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The Politics of Sexual Assault on the Theatrical Stage: How Theatre for Social Change Challenges Systems of Oppression

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THE POLITICS OF SEXUAL ASSAULT ON THE THEATRICAL STAGE:
HOW THEATRE FOR SOCIAL CHANGE CHALLENGES
SYSTEMS OF OPPRESSION

A Thesis

by

GERRY RODRIGUEZ

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ABSTRACT

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The critical introduction analyzes how theatre has been used as a tool to directly address politics and influence social change. Augusto Boal's Theatre of the Oppressed has been of particular importance and influence in contemporary theatre which directly mirrors the failures of society by representing the people who are most affected. The purpose of theatre for social change is to accurately represent oppression within communities and inspire audiences to play an active role in finding solutions for these oppressive systems once they leave the comfort of the theatre.

The critical introduction is followed by the full-length play, *Victim Does Not Remember*, which chronicles the aftermath of the sexual assault of university student, Valerie Lynn. The play utilizes hybridity by including film in order to document the night in question. The purpose of the play is to highlight rape culture in the forms of society, law enforcement, the criminal justice system, social media, and the news. The play also stages the inadequacies in resources provided to victims of sexual assault as well as the lack of policies meant to prevent and protect victims of sexual assault.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

The stage is a reflection of issues faced within a society. As a result, it is no surprise that theatre has always played a strong role in politics, effectively encouraging social change.

Looking back to the Ancient Greeks, it is clear that Aristophanes knew the power that performance could play in challenging social norms, even if the play's purpose was satire as represented in *Lysistrata*. However, these political undertones in performance have been used by dramatists throughout time as a way to convey a message to their audiences. When looking at contemporary theatre, society is able to see the influence political theatre can have on social change. Performances that represent oppressive systems and portray subjects that candidly express their struggles play an integral role in contributing to social change.

I began writing plays because my background is in theatre performance, and I found myself increasingly frustrated with the lack of roles for women. There are so many plays with so many opportunities for men, but the roles for women continued to be limited, and this is disappointingly supported by statistics from Broadway. According to Britt Stigler, Senior Editor for AllArts.org, when comparing call sheets for cast members in 2018, major roles for women declined from 37% to 32% in 2019. The opportunities for women in theatre are not growing. My response to this frustration is to write plays of my own, and my goal is to write women's stories and write roles for women.

My writing is greatly inspired by social justice, and I place great value in artists who have challenged societal paradigms. Plays such as Henrik Ibsen's *A Doll's House*, George Bernard Shaw's *Mrs. Warren's Profession*, and Susan Glaspell's *Trifles* are works that continue to face scrutiny due to themes surrounding women that remain taboo a full century later. I admire Luis Valdez's *Zoot Suit*, Lynn Nottage's *Ruined*, and Moisés Kaufman and the Members of the Tectonic Theater Project's *The Laramie Project* for writing biographical stories for the stage for the world to see true injustices and systems of oppression actively taking place in the world. Ntozake Shange's *For Colored Girls Who Have Considered Suicide When the Rainbow is Enuf*, Eve Ensler's *The Vagina Monologues*, and Irma Mayorga's *The Panza Monologues* have been instrumental in sharing the stories of women through the voices of women. Finally, Lorraine Hansberry's *A Raisin in the Sun*, Suzan-Lori Parks's *In the Blood*, Catherine Filloux's *Luz*, Virginia Grise's *Blu*, Quiara Alégría Hudes's *Water by the Spoonful*, and Alice Birch's *Anatomy of a Suicide* are only a handful of plays exploring issues such as race and gender inequality, sexuality, sexual assault, and mental health. These works are brave and continue to contribute to social justice and social change; however, an area of social justice within the sphere of theatre that is often neglected is the sexual violence against women.

With the onslaught of social media, instant news, and trending hashtags, society is in a unique position to have a direct view of the social issues taking place today. High profile cases against men in power have flooded the media and forced society to reconsider the issues that contribute to sexual violence. Society has witnessed the allegations against men such as Brett Kavanaugh and Bill Cosby, yet little has been done in an effort to prevent crimes like this from taking place in the first place. The high profile case that shocked the nation was the 2015 case *The People of the State of California v. Brock Allen Turner*, a case involving students at Stanford

University. Brock Turner was sentenced to six months in prison and three months of probation; however, he was released after only serving three months in prison (Chappell). This was only a reminder of the lack of consequences for sexual assault offenders, and when allegations of sexual assaults committed by Harvey Weinstein were brought to the public's attention, the #MeToo movement was born.

Despite the demands for justice for survivors of sexual assault, offenders continue to be met with leniency in the legal system, and these sexual assaults are showing no signs of slowing down. According to Christensen, *The National Intimate Partner and Sexual Violence Survey: 2010 Summary Report* notes that “approximately 20 percent of women in the USA will be sexually assaulted or experience an attempted assault in her lifetime; this is equal to one in five women...The US Department of Justice reports that approximately one in four women attending college will experience sexual violence during their four years of study” (Christensen 1455). According to the Department of Justice, of these sexual assault cases taking place on college campuses, “fewer than 5 percent of completed and attempted rapes were reported to law enforcement officials. In about two-thirds of the rape incidents, however, the victim did tell another person about the incidents. Most often this person was a friend, not a family member or college official” (Fisher et al. 23). Despite the prevalence of sexual assault, there is little being done to address the issues that contribute to victimization. Furthermore, there is even less being done to present these issues on the stage in a way that encourages calls to action for social justice. I believe that my play, *Victim Does Not Remember*, has the power to reach audiences that can take action and inspire social change.

CHAPTER II

THEATRE AS A CALL TO ACTION

Luis Valdez's organization of El Teatro Campesino in 1965 is one of the strongest examples of political theatre that intentionally used performance as a way to organize Chicano farmworkers who faced discrimination and used that organization to demand social change well into the 1970s. Luis Valdez stated, "The idea that really excites me about the future of the Teatro and American theatre is a theatre of political change. I'm talking politics, not art" (Elam 463). Luis Valdez was not satisfied with the representation of discrimination on stage in order to passively challenge racism; he witnessed an issue and formulated a plan of action to confront that issue, and he was able to do this through the art of ritual. Dr. Harry Elam, Jr., Professor at Stanford University, states, "Recent ritual theory and research have documented that rituals are capable of formulating values and inducing action in their community. During times of crisis, rituals can become a means of redressing social strife" (646). In *Quinta Temporada* (1966), Valdez represents farmworkers in the performance as well as performers who symbolized "the church, the union, and La Raza." These were institutions that his audience was familiar with and institutions in which he knew his audience would resonate. Elam states, "With the support of these institutions, the farmworkers in the audience were assured that they did not stand alone but were part of a greater cause" (467). There is strength in numbers, and having familiarity with the

actors on stage was a way in which to form a connection for the audience. In *Quinta Temporada*, the farmworkers in the audience laugh when they see a farmworker being exploited. Elam states, “The farmworkers laughed because they recognized not only the humor on stage but the irony of the stage’s relationship to their real life predicament. Laughter became a healthy release from the pressure of oppressive social conditions” (469). This laughter, however, also created a community with members who had experienced similar struggles. Soon, that anger is recognized, and that is how change is demanded.

Theatre does not only inspire social change through a direct connection to an audience with first-hand experience of an oppressive system. Theatre has a unique opportunity which allows for it to show its audience oppression that is faced by other groups of people. Social change is possible through simple acts of representation. Monica Palacios uses her performance of *Greetings from a Queer Señorita* to highlight homophobia, sexism, and gender inequality in a way that is charismatic and conversational in order to confront “Male Sexual Power.” Palacios states, “I allowed it because I was taught to accept it” (387). This statement is particularly powerful because it goes beyond Male Sexual Power. This is the statement that epitomizes the purpose of theatre for social change. Palacios utilized theatre for social change in order to create a space for herself that had been withheld from her as a queer, Latinx woman. Theatre for social change is an empowering movement that gives voices to marginalized communities, and it can be applied to social issues across the board in order to address the concerns of oppressed populations. As humans, we accept what we are taught, and it is our responsibility to educate ourselves and do the work that challenges oppressive systems. In “Transforming American Studies,” Chicana scholar, Gloria Anzaldúa, states:

A writer writes about what she or he wants to learn. Similarly, a teacher teaches what she or he needs to learn. Transformation does not happen unless we explore what threatens us as teachers and students; what we sweep under our desks; what we silence; what we're angry about; what causes us anxiety; what brings us into open conflict and disagreement; and what cultural prescriptions and cultural teachings we're rebelling against (241).

Writers have an opportunity to be educators. For playwrights, the stage is a vessel of power which can be used to confront oppressive systems that continue to be taught and passed down through generations; however, these systems will only be confronted if writers make the conscious decision to no longer remain silent and use their craft in a way that rebels against injustices within our society. This act of using art for empowerment has real effectiveness in society. Through experimentation, scholars are able to study how theatre is able to change the perception of society through the act of representing oppression on the stage.

The article, "Engaging Theatre for Social Change," presents a study conducted by M. Candace Christensen which analyzes the outcomes of a program conducted at University of Utah. The program consisted of undergraduate students who participated in short improv exercises which examined "various aspects of rape culture that commonly occur on a college campus" (Christensen 1459). Christensen notes:

Study participants mentioned that a salient effect of the intervention experience was learning how to subvert social norms. Before someone can be taught to challenge social norms, they must experience a situation in which they see how a social norm is oppressive to a person or group with which they can identify. This experience lays the foundation for an audience to feel empathy for the oppressed person/s and feel charged

with taking action to change the situation so that the social norm is deconstructed and reconstructed in a non-oppressive manner (1463).

Christensen was able to perform a study with results similar to the objective presented when Monica Palacios described accepting what is taught. These oppressive systems need to be acknowledged in order to be unlearned. Through theatre, participants in Christensen's study were able to recognize their own oppressive behaviors, unlearn these practices, and reeducate themselves in order to form a more respectful and cohesive society.

This resonates with the purpose of *Victim Does Not Remember*. My goal in writing the play was to represent the challenges faced by victims of sexual assault as well as challenge the social norms so readily accepted by society. It was imperative that I represent the way in which victims of sexual assault are so easily dismissed whether this takes place within a society that does not want to believe the experiences of victims or whether these victims are dismissed by those who are close to them who would prefer silence over justice. I also wanted to represent the pattern of victim blaming as well as using victims as archetypes for the purpose of political advancement. While *Victim Does Not Remember* is, generally, designed for an audience of college-aged individuals, it is imperative to not limit the audience when performing socio-political theatre.

In 2005, the play *Caught in the Middle*, a play about the rights given to partners in same-sex relationships which was based on a true story, was created and performed by University of New Hampshire in response to the legislation taking place in New England regarding civil unions. The University of New Hampshire collaborated with Seacoast Outright in order to create the Theatre for Social Justice Institute. The collaboration faced a dilemma when they realized that their intended audience was not the constructive audience for which they should be

performing. Kaye states, “Although we thought we were being very courageous, in reality, we were creating and performing work in a zone of safety and comfort. But what is the goal if you perform a piece of sociopolitical theatre for an audience whose views and attitudes you already share?” (59). In response, University of New Hampshire and Seacoast Outright organized invitations from Rotary Clubs to perform for marriage equality opponents who would then present their opinions to state legislatures. A survey was issued before the play to determine the percentage of the audience who supported marriage equality as well as the percentage that did not. A talkback followed the conclusion of the play followed by a second survey. The result was a 10 percent increase in audience members who supported marriage equality. Subsequently, theatre for social justice has an influence on its audience and has the power change the way in which society thinks. In the case of *Caught in the Middle*, the play successfully presented a call to action among voters for legislation regarding marriage equality.

Augusto Boal’s Theatre of the Oppressed was developed in Brazil in the 1970s to address systems of oppression by performing examples of this oppression on the stage. The theatrical style incorporates immersion and interaction with the audience, oftentimes asking members of the audience to contribute to the performance by volunteering systems of oppression faced within their own communities and, later, asking the audience to find solutions for these issues. In “Using Theatre of the Oppressed to Prevent Sexual Violence on College Campuses,” Christensen states, “According to Boal, we are all actors performing to scripts that have been written for us by oppressive systems. The roles we perform vary, depending on the audience we engage and the situations we navigate” (283). By creating an environment that speaks directly to the unique audience it is addressing, Theatre of the Oppressed is able to create a sense of familiarity with what Boal refers to as the “spect-ator.” This allows for a personalized experience where

individuals in the audience are able to navigate through the oppression they are viewing on the stage and form calls of action that can be performed when they witness forms of oppression outside of the performance space. According to Österlind, “the fundamental hypothesis for the varying forms and techniques of Theatre of the Oppressed is that if someone who is oppressed performs an action in theatrical fiction, this will enable him or her to perform it also in real life” (72). In essence, Boal’s Theatre of the Oppressed is a rehearsal for the audience so that they may actively practice solutions in the real world. Using the methods presented by Boal, it is my goal to represent the sexual violence that permeates our society and address a culture that prefers the silencing of victims rather than social justice.

In *Victim Does Not Remember*, sexual assault does not take place in the traditionally “violent” storyline because sexual assault does not always fit into the definition of “violent” as defined by mainstream media and, subsequently, the majority of people. Writers do a disservice by only portraying one way in which sexual assault is perpetuated. Sexual assault is not always committed as a physically violent attack by a stranger; it is often perpetuated by someone that the victim knows and trusts. This changes the way in which society defines violence in the real world, and it creates severe consequences that go beyond the page; these consequences reach into the daily lives and actions of those who live within our society because, as humans, we naturally see ourselves in the characters we read. Underrepresentation of the experiences of victims of sexual assault makes it excusable to continue violence against others because we are able to hide behind the façade of ignorance since ignorance gives us permission to ignore violence. According to Eva Österlind, “There is a need for drama methods that addresses both the political and the personal sphere, just as TO does, and to develop research designs to examine outcomes of these methods” (79). Writers carry the responsibility of

representing social issues accurately; therefore, a play about sexual assault occurring on a college campus needs to represent the statistics regarding such events.

Christensen describes specific personality changes that can be identified in victims of sexual assault, specifically addressing the effects of sexual assault on students on college campuses. Christensen states:

often, survivors disengage from coursework and eventually leave school, due to fear of seeing the perpetrator in class, on campus, or at social gatherings. These consequences are often due to a culture of victim blaming and lack of awareness on the part of professors and administrators about the pervasiveness of and symptoms associated with sexual violence (282).

These effects can be seen in the character of Valerie as she withdraws from friends and family as well as her inability to attend classes and her eventual desire to leave school indefinitely. The inaction of university administration is also represented in *Victim Does Not Remember* as the university is apprehensive to enact consequences on the sexual assault offender, Brian, and the university does not provide resources for the victim, Valerie.

Victim Does Not Remember seeks to address the injustices faced by Valerie and other victims of sexual assault. According to Hadley, “Theatre’s influence on the public sphere should be threefold, based first on the play’s efforts to engage, enact or challenge cultural norms, then the theatre institution’s efforts to do this, and finally the theatre industry’s efforts to do this via debates that play out in the media” (120). The questions presented by the play are the following:

1. What can we do for victims of sexual assault?
2. What can we do to prevent sexual assault from occurring in the first place?

The purpose of the play is to reach beyond individual members of the audience. It should inspire discussion that continues after a post-show talk-back. The issues represented in the play are critical points which engage discussion and debate, especially within its target audience which is college-aged students, using their preferred method of communication, as seen within the play itself: social media. Society has access to a unique connection to other people through the form of technological communication. The audience witnesses the debates taking place on social media in the play, but the conversation should not end when the play is over; it should continue in the same manner on real platforms so that the facets of sexual assault and rape culture can have the same far-reaching and broad discussion as represented in the play.

A common criticism of Theatre of the Oppressed is that it focuses on the individual instead of broad social change; however, Österlind argues, “The suffering and oppression is certainly felt [in Theatre of the Oppressed] individually, but as a result of increased awareness it can be understood as a consequence of specific sociocultural and political conditions” (77). While the individual expressing their oppression experiences this trauma as a singular person, sharing this experience allows the oppression to be felt and understood by an audience who has the power to change these systems of oppression. Andrew J. Corsa acknowledges the arguments that theatre can harm active empathy by allowing audiences to empathize with fictional characters acting out a story on the stage while ignoring people in need and tragic events taking place in real life. The stage provides an emotional outlet where audiences can feel good about the empathy they feel for characters in situations of injustice in a controlled environment. This reaction allows them to remain passive when confronted with real-life suffering that they have the power to change (Corsa 220). However, Augusto Boal’s Theatre of the Oppressed aims to stage characters and stories similar to those faced by the audience in an attempt to connect with

the individual. The method consists of exercises that include the “spect-ator.” Corsa states, “by encouraging spect-ators to play an active role in the exercises he developed, Boal hoped that they would train themselves for action and change in the real world” (224). As such, the audience is no longer passive. In order to encourage the audience to present a solution to the issues presented on stage, *Victim Does Not Remember* asks the audience to consider the systems in place that failed the character of Valerie. For example, at no point does the university reach out to inquire how Valerie is coping; it is the individual professors who make accommodations so that Valerie can continue her education remotely. The university also does nothing to punish the perpetrator of an alleged sexual assault; instead, the university allows a student under investigation of sexual assault to remain on campus and does nothing to ensure that Valerie remains safe from this perpetrator.

Creating theatre for social change can present problems regarding sensitivity and safety. Busby and McNamara state, “the methodologies and approaches taken generally within Theatre for Social Justice, or applied theatre more broadly, may still be perceived to be putting participants' emotional wellbeing at risk and potentially can create obstacles to uninhibited and creative collaboration” (146). While writing *Victim Does Not Remember*, I found myself questioning how I could create a safe space for the actors and crew collaborating on this project as well as create a safe space for the audience without compromising the message of the play. I had to decide what approach was too safe, and what approach was overstepping and pushing the boundaries. For the purposes of my play, I came to the conclusion that witnessing the assault was not necessary because the play is not about the sexual assault in question; it is about the aftermath of sexual assault and the way in which society reacts to victims. The audience is asked to believe the victim without witnessing the assault because this mirrors real life. The subject of

the assault is the catalyst for contention in the play with some characters believing the victim while others do not. Each character surrounding Valerie has their own theory regarding what happened to her and is confident in their knowledge; yet, Valerie, one of the only two members present at the time of the assault, remains uncertain. In fact, Valerie does not control the narrative in the play. She does not tell her own story; the other characters tell her story for her. The play is meant to analyze the way in which victims of sexual assault are treated after an assault has already taken place. It presents the reasons victims of sexual assault do not come forward and portrays the lack of resources made available to victims of traumatic events.

It was my desire to effectively portray trauma and create discomfort within an audience without creating a graphic spectacle on stage. James Thompson, Professor of Applied and Social Theatre, states, “without extreme care theatre projects that dig up narratives, experiences, and remembrances can blame, enact revenge, and foster animosity as much as they can develop dialogue, respect, or comfort” (151). Oftentimes, systems of oppression are used for the sake of storytelling in a way that misrepresents and undermines the issues faced by real people. In the case of sexual assault that is perpetuated against women, it is imperative to place women’s voices at the center of dialogue. Haining and Heim state, “representations of women [in theatre] have derived overwhelmingly from the male perspective” (19). When the experiences of women who have experienced sexual assault are told from the perspective of men, the result is writing that misrepresents the threat of violence women experience in their daily lives such as the play *Really Really* by Paul Downs Colaizzo which portrays the alleged victim of sexual assault as the true villain at the end of the play for the sole purpose of a plot twist. This carries repercussions outside of the theatre where women are already victims of disbelief, silencing, and victim blaming. As a result, plays such as *Really Really* actively contribute to systems of oppression.

It was important to me to approach the topic of sexual assault as social commentary from the perspective of a woman. This is not the story of revenge or justice; instead, the play is society and culture mirrored on the stage. It gives audiences the opportunity to be introspective and question their own contributions and complacency to sexual assault in society. Durham states, “rather than rushing to displace grief with (aggressive) action, we might allow it to live among us, for a productive end. [Judith Butler] suggests, ‘To grieve, and to make grief itself into a resource for politics, is not to be resigned to inaction, but it may be understood as the slow process by which we develop a point of identification with suffering itself’” (32). The expectation is for Valerie to act out as a reaction to the events taking place around her. Instead, Valerie internalizes the words and the actions, therefore, not reacting and appearing to be composed. In fact, she remains silent and complacent throughout much of the play, not using her voice even when it may benefit her.

The play ends with Valerie’s internal monologue expressing her suffering, isolation, and grief, finally allowing the audience a glimpse of the character’s inner turmoil. At this point, Valerie represents Gloria Anzaldúa’s theory: “the Coyolxauhqui imperative.” In “Let us be the healing of the wound,” Anzaldúa states, “The coyolxauhqui imperative is an ongoing process of making and unmaking. There is never any resolution, just the process of healing” (312). Valerie is in a process of transformation. She will never be the same person she was before the assault took place, and now she is forced to move forward in her life as an individual that she does not know. Likewise, Valerie’s transformation is experienced by the audience. Anzaldúa states, “What cracked is our perception of the world, how we relate to it, how we engage with it. Afterwards we view reality differently – we see through its rendijas (holes) to the illusion of consensual reality. The world as we know it ‘ends.’ We experience a radical shift of perception”

(310). By forcing audiences to sit in the discomfort of grief and trauma, I am actively challenging the audience's perceptions, poking holes in what they think they know. The world is not always what it seems, and I implore audiences to find empathy and use that as a source of action outside of the theatre.

This response to trauma can be seen in other plays that place sexual assault on the stage. Katrak analyzes the sexual violence perpetuated on women in *Ruined* by Lynn Nottage, a play that explores women as collateral damage during the civil war in the Democratic Republic of Congo inspired by interviews with the victims of these assaults. Katrak states, "Women like Sophie and Salima are very alone with their bodies, bearing pain and shame. In this state, they face what I have termed in another work 'internal exile', alienated from their families and communities, as well as from their violated bodies, denied self-worth" (43). In representing the way in which real women experience the effects of sexual assault, writers are able to reach audiences and make a connection with them that extends beyond a story. The audience no longer witnesses a plot; they are privy to a character who is real, a person that they know. The stage has the opportunity to represent real people who experience oppression and cruelty. Katrak states:

This cruelty, however, raises the possibility of inspiring spectators to imagine a more just and equitable human world. The effects of violence linger in the minds of sensitive *rasikas* as they leave the theatre and as they imagine changing gender and social inequities in their communities and beyond (43-44).

Responsible writers carefully represent social issues with accuracy and sensitivity. They reach into the ethics and empathy found in the members of their audience, sharing pain and evoking outrage. They hand over responsibility to the audience, asking them to take action. This is how writers have the power to promote social change.

Unfortunately, it is not always simple to write characters that an audience will empathize with, especially when writing about victims. If an audience does not empathize with the character of Valerie in *Victim Does Not Remember*, then the message of the play is easily misconstrued. Hence, the challenge is to navigate what Christopher J. Lyons terms “Stigma perspective” versus “Sympathy perspective.” Lyons states, “what I call the stigma perspective focuses on the effect of stigmatized status on attributions of blame to individuals involved in incidents of harassment or violence” (41). Lyons references research by Howard and Pike stating, “they concluded that stereotypes painting females as too trusting, passive, and careless led to increased attributions of blame to females” (41). I was challenged to create a victim who would garner sympathy rather than stigma. In order to accomplish this, I placed the stigmatization of victims on the stage for the audience to see for themselves. The stigmatization portrayed by the media and the other characters in the play should conjure sympathy from the audience for the victim. When the audience can view the stigmatization taking place before their eyes, it should put their own assumptions about victims into perspective as it is a reflection of their own actions.

When addressing “Stigma perspective” versus “Sympathy perspective,” it is important to consider the way in which offenders are written because offenders in real life are rarely clear-cut villains. Offenders have friends and family whose natural response is to try to protect their loved ones and ignore the worst in them. If writers continue to portray offenders as clear-cut villains, they do nothing to further the discussion and incite change in real life where the majority of offenders have a large following of people who sympathize with them. It is natural to sympathize to a certain degree with a character like Brian who has so much to lose and exists in a position where he may or may not be ignorant of the circumstances in which he created. Human

emotions, including sympathy, are complex; however, having sympathy for a person does not absolve them from accountability when a crime such as sexual assault is committed. Actions have consequences, and audiences should take this knowledge and apply it to the justice system where offenders of sexual assault are rarely held accountable for their actions.

CHAPTER III

VICTIM DOES NOT REMEMBER

Much of my intention in writing *Victim Does Not Remember* was in an effort to understand the human psyche and where people's perceptions come from. I wanted to understand why people react in the way that they do. Understanding where people's perspectives and opinions come from is much more constructive than judgement because it allows for an individual to meet them at their level and speak to them in a way that directly addresses their concerns so that they may be open to transforming their perception. It is in this way that I hope my play will allow for audiences to find a path toward healing and understanding. This path begins by staging plays highlighting injustices in society. In "(Un)natural bridges, (Un)safe spaces," Gloria Anzaldúa states, "I think of how feminist ideas and movements are attacked, called unnatural by the ruling powers when in fact they are ideas whose time has come" (243). The time is past due for women to have a larger voice in theatre, and the time has come to have a critical discussion about rape culture in a way that is respectful and does justice to victims of sexual assault. When it comes to injustice, we can all benefit from less speaking and more listening; however, audiences have to be willing to allow themselves to be placed in uncomfortable positions, and they have to be willing to change their perceptions. The purpose of placing such an important topic on the stage was to reach a larger audience with the intention of healing. The first step is to acknowledge the prevalence of rape culture. The second step is to address the different facets of rape culture so that they can be recognized in society. Next, we

find a solution for this problem and discovers methods of prevention. Finally, we can move on to a place where society is able to find mutual understanding and concern for its fellow citizens with the ultimate goal that society will be able to heal.

Other plays such as Anna Ziegler's *Actually* and Paul Downs Colaizzo's *Really Really* contain the subject of sexual assault within their plays; however, the subject is mainly used as a backdrop for the action on the stage, and the plays do little to confront the prevalence of rape culture within society. It was my goal to write a play which directly reflects the attitudes surrounding sexual assault in the real world as seen in real-life court cases, the news, and social media, all of which are guilty of perpetuating rape culture. The final scene of Act I portrays a cacophony of media descending on the stage, all reporting on the case that is unfolding before the audience's eyes. The scene is overwhelming for the audience's senses, illustrating the feeling of being trapped in a room with so many people and voices speaking at once. This scene is inspired by Moisés Kaufman's *The Laramie Project* which includes a similar scene where the media descends on the small town of Laramie, Wyoming to report on the murder of Matthew Shepherd. It is a powerful scene, based on true events, that reflects the ruthlessness of our society, and I wanted to include a similar scene in *Victim Does Not Remember* in order to portray the way in which we continue to callously ignore the sensitivity surrounding victims and the way in which we continue to talk about sexual assault.

The complexities of being human as well as the difficulties in maintaining relationships between people is something that I focused on very carefully when writing *Victim Does Not Remember*. Much of my inspiration for writing plays in general comes from the writing style of Tracy Letts in *August: Osage County*. I am continuously referencing him due to his gift for natural, interesting dialogue and his interesting stories that are tightly focused with plots that are

constantly moving forward. I looked at John Patrick Shanley's *Doubt: A Parable* and Florian Zeller's *The Father* for their impressive use of characterization and the way in which they can create plays about the nature of being human and being unsure in such a mysterious and complicated world which is the very broad theme of *Victim Does Not Remember*. Ayad Akhtar's *Disgraced* was an important reference for the portrayal of predisposed politics and opinions that are experienced by individuals. He, beautifully, explores how these delicate matters play out between individuals who come from such unique backgrounds. These different perspectives highlight the complicated relationships between people, and they can either bring people together or tear them apart. Lynn Nottage's *Sweat* bravely portrays the difficulties of ordinary people who are pitted against one another when they are really on the same side. It is about survival in a world that is terribly unfair to the common person, but especially for individuals who must live in systems of oppression. These plays and playwrights continue to be references for the way in which I approach writing and staging stories. They are inspirations for the way in which writers can successfully use art as a reflection of society.

I also knew that in writing this play, I did not want to be limited to one form of writing. In order to create a play that is relevant and accurately depicts the world in which we live today, it was important to be creative in the delivery of the story. This inspired me to write a play that incorporated hybridity. I referenced plays such as Quiara Alegria Hudes' *Water by the Spoonful* and Caridad Svich's *Iphigenia Crash Land Falls into the Neon Shell that was Once Her Heart* which utilize screens, film, text, and pictures in order to tell their stories. *Water by the Spoonful*, brilliantly, depicts the connection and relationships formed through technology by staging characters who communicate in chat rooms via computers. In *Victim Does Not Remember*, I utilize screens and video in order to show the audience the influence that the media has on its

viewers. This changes the way in which we view theatre, and it is instrumental in showing writers the potential that theatre has when we no longer limit the art form to “traditional” staging. Furthermore, the play emphasizes society’s reliance on technology. As playwrights, we are tasked with bringing theatre into the modern age which includes incorporating contemporary modes of communication so that what is performed on the stage accurately represents the world as it is known today which is fast-paced with instant access to media. Confrontation is no longer experienced face to face between two individuals anymore. It is less direct and shared with the world. Our actions are now documented and remain with us forever just as Valerie’s experiences are saved and shared in an instant.

I also drew inspiration from Alice Birch’s *Anatomy of a Suicide*, taking the time to carefully and intentionally orchestrate scenes in the play such as the final scene in Act I and the final scene in Act II. My intention was for characters to speak over each other at very specific points in time so that the dialogue becomes fluid and runs together. At the end of the play, this fluidity evolves into a stream of consciousness taking the form of poetry. In this section, I referenced plays such as *Blu* by Virginia Grise which exhibits elements of stream of consciousness where the dialogue of the characters run together. I referenced *Vigils* by Noah Haidle which experiments with language in dialogue, and I referenced *In the Blood* by Suzan Lori-Parks, a play which gives space and time for each character to have their moment and speak of themselves and their actions in the form of monologue and poetry. There are so many different forms of art that can come together and form the picture of a play, so it was important for me to feel free to include what was needed in order to convey the full message of the play. This freedom took place in the experimentation of genre and form, incorporating technology and experimenting with language and intentional delivery of dialogue and action.

CHAPTER IV

AFTER THE CURTAIN FALLS

It is my hope that *Victim Does Not Remember* will challenge the way in which sexual assault is viewed by the public and that this will encourage change in policies and resources for survivors. Performances showcasing the lived experiences of survivors reach audiences who share in the identity and experiences of the characters. Performances such as these bring awareness to audiences who may not be aware of their own biases. Representing social issues through performance creates a safe space for audiences to witness social injustices through a lens that mirrors the experiences of everyday life which allows for a familiarity within members of the audience. This allows for audiences to reflect and take steps to challenge injustices by reflecting on their own problematic behaviors, voting for policies that will relieve marginalized communities from continued discrimination, and standing up for marginalized communities when they see injustices in the world around them.

I would like to see *Victim Does Not Remember* staged in universities across the country. The play is an opportunity for to look at the contributions and the aftermath of sexual assault on college campuses through a critical lens. It allows for the combined efforts of theatre and social justice departments to create a forum where discussion about these issues can take place. The most important part of the process is initiation of the discussion because this acknowledges that there is an issue that so clearly needs to be addressed. While I believe universities would greatly benefit from staging a play such as *Victim Does Not Remember*, I do not want to limit the staging

potential of the play. The subject of sexual assault is relevant to any stage, and I believe that the play will positively contribute to change when performed on any stage. I wanted to write a play that was important and relevant with a discussion that would continue after the play ended because the topic of the play is so often debated. Reaching all audiences is imperative because the goal is not to only concentrate on discussion among university students; the goal is to challenge the biases in everyone.

When I began writing *Victim Does Not Remember*, I considered the contributions to rape culture, specifically how idea of rape culture is spread and how it evolves as we progress as a society. My goal was to write a play that reflected an accurate representation of the experiences of victims today. Much of this involved the evolution of communication and access to information which made it necessary to not only include the media in this play, but to also include social media because social media causes information to spread with the click of a button. I included social commentary within the dialogue because everyone has an opinion, and it is not always nice nor is it always accurate. The play is about representing our everyday behaviors on the stage as a reflection of our actions. Perhaps seeing ourselves and our biases on the stage will make a difference going forward.

Theatre is a community, and it allows for people from unique backgrounds and different perspectives to connect. Therefore, it is imperative that the page, and subsequently the stage, accurately represents and shares the stories that link the individuals who form society. Kaye presents the question, “Exactly what do we want to happen as a result of performing this piece” (59). I want *Victim Does Not Remember* to inform so that the audience may find compassion and understanding. My hope is that they will see how society has failed victims of sexual assault, and they will demand justice for these victims who are too afraid to speak. At the end of

Christensen's study which was presented in "Engaging Theatre for Social Change," Christensen noted, "The students that were interviewed found that the intervention inspired them to engage in an ethic care for one another, collaboratively construct solutions to a community problem, and deconstruct social norms that contribute to the problem" (1462). Society is stronger when individuals recognize injustices and engage in a common goal to find a solution for these issues.

Victim Does Not Remember does not end with a verdict because the verdict is irrelevant. Valerie's character has already been broken regardless of what the verdict will be. Furthermore, it is the objective of the audience to be the jury so that they may decide what justice appears to be in this case. As a writer, I am uninterested in telling my audience what to think; I prefer to present the issues and force the audience to sit in uncertainty, allowing them to come to their own conclusions. It is my belief that giving the audience a firm answer will allow them to leave when the curtain falls with a sense of finality when this topic is not yet finished being discussed. It is the job of the audience to continue this conversation when they return to their lives outside of the controlled environment of the theatre.

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APPENDIX

APPENDIX

VICTIM DOES NOT REMEMBER

A PLAY IN TWO ACTS

by

Gerry Rodriguez

CAST OF CHARACTERS

Valerie Lynn: A woman in her early 20s. College student. Her personality changes quickly from fun-loving and easy-going to distant and quiet.

Sarah Davila: A woman in her early 20s. College student. Type-A personality. She is organized and likes to be in control. Very protective.

Brian Fuller: A man in his early 20s. College Student. Confident and charismatic. He is used to getting what he wants and does not like to be challenged.

ENSEMBLE

Nurse Abby	TV Reporter
Kim	Student 1
Jonah	Student 2
Michelle	Manny
Trevor	Commentator 1
Officer 1	Commentator 2
Officer 2	Commentator 3
Arresting Officer	Commentator 4
Reporter 1	Bailiff
Reporter 2	Judge Guerrero
Reporter 3	Prosecutor
Reporter 4	Defense Attorney
Reporter 5	

SUGGESTED DOUBLING

Michelle/Reporter 2/Commentator 4
Kim/Reporter 1/Commentator 2/Student 2
Jonah/Reporter 5/Commentator 1/Bailiff
Trevor/Arresting Officer/Commentator 3
Officer 1/Manny/TV Reporter/Prosecutor
Officer 2/Reporter 4/Judge Guerrero
Nurse Abby/Reporter 3/Student 1/Defense Attorney

PLACE

College town in Texas

TIME

The present

NOTES

The play calls for an ensemble cast. With the exception of Valerie, Sarah, and Brian, performers should play multiple characters. Suggested doubling is included, but the director may cast as many performers as desired. Many characters are not gender specific.

With the exception of the closing scene in Act I, all transitions should be pre-recorded footage that is displayed on a screen upstage. These pre-recorded videos should include cell phone footage of the night of the party, news footage, and commentary as seen on media platforms.

Years for dates are left blank and should be edited with the year that reflects the most appropriate date so that the timeline remains current.

The names of social media platforms may be changed to correspond with the names of evolving platforms as the director sees fit.

When the media enters in the closing moments of Act I, the scene should become a sensory experience for the audience. The experience should be as loud, overwhelming, and uncomfortable as possible.

Valerie's final monologue at the end of the play is a poem that should represent the character's fragmentation and isolation. It is the moment when the audience finally witnesses the unraveling and detachment experienced by the character and should be reminiscent of a stream of consciousness.

ACT I

SCENE 1

Lights come up on the living room of SARAH'S apartment. VALERIE flirts with BRIAN in the background while ENSEMBLE is scattered around the stage. Everyone is drinking.

SARAH breaks away from the crowd and begins to pick up trash around the room. VALERIE, cup in hand, whispers in BRIAN'S ear then pulls on his hand before leaving him and approaching SARAH. VALERIE yells over the music.

VALERIE

You're no fun!

SARAH

What?

VALERIE

I said you're no fun!

SARAH

Why?

VALERIE

Stop cleaning. You can do it tomorrow.

SARAH

So that I can clean up after this hurricane while nursing a hangover? No, thank you. Tomorrow is for Alka-Seltzer and sunglasses.

VALERIE

But it's a party!

SARAH

Yeah, and apparently parties destroy apartments. Who knew?

VALERIE
(whining)

Come dance with me.

SARAH

You can help.

VALERIE makes a disapproving noise with her throat. She places her cup on a coffee table, and SARAH picks it up.

You know, I thought hosting a party would be fun.

VALERIE

It's not?

SARAH

Does this look like fun?

VALERIE

Come on. Just leave it.

SARAH

Two minutes, I promise.

VALERIE

Sarah!

VALERIE trips and falls, laughing.

SARAH

Shit! Valerie, are you okay?

VALERIE continues to laugh, uncontrollably. SARAH begins to laugh, then helps VALERIE to a standing position.

VALERIE

See? I'm a mess without you. I need you.

SARAH

Oh, please...

VALERIE

What?

SARAH

You need me?

VALERIE

I do. I need you. Life has no meaning without you. I need your arms around me. I need you to dance with me. Dance with me, Sarah! Dance with me!

SARAH

The tango?

VALERIE

I don't know ballroom.

SARAH

Then, I guess you'll have to dance with yourself. Ballroom is all I know.

VALERIE

I took tap for three weeks when I was in kinder. Do you want to see if I remember anything?

SARAH

Careful, now. I wouldn't want to see you pull a muscle.

VALERIE

You underestimate me.

SARAH

Do I?

VALERIE

Alright, tap solo coming up, right here on this coffee table. Just call me Ginger.

SARAH

Who's Ginger?

VALERIE

Ginger Rogers.

VALERIE pushes the trash off the table and onto the floor and stands on the table.

SARAH

I just cleaned that.

VALERIE

Do you want to see the tap solo I learned when I was five or not?

SARAH

You're way too drunk for this. Twenty bucks says you fall off this table.

VALERIE

At least I'm having fun. Now, are you ready for the show?

SARAH

I don't think I've ever looked forward to a moment more than this one right here.

VALERIE poses, about to begin her dance.

SARAH stops her abruptly.

Wait!

(to the room)

Someone better record this because if she doesn't remember this tomorrow, I need proof!

Multiple party guests pull out their phones
and begin recording.

VALERIE

...And...a five, six, seven, eight

VALERIE does a clumsy interpretation of a
tap dance. BRIAN approaches SARAH.

BRIAN

Cute dance.

SARAH

Mmm...I don't know if I would call it that.

BRIAN

The footwork is a little messy, and she's off by about half a beat. But I like the organic movements. They feel fresh and unrehearsed.

SARAH

Constructive criticism. I like it.

BRIAN

Well, what kind of person would I be to crush the dreams of a girl with that kind of joy on her face?

SARAH

And when did you become so protective of her? I didn't realize you two were so close.

BRIAN

I'm simply a protector of innocence and happiness.

SARAH

How noble.

BRIAN

Not noble, just decent.

SARAH

Alright, I hear you. You don't have to cozy up to the BFF anymore. Move along. Move along.

BRIAN holds up his cup to SARAH before retreating to the side of the room. VALERIE ends her dance with her arms in the air. The guests cheer.

VALERIE

Well?

SARAH

It's a good thing you're too close to graduating to change your major to Dance.

VALERIE

That good, huh?

SARAH

I think you're still missing the point.

VALERIE climbs down from the table.

VALERIE

Look at that, the table's clean. And I didn't fall. You owe me twenty bucks.

SARAH

I'll pay you tomorrow. If you remember.

VALERIE

Don't worry. I'll remember. So you'll come dance with me, right?

SARAH

(teasing)

I don't know. Brian might get the wrong idea.

VALERIE

Fuck Brian! No one's talking about Brian!

SARAH

Really? 'Cause I think he was feeling neglected during that...whatever that was on the table.

VALERIE

(excited)

Shut up!

SARAH

I've been watching you two all night. He's been better company for you than I could ever be.

VALERIE

He's just being nice.

SARAH

Trust me. He's not.

VALERIE

And then?

SARAH

Go talk to him. Let me clean this up, and then I'll come find you. Unless you don't want to be found, if you know what I mean.

VALERIE

Actually, I don't.

SARAH

(mocking Valerie)

Oh Brian! He's so hot! Did you see him tonight? He's so funny! Do you think he noticed me? Oh Brian! Brian!

VALERIE

I don't talk like that. Where's my cup?

SARAH

It's gone. Get a new one. I'm just saying that if you don't make a move tonight, I don't ever want to hear you whine about him again.

VALERIE
(shocked)

I would never make a move!

SARAH

Never?

VALERIE smiles seductively.

VALERIE
(posing)

How do I look?

SARAH

You need a pep talk?

VALERIE

Please? They're the best.

SARAH
(rolling her eyes)

Fine. But I'm only doing this once.

VALERIE poses again, more dramatically
this time.

VALERIE

Okay. How do I look?

SARAH
(in a loud, overdramatic voice)

Like a sauna. It's too hot.

VALERIE turns in a slow circle while
SARAH fans herself.

Oh! It's hot in here. Turn it down! It's too much! Now, let me watch you walk away!

VALERIE walks towards BRIAN, slowly.

There she goes! Miss America, everybody!

VALERIE stumbles into BRIAN. He catches
her. VALERIE looks into BRIAN'S eyes and
wraps her arms around his neck.

She smiles, then leans in to kiss him. The ENSEMBLE cheers.

Lights fade.

On a screen upstage, cell phone footage reveals an unconscious VALERIE on the floor of the bathroom.

It is crowded as the party guests laugh and point, at times obstructing the view of the camera. Guests may ad lib.

SARAH kneels to check on Valerie then attempts to lift her. SARAH may ad lib.

KIM enters and assists SARAH.

SARAH and KIM lift VALERIE and remove her from the bathroom.

Footage ends.

SCENE 2

SARAH'S bedroom. VALERIE is asleep in SARAH'S bed. SARAH enters. She wears leggings and a tank top. She slips on some sneakers that are next to the bed then goes to a mirror where she begins to touch up her makeup.

SARAH

No hangover, and my apartment isn't destroyed. Is this what twenty-two feels like?

VALERIE moans from the bed, pulling the blanket over her head.

I know. Fireball is not usually my friend. But I have finally discovered the key to a night of successful drinking. Pacing and hydration. Two things you were, obviously, lacking last night.

VALERIE moans again.

Girl, you were asleep a full three hours before me last night. Suck it up. Look at me. This outfit slaps. She's understated, she's effortless. Oh this old thing? Sweetheart, these are just my gym clothes.

(turning to Valerie)

Okay, but seriously, Valerie. You can stay in this bed for the rest of the afternoon, but I'm going to need to evict you by 6:00 p.m. on the dot. Jake is getting back in town this afternoon, and we have plans. Very specific plans that involve that bed. But I'm sympathetic to your situation, so I'll leave a bottle of Ibuprofen on the dresser. Do you think you can manage crawling out of that bed and getting back to your dorm all on your own, or do I need to drive you?

VALERIE pushes the blanket off of her face.
She has a hangover.

VALERIE

Painkillers. Now.

SARAH pulls a bottle of pills out of a drawer and tosses them onto the bed.
VALERIE feels around the bed for them, grabs the bottle, and sits up.

VALERIE

Water...

SARAH hands VALERIE her water bottle.
VALERIE fumbles with the pill bottle, grabs a couple of pills, and takes them. She begins to chug the water.

SARAH

We've all been there.

VALERIE

Where did you sleep last night?

SARAH

Kim's room. She fell asleep on the couch with
(gushy)

Manny.

VALERIE

Sorry for stealing your bed.

SARAH

You didn't steal my bed. I found you passed out in the bathroom and dragged you in here away from the mob that was taking pictures of you.

VALERIE

You carried me in here all by yourself?

SARAH

(laughing)

Please. I know I dress like a gym rat, but these arms can't lift more than five pounds. Kim helped. And like I said, it was more of a dragging situation than a carrying one.

VALERIE

Why didn't you just take me to Kim's room so you could have your bed?

SARAH

Kim wasn't asleep yet. I assumed she would need her bed but...apparently not.

VALERIE

But...

SARAH

I promise you, the game of musical beds that took place last night isn't that interesting. So are you comfortable...in my bed...right now?

VALERIE

I'm getting up, I promise.

SARAH

Take your time...just not too much time.

VALERIE

Yeah I know. Jake is coming over tonight. I heard that part. Just give me a minute. My body hurts.

SARAH

Must've been the table dance.

VALERIE

The what?

SARAH

It was just a tap dance. On top of a table.

VALERIE

Shut it, Sarah.

SARAH

You don't believe me?

VALERIE

I don't know how to tap dance.

SARAH

I know. That's what made it funny.

VALERIE

You can stop. I'm leaving.

SARAH

You seriously don't remember?

VALERIE

No.

SARAH

Ha! That's why I got video evidence.

SARAH pulls out her cell phone and searches for the video. She hands the phone to VALERIE.

Look, you're trending.

VALERIE

It went viral?

SARAH

I wouldn't consider it viral. It wasn't *that* good.

VALERIE watches the video. The audience can hear the footage. People are laughing. VALERIE hands the phone back to SARAH.

VALERIE

Who posted this?

SARAH

I could tell you, but I'd have to make a list.

VALERIE

Make it stop.

SARAH

Too late. You're officially a star.

VALERIE

I'm going to the university job fair next week. What if they see this?

SARAH

Enjoy your fifteen minutes. It's probably the most fame any of us will ever achieve.

VALERIE

One can only hope.

SARAH

You really don't remember any of that?

VALERIE

Trust me, I would never have let people record me if I was in my right mind.

SARAH

What do you remember?

VALERIE

(struggling)

I remember...getting here. I got a ride from Kim. And...Brian was here. I remember tequila. And vodka. And beer.

SARAH

Not a good combo.

VALERIE

No shit.

SARAH

What else do you remember?

VALERIE

Um...I'm pretty sure I talked to Brian? I think I tried to flirt. Please tell me I'm imagining that.

SARAH

You're imagination isn't that good. Do you remember kissing him?

VALERIE

I didn't.

SARAH

You did.

VALERIE

No. Kill me now.

SARAH

It was quite the show. People cheered.

VALERIE

Someone put me out of my misery.

SARAH

Do you remember anything else?

VALERIE

I'm pretty sure everything stopped when someone opened the tequila.

SARAH

That'll do it.

VALERIE

So embarrassing. Let me get dressed, and I'll get out of here. Where are my pants?

SARAH

What are you talking about?

VALERIE

You see this blanket? I'm not wearing pants underneath it. Where did you put them? Also, I appreciate you trying to make me more comfortable, but I don't think you needed to take my underwear too.

SARAH

Valerie, we didn't take any of your clothes.

VALERIE

What?

SARAH

Kim and I...we just put you in the bed and left. We closed the door behind us.

VALERIE
(confused)

Well, do you see them anywhere?

SARAH searches around the room for VALERIE'S clothes. She finds the pants on the other side of the bed. The underwear is stuck inside of them.

SARAH
Here. You don't remember taking them off?

VALERIE
No.

SARAH
Are you sure?

VALERIE
No, I don't remember.

SARAH
You don't remember?

VALERIE
I already said I don't remember. Can we change the subject?

SARAH
In a second. You're sure you were alone all night?

VALERIE
I don't know. You're the one who put me in here and left. Was I alone when you left?

SARAH
Yes. I told you, we left and closed the door.

VALERIE
So then I guess I was alone all night.

SARAH
And you took off your pants and underwear in the middle of the night?

VALERIE
I was probably uncomfortable and tried to take off my pants in the middle of the night.

SARAH

And your underwear?

VALERIE

Look, the underwear is stuck to the inside of the pants. I was probably too drunk to figure out how to put them back on.

SARAH

Maybe.

VALERIE

I'm going to get dressed now. Are there any more embarrassing moments from last night you would like me to replay for you?

SARAH

I'm just making sure you're okay.

VALERIE

Other than the hangover of the century, I'm fine.

SARAH sits on the bed.

SARAH

What's that?

VALERIE

What?

SARAH

On your arm. What is it?

VALERIE

It's nothing.

SARAH grabs VALERIE's arm. VALERIE pulls away.

SARAH

Come here.

VALERIE

What the fuck! Let me go!

SARAH

What's that?

VALERIE

Ow! That hurts! Don't touch me!

SARAH lets go of VALERIE's arm.

SARAH

That's a bruise.

VALERIE

No shit.

SARAH

It looks like fingers. Like someone grabbed your arm.

VALERIE

Like you just did right now?

SARAH

Valerie, I'm sorry. Can we just talk about this for a second?

VALERIE

I don't know what you want to talk about?

SARAH

You're not wearing underwear, and you don't remember taking them off...

VALERIE

Great, we're back on that subject...

SARAH

You have a bruise that looks a lot like a hand...

VALERIE

Which probably happened when you and Kim manhandled me getting me into the bed last night...

SARAH

I don't like this.

VALERIE

You don't like this? How do you think I feel?

SARAH

I just think it would be a good idea to go to the hospital.

VALERIE

The hospital?

SARAH

Just to get you checked out.

VALERIE

Checked out for what?

SARAH is unsure of how to broach the subject with VALERIE. She pauses and stutters.

Just say it.

SARAH

Maybe...you should get tested.

VALERIE

Tested?

SARAH

It wouldn't be a terrible idea to get a rape kit...at the hospital.

VALERIE is stunned. She pauses.

VALERIE

Why would I need a rape kit?

SARAH

It's just a formality. Just to be sure. Just in case...

VALERIE

Just in case of what?

SARAH

So that you can have a medical record.

VALERIE

A medical record of what?

SARAH

You don't know if something happened...

VALERIE

You're right. I don't know. So why would I go looking for something when there's no evidence?

SARAH

Your pants...

VALERIE

I took them off myself.

SARAH

But you don't remember that.

VALERIE

I know I don't remember!

SARAH

Valerie, please. I'm not trying to fight with you. I'm not trying to make you feel bad. I'm just trying to help.

VALERIE

You're not helping. Just leave it alone.

SARAH

Please, hear me out, okay. I don't want you to ignore this and then remember something later when it's too late to go to the hospital. So we go to the hospital, and it turns out everything is fine. Great. No big deal. No harm done. Everyone goes on with their lives. But if something happened...

VALERIE

What could've happened?

SARAH

If something happened, then you have evidence.

VALERIE

What evidence?

SARAH

Stop playing dumb. Listen to me. I'm not going to force you to do anything you don't want to do. But I'm asking you to please do this for yourself, for your own peace of mind and as an insurance policy. Please, just get in the car.

Lights fade.

On the screen upstage, cell phone footage shows BRIAN kissing VALERIE in a corner of the room.

Her eyes remain closed throughout most of the footage, and BRIAN has to hold her up throughout the scene.

At times, VALERIE falls to the ground and BRIAN has to pick her up.

VALERIE looks at BRIAN and opens her eyes for a second before closing them again. She smiles.

Footage ends.

SCENE 3

Hospital examination room. VALERIE sits on an exam table. NURSE ABBY enters.

NURSE ABBY

You're not undressed.

VALERIE

Sorry.

NURSE ABBY

That's fine. We can just start with some preliminary questions. My name is Abby, and I'll be performing a sexual assault forensic exam. Would you please state your name?

VALERIE

Valerie Lynn.

NURSE ABBY

Okay, Valerie. What is your date of birth?

VALERIE

(insert year to reflect correct age)

March 27, [year].

NURSE ABBY

You're twenty-two?

VALERIE

Yeah.

NURSE ABBY

Do you have any injuries on your body?

VALERIE

There's a bruise.

NURSE ABBY

Can I see it?

VALERIE

It's right here on my arm.

NURSE ABBY

Okay. Have you taken a shower?

VALERIE

No.

NURSE ABBY

Have you used the restroom?

VALERIE

Yes.

NURSE ABBY

Can you be more specific?

VALERIE looks at NURSE ABBY in disbelief for moment before she answers.

VALERIE

I peed.

NURSE ABBY

Are these the clothes you were wearing during the assault?

VALERIE

I don't know if there was an assault.

NURSE ABBY

Are these the clothes you were wearing during the suspected assault.

VALERIE

I don't suspect that there was an assault.

NURSE ABBY

Ms. Lynn, do you not wish to continue with this examination?

VALERIE

I don't know. No. Actually yes. Just in case.

NURSE ABBY

Alright. How many previous sexual partners have you had?

VALERIE

Um...

NURSE ABBY

It's just a question. To the best of your abilities, can you please state for me the number of previous sexual partners you have had.

VALERIE

Like, five? No, seven. Seven.

VALERIE buries her head in her hands.

NURSE ABBY

And have you used a condom with every sexual encounter?

VALERIE

Um...most? Um...I...I didn't...with one. Um...we didn't use a condom.

NURSE ABBY

With only one of your partners?

VALERIE

Right.

NURSE ABBY

How many times did you have sex with this partner without a condom?

VALERIE

I don't know. I didn't count.

NURSE ABBY

And why didn't the two of you choose to use a condom?

VALERIE

Um...I was on the pill. And he was my boyfriend. We were together for over a year.

NURSE ABBY

Are you currently on birth control?

VALERIE

I'm on the pill...but sometimes I forget.

NURSE ABBY

When was the first day of your last period?

VALERIE

I don't remember. A week ago, I think.

NURSE ABBY

We can provide you with Plan B.

VALERIE

Why would I need Plan B?

NURSE ABBY

Have you ever had an HIV test?

VALERIE

Um...I think I got one at my last annual. But I'm not sure.

NURSE ABBY

And when was that?

VALERIE

Like, three months ago.

NURSE ABBY

But you're unsure?

VALERIE

No, I'm not sure.

NURSE ABBY

Have any of your previous sexual partners tested positive for HIV?

VALERIE

I shouldn't be here.

NURSE ABBY

I'm sorry?

VALERIE

This was a bad idea.

NURSE ABBY

And why is that?

VALERIE

Because nothing happened.

NURSE ABBY

Why do you say that?

VALERIE

Because I don't remember.

NURSE ABBY

So why did you come here?

VALERIE

Because I don't remember!

NURSE ABBY is silent. She is beginning to understand the situation.

NURSE ABBY

I know this is difficult. You don't have to complete the exam if you don't want to, but I encourage you to stay. It is important to know your results so that you know where to go from here.

VALERIE

What happens if the test comes back positive?

NURSE ABBY

Well, since you're not a minor, it is up to you what you do with your results. We will not report your results to law enforcement. That decision will be left up to you.

VALERIE

And how long will it take to get the results?

NURSE ABBY

It's hard to say for sure. If we're optimistic, maybe two weeks. But sometimes there are backlogs, and it can take longer.

VALERIE

Okay.

NURSE ABBY

Do you wish to continue with the exam?

VALERIE

Yeah.

NURSE ABBY

I'm going to step out of the room for a moment so that you can remove your clothing. When you're finished undressing, will you please place your clothing in this bag? These linens are here for you to cover yourself. Do you have extra clothing to wear for when the exam is finished?

VALERIE

No.

NURSE ABBY

Do you have someone who can bring you spare clothing?

VALERIE

Yeah, she's waiting in the lobby. I'll text her.

NURSE ABBY

Alright, I'll be back when you're ready.

NURSE ABBY begins to exit but pauses.

You know, when I was your age, we didn't have rape kits. Or maybe we did, but no one talked about them. They've helped a lot of people. They can still help a lot of people.

Lights fade.

On the screen upstage, cell phone footage shows a coherent VALERIE drinking and talking to KIM.

KIM

We need shots!

VALERIE

Yes!

KIM

(to a another guest)

Are you pouring shots? Can we have some? Thanks.

The shots are poured. KIM hands one to VALERIE. They tap their paper shot glasses together and down the shots. Cheers and laughter from everyone.

BRIAN is behind VALERIE. She notices him and smiles. They are very friendly together.

VALERIE flirts subtly. She grabs his hand then pulls away, laughing as she exits the frame.

Footage ends.

SCENE 4

Coffee shop. BRIAN sits at a table with JONAH. BRIAN is comfortable and jovial. JONAH is alternating sips of coffee and water, nursing a hangover.

BRIAN

Jonah, you really need to learn to pace yourself.

JONAH

I've been personally victimized by whiskey.

BRIAN

Again.

JONAH groans in response.

BRIAN

I don't get it. If whiskey doesn't like you by this point, it's never gonna happen.

JONAH

So smooth.

BRIAN

So deceptive. Give it up. You'll never be friends.

KIM enters, cup of coffee in hand. She sits
at the table.

KIM

Is the water helping?

JONAH

No.

KIM

What about the coffee?

JONAH

Why is everyone yelling?

KIM

We're talking normal.

JONAH

Really? Because you sound like a screeching owl.

KIM

I'm going to pretend that was the hangover talking, but if you try a line like that again, I'll make sure that the hangover is the least of your problems.

BRIAN

I'm not inviting you to anymore parties if you're gonna be such a downer the next day. You're killing my vibe.

JONAH

Can we turn off the lights?

KIM

Take my sunglasses, and stop talking.

BRIAN

I feel great.

KIM

You didn't try to marry a whiskey bottle like this one did last night.

BRIAN

No, my focus was on something with legs. He should've had his priorities straight.

KIM

Yeah, we all saw you with Valerie last night. Your priorities were pretty clear.

JONAH

Maybe that's why I drank so much. That show was disgusting.

BRIAN

Jealous 'cause you're not getting any?

JONAH

Not jealous. I just didn't want to see the inside of your mouth.

BRIAN

Well, you didn't have to stand so close to me.

JONAH

Stand so close? Brian, I could see everything from across the room.

KIM

We could all see everything from across the room. Every angle.

BRIAN

I'm glad everyone got a good view of the show.

KIM

We did.

JONAH

I think I'm gonna throw up.

JONAH exits, hand over his mouth.

BRIAN

You guys didn't have to watch.

KIM

It was kind of hard not to.

What's Jonah's deal?
BRIAN

What do you mean?
KIM

Why is he being a prude?
BRIAN

I don't really think he's being a prude. He probably just didn't want to see your tongue down Valerie's throat last night. To be honest, I don't really think any of us wanted to see that, but we weren't given much of a choice.
KIM

I'm sorry for ruining everyone's night. I was a little busy embracing fate.
BRIAN

Embracing fate?
KIM

An opportunity presented itself, and I wasn't gonna say no.
BRIAN

I guess.
KIM

Y'all were the ones cheering. Don't act like all of that wasn't entertaining.
BRIAN

JONAH returns.

False alarm.
JONAH

It was entertaining enough for it to be all over Insta and TikTok this morning.
KIM

What are we talking about?
JONAH

We're still on Brian and Valerie's spit fest from last night.
KIM

JONAH

(groaning)

Still? Someone give me an Ibuprofen.

KIM digs in her purse.

KIM

I had the pleasure of seeing a reenactment of whatever the hell that was last night from multiple camera angles.

(to Jonah)

I only have Tylenol.

JONAH

Give it.

JONAH takes the pills.

BRIAN

But you missed the best part.

KIM

I doubt we missed anything.

BRIAN

Trust me. There was no one with a camera in the bedroom.

KIM

What?

BRIAN

That's right. Me and Valerie. Last night.

KIM

When was this?

BRIAN

I don't know. One or two?

KIM

(a beat)

I didn't see you guys go into the bedroom together.

BRIAN

It's not like we announced it.

KIM

I guess not. So whose idea was it?

BRIAN

Kim, you saw Valerie last night. She was all over me.

JONAH

I admire your humility.

BRIAN

I mean, I'm not calling her a slut or anything. It wasn't really anyone's idea. It just kind of happened.

KIM

I'm just surprised because she was so drunk.

BRIAN

She sobered up.

KIM

I just didn't see her after midnight. I guess I thought she was sleeping it off.

BRIAN

She did.

KIM

So she came back out to the party.

BRIAN

What? I mean, yeah. She came back out.

KIM

Okay.

BRIAN

Check this out. So, she comes and finds me outside. I'm smoking out by my car.

JONAH

Asshole.

BRIAN

What?

JONAH

No invite?

BRIAN

No. I only had one joint, and I didn't wanna share, okay? Anyway, I'm out there alone, smoking by my car, and she comes out. She's staring me down. She's determined, an animal.

JONAH

On the prowl.

BRIAN

Bro, can I just tell the story?

KIM

For real, I'm actually very interested in what he has to say.

Throughout the story, JONAH begins falling asleep at the table.

BRIAN

So she's coming at me, and I don't know whether to be excited or afraid for my life. And she grabs my face, and her tongue is in the back of my throat. Then, she grabs my dick, and I'm like, shit, she's about to jump my bones right here where anyone can walk out and see us. I'm telling you, she had me pinned against the car and was climbing on top of me. So I grabbed her and pulled her off of me and was like, hey not here. And she's like, moaning right, and she's like, I need you now. And I didn't want to disappoint her, you know? So I grab her hand, and I start pulling her back to the apartment. And I'm telling her that we can find some place more comfortable, it'll be more special, all of that.

KIM

(Sarcastic)

What a gentleman.

BRIAN

Hey, it's already been a wild night. I didn't want her bare ass to be going viral too.

KIM

So you took her to the bedroom.

BRIAN

I would say she took me to the bedroom. But for her sake, let's just say we found our way to the bedroom together.

Whose bedroom?

KIM

Sarah's.

BRIAN

She'll freak when she finds out.

KIM

She's not going to find out.

BRIAN

You don't think Valerie will tell her?

KIM

Valerie's not going to say anything.

BRIAN

Why?

KIM

BRIAN
(a beat)

Fine. Maybe she'll say something. But that's her problem. Like I said, it was her idea, and she's the one who took me in there.

KIM

Mhmm.

BRIAN

So we get to the bedroom. This girl is a freak.

KIM

Okay, so you and Valerie hooked up.

BRIAN

Ah, come on. You don't wanna hear all the dirty details?

KIM

I really don't.

BRIAN

Fine, I need to take a piss. You guys ready to get out of here?

KIM

Yeah.

BRIAN

Cool, be right back.

BRIAN exits.

KIM

Jonah, wake up.

JONAH

What?

KIM

Did you get all that?

JONAH

Yeah. Brian hooked up with Valerie, and apparently Valerie is a freak.

KIM

Valerie was unconscious last night.

JONAH

What?

KIM

She passed out in the bathroom. Sarah and I moved her to Sarah's bedroom.

JONAH

And she slept it off, and came out to find Brian.

KIM

No. I'm telling you. Valerie was unconscious.

JONAH

It's not like you guarded the door. She could've woken up.

KIM

Did you see her after midnight last night?

JONAH

I'm not a good person to ask. I was shit-faced.

KIM

Well, I didn't see her after midnight.

JONAH

So? It was a party. It was crowded.

KIM

It's a small apartment, and I helped move her unconscious body to a bedroom. I would've noticed if she came out of that room.

JONAH

Are you sure?

KIM

Jonah, we left her on the bed and closed the door. She didn't come out of that room.

Lights fade.

On the screen upstage, BRIAN flirts with a sober VALERIE.

BRIAN touches her shoulder. He takes her hand, and she spins in a circle, showing off her outfit, laughing.

BRIAN pulls her in for a hug. VALERIE hugs him back.

VALERIE begins to pull away to leave, but BRIAN grabs her hand, pulling her back.

VALERIE laughs and hugs him again.

VALERIE smiles, holding up one finger. She exits.

Footage ends.

SCENE 5

SARAH'S living room. VALERIE sits on the sofa. There is a knock at the door. VALERIE doesn't answer. There is another knock. VALERIE still doesn't move from the couch. There is a third knock at the door. SARAH enters.

SARAH

Valerie, aren't you going to get that? Or are you going to let your parents camp out on my porch?

VALERIE

How do you know it's my parents? It could be a murderer, or an arsonist, or worse...a religious cult inviting us to church.

SARAH

Your parents just called and said they were at the gas station down the street. They said they would be here any minute.

SARAH moves to answer the door.

VALERIE

It still could be someone else. Don't accept any tracks or Bibles or anything. Or else they'll think it's okay to come back here.

SARAH answers the door. MICHELLE and
TREVOR enter.

TREVOR

Hi, Sarah. How are you?

SARAH

I'm good, Mr. Lynn. How are you?

TREVOR

We're wonderful. Thank you for asking.

SARAH

Hi, Mrs. Lynn. It's good to see you again.

MICHELLE

Thank you, Sarah. It's good to see you again too.

(to Valerie)

Are you just going to sit there, or are you going to say hi.

VALERIE

Hi.

MICHELLE

Don't go out of your way to welcome us, dear.

TREVOR shuts the door behind him.

TREVOR

Michelle, you know she's been busy with school. Let her relax. Her job isn't to entertain us.

(to Valerie)

Hi, sweetheart.

TREVOR goes to hug VALERIE. VALERIE gives him a half-hearted hug without standing.

MICHELLE

(to Valerie)

Well, you must be busy. The only time we hear from you is if we text you. And I don't know how I'm supposed to interpret these short one-word responses we get from you.

VALERIE

Yeah, I guess midterms were crazy.

MICHELLE

I'm sorry for surprising you like this, but I needed to hear at least one full sentence out of you this month. You don't even answer your phone anymore.

TREVOR

Michelle, she's been busy. She just explained that.

MICHELLE

She didn't explain anything to me. All she did was agree with me that she must be busy.

SARAH enters with two glasses of water. She hands them to MICHELLE and TREVOR.

SARAH

I hope room temperature is okay.

TREVOR

It's fine, thank you.

MICHELLE

Thank you, Sarah. Valerie, I hear more from Sarah than I hear from you.

(to Sarah)

Oh, and Sarah, I saw your mother at church, and she told me that you applied for law school!

(to Valerie)

See, I know these things because, as it turns out, Sarah communicates with her mother regularly. I suggest you take some cues from her. I hope you're going to tell me that you've been too busy to answer my calls because you're diligently preparing for next semester. How have the job fairs been going? Or do those not start until your final semester? You know what would really help your resumé? Getting an internship during your last semester. Do you think it's too late to find one?

TREVOR

We didn't come here to pressure you about graduation.

MICHELLE

It's not pressure, Trevor. It's a reminder that she's in the home stretch.

TREVOR

No. We came here to celebrate your successful midterms, you and Sarah both.

MICHELLE

That too. But I starting thinking about what you were going to do after graduation, and I realized that you don't have any real job experience. You're going to appear completely unprepared and irresponsible. Unmotivated. What will they think you did the entire time you were in college? You should've gotten a job last year.

TREVOR

You told her she should focus on her classes instead of getting a job.

MICHELLE

Well, I changed my mind. That was a terrible decision.

TREVOR

It's a little too late to change your mind.

MICHELLE opens her mouth to say something, but Trevor stops her.

And, no, let me finish. It's her life. If she wanted to get a job, she would have gotten one.

MICHELLE

Is that true?

(to Valerie)

Do you even want a job?

TREVOR

That's not what I meant.

MICHELLE

(to Valerie)

Tomorrow, I'm taking you to the career center, and we're going to find you something, anything. Job, volunteer work, an internship...if anyone is still seeking interns...

TREVOR

(to Michelle)

We've been driving all day, and we're here to celebrate.

(to Valerie and Sarah)

We want to take you both to eat. Where should we go?

VALERIE

Actually, I'm not very hungry.

TREVOR

Valerie, I know you, and I know that you've been living off of ramen and canned tuna all semester. Let me get you something different for a change.

VALERIE

I just don't really feel like going out right now. But you can all go. I'll just stay here.

MICHELLE

We're not going to go out without you.

SARAH

I don't mind staying here with you if you're not feeling up to going out.

MICHELLE

Valerie, *you* invited us, remember? So we came...to spend time with you. Why would I go out with your father right now? We see each other everyday.

TREVOR

Okay, we can fix this. What if we just order in?

MICHELLE

Well, that doesn't feel very celebratory.

TREVOR

I thought the point was to spend time with Valerie.

MICHELLE

That is the point, but this isn't how I...You know what? Forget it. Valerie, would you be opposed to ordering take-out?

VALERIE

Take-out is fine.

TREVOR

Great. What do you want to eat?

VALERIE

Like I said, I'm not very hungry. You guys can decide.

MICHELLE

I don't know what is going on with you today, but we did not drive out here so that you could avoid all questions surrounding school and food...Oh my God! Do you have an eating disorder?

TREVOR

Michelle!

MICHELLE

What? It's a valid question with the way she's acting.

TREVOR

It's really not.

VALERIE

I don't have an eating disorder.

MICHELLE

Then why aren't you answering any of our questions?

VALERIE

Technically, I am answering them.

MICHELLE

Excluding yourself from the conversation is equivalent to avoiding the questions.

VALERIE

No, it's not.

MICHELLE

We didn't come here to argue with you.

VALERIE

Then don't.

MICHELLE

I'm sorry if we caught you on a bad day. You knew we were coming. Why didn't you just call us and tell us you weren't in the mood for company?

VALERIE

It's fine that you're here. I just don't feel like going out, okay?

MICHELLE

Why?

VALERIE

Dad?

TREVOR

Sarah, I feel like pizza. You girls order whatever you want, and have it delivered. I'll pay cash when it gets here. Michelle, we left our bags in the car. Let's go get them while the girls place the order.

MICHELLE

They're overnight bags. You're perfectly capable of getting them yourself.

TREVOR

Will you, please, come help me with the bags while the girls order the pizza.

MICHELLE pauses and stares at VALERIE for a moment before conceding. She exits with TREVOR.

SARAH

Are you okay?

VALERIE

I'm fine.

SARAH

Okay...When are you going to tell them?

VALERIE

I don't know.

SARAH

Well, it's the whole reason they're here. You might as well get it over with. Rip the band-aid.

VALERIE

This isn't exactly a band-aid situation.

SARAH

Yeah, I guess it's not.

VALERIE

How do I even bring this up?

SARAH

You just say it, I guess. I don't think there's really a right way to go about this.

VALERIE

This was stupid. I should've just told them over the phone. We should just pretend like nothing happened, entertain them, and let them go back home. I can call them and tell them when they're home.

SARAH

Valerie, everyone is talking about it. It's all over TikTok. You need to tell them before they find out from someone else.

VALERIE

My mom doesn't have a TikTok.

SARAH

Your dad has a TikTok.

VALERIE

What?

SARAH

Yeah. My dad has one too. They follow each other.

VALERIE

That's weird.

SARAH

I know. I don't get it either.

VALERIE

You know what? Whatever. Let them find out on TikTok.

SARAH

You want them to come up with their own conclusion? Without hearing your side of the story?

VALERIE

I don't have a side of the story.

SARAH

Yes, you do. And you have me as a witness.

VALERIE

A witness to what? You didn't see anything.

SARAH

I saw enough.

VALERIE

So, what? I just tell them when they walk through the door?

SARAH

If that's what you want to do. Do you want me to give you some privacy?

VALERIE

No. Stay.

SARAH

Okay.

TREVOR and MICHELLE enter. They are carrying overnight bags.

TREVOR

I hope that pizza's on its way. What kind did you order?

MICHELLE

I forgot to tell you girls no sausage.

VALERIE

I have something to tell you.

TREVOR

Sure, honey, what's up?

VALERIE

Can you guys sit down?

MICHELLE

Valerie, what's wrong? There are a lot of possible scenarios running through my head right now, so you better start talking.

TREVOR

Let's just sit down, and then she'll tell us, okay? Valerie, what's going on?

VALERIE

Something happened.

MICHELLE

Yes, we gathered that. What happened?

VALERIE

There was this party, and I got really drunk.

MICHELLE

How drunk? Did you drive? Oh my God! Was it alcohol poisoning? Did you go to the hospital?

TREVOR

Michelle.

(to Valerie)

Go on.

VALERIE

I blacked out.

MICHELLE

Oh my God.

VALERIE

I woke up in Sarah's room, and I had this bruise on my arm, and I wasn't wearing any pants or underwear.

MICHELLE

(to Sarah)

I don't understand...

SARAH

A friend and I put Valerie in my bed when she was unconscious. We closed the door behind us. She was fully clothed when we left.

VALERIE

There were these videos going around on social media.

MICHELLE

Videos?

VALERIE

Yes, videos. Of me unconscious in the bathroom, before Sarah helped to move me to her room. But there were also videos of me drinking and talking to this guy, Brian. There were a lot of videos of us dancing and kissing. Anyway, Sarah convinced me to go to the hospital for a rape kit, because of the bruise and the missing clothes, you know? So I did, and I got the results.

MICHELLE

And?

VALERIE

There was evidence of semen. But I hadn't had sex for months, not since Andrew and I broke up.

MICHELLE

Oh my God.

VALERIE

And then Brian was telling everyone that we had sex that night, but I don't remember it. I don't remember anything.

TREVOR

Where is Brian now?

VALERIE

I don't know. I haven't talked to him since the night of the party.

TREVOR

I'm asking if he's in jail or out on bond.

VALERIE

What? No. I haven't pressed charges.

MICHELLE

Why haven't you pressed charges? He needs to be in prison!

VALERIE

I don't want anyone to know what happened.

TREVOR

He raped you! He can't get away with this!

VALERIE

Well, we don't technically know that. We know what the results of the rape kit were and we know what Brian said but...

TREVOR

Valerie.

VALERIE

I just want to forget that it happened which is pretty easy because I don't actually remember it.

TREVOR

You were raped while you were unconscious! It doesn't matter that you don't remember the specific event!

VALERIE

And I know his basic routine, so I've just been avoiding the places I used to see him around campus.

MICHELLE

He's still enrolled in this school? He wasn't expelled?

VALERIE

I didn't file a report with the school.

MICHELLE

Valerie!

TREVOR

When did this event take place?

VALERIE

It was the beginning of the semester. Like two months ago.

TREVOR

When did you get your results?

VALERIE

The day before I called you.

TREVOR

So, three days ago. You need to go down to the police station right now and file a report. Let's go. I'll drive you.

VALERIE

No.

TREVOR

What?

VALERIE

I said, no. I don't want to file a report.

MICHELLE

You have to.

VALERIE

I don't have to do anything. What am I going to tell them? I don't even remember it happening.

TREVOR

That's exactly what you tell them. You tell them that you were assaulted when you were unconscious.

VALERIE

I don't even know that because I was unconscious.

TREVOR

Your results said that there was semen present, right?

VALERIE

Yes.

TREVOR

So the results determined that you had intercourse that night?

VALERIE

Yes, there were...tears...in my...

TREVOR

And you were unconscious.

VALERIE

Yes.

TREVOR

So you couldn't consent.

Right. VALERIE

So you were raped. TREVOR

It's not that simple. VALERIE

This Brian is telling people that the two of you had sex at the party. TREVOR

Yes. VALERIE

So he's admitted to raping you. TREVOR

Not exactly. VALERIE

You said there are videos on social media of you unconscious that night. TREVOR

Yeah, but there are also videos of me making out with Brian. VALERIE

Sarah, you said that you put her in your room with the help of a friend and closed the door behind you, and Valerie was unconscious and fully clothed. TREVOR

Yes. SARAH

So there are two witnesses to this. TREVOR

Yes. SARAH

Okay, let's go to the station. TREVOR

VALERIE

Does anyone care about what I want to do in this situation?

MICHELLE

Of course, we care. That's why we're going to be with you. For moral support.

VALERIE

But you're not going to have to deal with the aftermath.

MICHELLE

The aftermath?

TREVOR

Valerie, you were raped. He needs to be expelled, and he needs to be in prison.

MICHELLE

You have a responsibility to do this so that he doesn't do this to someone else.

VALERIE

I thought I just had a responsibility to take care of myself.

MICHELLE

We'll figure out how to take care of you after we file the report. We'll get you a therapist, whatever you need. But right now, the report is our priority.

TREVOR

He's not going to get away with this. Get in the car.

Lights fade.

On the screen upstage, cell phone footage shows VALERIE sitting on a sofa with a drink in her hand. She is struggling to keep her eyes open and sit upright. VALERIE spills her drink, and one of the party guests tries to clean it up. VALERIE appears to need to throw up. Another guest grabs her and tries to help her up from the sofa.

The footage ends, abruptly.

SCENE 6

Police station. VALERIE sits at a table.
OFFICER 1 and OFFICER 2 enter.

OFFICER 2 carries a folder with forms and documents.

OFFICER 1

Ms. Lynn.

VALERIE

Yes.

OFFICER 1

You wanted to file a police report?

VALERIE

Yes.

OFFICER 1

A sexual assault.

VALERIE

Yes.

OFFICER 1

Can you tell us what happened?

OFFICER 2 takes out a legal pad and begins to take notes.

VALERIE

I was at a party, and I passed out. I woke up in my friend's bed and it appeared that something had happened.

OFFICER 1

Something...like what, exactly? You're going to have to be more specific.

VALERIE

I wasn't wearing my pants or my underwear. It looked like I had had sex. But the thing is, I don't remember it. My friend said I was unconscious so...

OFFICER 1

Right. And you want to file a report about the incident, or does this incident involve a specific individual?

VALERIE

Brian Fuller.

OFFICER 1

And how do you know this individual?

VALERIE

We're friends. We go to school together.

OFFICER 1

Right. And why do you think that this Brian Fuller was involved in this incident?

VALERIE

He told people that we had sex the night of the party.

OFFICER 1

But you don't remember this occurring?

VALERIE

No.

OFFICER 1

Did you bring the results of your sexual assault forensic exam?

VALERIE

Yes.

VALERIE gives the paperwork to OFFICER
1. He skims the results.

OFFICER 1

There was semen present?

VALERIE

And tears.

OFFICER 1

And you're sure you don't remember consenting to sex that evening.

VALERIE

No, I don't remember anything.

OFFICER 1

Is it possible that you don't remember giving consent?

VALERIE

Um...I thought that since I was unconscious, I couldn't give consent.

OFFICER 2

If you woke up at some point, then you wouldn't have been unconscious and could have, possibly, given consent.

VALERIE

I don't remember.

OFFICER 1

What exactly don't you remember?

VALERIE

I don't remember anything. I drank so much.

OFFICER 1

How much did you drink?

VALERIE

I don't remember. I'm sorry.

OFFICER 2

The more information you give us, the better we can help you.

VALERIE

I know that...I just...I'm sorry. I just don't remember what happened. There was a bruise.

OFFICER 1

A bruise? Where?

VALERIE

On my arm. It looked like fingers or a handprint or something. There's a picture in the paperwork you're holding.

OFFICER 1 flips through the pages until he finds the picture. He examines the picture and sighs.

OFFICER 1

Is it possible that you fell or bumped into something and don't remember.

VALERIE

It's possible, but it's shaped like a hand.

OFFICER 2

Do you think you could have fallen and someone could have caught you? Is it possible that this could have left a bruise?

OFFICER 1

You said that your friends Sarah and...

VALERIE

Kim.

OFFICER 1

Right. Kim carried you to a bed so that you could sleep it off. Could you have obtained a bruise during this act?

VALERIE

It's possible. But the semen...and Brian said...

OFFICER 2

We'll bring him in for questioning, but he's going to tell us that you gave consent.

VALERIE

But I was so drunk, and then I was unconscious. Even if I did wake up, how would I have been in the right state of mind to give consent? I don't even remember it happening?

OFFICER 2

Like I said, we'll bring him in for questioning. As far as determining whether the intercourse was consensual, that will have to be determined by a court, and that's only if you decide to press charges. Is that what you want to do?

VALERIE

My parents want me to press charges.

OFFICER 2

What do *you* want to do?

VALERIE stares at the table for a moment.
She looks back as if looking for her parents
and Sarah. She looks back at the officers.

VALERIE

I want to press charges.

OFFICER 1

Okay.

BRIAN enters, walking across the stage. ARRESTING OFFICER enters on the opposite end of the stage. OFFICER 1 joins ARRESTING OFFICER. ARRESTING OFFICER places handcuffs on BRIAN. OFFICER 2 continues to question VALERIE as OFFICER 1 reads BRIAN his miranda rights. The dialogue should overlap.

OFFICER 2
When did you last speak to Brian Fuller?

OFFICER 1
(overlapping)
Brian Fuller?

VALERIE
The night of the party.

BRIAN
Yes.

OFFICER 2
Has he tried to contact you since the night of the party?

OFFICER 1
You are under arrest. You have the right to remain silent. Anything you say can and will be used against you in a court of law.

VALERIE
No.

BRIAN
What's going on? Why are you arresting me? Get these cuffs off of me. I didn't do anything.

OFFICER 2
Do you recall Mr. Fuller supplying you with any alcohol on the night of the party?

OFFICER 1
You have a right to an attorney. If you cannot afford an attorney, one will be appointed for you.

VALERIE
I don't remember.

BRIAN
Somebody do something! Help me!
Please, I'll go with you, just un-cuff me.
Where are you taking me?

VALERIE continues to be questioned, but her dialogue with OFFICER 2 fades out as the media descends on stage. REPORTER 1, REPORTER 2, REPORTER 3, REPORTER 4, and REPORTER 5 appear from different directions as they report the story. The stage erupts with noise as they speak over each other, their dialogue overlapping.

*See optional reporter dialogue immediately following the scene.

A news report appears on the screen upstage. OFFICER 2 exits soon after the media's dialogue begins and VALERIE rises, moving to stand center stage. The TV REPORTER's dialogue overlaps with the reporters on stage. The reporters ad-lib* the events of the unfolding story as they slowly make their way to VALERIE, where they finally surround her as if speaking directly to her. The voices continue to rise higher in volume as they become argumentative.

SARAH and BRIAN enter from opposite ends of the stage, BRIAN accompanied by the ARRESTING OFFICER. SARAH and BRIAN also ad-lib with SARAH accusing BRIAN of assault and BRIAN shouting his innocence. OFFICER 1 and OFFICER 2 have also entered and attempt to control the chaos unfolding on the stage. The ARRESTING OFFICER tells BRIAN to control himself as OFFICER 1 tells SARAH to step back. OFFICER 2 attempts to de-escalate the situation with the reporters. The dialogue should be incoherent as the ensemble shouts over one another. VALERIE sits down in the middle of the stage, surrounded by the voices of the ensemble.

The shouts rise to full volume until finally, silence and blackout, except for a spotlight on VALERIE who sits in deafening silence on the stage.

Lights slowly fade.

*Optional reporter dialogue

REPORTER 1
(overlapping)

A student at the University of Kingston was arrested this afternoon following allegations of sexual assault. Sources say that the victim was unconscious when she was sexually assaulted by Brian Fuller at a party in September. The victim admits to drinking heavily at the party which took place at a friend's apartment. Videos on social media show the victim drinking, laughing, and dancing while at the party; however, more videos continue to surface showing the victim falling, spilling drinks, and one particularly disturbing video shows the victim unconscious on a bathroom floor. When questioned by police about the alleged assault that took place, the victim has few answers to provide them, consistently repeating that she does not remember.

REPORTER 2
(overlapping)

Brian Fuller was arrested today after a victim has come forward alleging that she was raped at a party in September. A senior at the University of Kingston, Brian Fuller has been described by friends as charismatic and funny. Majoring in political science, he is a contributor for many political events and rallies that take place on campus, and professors describe the student as having great potential for politics after graduation. However, following the allegations of sexual assault, it is unclear how this potential will proceed. This may be the end of Mr. Fuller's career before it has even had a chance to begin. Yet, questions by the police have yielded few answers from the victim who stands by her initial statement that she does not remember the assault that, allegedly, took place.

REPORTER 3
(overlapping)

The University of Kingston has declined to comment on the arrest of one of its students, Brian Fuller, who was arrested today after a report was filed by a victim alleging that she was sexually assaulted by Mr. Fuller at a party that took place at an on-campus apartment. This is not the first allegation of sexual assault that has come from a student at the University of Kingston, and, formerly, a spokesperson for the university stated that policies were being implemented to bring awareness of sexual assault and to try to prevent future incidents of sexual assaults from taking place. A spokesperson also stated that resources were being made available on campus for victims of sexual assault but declined to answer when pressed for questions about the specificity of these resources. When asked if the university had reached out to the alleged victim of Brian Fuller and was providing the victim with campus resources during this time, the university, again, declined to comment. It is unclear whether Mr. Fuller has been reprimanded by the university at this time, but sources say that he remains enrolled for the spring semester.

REPORTER 4

(overlapping)

A student at the University of Kingston claims that she does not remember an alleged sexual assault that took place while she was unconscious at a party in September. Reports suggest that the party was host to a number of students consuming large amounts of alcohol. The victim claims to have had too much to drink and, at some point in the night, lost consciousness, although she admits to not remembering the acts that took place leading up to the loss of consciousness. Police have attempted to question the victim in an effort to gain more insight as to what took place at the party as well as create a timeline of the events leading up to the alleged assault. Upon further questioning, the victim simply says that she does not remember. It will now be up to the courts to determine whether or not the victim was in a state of mind strong enough to allow for her to give consent or if she was incapacitated to the point that she could not give consent.

REPORTER 5

(overlapping)

In another case challenging the definition of consent, a student at a university has been arrested after allegedly sexually assaulting a student who was unconscious and, therefore, unable to give consent. The victim admits to have been drinking, excessively, at the party and claims that she does not remember losing consciousness, nor does she remember an assault taking place. Witnesses claim to have placed the unconscious victim in a bedroom during the night and leaving her there, alone, with the door closed before returning to the party. Witnesses attest that the victim did not leave the room for the duration of the night and that the perpetrator had to have entered the bedroom of his own accord where the assault is alleged to have taken place.

A news report begins playing on the screen
upstage.

TV REPORTER

(overlapping)

Brian Fuller of the University of Kingston was arrested today following allegations of sexual assault by a victim who claims to have been unconscious when the assault took place. The victim says that she does not remember the assault, but woke up the following day to find that her jeans and her underwear had been removed. She also noticed a bruise on her arm. After receiving a sexual assault forensic exam, it was determined that intercourse had taken place the previous night, an act that the victim could not recall. Sources allege that Brian Fuller had bragged about the night that he had with the victim and was arrested. A warrant has been issued to determine whether Fuller's DNA matches that of the forensic report. Still, Mr. Fuller does not deny that intercourse took place with the victim that night; however, Mr. Fuller is adamant that the act was consensual raising the question: Who can give consent?

ACT II

SCENE 1

VALERIE sits alone on a bench drinking coffee from a to-go cup. A group of students stands to the side, also drinking coffee. They whisper and point at VALERIE. Some students make disapproving looks. Some students laugh.

VALERIE'S phone rings. She looks at her phone then ignores the call. The phone begins to ping. MICHELLE is texting VALERIE. MICHELLE'S dialogue may be a voice-over, or she may be on stage. The text messages may appear on the screen upstage.

MICHELLE

I've been trying to call you for days.
What is this video I found?
You were kissing that boy?
I don't understand. Was this before or after he did what he did to you?
Why are you ignoring my messages?

If MICHELLE is on the stage, she disappears. VALERIE'S phone rings again. She ignores it. The phone pings. It is a voicemail. VALERIE listens to the message. TREVOR'S voice is heard. This may be a voice-over, or he may appear on stage.

TREVOR

Sweetheart, please answer your mother. I know she comes on a little strong, but she really is just concerned about you. How are you? Please. Are you okay? Listen, we've been seeing the news reports, and we've seen...the videos...you know what I'm talking about. We're confused, honey. Were you in a relationship with this boy? What exactly happened that night? You never really told us anything. People are beginning to ask us questions, and we don't know how to respond. Please, just tell us what happened. I promise we won't be mad. We just want to know the truth. Please call me back. I love you. Oh, and call your mother. Bye.

VALERIE puts down the phone. If
TREVOR is on the stage, he exits.
VALERIE'S phone begins to ping again.
MICHELLE is texting again. MICHELLE
appears again if she is meant to be visible on
the stage. VALERIE watches the messages
appear on the phone, but she does not
respond.

MICHELLE

We're not going to get anywhere with you acting like this.
I hope you're at least communicating with your lawyer.
How is the case going? The lawyer won't give me any information.
Call me.
Or call your father.

VALERIE puts down the phone.
MICHELLE exits if she was on stage.

SARAH enters. She sits next to VALERIE.

VALERIE

You're late.

SARAH

I know. I'm so sorry. I had a meeting with my advisor to make sure everything was good
to go so that I can graduate after next semester. Have you met with your advisor yet?

VALERIE

No.

SARAH

You need to do that. Have you at least scheduled your meeting?

VALERIE

No.

SARAH

Are you just going to wing it and see what happens?

VALERIE

I don't know.

SARAH

Sometimes I wish I could be as laid-back as you.

VALERIE

Right.

SARAH

I know we haven't talked about it, but I wanted to ask. How do you feel about the arraignment?

VALERIE

I'm not sure how I'm supposed to feel.

SARAH

Fuck Brian. That's how you should feel.

VALERIE

Apparently, I already did that.

SARAH

Valerie! No, you didn't! Look at me. That wasn't consensual.

VALERIE

So I've been told.

SARAH

Can you believe the nerve of that asshole? Pleading not guilty?

VALERIE

Did you expect him to plead guilty?

SARAH

I guess not. He was standing there, and I was waiting for him to plead not guilty because, obviously, we knew that's what he would plead, but I don't know. I guess I didn't realize that I secretly hoped he would plead guilty. That he would say it. Confess what he actually did.

VALERIE

Like a Hallmark movie.

SARAH

I don't think they touch these topics in Hallmark movies.

VALERIE

Too skeevy.

SARAH

Yeah. Hey, I'm going to file another complaint to the school. He shouldn't be allowed on campus anymore. He should've been expelled.

VALERIE

Why? It's just an allegation. It's still under investigation. It hasn't even gone to trial yet.

SARAH

Yeah, but it's a serious allegation. The priority should be the safety of the students, *your* safety.

VALERIE

Whatever.

SARAH

How's the investigation going?

VALERIE

I don't know. I have to go to talk to my lawyer tomorrow about the trial.

SARAH

About what?

VALERIE

I don't know. She probably just wants to prep me for what opposing counsel is going to say. Everyone's sick of asking me questions because I can't answer any of them.

VALERIE looks at the group of students who are talking about her. She shifts uncomfortably and sips her coffee.

SARAH

That's kind of the point, though. You weren't able to give consent. Case closed.

VALERIE

You know that's not how it works, but thanks for trying to make me feel better, I guess.

SARAH

I just need you to know that I'm on your side. I believe you. I know what happened to you.

VALERIE

You really don't.

(beat)

We probably should've met at your apartment.

SARAH

Why?

VALERIE glances at the group of students.

SARAH follows her gaze.

VALERIE

It just would've been safer.

SARAH

You can't let them get to you.

VALERIE

Easy for you to say.

SARAH

You've been holed up in my apartment for weeks. You needed some fresh air. Hey, before I forget, do you need anything else from your dorm? I can pick it up for you and bring it back to the apartment. Or were you thinking about going back to your dorm?

VALERIE

Are you sick of me crashing on your couch?

SARAH

No! You can stay as long as you want. You know that. I'm just not really sure where your head's at right now.

VALERIE

I can't go back right now. Having to walk through those narrow halls with all those people, all those dorms. Having to share a bathroom with strangers. I can't sit in my dorm and hear all those voices...

SARAH

Hey, I get it. Don't worry about it. Like I said, I can go to your dorm and get some more of your stuff. Do you want me to just move all of your stuff out of there and bring it back to the apartment? Or I can call your parents and have them take your stuff back to their house...

VALERIE

No! Don't call my parents. And don't worry about my stuff. Just leave it.

SARAH

Are you sure?

VALERIE

Yeah, it's fine.

VALERIE looks at the group of students
again.

SARAH

Are you okay?

VALERIE

Everyone's talking about me.

SARAH

Not everyone.

VALERIE

Yeah, everyone. And you pretending that everything's fine and I'm imagining all of the shit that everyone's saying isn't helping. I know you think you're somehow protecting me or shielding me from what's going on out here by lying to me, but I'm not oblivious. I hear what they're saying. I see what they're saying all over social media. So just stop because it doesn't make me feel better. It just makes me feel like you're trying to convince me that I'm delusional.

SARAH

That's not what I'm trying to do.

VALERIE

I know it's not, but that's what it feels like.

SARAH

Okay, I'm sorry. I won't sugar-coat it anymore.

VALERIE

Okay.

(beat)

SARAH

Have you thought about deleting your social media?

VALERIE

What's the point? I'm going to hear it anyway. And besides, social media is the only way I get any news about my case because no one wants to tell me anything. They think I'm too fragile to handle what's going on when, in reality, they're trying to send me into a courtroom without any clue as to what people think about my case or what public opinion is of Brian.

SARAH

But public opinion doesn't matter in a court of law.

VALERIE

Sure it doesn't.

SARAH

Okay, I'm sorry.

(beat)

VALERIE

They're saying I asked for it.

SARAH

That's what they're saying, but it's not true.

VALERIE

Maybe it is. The lawyers, the police, they have all of this video evidence of me flirting with Brian, making out with him...

SARAH

They also have video evidence of you unconscious.

VALERIE

I don't really think that can compete with the other videos.

SARAH

Of course it can. That's what the entire case is about.

VALERIE

I'm just saying what everyone else is saying.

SARAH

I know it's scary.

VALERIE

No, you don't.

SARAH

You're right, I don't.

VALERIE

But that's what they're going to say in court. They're going to say that I asked for it.

SARAH

I know they are.

VALERIE

I don't want to talk about the case anymore.

SARAH

Okay. We don't have to talk about it. I think I'm going to get myself a coffee. Do you want a muffin or anything?

VALERIE

I'm fine.

SARAH

I'll be right back. Are you okay by yourself?

VALERIE

Are you serious?

SARAH

I'm sorry. I'll be back, okay?

VALERIE

Okay.

SARAH gets up to get herself a cup of coffee. The group of students begins to disperse. Two students walk by VALERIE to exit.

STUDENT 1

Lying slut.

SARAH

What did you just say?

STUDENT 1

Nothing.

Sarah, it's fine.

VALERIE

SARAH
(to Valerie)

No, it's not.

(to Student 1)

I asked you what you said.

STUDENT 2

She didn't say anything.

SARAH

I heard her say something. You want to say that a little louder?

STUDENT 2

We were just leaving.

SARAH

I'm sure you were because I'm willing to bet that you wouldn't want other people to know that you use that kind of language when referring to other women. And I'm willing to bet that you wouldn't want it to be public knowledge that you don't know the difference between consensual sex and non-consensual sex. And I'm willing to bet that you wouldn't want people to know that you think women routinely lie about being sexually assaulted. Why are you still standing here? Go!

STUDENT 1
(to Valerie)

You know, you used to be fun.

STUDENT 1 and STUDENT 2 exit.

VALERIE

Sarah.

SARAH

Are you okay?

VALERIE

I'm not your political platform.

VALERIE exits.

Lights fade.

On the screen upstage, news footage shows
REPORTER 1 reporting an update on the
case.

REPORTER 1

More videos continue to surface of the alleged victim in the Brian Fuller case. Videos of the victim have been circulating on multiple social media platforms. In the videos, the alleged victim is seen drinking in excess, flirting with the defendant, dancing with the defendant, and in many of the videos, the alleged victim is seen kissing the defendant. As videos continue to surface, many people are finding it difficult to continue to believe the victim's initial report of being assaulted. Despite the videos, the prosecution team has stated that they remain confident that they have a solid case against Mr. Fuller. Both the prosecution and the defense team have declined to comment on the new videos.

Footage ends.

SCENE 2

BRIAN, JONAH, and MANNY enter. They
each hold a bottle of water. BRIAN holds a
basketball. BRIAN sits on the bench.

MANNY

You're off your game today.

BRIAN

Shut up, Manny.

JONAH

I basically gave you that last shot for free.

BRIAN

Yeah, well, I didn't see it.

MANNY

Will you look at that? Superstar's not so super anymore.

JONAH

Superstar? He warmed the bench his entire freshman year until he quit.

MANNY

(to Brian)

You were on the basketball team?

BRIAN

I was a benchwarmer. Thanks for bringing it up, Jonah.

JONAH

No problem. I was feeling nostalgic.

BRIAN

Well don't.

MANNY

Aw...Brian's shy.

JONAH

Or humble.

MANNY

No, that's definitely not it.

BRIAN

Knock it off!

MANNY

What's up with you?

BRIAN

Why doesn't everyone get off my back?

MANNY

No one's on your back. You're just on edge all the time. It's a real downer.

JONAH

Hey, Manny, let's lay off, okay? He's not feeling it today.

MANNY

He's never feeling it anymore. Ever since that shit with Valerie.

BRIAN

Why do you have to go and bring up that bitch?

MANNY

It's the truth. Everyone feels bad for you, but no one actually wants to be around you anymore. All you do is mope and whine.

BRIAN

Your biggest concern right now is passing your finals next week. My biggest concern is going to prison because of some story some pissed off bitch made up.

JONAH

Hey, I'm going to go to the REC and get a protein shake. You guys want to come?

BRIAN

Typical Jonah. Bring up Valerie, and he wants to bail.

JONAH

I'm not bailing. I asked if you wanted to come with me.

BRIAN

No, I don't want to go to the damn REC with you.

JONAH

Fine. We can stay here and watch you mope.

BRIAN

You don't have to stay here and watch me do anything.

MANNY

Is this about the trial? When's your court date?

BRIAN

I'm not talking about my court date.

MANNY

Look, I get it. Valerie screwed you over, but you don't have to be such a dick.

BRIAN

You don't know how I have to be. Has something like this ever happened to you?

MANNY

No.

BRIAN

Damn right, it hasn't. So stop acting like it has.

MANNY

Look, Brian. I'm on your side.

BRIAN

A lot of good that does me.

MANNY

It should do you some good. You need people on your side.

BRIAN

I shouldn't need people on my side because I didn't do anything wrong.

MANNY

We know you didn't.

BRIAN

Do you? She was all over me all night. She kissed *me*.

MANNY

Yeah, man. We saw all the videos.

BRIAN

But because she was too much of a lightweight to hold her alcohol, I'm the one who's on trial? How was I supposed to know she was that drunk? I never gave her a single drink. I had no idea how much she had drunk that night?

JONAH

I think people are questioning the video where she was unconscious on the bathroom floor.

BRIAN

Whose side are you on?

JONAH

I'm not on anyone's side. I'm just stating what people seem to be concerned about.

BRIAN

She wasn't unconscious when I finally found her in the bedroom that night.

JONAH

I thought you were outside and *she* found *you*.

BRIAN

Shit, man. I don't even know anymore. Everyone has their own version of that night and I can't even keep them straight anymore.

JONAH

Okay, but we know that Kim and Sarah put her in Sarah's bed that night, and we know that she was unconscious when that happened. That has some people confused.

BRIAN

Since when are you a detective, Jonah? She woke up. That's what happens. People get drunk, they pass out, they wake up, and then they're sober.

JONAH

Okay, so she was awake and sober when you went into the bedroom?

BRIAN

Yeah. No. When she found me outside.

JONAH

When she found you outside. Kim and Sarah put her in the bed and then she was awake and sober that fast?

BRIAN

Yeah, she must've slept it off and then she was fine.

MANNY

Jonah, why are you grilling him about this?

JONAH

I'm not grilling him.

MANNY

That's what it seems like.

JONAH

I'm just trying to figure out what happened.

BRIAN

I already told you what happened, and you obviously don't believe me.

JONAH

I didn't say that I don't believe you.

BRIAN

But, let me guess, you "believe women."

JONAH

This isn't political.

BRIAN

Damn right, it's political, and they're going to make an example out of me.

MANNY

Nah, man. Have you seen what they're saying on the news? I think most people are on your side.

BRIAN

I shouldn't be in the news at all. That bitch is trying to ruin my reputation.

MANNY

Well, she's doing a damn good job of ruining her own reputation, if that makes you feel any better.

BRIAN

Good. Her reputation deserves to be destroyed.

MANNY

She just regrets what happened that night. She's embarrassed.

BRIAN

Of course, she's embarrassed. She looked like an idiot. And she still looks like an idiot trying to claim that...what? That I raped her? No way! She asked her for it. She was on top of me. This is what happens when you "believe women" without question; they take advantage of the system. They do something embarrassing and then turn around and say "Oh, I didn't actually do that. I was attacked." Bullshit! They keep this up, and no one's going to want to touch them. I know I'm going to stay as far away from them as possible. Serves them right.

JONAH

I really am sorry you're having to go through this.

BRIAN

Save it. You've had questions from the very beginning. You know what, Jonah. I hope something like this happens to you someday. I hope you're with some girl and the next day she goes to the cops and tells them that you raped her. Then, you'll really know what it's like to deal with this insanity.

MANNY

Come on, Brian. You don't mean that.

BRIAN

(to Manny)

Yeah, I do.

(to Jonah)

Why are you still here pretending that you care? I don't want you here. Get out of here.

JONAH begins to exit but stops and turns.

JONAH

Brian, why did you go looking for her in the bedroom that night?

BRIAN exits.

MANNY

Nice going. What's your problem?

JONAH

I don't have a problem. What's with you? You don't even question him. You're just going to take his word?

MANNY

Yeah. I have to.

JONAH

Why?

MANNY

It's complicated.

JONAH

No, it's not.

MANNY

He's my friend, you know?

JONAH

Yeah. He was my friend too.

JONAH exits.

Lights fade.

On a screen upstage, a podcast clip is shown. COMMENTATOR 1 and COMMENTATOR 2 discuss the videos of Valerie that have circulated on social media.

COMMENTATOR 1

The videos of this girl are very provocative, and it will be interesting to see how these videos are used as evidence in the trial and what influence they will have over the trial.

COMMENTATOR 2

Absolutely. I think what we'll see is the prosecution try to have these videos of this young lady flirting with the defendant and kissing the defendant thrown out of evidence on the grounds that they are irrelevant.

COMMENTATOR 1

But how are they irrelevant? Because these are all of the actions that led up to the alleged assault?

COMMENTATOR 2

Well, I think they're going to attempt to have them thrown out, but I absolutely don't think the judge is going to allow that.

COMMENTATOR 1

The videos, clearly, show that the alleged victim initiated all contact with the defendant.

COMMENTATOR 2

Yes, that's the way it appears. So, do you think she's telling the truth?

COMMENTATOR 1

Do I think the assault actually took place?

COMMENTATOR 2

Yeah.

COMMENTATOR 1

(laughing)

Oh, no, I'm not going to answer that question. No comment!

Footage ends.

SCENE 3

The living room of SARAH'S apartment.
There is a knock at the door. SARAH enters
and answers the door. TREVOR and
MICHELLE enter.

SARAH

Hi.

TREVOR

Hi, Sarah. Where's Valerie?

SARAH

She's in the bathroom.

MICHELLE

So she's been staying here since it happened?

SARAH

Yeah.

TREVOR

She hasn't returned to her dorm at all?

SARAH

Well, she went back once, but she came back an hour later and never went back. She said she didn't want to talk about it, so I left it alone.

MICHELLE

She's sleeping here and eating here?

SARAH

Yeah.

TREVOR

Does she go anywhere?

SARAH

She goes to see her lawyer, but other than that, she pretty much doesn't leave the apartment. I got her to go get a cup of coffee with me one time, but that was it.

MICHELLE

What about her classes?

SARAH

Her professor's have been lenient.

MICHELLE

Lenient?

SARAH

They're letting her turn in her work online.

VALERIE enters.

TREVOR

Valerie. How are you, honey?

VALERIE

Fine.

MICHELLE

Sarah tells us you haven't been attending your classes.

TREVOR

Michelle.

MICHELLE

(To Trevor)

Stop saying my name.

(To Valerie)

Sarah said that your professors are allowing you to turn in your work online. How does that work? How do you get your notes? Are you accepting a lower grade? Is this going to affect your GPA?

TREVOR

Michelle.

VALERIE

It's fine. Everything's fine.

TREVOR

Everything's not fine if you're refusing to return to your dorm.

MICHELLE

Why aren't you staying in your dorm? What's wrong?

VALERIE

Nothing. I just want to stay here.

There is an awkward silence. VALERIE sits on the sofa. TREVOR and MICHELLE look at each other.

SARAH

I'll just be in my room.

SARAH exits.

TREVOR

We've been watching the news.

VALERIE

Great.

MICHELLE

Those videos of you drinking and dancing on the table. What were you thinking?

TREVOR

Did you know that people were recording you?

VALERIE

I don't remember any of it.

MICHELLE

I thought we raised you better than that. I thought you knew better than to drink so much that you lost your inhibitions, but apparently you're not as responsible as we thought you were. Were you planning on driving that night?

VALERIE

No, I had planned to spend the night here after the party, which I did.

TREVOR

But you didn't actually make that choice, did you? Sarah's the one who put you in her bed that night.

VALERIE

I would've spent the night here whether I had been drunk or not. That was the plan.

MICHELLE

That's irrelevant. There's a video of you falling off of a table. There's another video of you looking like you're going to throw up, and someone is trying to help you to the bathroom. It's embarrassing. Aren't you embarrassed at all?

VALERIE

Of course, I'm embarrassed. Why do you think I'm not leaving this apartment?

MICHELLE

Right. About this apartment. There's videos of you with that boy, Brian. You're flirting with him and kissing him. You're dancing with him. Did you know him?

VALERIE

Yes.

TREVOR

Did you like him?

VALERIE

Yes.

TREVOR

Why didn't we know about this?

VALERIE

You didn't ask. I told my lawyer everything. It's nothing for you to be concerned about.

TREVOR

How could we not be concerned about this?

MICHELLE

Did you go to the party planning to have sex with this boy?

TREVOR

Michelle.

MICHELLE

No, Trevor. This is a serious question. Valerie, answer me. Did you want to have sex with him?

VALERIE

I don't know. Maybe, I did.

MICHELLE

Oh my God. Do you have any idea what people are saying about you? Have you been watching the news?

VALERIE

Yes, mother, I know what people have been saying about me! That's why I'm not showing my face outside. That's why I'm not going to class anymore. That's why I'm not going back to the dorm. So that I don't have to see everyone and hear everyone giving their opinions on something when they don't even know what happened.

MICHELLE

According to you, you don't know what happened either. You're not exactly a reliable witness at this point.

VALERIE

News flash! I never was! It was the two of you who drove me to the station and made me press charges. I didn't even want to go.

TREVOR

Because we believed you had been sexually assaulted.

VALERIE

Believed? So you don't actually think I was.

MICHELLE

We don't know what to believe anymore. And we find your behavior to be odd for someone who was sexually assaulted.

VALERIE

How has my behavior been odd?

MICHELLE

You haven't been emotional at all. I haven't even seen you cry. You're so far removed from the case. You're so sullen.

TREVOR

Why are you staying in Sarah's apartment?

VALERIE

I told you, I can't go back to the dorms. I can't go outside, I can't...

MICHELLE

But this is where the assault took place. How could you come back here? How could you return to a place where such a traumatic event happened? I don't understand it.

VALERIE

I feel safe with Sarah.

MICHELLE

You're lying. Why are you staying here?

VALERIE

It's quiet, and it's private.

MICHELLE

(raising her voice)

Why are you staying here? Don't you understand how this looks?

VALERIE

No. Why don't you explain it to me.

MICHELLE

It looks like you lied. Like you made the whole thing up.

VALERIE

Is that what you think?

MICHELLE

It doesn't matter what I think. The only thing that matters is what a jury thinks.

VALERIE

Is that really the only opinion that matters to you?

MICHELLE pauses, stares down VALERIE.

MICHELLE

You're lucky he didn't use a condom.

TREVOR

Michelle!

MICHELLE

At least there is a shred of physical evidence for the trial. Look at me when I'm speaking to you. You need to remember something. That "evidence" doesn't prove anything.

TREVOR

That's enough.

MICHELLE

(to Trevor)

No! You don't seem to understand how this works. Without that physical evidence, there wouldn't even be a trial. I can't be here anymore.

MICHELLE turns to leave.

VALERIE

I'm sorry this is so embarrassing for you.

MICHELLE and TREVOR stare at
VALERIE for a long moment.

MICHELLE

I don't even know who you are anymore.

TREVOR

We'll call you later.

MICHELLE and TREVOR exit.

Lights fade.

On a screen upstage, a video of a podcast plays. COMMENTATOR 3 and COMMENTATOR 4 discuss the case.

COMMENTATOR 3

I'm quite disturbed by some of these videos.

COMMENTATOR 4

I am as well.

COMMENTATOR 3

We see this girl heavily inebriated. At times, she is struggling to stand on her own, walk on her own, she's even struggling to sit upright on her own.

COMMENTATOR 4

Yes.

COMMENTATOR 3

There's the video, probably the most important piece of evidence in this case, where she is unconscious on the bathroom floor while she is being recorded, and people are just watching and laughing.

COMMENTATOR 4

And then she has to be physically carried to another room.

COMMENTATOR 3

Exactly.

COMMENTATOR 4

I mean, there's no way she could have given consent. Even before the video revealing that she was unconscious at some point that night, given her behavior in the other videos, I can't imagine a court determining that she could have given consent that night. There's just no way.

COMMENTATOR 3

And the video of her unconscious really is the nail in the coffin. Even if she did wake up at some point later that night, she still wouldn't be in a state to give consent.

COMMENTATOR 4

What I want to know is how Brian Fuller knew the victim was in that bedroom.

COMMENTATOR 3

I've wondered that myself.

COMMENTATOR 4

Was he looking for her?

COMMENTATOR 3

I think he was. We'll see what he says at the trial, but I think he was looking for her.

COMMENTATOR 4

This case is heartbreaking, and the videos serve as yet another warning for young women. You can't allow yourself to get that drunk. You can't put yourself in situations like this.

COMMENTATOR 3

That's right. You need to be responsible, and you need to protect yourself.

Footage ends.

SCENE 4

VALERIE sits on the sofa in SARAH's living room. She is wrapped in a blanket, scrolling through her phone. KIM enters the living room from her bedroom. She carries a purse and car keys.

KIM

Hey, Valerie. How you doing?

VALERIE doesn't answer. KIM pauses, watching VALERIE with concern.

Are you sure you're comfortable on the sofa? You know you can always use my room. Sarah wouldn't mind me bunking with her for a while.

VALERIE continues to scroll through her phone.

Okay, well just think about it. You can let us know if you get sick of the sofa.

VALERIE still doesn't respond.

Hey...Valerie. Are you okay?

No response.

You know, if you ever want to talk about anything, I'm here.

We don't even have to talk, you can just text me, or you don't even have to do that. We can just sit...in silence. No one speaking.

No response.

I better get to work, but I just wanted to put that out there. In case you needed anything.

No response. KIM moves toward the door. She begins to exit then pauses. She looks at VALERIE who continues to scroll through her phone.

Valerie. I believe you. I know it's probably obvious that I believe you, but I just thought it was important to say it. I believe you.

KIM exits. VALERIE is still scrolling through her phone. She pauses, tosses her phone on the coffee table. She stares at it. VALERIE takes off the blanket. She stands and stares, unsure of what she wants to do. She looks around the room, walks like she might go to the kitchen. She stops again and changes direction, staring at the bedrooms. She begins to walk toward Sarah's room.

There is a knock at the door. VALERIE freezes. There is another knock. VALERIE stares at the door. There is a third knock. VALERIE finally goes to open the door. When the door is open, BRIAN is standing in front of her.

VALERIE

You're not supposed to be here.

BRIAN

I know.

VALERIE

You're not supposed to be anywhere near me.

BRIAN

I know. I just wanted to talk to you.

VALERIE

You should go.

BRIAN grabs VALERIE's arm.

BRIAN

Come on, Valerie. Shit's crazy right now, and no one else gets it. No one but the two of us.

BRIAN and VALERIE freeze, tense. They look at her arm. BRIAN releases her arm.

Sorry. It'll only be a few minutes. I just need to talk to you. Give me five minutes, and then I'll go.

VALERIE

What if I say no?

BRIAN

Then, I'll go. I wouldn't do anything you didn't want me to.

VALERIE

I don't want you to be here, yet here you are.

BRIAN

You can tell me to leave.

VALERIE

I already told you to.

BRIAN

Okay, fine. I'm leaving. I just thought it might help you to hear what I have to say. I know you've been going through it. Let me help you.

VALERIE

I don't need you to help me.

BRIAN

You shouldn't have to go through this alone.

VALERIE

I'm not. And you're the last person I would want to talk to about any of this.

BRIAN

I just thought, maybe, I could give you some clarification on a few things. I know you don't remember some of what happened that night. Valerie, that must be so hard for you. Please, let me help fill in some of the blanks.

VALERIE

My lawyer wouldn't approve.

BRIAN

Neither would mine. But they don't have to know...Please, Val, I just want to help.

VALERIE

Well, what do you have to say to me?

BRIAN

Can I come inside?

VALERIE

Bye, Brian.

BRIAN

Valerie, do you want people to see me here? See us talking together like this? Come on, just let me come inside for five minutes.

VALERIE

Fine. Five minutes.

BRIAN

Thanks.

BRIAN enters. VALERIE closes the door behind him.

VALERIE

What do you want?

BRIAN

Is Sarah here?

VALERIE

No. She has a job interview.

BRIAN

Oh cool. When did she leave?

VALERIE

Why do you want to know?

BRIAN

I just wouldn't want her to come home and see us together.

VALERIE

You have five minutes.

BRIAN

Okay. When do you get so uptight? Is it from living with Sarah?

VALERIE

I'm not uptight.

BRIAN

Fine. You're cold.

VALERIE

Can you just get to the point?

BRIAN

Do you want to sit down?

VALERIE

I'm fine standing. You're welcome to sit.

BRIAN moves and sits on the sofa.
VALERIE stands to the side and waits for
him to speak.

BRIAN

How are you? Are you okay?

VALERIE

I'm fine.

BRIAN

That's good. I wish I could say the same about myself.

VALERIE

I'm sorry.

BRIAN

Did you know that they arrested me in the Student Union? In front of everyone.

VALERIE

No, I didn't know that.

BRIAN

They wouldn't even tell me why they were arresting me. And then, when they finally told me at the station, I was shocked. I didn't believe that you would have actually filed charges against me like that. I thought it had to be a mistake, that someone else had made a complaint or something. But it was you. I don't get it, Val. I thought you liked me.

VALERIE

I did.

BRIAN

So what happened? Were you pressured into pressing charges? Were you trying to save your reputation? What happened?

VALERIE

It's just that I don't remember what happened that night, and I went to the hospital and got a rape kit...

BRIAN

Yeah, I know. They took my DNA, remember?

VALERIE

Yeah. I guess so.

BRIAN

But if you don't remember, then how can you file a report?

VALERIE

You told people that we had sex, and the rape kit confirmed that, but the thing is, I don't remember it happening. I don't even know when it happened.

BRIAN

And that's my fault?

VALERIE

I don't know.

BRIAN

I'm sorry you're going through this Valerie. I really am. Did you know that I lost my internship? This is my last semester, and I'm not even sure if they're going to let me finish my classes if the trial goes the wrong way.

VALERIE

And what's the wrong way?

BRIAN

If the jury decides that I'm guilty.

VALERIE

Brian, I don't remember having sex with you. I was unconscious.

BRIAN

You weren't unconscious when I found you.

VALERIE

Why were you looking for me?

BRIAN

I wasn't. I was trying to find a quiet place to use the phone. I invited some more friends to the party, and they got lost.

VALERIE

Did you call them?

BRIAN

Who?

VALERIE

Your friends. Did they ever make it to the party?

BRIAN

No. You saw me come into the room, and I got distracted.

VALERIE

By what?

BRIAN

Jesus, Val, by you. You called me over to you and started kissing me.

VALERIE

I don't remember any of that.

BRIAN

Well, that's what happened. You pushed me down on the bed and climbed on top of me. I just went along with whatever you wanted.

VALERIE

Did I say anything?

BRIAN

You said my name. You asked me what took me so long to find you.

VALERIE

I did?

BRIAN

Yeah. Valerie, I thought you knew what you were doing. I never would've gone through with it if I knew you weren't thinking clearly. I wouldn't do anything to hurt you. I liked you a lot. Now, people are calling me a rapist on TV and online. Everyone questions my intentions for every single thing that I do. I can't go anywhere. Half the people glare at me and tell me what I can go do to myself and the other half feel sorry for me and want to offer their condolences. They think their pity is, somehow, helpful. My parents are pissed at me. They said I embarrassed the family. I've lost everyone's respect and everything I've worked so hard for. Why would I risk losing everything for one night with you? Why would I want you unconscious? It doesn't make any sense. What kind of person do you think I am?

VALERIE

I don't know. People said they saw...

BRIAN

No one saw shit. I didn't rape you, and you know it. You couldn't handle your alcohol. You got drunk. You had to be carried to a bedroom by your friends, for Christ's sake. Don't ruin my life because you're embarrassed.

VALERIE

I'm sorry.

BRIAN rises and goes to comfort

VALERIE. She stands stiff and does not show any emotion.

BRIAN

It's okay. I know you weren't trying to hurt me. But you are. You're hurting me, Val. You're hurting me because you're hurting too. But hurting me isn't making the pain go away, is it?

VALERIE

No.

BRIAN

You can make this stop. I know you'll do the right thing.

BRIAN hugs VALERIE before he exits.

Lights fade.

On a screen upstage, REPORTER 2 reports on the news.

REPORTER 2

Media attention on the Brian Fuller case continues as students marched in front of the administration building at the University of Kingston in protest of the lack of consequences implemented by the university on the defendant, Brian Fuller. Students marched with signs and megaphones demanding that the university hold Mr. Fuller accountable for his alleged actions. Protestors say that it is the duty of the university to protect victims of sexual assault and having a student on campus who is a defendant in an active trial is not safe for the students, nor does it instill faith that the university is going to protect students from sexual assault in the future. The students feel that the priority of the university should be to prevent sexual assault, and the lack of action from the university creates an environment that ignores sexual assault. Students who believe Mr. Fuller to be innocent came to his defense and clashed with protestors, escalating the incident to what some referred to as a riot. Campus police, quickly, responded to the incident, dispersing the students, forcing the protest to come to an abrupt halt. A spokesperson for the university commented on the protest stating that the university takes the safety of every student seriously; however, they ask for patience from students as well as the public as they resolve the issues with the defendant, Brian Fuller, privately.

Footage ends.

SCENE 5

VALERIE is alone in SARAH'S bedroom, sitting on the bed. She stares at the blanket beneath her with a blank expression on her face. SARAH enters.

SARAH

Shit, you scared me. What are you doing in here?

VALERIE

Do you remember when we went to Daytona Beach for spring break?

SARAH

Yeah, that was like two years ago.

VALERIE

Do you remember how drunk everyone was? I mean, literally everyone.

SARAH

I remember there was this guy who kept buying us drinks and racking up his tab and at the end of the night he realized he'd blown all of his money for the week.

VALERIE

But you remember everything, right?

SARAH

(suddenly concerned)

Valerie, what are you doing in here?

VALERIE

Do you think everyone from that trip remembers everything that happened? Every single person who was at Daytona Beach that week. Do you think every one of them remembers where they were and who they were with the entire time they were there? Every minute, every second accounted for.

SARAH

Valerie...

VALERIE

I just don't remember anything. How could anything have happened if I don't even remember it?

SARAH

Listen, I talked to Kim. She said that Brian said that he found you outside and you came onto him and then you took him inside. But Valerie, you didn't come out of that room. We left you in there. You were unconscious. He's lying about-

VALERIE

(sarcastically)

You said that Kim said that Brian said- I don't give a shit what anyone said. Everyone seems to have something to say except for me.

SARAH

Then what do you want to say?

VALERIE

Nothing. I have nothing to say.

(pause)

I'm dropping my classes. I'm leaving school.

SARAH

It's your last semester! You're going to graduate!

VALERIE

No, I'm not. I'm failing my classes.

SARAH

What? How?

VALERIE

I can't do it anymore.

SARAH

Do what?

VALERIE

Go through the motions. Pretending that everything is fine.

SARAH

No one expects you to pretend that everything is fine. It's not fine. But you can't let that get in the way of what you want-

VALERIE

I don't want anything. That's the problem.

SARAH

You're just so close-

VALERIE

I was so close. And now I'm not. Things change.

SARAH

But-

VALERIE

Sarah, stop. You don't always have to try to fix everything.

SARAH pauses. She wants to say more, but she doesn't.

SARAH

Okay.

VALERIE

(softly, to herself)

Sometimes there isn't a reason, and sometimes there isn't an answer.

SARAH watches VALERIE. She doesn't understand what VALERIE is talking about and wants to question her, but she thinks better of it. She stands, waiting for VALERIE to speak again.

(to Sarah)

I dropped the charges.

SARAH

(softly)

Why?

VALERIE

The DA picked up the case. It's going to have a criminal trial. I don't want to do the civil trial anymore. Actually, I never wanted a trial at all. I just wanted to make everyone happy. But that didn't work, and now here we are with the government involved. I don't want to go through this trial twice.

SARAH

Okay.

VALERIE

Why did you make me go to the hospital?

SARAH

(gently)

Because timing is everything. You needed proof-

VALERIE

Proof of what exactly? It didn't prove anything.

SARAH

It proved that-

VALERIE

That I'm promiscuous?

SARAH
(defensive)

No! It proved that something happened to you without your consent!

VALERIE

You sure about that? Because I'm not.

SARAH

What happened to you was a crime.

VALERIE

Was it though? You weren't there.

SARAH

You're right. I wasn't there, but you were. So why don't you tell me right now? What happened that night? Who did you have sex with? When did it happen? How long did it last? Take your time. I'll wait.

VALERIE
(holding back tears)

I'm really sick of people reminding me that I don't remember what happened.

SARAH

Then what do you want?

VALERIE

I want it to go away. I want to go back to before that stupid rape kit. I want to go back to when I didn't know what happened.

SARAH

And how would that help, exactly? I hate to break it to you, but you still wouldn't know what happened. You would still be dealing with this.

VALERIE

But the whole world wouldn't be watching! The whole world wouldn't hate me!

SARAH

I don't hate you. I'm here, remember? I've been here, waiting patiently, trying to support you through this whole investigation and this trial-

VALERIE

No one asked you to do that! I didn't want you to take me to the hospital! I didn't want any of this!

SARAH

And what would that have accomplished? Nothing. He would still be out there. He would've gotten away with it.

VALERIE

So what? He'll still probably get away with it.

SARAH

That's not the point.

VALERIE

Then what is the point? Because right now I can't think of a valid reason to ruin Brian's life.

SARAH

You're worried about ruining his life?

VALERIE

Why shouldn't I be? Have you seen what he's been going through?

SARAH

And what about what you've been going through?

VALERIE

I don't think someone should go to prison or have their reputation ruined because I'm hysterical.

SARAH

Hysterical? That's how you would describe the way you've been acting through all of this? Because I would describe it more as stoic, removed, indifferent...

VALERIE

I'm just saying that it's not that bad.

SARAH

What?

VALERIE

I don't remember. How can something be traumatic if I don't remember it? Others have had it a lot worse. Mine barely fits the definition of rape. So much so that an entire jury has been tasked with deciding if I was raped or not.

SARAH

How can you say that?

VALERIE

I keep coming back to this room and lying on this bed. I take off my clothes, and I smell the sheets.

SARAH

Why?

VALERIE

I'm trying to remember. Anything. I keep hoping that it'll all come flooding back to me, or at least bits and pieces that I can put together like a puzzle. But there's nothing. There aren't any memories. It's just all gone.

SARAH reaches for VALERIE, but VALERIE cowers, shielding herself with her hands. She is like a scared animal.

SARAH

Valerie-

VALERIE

Don't touch me!

SARAH stops. She raises her arms to show her hands.

SARAH

I'm sorry. It's okay. I'm sorry. I'm not going to touch you. I'm right here. I'm going to stay over here.

SARAH continues to show her hands as she kneels on the floor. VALERIE is shaking but slowly relaxes her arms so that she is no longer shielded from SARAH. VALERIE crumples into a ball on the floor.

VALERIE

I can't tell you because there's nothing to say. I'm scared and lost and alone, and I can't explain it. I just am.

SARAH lowers herself so that she is lying on the floor now, her hand slightly reaching out to VALERIE but not moving any closer.

SARAH

I had no idea, Valerie. I'm here. I'm just trying to help. Please, just let me help you. Just talk to me. Tell me how you're feeling.

VALERIE

I'm stranded in an ocean, and I'm treading water, looking for a sandbar, but there's nowhere to plant my feet. The sandbar doesn't exist. I can't get out of this. My lungs are filling with water, and I can't pull myself up for air. And no one can help me. I wish I could answer your questions and be the victim you want me to be. I wish I could let you save me and be the hero. I wish I could explain what it is that I'm feeling. Screw explaining anything! I wish I could even understand my feelings myself, but I just can't. I think my brain has detached itself from my body. My brain is lost, and my heart is lost and all of the blood in my body is running through my veins trying to make contact, reach out for something, anything, but it just falls short. That tether is gone, and my body is drifting. I just feel, and that's it. There are no words for these feelings. I just am. I just exist.

(beginning to cry)

It wasn't violent. I wasn't attacked on the street. I was having fun. And I knew him. And I liked him. And maybe I did say yes. It's not his fault that I don't remember. It's my fault. It was my fault. Everyone saw it. And maybe it didn't even happen like that. Maybe I initiated it. Maybe he came to check on me because he was worried, and I climbed on top of him. Maybe it didn't even happen. It didn't happen. It didn't happen.

SARAH reaches for VALERIE, but
VALERIE does not move.

SARAH

(crying)

Valerie, it happened. It's not your fault, and it happened. It happened.

Lights fade.

On a screen upstage, news footage shows
REPORTER 3 reporting a segment.

REPORTER 3

Yet another allegation of sexual assault taking place on a college campus, this time at Pullman College. The victim claims to have accepted a drink from a friend at a bar and to have woken up the next day in the friend's bed without any memory of what took place the prior evening.

Toxicology reports revealed that the victim had Rohypnol in their system, a substance that the victim does not recall ingesting. This comes just one day before the trial date for the high-profile case, The State of Texas vs. Brian Fuller. Defendant, Brian Fuller, and his team continue to fight allegations made by a student at the University of Kingston stating the Mr. Fuller sexually assaulted her when she was unconscious at a party. The defendant has remained adamant regarding his innocence in this case which has received much media attention due to the enormous amount of videos shared via social media that took place on the night of the party, videos that show interactions between the alleged victim and the defendant which will now be used as evidence in tomorrow's trial. Followers of the case are interested to see how the outcome of this trial will influence future trials that challenge the definition of consent.

Footage ends.

SCENE 6

The courtroom. When speaking to the jury, the PROSECUTOR and DEFENSE ATTORNEY direct dialogue toward the audience as if the audience is the jury.

The PROSECUTOR and the BAILIFF enter.

JUDGE GUERRERO enters.

BAILIFF

All rise. The court is now in session, the Honorable Judge Guerrero presiding.

JUDGE GUERRERO

Please, be seated. Prior to the court's recess, the jury heard witness testimonies from Kim Reed and Sarah Davila. Is the prosecution ready to call their next witness?

PROSECUTOR

Yes, your honor. The prosecution calls Valerie Lynn to take the stand.

VALERIE enters. She stands at the podium while the BAILIFF brings a Bible and swears her in.

BAILIFF

Please, raise your right hand. Do you swear to tell the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth?

VALERIE

I do.

The BAILIFF exits. VALERIE takes a seat at the podium.

PROSECUTOR

Please state your name for the court.

VALERIE

Valerie Lynn.

PROSECUTOR

Ms. Lynn. Will you, please, recall where you were on the night of September 4, [year].

VALERIE

I went to a party at my friend's apartment. Sarah Davila. It was her apartment.

PROSECUTOR

Was this the first time you had been in this apartment?

VALERIE

No.

PROSECUTOR

How many times have you entered this apartment?

VALERIE

I can't count the times. Sarah's my best friend. I've spent almost every weekend at that apartment since she leased it last year.

PROSECUTOR

You said you attended a party at this apartment. Did you consume any alcohol at this party?

VALERIE

Yes.

PROSECUTOR

How much alcohol would you say you consumed?

VALERIE

I can't remember. It was enough for me to black out.

A still-frame of VALERIE unconscious on the bathroom floor appears on a screen.

PROSECUTOR

This is a still from a video that was recorded at the party that you attended. Can you identify the individual on the floor in this picture?

VALERIE

It's me.

PROSECUTOR

Let the record show that Ms. Lynn has identified the individual in Exhibit C as herself. Ms. Lynn, have you seen this image before?

VALERIE

Yes.

PROSECUTOR

Do you remember this event being recorded?

VALERIE

No. I was unconscious.

The still-frame disappears from the screen.

PROSECUTOR

Will you, please, tell the court the last thing you remember before waking up the following day?

VALERIE

I remember spilling a drink on a rug, and I tried to clean it up, but I fell, and then someone picked me up. That's it.

PROSECUTOR

That is the last thing you remember?

VALERIE

Yes.

PROSECUTOR

And after this event, what is the first thing you remember.

VALERIE

Sarah came into the bedroom that I was in. She was talking really loud, and it woke me up. I was in her bed, and I wasn't wearing any pants or underwear.

PROSECUTOR

Do you recall removing any of your clothing that night?

VALERIE

No.

PROSECUTOR

What happened when you realized you weren't wearing pants or underwear?

VALERIE

I tried to come up with a logical explanation for it, but I couldn't think of anything. And then Sarah saw a bruise on my arm, and it looked like a handprint. She was worried.

PROSECUTOR

What was she worried about?

VALERIE

She thought it was weird that I couldn't explain why I wasn't wearing my pants or underwear and that I didn't remember anything from the night before. She thought I might have been sexually assaulted.

PROSECUTOR

Did you believe you had been sexually assaulted?

VALERIE

I didn't know what to believe. But I wanted Sarah to stop talking, so I let her take me to the hospital for a rape kit.

PROSECUTOR

And what were the results of this examination?

VALERIE

There were tears in my vagina, and there was semen present.

The PROSECUTOR presents two files to
JUDGE GUERRERO.

PROSECUTOR

(to Judge Guerrero)

Your honor, I would like to present Exhibit A and Exhibit B for evidence.

The Sexual Assault Forensic Examination completed on the morning of September 5, [year] clearly states that intercourse took place on the night of September 4, [year], and the DNA results match that of the defendant, Mr. Brian Fuller.

TO VALERIE

Ms. Lynn, do you recall having intercourse on the night of the party?

VALERIE

No.

PROSECUTOR

Do you recall Mr. Fuller entering the bedroom in which you were sleeping on the night of September 4, [year]?

VALERIE

No.

PROSECUTOR

Do you recall Mr. Fuller being in the bedroom with you at any point at all during the night of September 4, [year]?

VALERIE

No.

PROSECUTOR

Do you recall ever having sex with the defendant, Brian Fuller, at any time, including prior to the date of September 4, [year]?

VALERIE

No. I have never had sex with Brian Fuller, to my knowledge.

PROSECUTOR

Thank you, Your Honor. No further questions.

JUDGE GUERRERO

The defense may cross-examine the witness.

DEFENSE ATTORNEY

Ms. Lynn. Do you drink often?

VALERIE

I drink some. At parties.

DEFENSE ATTORNEY

Are you an alcoholic?

VALERIE

No.

DEFENSE ATTORNEY

Would you say that the amount of alcohol you consumed on the night of September 4, [year] was about average for your regular consumption?

VALERIE

I drank much more on that night than I usually drink.

DEFENSE ATTORNEY

Hm. Why is that?

VALERIE

I don't know. I was just having fun.

On the screen, the video of VALERIE dancing on the table and falling appears.

DEFENSE ATTORNEY

Okay. Ms. Lynn, can you identify the individual dancing on the table in this video?

VALERIE

It's me.

DEFENSE ATTORNEY

Let the record show that Ms. Lynn has identified herself as the individual in Exhibit D. Ms. Lynn, would you consider this a video of you having fun?

VALERIE

I don't know. I don't remember this event.

On the screen, the video of VALERIE taking shots appears.

DEFENSE ATTORNEY

Ms. Lynn, can you identify the individual in this video taking shots of alcohol?

VALERIE

It's me.

DEFENSE ATTORNEY

Let the record show that Ms. Lynn has identified herself as the individual in Exhibit E. Ms. Lynn, would you consider this a video of you having fun?

VALERIE

I don't know. I don't remember this event.

On the screen, the video of VALERIE kissing BRIAN appears.

DEFENSE ATTORNEY

Ms. Lynn, can you identify the two individuals in this video?

VALERIE

It's me and Brian.

DEFENSE ATTORNEY

Let the record show that Ms. Lynn has identified herself and the defendant, Brian Fuller, in Exhibit F. Ms. Lynn, what are you and Brian Fuller doing in this video?

VALERIE

We're kissing.

DEFENSE ATTORNEY

You're kissing? Can you identify the individual who initiated the kiss in this video?

VALERIE

It's me.

DEFENSE ATTORNEY

Ms. Lynn, would you consider yourself a promiscuous individual?

PROSECUTOR

Objection, Your Honor.

JUDGE GUERRERO

Overruled. The witness will answer the question.

DEFENSE ATTORNEY

Ms. Lynn, I'll ask again. Do you consider yourself to be a promiscuous individual?

VALERIE

No.

DEFENSE ATTORNEY

So these videos of you at this party are taken out of context. They don't accurately represent your typical character. These videos just happen to cast you in an unflattering light at different time-stamps over the course of the same night.

PROSECUTOR

Objection.

DEFENSE ATTORNEY

Your Honor, I didn't ask a question.

JUDGE GUERRERO

(to prosecutor)

Overruled.

(to defense attorney)

Get to the point.

DEFENSE ATTORNEY

Ms. Lynn, how many sexual partners have you had?

PROSECUTOR

Objection. Your Honor, my client's prior sexual history has nothing to do with this case.

DEFENSE ATTORNEY

Your Honor, I am establishing a pattern.

JUDGE GUERRERO

Overruled. The witness will answer the question.

VALERIE

Seven.

DEFENSE ATTORNEY

Have your sexual partners, regularly, been casual encounters?

PROSECUTOR

Objection.

JUDGE GUERRERO

Overruled.

VALERIE

No. Most of them have been boyfriends.

DEFENSE ATTORNEY

Most, but not all. Could you tell us how many encounters have been boyfriends and how many have been casual?

VALERIE

Five were boyfriends. Two were casual.

DEFENSE ATTORNEY

Five were boyfriends. That's quite a few boyfriends for someone your age. Did you know that Brian Fuller would be in attendance at the party on the night of September 4, [year]?

VALERIE

I had a feeling he would be there, but I wasn't sure.

DEFENSE ATTORNEY

Did you attend the party with the intent of seeing Brian Fuller?

VALERIE

No. It was a party at my best friend's apartment. I would have been there whether Brian showed up or not. And like, I said, I wasn't entirely sure he would be there.

DEFENSE ATTORNEY

Were you hoping that Brian Fuller would be there?

VALERIE

Yes.

DEFENSE ATTORNEY

Why?

VALERIE

I liked him.

DEFENSE ATTORNEY

Ms. Lynn, did you have plans to seduce Mr. Fuller on the night of September 4, [year]?

VALERIE

No.

DEFENSE ATTORNEY

Is it possible that you had intercourse with Mr. Fuller and, embarrassed by the videos documenting your behavior on the night of the party, claimed to have no memory of the events, and then claimed to have been sexually assaulted by the defendant?

VALERIE

No.

DEFENSE ATTORNEY

Would describe yourself as a flirtatious woman?

VALERIE

I'm friendly. I'm not flirtatious.

DEFENSE ATTORNEY

And would you describe your behavior with Mr. Fuller as friendly or flirtatious?

VALERIE

I liked him. I flirted with him.

DEFENSE ATTORNEY

Was it your intention to cause mental and emotional harm to Mr. Fuller with your claims?

VALERIE

No. I never wanted to inflict harm on anyone. He's the one who inflicted mental and emotional harm on me.

DEFENSE ATTORNEY

Please, just answer the question that was asked Ms. Lynn.

VALERIE

No, it wasn't my intention to inflict any harm.

DEFENSE ATTORNEY

Ms. Lynn, it seems to me that you were having fun and you behaved irresponsibly and now that you regret your decisions, you are now taking them out on my client.

PROSECUTOR

Objection, Your honor. The defense is-

JUDGE GUERRERO

Sustained. Does the prosecution have a question for the witness?

DEFENSE ATTORNEY

Ms. Lynn, was the kiss shared by Brian Fuller and yourself consensual?

VALERIE begins her monologue. The PROSECUTOR attempts to redirect her attention, but VALERIE is in a trance. She continues her monologue.

VALERIE

These hands have lost the comfort of muscle
memory that once carried them through dark hallways...

DEFENSE ATTORNEY

Ms. Lynn. Please, just answer the question. Was the kiss shared by Brian Fuller and
yourself consensual?

VALERIE

and into the filtered gray light of rainclouds
that washed our feet and made us clean again.

DEFENSE ATTORNEY

Your honor...

JUDGE GUERRERO

Ms. Lynn. You will answer the question.

VALERIE

I lost my soul on a night that obscures memory.

JUDGE GUERRERO

Will the prosecution control their witness?

PROSECUTOR

Your honor, the prosecution would like to call a brief recess.

VALERIE

I left it in the comfort of warm quilts

JUDGE GUERRERO

Will both counsels, please, approach the bench?

VALERIE rises from the witness stand. She
walks slowly downstage and continues her
monologue.

During the remainder of VALERIE's
monologue, the PROSECUTOR and
DEFENSE ATTORNEY approach JUDGE
GUERRERO where they argue, unheard.

VALERIE

And never returned because its light is a disguise
for the deceit that churns inside my bones.

I sacrificed my faith to the air because it breathes
better than my lungs. I released it with my fingers and watched it fly
away in the beak of a bird who was happy to fill its nest
with the burden that used to call my back its home.

Lights fade on everyone except VALERIE
who stands in a spotlight, alone.

I often wonder what happened to the peace that breathed
life into my heart. Peace that painted my lips
into an undeserving smile. Peace that does not know how to exist
in a life that has become forever nocturnal.

At night, I lie on my back with my head on a pillow,
and I stare at the darkness because my eyelids have been stitched
open by the fear of silence. It speaks to me in the whispers
of an artificial light that invades my mind, more seductive than stars.

I have been called to play a game, collect the fragments
of my body that have been lost. Or stolen.
But what they do not tell you is that there is no winner.
We are destined to dance in circles.

Where am I? What is my name?
Please, can you help me remember my name?

Lights fade.

END OF PLAY.

BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Gerry Rodriguez earned her Bachelor of Arts in Theatre Performance from University of Texas Rio Grande Valley in 2018. She completed her Master of Fine Arts in Creative Writing with an emphasis on playwriting and poetry along with a Graduate Certificate in Gender and Women's Studies in 2022 from University of Texas Rio Grande Valley. From 2017-2018 and again in 2022, she worked as a research assistant in the Department of Theatre. under Dr. Eric Wiley.

Publications include the poems "La Lomita" and "We Could Be Lovers," published in 2022 in *Stonecrop Magazine* and *Open Minds Quarterly*, respectively. Her short story, "Carnal," was published in 2022 in *decomp* in 2022. Presentations include "Latino Representation in Theatre," presented at the University of Texas Rio Grande Valley Engaged Scholar Symposium in 2018 and "Poetry in Motion: Challenging the Boundaries of Poetry and Playwriting," presented at the Rio Grande Valley International Poetry Festival in 2022.

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