovin'ly bout Seun,
thuh words I fed em months ago
pour outta their mouths
an' spread across thuh room.

They talk bout mum an' dad,
thuh motorway madness
that mangled em an' made us
orphans at thirteen.

How Seun had been uh rock for me,
as we went from foster fam'ly ta fam'ly
till it could juss be him and me.

How he was uh great student,
determined to live thuh life our parents
had back in Nigeria, but do it here.

Like they always dreamed of.
till those men let their hate
infiltrate and took it all away.

Thass what our lawyer sez it was

But argues manslaughter
For uh 'more likely conviction'.
Bun dat.
We all know wot it wos.
Murder, cos they hated his skin.
Cos it wozza sin ta em that he was in their
Part o'thuh country
With one of theirs.
But they're pleadin innocent
So we gotta sit thru this whole thin'.

Thuh prosecution finish
An' then iss thuh defence's turn.
Lies swarm in like bees
An' they all sting me.
Talkin bout self-defence,
How they nevah meant ta leave him dead,
Wen they –
'OH MY GOD'
Why're they letting you speak?
These are LIES!
They are GUILTY!'

Quickly, I'm silenced.
Quickly, I'm warned.
Quicky, I'm seen.
Seen as mad.

CHEF – Chef

by Sabrina Mahfouz

I was closing up, mid-week quiet night.
There was mud on his boots,
it hadn't rained for a while.
He stood there
like he should be there,
as if he could never be unwelcome.
There wasn't one bit of his bobbled skin
that I wanted to let in,
this was my kitchen,
my fucking kitchen,
his boots his mud his muck wasn't welcome.
Come in, he said,
can I come in?
I ignored him.
It was late,
I was cleaning,
scrubbing silver to lake-lit moonlight,
the last night before the first night off in ten days.
Swaying with tiredness,
the tonelessness of his voice
fighting with the memory I had of its bite.
What for,
what do you wanna come in for?
I didn't even look up,
kept scrubbing,
wiping.
See,
I want to see you.
I'm here, you've seen.
What do you want from me?
Nothing, I want nothing.
You should leave.
I need you to see me.
I won't look.
Wiping still, I wonder if my cooking
will be spoilt by this intrusion,
will this memory infuse all my soft fruits,
plait itself into my pastry?
Just leave me and my kitchen.
I let you run your first one.
Bullshit.
On the ship, I did.
Yeh, then you tried to twist all the breath outta me,
leave me be.

I'm not giving in.
Go. You're too slow.
It's all over, no daughter for you.
If you don't let me,
I mean it's all that's keeping me going really,
it's all I want, it's all I –
don't give a shit.

Now I look.
He's got broken eyes
and a starry heart stuck in thunderclouds.
The sight makes my soul quiet but my voice loud
and I shout.
Now you ain't proud?
You wanna come to love me,
come to get loved by me?
See where I am? Do you see?

Good Grief

by Ngozi Anyanwu

Father? Dad? Papa?
I tried all those and he just stared straight through me.
Then I tried
Hey I'm your son.
Then I asked if I had the wrong address
But I knew I hadn't, 'cause I was staring at my future.
If I believed I had one.
Anyway...
He said I know.
He knew...
he knew...
he knew...
where I was
that I existed
where I lived
where I went to school
how I got into my first fight at Conwell Egan 'cause
someone called me a "light-skin tree monkey."
He had a picture of me...
He didn't miss me though.
I'm missable, right? I feel like...
if I me me
I'd like me
I'd wanna claim me
Right?
I've been thinking this whole time that he must have been walking
around with this like... what do they call it when you have a limb
missing and you act like you still have it?
I thought he'd have like this phantom feeling.
Cut to a dude setting a table with no one there.
He sets it every night waiting for me to show.
And then he's like "nah I did this all wrong"
and he resets it.
The table.
Every day.
Hoping that today will be the day
Where he fills this...
Phantom whatever.
Then he's like,
fuck this,
my son's a man.
So he goes in his fridge,
grabs a six-pack,

cracks open a beer
Rolling Rock.
He places a beer on the table in front of my empty chair
and he just talks. Watching TV, talking to no one. That's what I'd
imagine he did with his days. I used to have dreams about that shit.
Did you know that?
Would we hug? Would we shake hands like men and then hug?
How
When
Where I'd run into him.
I'd create the scenarios in my head.
I use to imagine myself walking around in the world.
We would meet eyes on the street and know.
We'd calmly sit down.
We'd talk about how the Eagles need to get their shit together if
they wanna win a conference final.
We'd eat at a diner.
Share some shit over some pie and marvel about how there were
some fine-ass sons-a-bitches walking around.
Nothing too cliché.
Just these two men who would come to an understanding.
Then he'd say some wise shit.
And we'd go through this ritual like once a week
For like...
EVER.
And he'd wanna know me...
Pussy shit right?

ISABELLA – MEASURE FOR MEASURE

by William Shakespeare

ISABELLA To whom should I complain? Did I tell this,
Who would believe me? O perilous mouths,
That bear in them one and the self-same tongue,
Either of condemnation or approval;
Bidding the law make court'sy to their will:
Hooking both right and wrong to the appetite,
To follow as it draws! I'll to my brother:
Though he hath fallen by prompture of the blood,
Yet hath he in him such a mind of honour.
That, had he twenty heads to tender down
On twenty bloody blocks, he'd yield them up,
Before his sister should her body stoop
To such abhorr'd pollution.
Then, Isabel, live chaste, and, brother, die:
More than our brother is our chastity.
I'll tell him yet of Angelo's request,
And fit his mind to death, for his soul's rest.

HELENA - A MIDSUMMER NIGHT'S DREAM

by William Shakespeare

HELENA How happy some o'er other some can be!
Through Athens I am thought as fair as she.
But what of that? Demetrius thinks not so;
He will not know what all but he do know:
And as he errs doting on Hermia's eyes
So I admiring of his qualities:
Things base and vile holding no quantity
Love can transpose to form and dignity:
Love looks not with the eyes but with the mind;
And therefore is wing'd Cupid painted blind:
Nor hath Love's mind of any judgement taste;
Wings and no eyes figure unheedy haste:
And therefore is Love said to be a child
Because in choice he is so oft beguiled.
As waggish boys in game themselves forswear
So the boy Love is perjured every where:
For ere Demetrius look'd on Hermia's eyne
He hail'd down oaths that he was only mine;
And when this hail some heat from Hermia felt
So he dissolved and showers of oaths did melt.
I will go tell him of fair Hermia's flight:
Then to the wood will he to-morrow night
Pursue her; and for this intelligence
If I have thanks it is a dear expense:
But herein mean I to enrich my pain
To have his sight thither and back again.

HAMLET – HAMLET

by William Shakespeare

HAMLET How all occasions do inform against me,
And spur my dull revenge! What is a man,
If his chief good and market of his time
Be but to sleep and feed? a beast, no more.
Sure, he that made us with such large discourse,
Looking before and after, gave us not
That capability and god-like reason
To fust in us unused. Now, whether it be
Bestial oblivion, or some craven scruple
Of thinking too precisely on the event,
A thought which, quarter'd, hath but one part wisdom
And ever three parts coward, I do not know
Why yet I live to say 'This thing's to do;'
Sith I have cause and will and strength and means
To do't. Examples gross as earth exhort me:
Witness this army of such mass and charge
Led by a delicate and tender prince,
Whose spirit with divine ambition puff'd
Makes mouths at the invisible event,
Exposing what is mortal and unsure
To all that fortune, death and danger dare,
Even for an egg-shell. Rightly to be great
Is not to stir without great argument,
But greatly to find quarrel in a straw
When honour's at the stake. How stand I then,
That have a father kill'd, a mother stain'd,
Excitements of my reason and my blood,
And let all sleep? while, to my shame, I see
The imminent death of twenty thousand men,
That, for a fantasy and trick of fame,
Go to their graves like beds, fight for a plot
Whereon the numbers cannot try the cause,
Which is not tomb enough and continent
To hide the slain? O, from this time forth,
My thoughts be bloody, or be nothing worth!

QUEEN MARGARET – HENRY 6 PART 3

by William Shakespeare (Folio 1623)

MARGARET

Enforced thee! Art thou King, and wilt be forced?
I shame to hear thee speak. Ah, timorous Wretch!
Thou hast undone thyself, thy Son, and me;
And given unto the House of York such head,
As thou shalt reign but by their sufferance.
To entail him and his Heirs unto the Crown,
What is it, but to make thy Sepulchre
And creep into it far before thy time?
Warwick is Chancellor and the Lord of Calais;
Stern Falconbridge commands the Narrow Seas;
The Duke is made Protector of the Realm;
And yet shalt thou be safe? such safety finds
The trembling Lamb environed with Wolves.
Had I been there, which am a silly Woman,
The Soldiers should have toss'd me on their Pikes
Before I would have granted to that Act.
But thou preferr'st thy Life before thine Honour:
And seeing thou dost, I here divorce myself
Both from thy Table, *Henry*, and thy Bed,
Until that Act of Parliament be repeal'd
Whereby my Son is disinherited.
The Northern Lords that have forsworn thy Colours
Will follow mine, if once they see them spread;
And spread they shall be, to thy foul disgrace
And utter ruin of the House of *York*.
Thus do I leave thee. Come, Son, let's away;
Our Army is ready; come, we'll after them.

MARK ANTHONY – JULIUS CAESAR

by William Shakespeare

ANTHONY O, pardon me, thou bleeding piece of earth,
That I am meek and gentle with these butchers.
Thou art the ruins of the noblest man
That ever lived in the tide of times.
Woe to the hand that shed this costly blood!
Over thy wounds now do I prophesy
(Which, like dumb mouths, do ope' their ruby lips
To beg the voice and utterance of my tongue),
A curse shall light upon the limbs of men;
Domestic fury and fierce civil strife
Shall cumber all the parts of Italy;
Blood and destruction shall be so in use,
And dreadful objects so familiar,
That mothers shall but smile when they behold
Their infants quartered with the hands of war,
All pity chok'd with custom of fell deeds;
And Caesar's spirit, ranging for revenge,
With Até by his side come hot from hell,
Shall in these confines with a monarch's voice
Cry 'Havoc!' and let slip the dogs of war,
That this foul deed shall smell above the earth
With carrion men, groaning for burial.

EDMUND - KING LEAR

by William Shakespeare

EDMUND Thou, Nature, art my goddess; to thy law
My services are bound. Wherefore should I
Stand in the plague of custom, and permit
The curiosity of nations to deprive me,
For that I am some twelve or fourteen moonshines
Lag of a brother? Why bastard? Wherefore base?
When my dimensions are as well compact,
My mind as generous, and my shape as true,
As honest madam's issue? Why brand they us
With base? with baseness? bastardy? base, base?
Who in the lusty stealth of nature take
More composition and fierce quality
Than doth, within a dull, stale, tired bed,
Go to th' creating of a whole tribe of fops,
Got 'tween asleep and wake? Well then,
Legitimate Edgar, I must have your land:
Our father's love is to the bastard Edmund
As to th' legitimate. Fine word "legitimate"!
Well, my legitimate, if this letter speed,
And my invention thrive, Edmund the base
Shall top th' legitimate -: I grow, I prosper;
Now, gods, stand up for bastards!

IAGO – OTHELLO

by William Shakespeare

IAGO That Cassio loves her, I do well believe it.
 That she loves him, 'tis apt and of great credit
 The Moor – howbe't that I endure him not -
 Is of a constant, loving, noble nature,
 And I dare think he'll prove to Desdemona
 A most dear husband. Now I do love her too,
 Not out of absolute lust – though peradventure
 I stand accountant for as great a sin -
 But partly led to diet my revenge,
 For that I do suspect the lusty Moor
 Hath leapt into my seat, the thought whereof
 Doth, like a poisonous mineral, gnaw my inwards;
 And nothing can or shall content my soul
 Till I am evened with him, wife for wife -
 Or failing so, yet that I put the Moor
 At least into a jealousy so strong
 That judgement cannot cure. Which thing to do;
 If this poor trash of Venice whom I trace
 For his quick hunting stand the putting on,
 I'll have our Michael Cassio on the hip,
 Abuse him to the Moor in the rank garb -
 For I fear Cassio with my nightcap, too -
 Make the Moor thank me, love me, and reward me
 For making him egregiously an ass,
 And practising upon his peace and quiet,
 Even to madness: 'tis here, but yet confus'd;
 Knavery's plain face is never seen, till us'd.

DOU YI – SNOW IN MIDSUMMER

by FRANCES YA-CHU COWHIG

Based on the classical Chinese drama 'The Injustice to Dou E That Moved Heaven and Earth' by Guan Hanqing

DOU Yi Mother Cai, don't cry
Don't get angry or curse the sky
Maybe Dou Yi is not fit for this time.
My mother read me a story about a loyal official framed for murder.
As he howled a Heaven before his execution
Frost flew from the sky even though it was May.
If we still live on a planet that hates injustice
Snow will fall from the clouds and shield my remains.
May that snow be the last water that falls on New Harmony until
Justice is brought to Dou Yi.

Officers –
Do you see the white flag flapping overhead?
If I am innocent
Not a drop of hot blood will spill onto the green earth or stain my clothes
No matter how many bullets pierce this flesh.
My blood will fly towards the Blue Sky and
Stain the white flag flying above us.
This has happened before when wrongs were suffered by honest women.
Now it will happen here
Where the good suffer poverty and a short life
And the wicked live long and make lots of money.
Because officials are heartless and choose to
Close their eyes and fill their pockets
And men in this town were born with a few words
But you are too timid to speak.

The sky darkens

This floating world dims for me
A cold wind spins!
Officers, I promise you –
It is the hottest time of the year
But soon Snow will tumble down like cotton
And New Harmony will experience the wrath of a drought for three years.

CONTEMPORARY MONOLOGUES

BRANDON – Unbearable Hotness

by Gabriel Davis

I just fuckin' killed Chuck. I think. I mean, he's just laying out there. He's not moving. I don't think he's breathing.

I mean, there I was just up on the roof with Marissa – talking, laughing, having a great time. I tell her she reminds me of Sandra Bullock. I tell her I loved “Hope Floats.” Who knew those would be the magic words? Next thing I know her clothes are off and we're loosening roof shingles like there's no tomorrow. And then there's biting and kissing and touching and suddenly someone starts beating on me, I mean, just pounding on me and growling. Yeah, growling. And I look up and there's Chuck. And I'm like, “What's the problem?” and he says “The problem is, dude, you're fucking my girlfriend.”

So I look at Marissa and I'm like “You're someone's girlfriend?” And she says “No.” Then it comes out Chuck just wishes she's his girlfriend but actually she's his cousin or something, so he's got these feelings of guilt about wanting her...and then he starts crying.

So that ruined the mood. Marissa puts her clothes on, and she goes back down through the window, back into the party. And I'm left with Chuck. Blubbering, whining, crying Chuck.

And he starts in on how he's just this total fuck up and maybe he should just throw himself off the roof. And for a split second I'm thinking “YES! Throw yourself off the roof! Do it!” But I don't say that. I say I “You're gonna get a girl, buddy, just maybe not your cousin, huh?” And then I give him a friendly pat on the back. A nice manly slap on the back. And he looked heavy, I mean, who knew he'd go flying.

Who knew he'd go flying right off the roof?

KENNEDY – Goodbye Charles
by Gabriel Davis

KENNEDY I'm not the kind of guy who spends hundreds on a last minute flight back to New York, tears across town, then runs up six flights of stairs and knocks on my best friend's girlfriend's door in order to run off and elope with her based on one crazy, thoughtless, inexplicably romantic night.

So what am I doing here, Audrey? I'm not passionate. I'm a fact checker for Christ's sake. And the fact of me – being here – doesn't check out.

I mean, this is the kind of thing that only happens in the movies – and we're not in the movies. We're on McDougal Street, two blocks south of Bleecker – that's where we are. That is an indisputable geographical fact.

We can't do this. Because the fact is you are in a relationship. Because the fact is we just met yesterday. Because the fact is I'm not the kind of guy who falls in love.

But the problem is....see...the problem is...despite every fact I can muster, there's something that still doesn't check out. Because the truth is despite all facts to the contrary...I still love you madly. And it just defies all reason. But I do. And it's not like me. And I don't want to. But I can't help it.

I'm yours, Audrey. Completely, totally, hopelessly, and utterly...yours..

ZADIE – Orange Thrower

By Kirsty Marillier

ZADIE My cousin was everything uncontrollable in the world.

She came out of the womb unsure of where she fit. Born to a mumma who didn't want her and a daddy who was a 'no-good, ratbag-of-a-man' she was raised in a big house, on a dusty street, by the women around her. By my ma's ma. Until sometimes she raised a bit of me.

She was born in the eighties, in a pre-Mandela time when South African law meant mixed relations were illegal. And whether or not Stekkies's dad was white or black or brown was something always in question.

As a result, she had a ... wayward, transgression in her blood.

And called herself a 'political act' from day dot.

Beat.

She had a habit of dating big, chunky men. Men with beefy shoulders and toothpicks in their mouths type men. She'd bring them home for us to meet, parading them around for all to digest, hanging from their shoulders like a G-string on a clothesline.

ZADIE's dialect becomes more South African.

Stekkie Stekkie Stekkie Stukkie.

I know now that stuk is Afrikaans for Piece. Piece. Part.

She moved to Joburg when she was twenty-one, twenty-one after saying for years that she was going to get rich quick and 'wipe her bum with fifty-rand notes'. And one hot, noughties summer morning, as a fuck you to everything coloured, everything ... constructed by the Apartheid ... she hopped on a kombi bus, with a baby in her belly, and fled.

Beat.

I loved her. And found radiance in her carelessness.

My cousin came out of the womb unsure of where she fit. Mixed race and political and radiantly in-between. A child with no place to fit. A woman with no place to fit. A woman who gave and gave ... until she had nothing left.

SOPH – The War Next Door

by Tamsin Ogelsby

SOPH It's green.

We, for some reason, were given two

So I've brought you the spare –

Here – it's for you.

You know it's not such a chore

you don't need to separate it out anymore

bottles and tins and cardboard and plastic

you just chuck it all in, it's fantastic

They do all the sorting at some local base

much better than before

when it all went overseas to dodgy developing countries

like China

because the biggest problem we face

today (apart from the imminent self destruction of the

Entire human race)

is how to find a use for all the rubbish we produce

because of course the old days, no one had a car

and you'd never buy more than you could carry or eat

so you did all your shopping in the high street

but now, my god, the stuff we discard!

Did you know, every two hours

we throw away enough to fill the Albert Hall

all things you could recycle –

we've been on at the council for years, me and Max,

proves it's worth making a fuss

you know we use eight billion carrier bags annually?

Britain, that is, not us.

KRISTINA – Julie After Strindberg

by Polly Stenham

KRISTINA I hold your hair up when you're sick. I pick you up after your abortion. I wash your bloodstained underwear. I get up most days and I serve you. But I tell myself, it's not her fault. She's a nice girl. It could be the other way round. She treats me well. She treats me like a person. She didn't write history. She's just snared in the story like me. Sometimes she even makes it possible for us to both pretend that we're not hostage to our situation. Sometimes when we're talking in the kitchen we can both pretend that it's all pretend. And that makes the job, sort of bearable, that we both have moments of pretending. That it all isn't so fucked. That is all isn't so fucking unfair. You see all I had here, was a tiny bit of dignity. But even that you've snatched, and it wasn't even precious to you. I don't think you even knew I had it. That I need it. I don't think you know what it's like to need something. Because, what you've done, what you've just done, is worse than sex with someone you shouldn't. That's child's play really. It's ordinary. It's the oldest trick in the book. What you've actually done is you've turned the light on. When we'd both agreed to sometimes have it off. In what you've done, you've reiterated everything. In your action is the whole world. Of taking and taken. You are wrong. You are what's wrong.

HER – Blackout Songs

by Joe White

HER Yes, well, I couldn't communicate with the outside world you see, not for a long while. I was struck down with a rare affliction – exotic actually, almost entirely unheard of. I'd taken to river swimming, you see. Every morning I'd hop in the river and swim for hours at a time – upstream, downstream ... but I was noticing I was gaining weight. It was the strangest thing: the more I swam, the heavier I became, I was getting bigger and bigger. Turns out I hadn't been closing my mouth. I'd been taking in all that river water for months and months and months, and so there I was, with this giant belly, pregnant with a whole river, until eventually I sprung a leak, out of my bum, and someone had to plug me up with corks. Roll me into the hospital – a giant wobbly ball of a woman. They drained me. It took months and months, a year, maybe I don't know, but it was awful. I loved having the river in me. But they told me it was bad for me. They squeezed me dry, a vat at a time, and let me go ... Problem is. It's not like it's just done now. I'd gotten so used to it. My body had stretched. And now I feel all. Saggy. Empty. All this space to fill up again... And I so missed the art world. I've missed looking at it. Quite terribly. I forgot how beautiful it was... I don't suppose you'd like to go somewhere. And. Fill me in. Not like that. Cheeky -

HIM – Blackout Songs

by Joe White

HIM I had a few sketches to go from, but it's mainly memory. So of course it's shit. It's fucking shit, it's nothing, and I've tried, over and over, but it's just nothing. It's because I'm happy. I'm so *happy* now. So I left the studio, this morning, and I walked, and I went and stood outside a pub. A pub we used to go to – I stood outside, thinking about going in, just have one, maybe, kept crossing the road, looking in, crossing back, fuck it, just one, see if it does anything, see if it stirs anything up. See if I can get that back. And then this old bloke came dribbling over to me, came spitting and dribbling, asking for money and then he stopped and looked at me... and asked how you were doing. Said your name, out loud, said what a great girl you were, great girl, he said, great girl, and for a second, I saw you, there, inside, Friday money clutched in your hand, 'next one's on me', some story, some character, everyone laughing, hoarse coughing, and me, watching you, and just. Loving you, like that, more than anything, more than ever, like that... And then I left. I gave the old fella a couple of quid, said have one for us, and then I came home... How was your day?

CHARLIE – Admissions

by Joshua Harmon

CHARLIE: No, you want me to be just like you, cause I guess you think you're like, nailing life, but actually, my worst nightmare would be turning out like you.

You can't even see yourself, can you? You can't even see yourself.

You think you spent your life championing the underdog; did you ever stop to think about who got shoved out of the way so you could do it?

You're happy to make the world a better place, as long as it doesn't cost you anything. that's what your tombstone should say:

Bill Mason made the world a better place, and it didn't cost him a thing. Call me naive, but if people could make the world fairer without sacrificing *anything* it would have happened by now. It hasn't. You think you're like some kind of hero? Look in the mirror Dad: you're not a hero. You're a hypocrite.

JENNY – Dry Powder

by Sarah Burgess

JENNY. I don't know how instructive my experiences are because I'm atypical and I didn't go to NYU, but the recent hysterical whining directed at my firm has caused me to reflect on something that happened to me in high school: I took AP calculus in 10th grade, and my school didn't offer any math higher than that so in 11th grade I had to go to the local community college to take multivariable calculus.

Unfortunately, my family forced me to ride to the community college with a girl who was a full-time student there. This was Lindsay, our neighbour's daughter. Lindsay was twenty, and she had still not been able to pass Algebra One. As you might imagine, we had little in common. And she was rude to me. When I would request that she obey the speed limit, she would actually exert more force on the accelerator. I knew what was going on. What was going on had a name: Resentment.

So finally one morning I turned to Lindsay and I said: You aren't failing Algebra One because I'm acing multivariable calculus. Those are independent events. Let me repeat that, because that's something you need to keep in mind when people attack you because you work in finance: There will always be people who fail Algebra One. But those people did not fail Algebra One because you were able to ace multivariable calculus. We are simply in a different class. And to that we could perhaps attach some meaning but that meaning is not that you and I are the villains of the story. I said to Lindsay: All I can possibly do is continue my progress through multivariable calculus and try not to spill my juice in your car, and maybe you can please drive safely. That's the most we can do for each other. Anyway, she became very angry. She said how dare I bring that up. She said she wanted to be a lawyer some day (of course) and she was never going to get there because she can't do math.

THERESA – Marion Bridge

by Daniel McIvor

THERESA: You have no idea about me Agnes, you just have no idea. You think it's all so easy for me but it's not--it's not. This is a life I have -- a big life. I'd like to see you try being a nun. People say awful things--they think worse things. And I have a heart you know--I didn't give up my heart when I took my vows. And yes indeed I do live in the world. In this big old awful sick mess of a world. And my heart is filled with questions. Filled. Every time I look around at the world. And when I do look at it what I see it--no, what I *don't* see is God. You've got children killing children and half the world on drugs and the other half starving and people just letting it happen. Where's God in that? And I'm supposed to believe God is everywhere, in everything, in everyone--but sometimes I just don't see him. Imagine how that makes me feel--just as a person--as a person who made a decision and a promise to believe -- to see God everywhere. But where is he? Every day -- every minute of every day I have to ask that question because of the choices I've made. And you don't think sometimes I don't just feel like a fool? But I've got to keep believing and I've got to keep loving and giving and helping. But it's all such a mess and I don't know what to do about it. I don't know how to make things right. I don't know how I got here. There's no room Agnes...I have no room for anyone else.

JACKIE – The Motherfucker with the Hat

by Stephen Adly Guirgis

JACKIE: Anyway, Veronica, I think, was upset about the A.A. even though for all she knows nothing happened, and so, my belief is she started fuckin' the motherfucker with the hat so she could prove to herself that she don't love me, but, of course, we all know she do love me, but now, I found out about it 'cuz the motherfucker left his hat on my table— so— I got upset, I got a gun from Chuchi, and I took the hat and the gun to the motherfucker with the hat's apartment downstairs, and . . . that's when a incident happened. Now, what Veronica woulda done is she woulda just knocked on a door and started capping bodies an' shit! But that ain't me. You known me since Chinese handball, Julio— is that me? All I did: I knocked on the door. Motherfucker with the Hat answered. I didn't say nothing. I just took the Hat -- the hat from my house, tossed it on his carpet, stared him straight in his eye, cocked the gun, and shot the fuckin' Hat on the carpet. Dass all I did. I shot his Hat. Dass all. And -- BELIEVE ME -- the motherfucker KNEW what that was about! The problem is, the bullet went through his hat, ricko-shayed off his floor, blew out his big screen TV, and put a hole into the guy next door's apartment who was home at the time, so, I had to, like, flee... And now I gotta return the gun to fuckin' Chuchi, but he ain't around, so could you please hide the fuckin' gun until, like, Chuchi could be located, please?

SYDNEY MILLSAP – Kings

by Sarah Burgess

SYDNEY MILLSAP:

On that note, in this year's election, I will not contest my seat. I have decided, against the advice of my party and my family and my one friend Pam that it would be best for me to challenge Senator McDowell in the May primary.

Now, you're not stupid. Texas has twenty-five TV markets. We used to be our own county. We're the state with the highest population aside from that overregulated nightmare on the West Coast. This will cost millions.

So I am going to have to keep eating the little pieces of salmon. But let me make one thing clear: at all times, I tend to expect the worst. Often, too often, I've been right. But I can handle the bad personal outcomes when, as your Senator, I vote however is best for you. I will take their appetizers. I will not do as they say.

That's not something John McDowell can give us anymore. Not because he's evil. He's a good guy. But unfortunately that means he's good to lobbyists and donors.

Two weeks ago, when I voted yes on a bill that would've made private equity-fund managers pay income tax on their earnings, John pilled me aside in DC and told me the party wanted me gone. He wasn't mean, he wasn't threatening. He was a man standing up for his friends. And that's the problem, isn't it? I do not have friends in Washington. You will not have that problem with me.

So, I ask for your vote this May and this November. If elected, I will reintroduce that bill. And if it gets killed again? I will tell you who killed it and why. You and I can watch together as our politicians try to pretend their spines are made of anything stronger than warm queso.

I'm sure, this sounds familiar to you – a lawmaker trying to sound like she's better than Washington. Good. You should be skeptical. If I can be honest, lately you haven't exactly been hitting it out of the park when it comes to selecting leaders for yourself. Thank you. God

Bless Texas and, I guess, the United States of
America.

HEATHER CHANDLER – Heathers: The Musical

by Kevin Murphy and Laurence O'Keefe

HEATHER CHANDLER: You don't get to be a nobody. Come Monday, You're an ex-somebody. Not even the losers are gonna touch you now. You can transfer to Washington and you can transfer to Jefferson, but no one at Westerberg is gonna let you play their reindeer games. I'm like oxygen: I'm everywhere. Really, Veronica? Sleeping with psycho trench coat kid? I will crucify you for this. Everyone in school is gonna know that "good little Veronica Sawyer" is nothing but a dirty whore:

AAAAAAAAAAHHH! I raised you up from nothing! And this is my thanks? I get paid in puke????? I know who I'm eating lunch with on Monday. Do you? (To all) Okay, party people! Where is the goddam keg?

You were nothing before you met me! You were playing Barbies with Betty Finn! You were a Brownie, you were a Bluebird, you were a Girl Scout Cookie! I got you into a Remington Party! What's my thanks? It's on the hallway carpet. I get paid in puke! (totally in control) Monday morning, you're history. I'll tell everyone about tonight. Transfer to Washington. Transfer to Jefferson. No one at Westerburg's going to let you play their reindeer games.

WOMAN – Lungs

by Duncan Macmillan

Look. Alright. Listen, you have to understand, alright, I'm thinking out loud here so please just let me talk, just let me think it through out loud.

Please, alright, don't just jump in if I say something wrong or stupid, just let me think, okay. Because I've always wanted –

alright – and I'm talking in the abstract, I've always wanted, I've always had a sense or an idea of myself, always defined myself, okay, as a person who would.

That my purpose in life, that my function on this planet would be to. And not that I ever thought about it like that.

It's only now because you're asking – or not asking but mentioning. Starting the conversation. Only because of that,

that I'm now even thinking about it. But it's always been sort of a given for me, an assumption ever since I was a little girl playing with dolls.

I mean long, long before I met you. It's never been what I guess it should be which is a a a a an extension of an expression of,

you know, f***ing love or whatever. A coming together of two people. It's always been this, alright – and this will sound stupid and naive.

But it's always been an image, I guess, of myself with a bump and glowing in that motherly – or pushing a pram or a cot, or a mobile above it or singing to it.

Reading Beatrix Potter or Dr Seuss. I don't care, never cared about it being a boy or a girl.

Just small and soft and adorable and with that milky head smell and the tiny socks and giggles and, yes, vomit even.

It's all part of it. Looking after it. Caring for it. That's, I think, the impulse. And there's always been a father in the picture but sort of a blurring background generic man.

I'm sorry, it's just this picture of my life I've always had since I was able to think and I've never questioned it. Never.

TOBY – The Inheritance

by Matthew Lopez

TOBY: You would be nothing without me, do you understand? You would be nothing without this part. I gave you this chance, I'm the one who made it happen. Me. It wasn't Tom and his magical fifty-year-old Viagra dick, which by now I'm sure has given you herpes. I will never speak to you again, I don't ever even want to look at you again. And when you win the Tony for this role, which you will, it will be because of me and the part that I've written. So if you don't thank me in your acceptance speech – and I mean, like really lick my ass – I will make sure that everyone knows how you betrayed me and what a backstabbing, malicious, cock-teasing little Eve Harrington you are. And just for the record: Timothée Chalamet, Ben Platt and Lucas Hedges all passed on this part before we offered it to you. So you should probably thank them in your Tony speech, too. So in conclusion: fuck you, Adam. I wish I'd never met you.

ZOE – The Niceties

by Eleanor Burgess

ZOE: You're more afraid of looking like a racist than you are of being a racist.

Don't you want to think about that?

Okay. What are you doing to promote equality? Are you using the money you saved on your son's tuition to fund a scholarship for a student of color? Are you getting all your white friends together to call congressional representatives and demand criminal justice reform? Or do you actually never bother to think about racial equality, and now you're just trying to claim that you do to save face when you know you've been behaving badly, because in that case you can go fuck yourself.

I want this to be *your* problem. I have spent my life living with this problem. Why are my teachers talking to me the way they do? Why are my friends looking at me the way they do? Why is this boy interested in me? Why isn't this boy interested in me?

No you do not get it. That is my whole point, you don't get to say, enough. It keeps coming. Was I just imagining it, or did my sociology professor jump when I jogged past him in the street after dark? And will I ever be safe if that's the kind of thing that happens here? Here. Is there anything for me to love about my country, any way for me to look around this country with love when everything is tainted, everything, and no one else seems bothered by it, everyone else seems happy as a clam—and I have the burden of seeing it for what it really is, I have to educate people, and I have to decide when to stop educating people — and just let it go in order to stay likable and employable and I have to try to focus on my dumb and problematic assignments with all this shit racing through my head, and it's all my problem, how is that fair?? So here I am. In your office. This is your problem.

ROSE – The Children

by Lucy Kirkwood

ROSE: It'll sound silly but. You were who I wanted to be when I grew up. I thought, one day I'll be like Hazel. I won't smoke cigarettes and I'll wear sunscreen and plan the week's meals ahead and get a slow cooker and not just buy sandwiches from petrol stations and I'll keep the bathroom really clean not just give it a wipe when people are coming over and I'll stop crying all the time and I'll do exercise and have a really neat handbag and do washing regularly not just when I've run out of knickers and stop losing earrings and not stay awake reading till four in the morning and feel like shit the next day and I'll find out how tracker mortgages work and be fifteen minutes early to everything and most of all most of all I'll know when I've had enough. But I never quite got there. And I think it's a bit late now. And then tonight I saw your washing outside, on the line, and I thought about you, pegging it out, and how many times in your life you'd done that and no one noticed. And I thought, that woman holds up the world. So that's why, really.

PADRAIC – Lieutenant of Inishmore

by Martin McDonagh

PADRAIC: James Hanley, don't keep going on about your stupid fecking toenails! The way you talk it sounds as if I took off a rake of them, when it was only two I took off, and them only small ones. If they'd been big ones I could understand, but they weren't. They were small. You'd hardly notice them gone. And if it was so concerned you were about the health of them toenails it would've been once in a while you cleaned out the muck from under them.

If I hadn't been such a nice fella I would've taken one toenail off of separate feet, but I didn't, I took two toenails off the one foot, so that it's only the one foot you'll have to be limping on and not the two. If it had been the two you'd've found it a devil to be getting about. But with the pain concentrated on the one, if you can get hold of a crutch or a decent stick, I'm not sure if the General Hospital does hand them out but they might do, I don't know. You could phone them up and ask, or go in and see them would be the best thing, and make sure them toes won't be going septic at the same time. I didn't disinfect this razor at all, I never do, I see no need, but they'd be the best people to ask, sure they're the experts. You'll probably need a tetanus jab too, oh there's no question. I do hate injections, I do. I think I'd rather be slashed with a razor than have an injection. I don't know why. Of course, I'd rather have neither. You'll have had both by the end of the day. What a bad day you've had. (Pause.)But, em ... I have lost me train of thought now, so I have.

(pause)The next item on the agenda is which nipple of yours do you want to be saying goodbye to. The right or the left?

L'L BIT – How I Learned to Drive

by Paula Vogel

Sometimes to tell a secret, you first have to teach a lesson. We're going to start our lesson tonight on an early, warm summer evening. In a parking lot overlooking the Beltsville Agricultural Farms in suburban Maryland. Less than a mile away, the crumbling concrete of U.S. 1 wends its way past one-room revival churches, the porno drive-in, and boarded up motels with For Sale signs tumbling down.

Like I said, it's a warm summer evening.

Here on the land the Department of Agriculture owns, the smell of sleeping farm animal is thick on the air. The smells of clover and hay mix in with the smells of the leather dashboard. You can still imagine how Maryland used to be, before the malls took over. This countryside was once dotted with farmhouses – from their porches you could have witnessed the Civil War ragin in the front fields.

Oh yes. There's a moon over Maryland tonight, that spills into the car where I sit beside a man old enough to be – did I mention how still the night is? Damp sound and tranquil air. It's the kind of night that makes a middle aged man with a mortgage feel like a country boy again.

It's 1969. And I am very old, very cynical of the world, and I know it all. In short, I am seventeen years old, parking off a dark lane with a married man on an early summer night.

CHRIS – Sweat

by Lynn Nottage

CHRIS. (Escalating emotions.) I dunno. A couple minutes, and your whole life changes, that's it. It's gone. Every day I think about what if I hadn't... You know... I run it and run it, a tape over and over again. What if. What if. What if. All night. In my head. I can't turn it off. Reverend Duckett said, "Lean on God for forgiveness. Lean on God to find your way through the terrible storm." I'm leaning into the wind, I'm fuckin' leaning... And. A moment. And then there's Jason. Crossing Penn, you know, and I'm just chilling, looking in the window of Sneaker Villa, not thinking about anything. He sees me. I see him. Neither of us could...um, move for a second. We...it was...I've been thinking about what I would do in that moment. How I would react, what I would say. I mean...fuck it. What we did was unforgivable... Next thing I know I'm walking fast toward him, I don't know what I'm gonna do. But the emotions are right there in my chest. A fist pressing right there. Pressing. And I keep walking. And I'm expecting him to walk away, do something, but he just stands there like he's been waiting on me all these years. And...we come face to face. Like right there. I can smell his breath, that's how close we are. I can see the fucking veins in his eyes. And my fists clench. My fingernails dig into the palms of my hands and then it just happens...weird... We're hugging. Hugging. I don't know why. And for the first time in eight years, I feel like I could go.

ANNA PETROVNA – WILD HONEY

by Michael Frayn (after Anton Chekhov)

ANNA How can you say that? How can you lie to me, on such a night as this, beneath such a sky? Tell your lies in autumn, if you must, in the gloom and the mud, but not now, not here. You're being watched! Look up, you absurd man! A thousand eyes, all shining with indignation! You must be good and true, just as all this is good and true. Don't break this silence with your little words! There's no man in the world I could ever love as I love you. There's no woman in the world you could ever love as you love me. Let's take that love; and all the rest, that so torments you – we'll leave that to others to worry about. Are you really such a terrible Don Juan? You look so handsome in the moonlight! Such a solemn face! It's a woman who's come to call, not a wild animal! All right – if you really hate it all so much I'll go away again. Is that what you want? I'll go away, and everything will be just as it was before. Yes...? (she laughs) Idiot! Take it! Snatch it! Seize it! What more do you want? Smoke it to the end, like a cigarette – pinch it out – tread it under your heel. Be human! You funny creature! A woman loves you – a woman you love – fine summer weather. What could be simpler than that? You don't realise how hard life is for me. And yet life is what I long for. Everything is alive, nothing is ever still. We're surrounded by life. We must live, too, Misha! Leave all the problems for tomorrow. Tonight, on this night of nights, we'll simply live!

BERNADETTE – CURSED!

By Kodi Bedford

BERNADETTE ...So I guess my point is that I'm not depressed about mortgages and I really don't know why I had a breakdown at Louisa's Hawaiian themed thirtieth birthday party in Surry Hills. It just came upon me. We could be talking about anything; all the pressures of modern day life. Climate change. Politics. Catholics. I'm not Catholic but I was raised as a Catholic and went to Catholic school. I wasn't molested or anything. Sorry, when you say that to people you went to a Catholic school, you immediately have to assure them you weren't touched. And if you were, that's a conversation stopper. Not that there's anything wrong with that. I mean there IS something wrong with that. Shit. I'm sorry. Is that what I need to talk about in these sessions? Catholics? The non-touched variety of Catholics. Nan who raised us was as devout as they came. I'm talking rosary every night with my brother and sister. Praying for people – alcoholics, heathens, racists, Great aunt Mildred who ticks all three boxes. But come to think of it, I don't think being a Catholic made me depressed. And it wasn't my childhood. Nan gave us a loving, sane, safe, somewhat Catholic (non-touched) childhood! Good country living. Geraldton in the Midwest of Western Australia. Yeah no one has heard of it.

TESSA – PRIMA FACIE

by Suzie Miller

TESSA Adam and I go down to the local deli for lunch. In the lift with the corporates. Solicitors who specialise in company law, Italian suits, nice, like really nice ties. Women with silk shirts, group of five of them They're a different breed. It's all corporate contracts. They all think barristers are arrogant. Yeah, maybe we are a bit. Adam tells me about a law grad who wants to come and work with him. We laugh about previous law grads we've had in chambers. I tell him about Sophie. young, New to criminal law. Adam vaguely remembers her. 'I got her to interview a client. Client says he wants to plead Not Guilty, but she says to him, I swear to you, she said,

"But tell me the truth, did you do it?" Adam shakes his head. 'So I jump in, "Hold everything Sophie", take her aside.

"What the fuck are you doing?" She's all "what? What?"

I'm telling her, "he's pleading not guilty. What if he now tells you he did it? You can't represent him then, can you?"

She goes, "So?"

No idea.'

Adam jokingly slaps his forehead.

"You're walking an ethical tightrope, Sophie; you don't get to ask him if he did it? You take his instructions and that's it, if he has a case you run it. End of story. You don't play God, You don't decide, or judge."

Adam is laughing now.

'Did she apologise?'

'No, not at all!' She was utterly appalled. She said, and I swear this is word for word,

"But what if he did it?"

JUNHEE – YOU FOR ME FOR YOU

by Mia Chung

JUNHEE I can't seem to make the simplest decisions. I usually bring my lunch, but a friend wanted to go out, and I want to be relaxed and engaged and approachable. But then the menu came and I couldn't decide what to order. No fish or 'specials' on Mondays cuz that's what didn't sell over the weekend. If I'm out, should I really be ordering something I could cook myself? Burnt food and potato chips are carcinogenic; not all antioxidants are created equal; I think I've caught the gluten allergy; sugar is suicide with a spoon! The New York Times told me that rice contains arsenic – even brown rice! – could that possibly be true? In the end, I got a few pieces of kale and a lentil soup and spent the rest of the day hungry. I think I'm afraid of food!

I'm learning to stay positive, don't be judge-y, step back and let go.

I take deep breaths, read Ralph Waldo Emerson on my breaks. I've tried four different kinds of yoga, splurged on a massage, signed up for meditation class. But then each thing stops working. I think I have yoga immunity! I'm always looking for the next thing. I feel empty and sad and unhappy. And then I get unhappy that I'm unhappy.

KENDRA – GLORIA

by Brandon Jacobs-Jenkins

KENDRA Yes! Because, after Austin told me he wasn't editing the print piece and I realized you were a fucking liar, he was just like, 'Why don't we just call Kara in here and you can give her your notes yourself' and so, like, in stalks Kara, who I guess had been eavesdropping and she's like, 'What notes?' And I just bring up some of the liberties she took with Sarah Tweed's sexuality and, I guess, this strikes a nerve because Kara is insecure and knows she's not supposed to be writing this, so she starts screaming at me, accusing me of being homophobic, which is not fair because I totally have a gay brother – I think – and then Michael comes over from next door and he's like, 'What's going on?' And Austin's all, 'Kendra is just giving Kara some notes on the Sarah Tweed piece,' then Michael's like, 'Are these coming from Eleanor?' And I'm just like, 'No, they're coming from me, why would they be coming from Eleanor?' And then Michael's like, 'Because I just signed the piece to Eleanor like ten minutes ago.' And then the room gets really quiet and I have to make up some excuse about how Eleanor's been in meetings all morning and I look like a fucking asshole when you and Kara are the fucking assholes!

FIONA – ROTTERDAM

by Jon Brittan

FIONA You Googled it and you took notes? Are you planning on writing an essay?

...

And you thought Wikipedia would tell you? ...

I tried to tell you last night. I don't really know... Look, I haven't really thought about this either, I just... I mean, I know there are procedures that some people have... But some people don't have them, some people don't have them at all, and I haven't seriously considered... I mean, even if I did... transition, which is what it's called, I'd need to live as a man for at least, like, two years before I could actually consider anything like... And in the meantime, if I did decide... I mean, it wouldn't be a huge change, would it? It wouldn't mean new clothes or much of a haircut. There'd just be... hormones.

Beat.

Sorry. Look, it won't – It wouldn't... I think there might be some side-effects but mostly it'll just be, y'know, lower voice, facial hair... man stuff. And my periods would stop, so our bad moods wouldn't be in sync any more.

KEN – RED

by John Logan

KEN (Reliving it.) I woke up... and the first thing I saw was the snow outside my window. I was glad it snowed because it was Saturday and I could go sledding. My Dad would take me sledding, me and my sister. But...but... I didn't smell anything. That was weird. Normally my Mom would be up making breakfast. It was really quiet. I put on my slippers – they were those Neolite ones that look like moccasins. Go into the hall... Now it's really quiet... And it's *cold*. There's a window open somewhere... Then I see my sister, she's just standing in the hallway, staring into my parent's room. The door's open. My sister...she's standing in a puddle of pee. Just staring. Her eyes... I go to the door and look in and see the snow first. Outside the window, so much snow, maybe I'll still go sledding. And then the blood. The bed's stained with it. And the wall. They're on the bed... It was a knife... Apparently it was a knife, I found out later.

Beat.

Burglars, I found out. At least two of them... But right now I don't know what to do. I just see... I... don't want my sister to see any more. My little sister... I turn around and push her out and shut the door. The door handle... With blood... Is red.

JASMINE – FAIRVIEW

BY JACKIE SIBBLES DRURY

JASMINE *(To herself)*: Just trying to make some conversation
about some nice uplifting movies
and she's trying to tell me that:
that doesn't happen to people.
(sucks teeth)
Like nobody know somebody that's dead
or got a new dog in their whole life:
that doesn't happen that's not true.
Please.

...

I. Am not talking. To you. Ok?
(continuing to herself:)
Having a private-ass conversation with myself
thinking through my own damn thoughts
and she trying to tell me
that what I'm thinking to myself is wrong.
I'm not even talking to her.
Why she got to have an opinion
About every damn thought in my head
like, damn,
let me think something stupid, I'm just thinking to myself
and if I want to be stupid when I'm just thinking to myself,
what is it to you? Huh?
Like if I want to think about something stupid, to myself,
by myself,
what is that to you?
Like if I want to think that Beverly is uppity,
and she like to put on like she better than everybody,
but everybody know she cheap as shit,
and I want to say that to myself
and not say that to anybody else,
then what's the problem with that?
Huhn? You got anything to say?
You better not because I'm not even talking to you.
Damn.
She not that bad.
Beverly's not that bad.
She's just all pent up because her man don't love her right.

ALEX – THE GREAT FIRE

by Kit Brookman

ALEX

Oh, thank you. Thank you for building this house that Lily and Michael now live inside like penitents, that you for instilling us with this idea that poverty is noble, telling us how organic vegetables really do taste better and they're so much better for the environment, how amazing Japan is, well you can afford it!

We swallowed up this dream, this fantasy that you were able to spin but were wise or lucky enough to avoid yourselves. We'll never be able to build anything of our own, we'll just live in your world until you die, and it becomes ours, and we will live in your home with your bones under the floorboards until we die. But we won't die soon. Because as soon as we can make our way we'll have to be supporting all you old people clinging onto life, lifting you above our heads in the manner to which you have become so exquisitely accustomed, wading into the sea as it rises around us!

And you've polluted and ruined the planet, but we're the ones who'll have to suffer, we'll be the ones who have to dig the human race out of that particular hole, if we can, doing our best to keep things less than completely catastrophic! That's the best margin we can aim for! And you think that our generation has a disproportionate sense of entitlement?!

TREPLEV - THE SEAGULL

by Anton Chekhov

TREPLEV (pulling petals off a flower) She loves me, she loves me not. She loves me, she loves me not. She loves me, she loves me not. (laughs) You see, Mother doesn't love me - to put it rather mildly. She likes excitement, romantic affairs, gay clothes - but I'm twenty five years old and a constant reminder that she's not so young as she was. She's only thirty-two when I'm not around, but when I'm with her she's forty-three, and that's what she can't stand about me. Besides, she knows I've no use for the theatre. She adores the stage. Serving humanity in the sacred cause of art, that's how she thinks of it. But the theatre's in a rut nowadays, if you ask me - it's so one-sided. The curtain goes up and you see a room with three walls. It's evening, so the lights are on. And in the room you have these geniuses, these high priests of art, to show you how people eat, drink, love, walk about and wear their jackets. Out of mediocre scenes and lines they try to drag a moral, some commonplace that doesn't tax the brain and might come in useful about the house. When I'm offered a thousand different variations on the same old theme, I have to escape - run for it, as Maupassant ran from the Eiffel Tower because it was so vulgar he felt it was driving him crazy... What we need's a new kind of theatre. New forms are what we need, and if we haven't got them we'd be a sight better off with nothing at all.

BASHIR – THE INVISIBLE HAND

BY AYAD AKHTAR

Bashir You always think you're better than everyone else.

...

It's true. You look down on me because of what I'm doing. Here. At least That's what you think. But in fact, that's not it. Not even. 'Cause the thing is? Wouldn't be any different if I was back in London driving around in some black Beemer in my Dolce Gabbanas, chasing after white girls like my school mates. You'd look down on me then, too, just in a different way.

...

Where I grew up? Hounslow? It's a slum, really. Where they stuck all of us. My father? Spent his whole life being stepped on, spit on by white people. Selling 'em knick knacks, and thank you, sir, and thank you, ma'am, can I have another? I wasn't going to have a life like that.

(Beat)

Something I was good at in school? History. Though you probably don't believe that, neither. Thing is, I remember this unit we had about European

History. The Spanish Civil War. All these young men from different countries running off to give their lives to fight the dictator, Franco. That's what I'm doing. That's what a whole generation of us're doing. Giving up soft lives in the West to fight for something meaningful.

...

See the system's pants. There's no use working inside it. We gotta change the system. We gotta take it to the Man. Bring him to the ground and stomp his heart out. And you know what? If people gotta die in the process, so be it.

GARY – OSAMA THE HERO

by Denis Kelly

GARY

This one boy comes in wearing trainers, new trainers, really nice trainers, showing of his trainers to the entire class, not a friend but not an enemy so for me that's a friend, they break his legs, getting the trainers, they break his legs, didn't have to, misunderstood the complexities of the social structure and his place within it, I remember sitting for an hour looking at my trainers trying to understand the complexities of the social structure and my place within it. No idea. No idea at all. On the way home Mum stopped me in the street and asked me for some spare change. Breath like pickled death. Gave her some, went home, had fish fingers and pop tarts.

Points of view, it's all about points of view; killing two thousand people's not wrong, it just all depends on what two thousand people it is.

Said that in maths, got detention, said it in media studies and got an A; she thought I was quoting Orson Welles. Said it in games and I was asked to leave the gym. Teacher looked like he might cry. Didn't say it again.

BEAR – THE MAN WITH THE IRON NECK

by URSULA YOVIC

BEAR Hey Mum. You remember how I got this scar?

He lifts his arm to show his scar.

We were six years old, Mum. Almost adults. We were supposed to wait for you to come home but we wanted to open our presents. So, we double banked Dad. Kept saying... "Just one present Dad, Please? Please? Please? Please?"

Yeah, he let us open one. The roller skates. Matching pairs. Bright yellow, glow in the dark ones. Wanted to try 'em out straight away. So, Dad sits us down in the back yard. "Alright, sit eya, put these booger skates on. Ok? Now... I got another little surprise for ya's. And we were like, "Ok Dad. We'll wait.". (He Laughs) Course we didn't, soon as he disappeared inside, we put them skates on. I got up first and then Evelyn. My legs were shaking. One was goin' this way and the other leg was goin that way. I was nearly doin' the splits. Ev was like this, her hands on my head and I was sinking! "Oww Stop Ev... My ring's gonna split, my ring's gonna split!" ... And you know, I can't even remember how but we managed to stand up and that's when Dad came marching out, through the back door in that gammin clown costume! You remember the one? And that mangy looking rainbow afro wig. Well, he scared the shit out of us. Looked like he came straight out of a horror movie. I screamed and fell backwards, breaking my wrist. I'm crying, Ev's crying. Dad's crying. And he's trying to get near us but we're shitting ourselves, crawling away, screaming, "Get away clown!, Get away clown!!" And we couldn't run coz' we still had them stupid roller skates on and then I could feel the pain in my wrist. He picked both of us up. One in each arm. And that's when you arrived to see this clown taking your kids to the hospital. At the hospital, Dad's carrying Evelyn, still wearing that clown costume. Lipstick smudged across his face, wig all over the place. He didn't care that he looked like a fool. He was only worried bout me... That was the last birthday, Mum. Before he died... I try and see him, you know? Every time I close my eyes I try and see that clown standing in the hospital corridor... But... he always disappears and all I see is him and that tree... It's all I see now. His face, swollen. And I'm stuck Mum. I cant get my head right. I get stuck. We saw a ghost...

SHAWN – GLORIA

by Brandon Jacob Jenkins

SHAWN

There's this girl who works here – Vanessa? She one of them girls that has Witherspoon face. You know how some white girls just randomly be looking like Reese Witherspoon? Vanessa be getting so mad when I say that though. She be like, 'Shawn, that is racist! All white people do not look alike!' And I'm like, Bitch, it's not racist if I say you look famous. I mean, it's only racist if I say you look like some basic run-of-the-mill white chick, you know? There's a difference. I mean people be mistaking me for somebody else all the time. And that's the shit that be getting me mad, you know? That's when I'm like, all black people do not look alike, you know what I mean? It's like No, I'm not the guy who mowed your dad's lawn. And no, I'm not your student from the year you did Teach for America! That's different. Vanessa just be so sensitive. It's not like I mistook her for Reese Witherspoon. It's not like I tapped her on the shoulder and was like, 'Reese Witherspoon, is that you?' I just said she look like Reese Witherspoon, because she got a Witherspoon face. I mean, it would be different if somebody mistook me for somebody famous once in a while. That would be nice. But that, like, never happens.

MAT – AUDITION

by Mat Fraser

MAT, intimate, close, soft. 'I look old to you, yeah? Well, older, I know I do. I am, so I must do. There's no space to see the full picture, so you're concentrating on my face. Have a good long look...' (With a different delivery.) 'I look old to you, yeah? Well, older, I know I do. I am, so I must...' Ah. Auditions, are for me, the single most nerve-racking aspect of acting. More terrifying than a first night on stage, or a first scene on a new set. Like most actors I can't control getting the part, just the acting. But, unlike most actors, not getting the part can often have nothing to do with my acting, and everything to do with, these. He stands up so his hands become the only things on screen. He screams loudly.

AAARRGGGHHHH! He sits back down. These babies, over the last twenty-five years, have caused commotions, disruptions, shame even. Oh not for me, I love the power of my magic hands. I love my body. No, really, I do. It is the only one I've got. 'Thou, nature, art my goddess. To thy law My services are bound.

Wherefore should I Stand in the plague of custom and permit The curiosity of nations to deprive me?' I used to do Edmund's speech from King Lear, but it all got a bit self-reflexy, you know? Like, yes Edmund dude, I hear you loud and clear, and so do the 2004 casting director and director... 'What a cunning choice, ha, he's speaking about himself in society, through a Shakespearean character, how lovely, clever too. Mmm...' No. I got here too early – it's better than being too late, that's worse. Anything that causes more tension in the room counts against my getting the job. I say 'more' because it's often already quite tense in there.

'What if he sees me staring at his hands?' 'What if he's crap and I find it embarrassing?' 'What if we fumble the greeting handshake? – Oh God, the handshake.' 'What if the audience can't believe him in the role?

'What if I can't believe him in the role, because his body looks weird, his body isn't normal, his body, his body, his body body body bod bod bod bod bo bo bo b b b – BAM!' My flippers intervened. POW! My hands got shaken in between, your very practised smile, and the normal I defiled.

ANNETTE – The Shed

by Matilda Ibinì

ANNETTE takes a sip of some wine. Hey Julia, you're probably fast asleep, let me know what time it is when you get this... you might have noticed a different background, I'm filming from my kitchen, not the shed. Sorry I missed recording last month's news, I broke our streak... before I forget, thank you for sending me that Tiger Balm, it really helped my muscle pain... There's something I need to tell you... You know how hard it is to recruit PAs, well I now employ five. I don't think I've ever had this many at any one time... To refresh your memory there's – Yasmeen, Clare, Ally, Simone, and Ellie; she's still in your old position, full time. She's been with me – God, it'll be four years... I got good vibes about Ellie though, like she could last the distance. Ellie kept up your chore chart, she made sure all the other PAs did as well. She's a bit bossy, but she means well... She gets my chronic pain and she's so on it with my meds. She showed me how to be more productive and break down my projects into manageable tasks... Don't tell anyone but... we even got drunk together one New Year's Eve. She makes me feel like more than just a monthly payslip, like you did... not that I'm comparing or anything. You know I would have you back in a heartbeat, if you ever decide to come back. I hope teaching's still going well. I live next door to a teacher now, she moved in with her husband at the beginning of spring. I was writing in my shed when Ellie popped in. 'Your neighbour wants a word.' I come out of the shed, and there she is, this smiley, curly redhead with a nose ring and bright eyes. 'Keira.' She reached out her hand for a handshake but of course I can't reach it, so she picks up my hand in hers. She invites me and Ellie to her housewarming barbecue, but their house isn't accessible, so Keira and Ellie take down two planks of wood from the fence between our gardens and I just managed to squeeze my wheelchair through. I remember Ellie handing me a hotdog, with a smidge of mustard, and far too much ketchup. I take a bite (yuck) – Patrick, Keira's husband, says 'That's a veggie dog, better for the environment and your health... not your health specifically... everyone's –' Keira offers me a beer; she opens it with her teeth... I ask for a straw. 'Afraid not, we're trying to limit our single-use plastics.' 'Is it really the humble straw that's polluting our oceans though?'