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AN ACTOR'S JOURNEY INTO THE MIND OF A SOCIOPATH

This thesis is approved.

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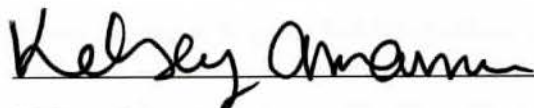
## ABSTRACT

In order to complete the requirements for a Master of Fine Arts at Lindenwood University, I was required to perform a leading role as part of my thesis project. I chose to play Neil LaBute's character, Evelyn, in his play, *The Shape of Things*. Evelyn is an incredibly complex character; there are multiple layers to her and for each layer I did extensive research. This paper will take the reader on a journey through the process as I experienced it, including the decisions I made to create Evelyn.

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## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

Special thanks are due to my director, Lyndsay Hicks. Thank you for pushing me and agreeing to ride this roller-coaster with me. Thank you to my thesis director, Emily Jones. You have been the biggest encouragement to me here at Lindenwood and you continue to help me grow; you are a brilliant teacher and person and I thank you for letting me take on the role of Evelyn and for your consistent dedication to my education. Thank you to both Donna Northcott and Ann Canale. I have improved with every class that I have taken with you Donna. You are more talented than you know and your classes have been one of the biggest highlights throughout my experience here at Lindenwood. Thank you. And to Ann – you are that one teacher that I could always count on to be there to answer any and every question I had. Your class was very demanding, but I appreciated your extensive knowledge and your love for what you do.

## **DEDICATION**

This thesis is dedicated to my parents. Mom – you're my best friend and biggest fan. Thank you for always believing in me and allowing me to pursue theatre. Dad – you show me every day how proud you are of me and you are always there for me. Love you both!

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## Chapter One: Introduction

*The Shape of Things* was performed September 20<sup>th</sup> through the 23<sup>rd</sup> at the Emerson Black Box Theater at the J. Scheidegger Center for The Arts on the campus of Lindenwood University. The rehearsals started August 20<sup>th</sup> and continued through September 19<sup>th</sup>. The cast of *The Shape of Things* included: Kelsey Amann as Evelyn, Cassie Ballard as Jenny, Billy Walkenhorst as Adam, and Josh Wolk as Phillip. The production crew included: Lyndsay Hicks as Director, Courtney McDaniel as Production Stage Manager, Lindsey Conklin as Assistant Stage Manager, Pippin McGowan as Stage Designer, Tim Poertner as Light Designer, Krista Tettaton as Properties Mistress, Danny Mauk as Sound Designer, and Donna Northcott as Costume Designer.

*The Shape of Things* was written by American playwright Neil LaBute.

In *The Shape of Things*, LaBute asks his audience how far they would go to be considered “desirable.” How much will one change for love? For art? What would we be willing to change? What price might we pay? These are some of the painful questions LaBute examines (Ketay). Peter Marks from the Washington Post explains “LaBute explored some of the same terrain [as in *Fat Pig*], about our obsession with facets of people that are only skin deep.” LaBute’s themes throughout the show are “the nature of art and the moral responsibility of the artist” (Billington). From the beginning, all seems clear enough. Evelyn, a graduate student pursuing her M.F.A. in Applied Theory and Criticism, has just begun working on her thesis project. Evelyn meets the agreeable, awkward, and “average” Adam at an art gallery, where Adam is the night security guard. Evelyn was about to spray a graffiti penis on a sculpture when Adam approaches her. Evelyn is breathtakingly beautiful, mysterious, and appears to be interested in Adam, to

his surprise. The two begin a passionate relationship, where Evelyn transforms Adam from average to attractive. Evelyn manipulates and “suggests” multiple changes to Adam’s behavior and looks. She latches on to Adam’s weakness and vulnerability and tricks him into losing 30 pounds, replacing his glasses with contacts, obtaining a new and expensive wardrobe, getting a nose job, and dropping his best – and only friends – Phil and Jenny, all for her.

Evelyn uses sex and Adam’s desire for her to secretly control and alters his appearance and lifestyle. In the end of *The Shape of Things*, LaBute reveals to his audience Evelyn’s thesis project: Adam. In the final scene, mere days after Adam proposed with an engagement ring that was once his grandmother’s, Evelyn delivers her thesis project in front of her peers as well as Adam, Phil, and Jenny. Evelyn reveals her true interest in Adam: his “transformation” is the purpose of her thesis project and her semester’s work. She displays a before-and-after photo of Adam, along with items that represent the “old” Adam and the “new and improved” Adam, such as his favorite old jacket, his glasses, the bandages from his plastic surgery, and the engagement ring. After her presentation, Adam confronts Evelyn and demands to know why she destroyed his life and put it on display. Evelyn never shows any remorse for her actions. She admits to lying and using Adam for her art. She believes she did nothing wrong. Evelyn tells Adam, “everything I did made you a more desirable person, Adam. People began to notice you...take interest in you” (*The Shape* 83). She explains, “...all that stuff we did was real for you, therefore it was real. It wasn’t for me, therefore it wasn’t. It’s all subjective, Adam. Everything” (*The Shape* 83). Adam asks Evelyn if any of it was true and Evelyn replies, “...no. None of it” (*The Shape* 87). Even at the very end, Evelyn

shows no regret, or empathy, and even tries to joke with Adam, as if they were still friends.

As one can see Evelyn is a character with many layers; some LaBute identifies throughout the play and others that I had to find for myself. Those layers that I had to find for myself required extensive research and discoveries. Where is Evelyn from? What was her childhood like? When did she decide to dedicate her life to art? Has she ever been in love? How can she have no remorse for her actions and walk away fulfilled? Is there more to Evelyn than just a malicious artist? Who is the honest and “real” Evelyn? Who is the Evelyn without her art? These questions and more helped me create a background for Evelyn and formed a plan for my research.

## Chapter Two: Research and Character Analysis

Neil LaBute is an American film director, screenwriter, and playwright. LaBute studied theatre at Brigham Young University where he produced several plays that pushed the envelope of what was acceptable at that conservative religious university. LaBute has written over twenty productions and most have repeated themes (IMDB). He shakes his audience with honesty and writes about topics which are rarely discussed, such as our obsession with the surface of things. LaBute writes about sex and the advantages it carries within our culture. He writes about revenge and usually includes a villain/vixen who not only is cruel and manipulative, but who also has some sort of hatred towards the opposite sex (IMDB). Another popular topic for LaBute is beauty and what is considered beautiful in our society and how far one will go to become desirable.

One example of LaBute using these themes is in his production entitled *In the Company of Men*. The play revolves around two frustrated employees, Chad and Howard, who are both resentful of their recent bad luck with women. They first form a revenge scheme to help mend their battered egos. Then they find an insecure and vulnerable victim – a lovely, hearing-impaired woman who has not dated in years. Both men simultaneously romance her and slather her with affection, and then later, both break up with her. Chad shows characteristics to the audience of being cruel, manipulative, two-faced, and abusive, whereas Howard is the more submissive of the two. Chad is the male version of Evelyn in *The Shape of Things*. *In the Company of Men* is a psychological black comedy, but the beauty of LaBute is that he tells this story so intensely and diabolically that his audience has no choice but to have a strong reaction. This play helped me to understand the characters that LaBute chooses to write about.

LaBute develops one main character with devoid of honor and remorse and incapable of feeling empathy or regret. Chad is not one who will have an arc and later become “good” or learn from his mistakes. Chad’s character is labeled “evil” or “bad,” but he never sees himself as doing anything wrong. Chad is a brilliantly well-constructed character and LaBute opens Chad’s mind to show his readers that not all people are capable of good and not everyone learns from their mistakes (*In the Company*). LaBute demonstrates the same thing with Evelyn.

Another example of LaBute’s popular themes can be found in his play, *Your Friends & Neighbors*, which developed into a story about misogyny including similar topics to those found *In the Company of Men*. LaBute dissects sexual politics and gives his audience something that is edgy and entertaining. *Your Friends & Neighbors* is a sexual show about six adults: two couples and two friends. Each “couple” has internal issues and is unhappy with their current situations. Throughout the show, the couples intertwine with each other sexually. LaBute has his representative characters: the egotistical macho man, the manipulative prick, the vulnerable woman or man, and the “everyman.” This show, yet again, helped me to understand a LaBute character. LaBute always has that one character that is superior to the others and gets away with doing wrong. LaBute creates a character who others know or suspect is a villain, but those same people never confront the villain, because they either lack proof or they feel inferior to the villain (*Your Friends & Neighbors*). Evelyn does this by making those around her feel small and unimportant: understanding this helps one appreciate the complexity of this vixen.

LaBute also wrote a play entitled *Fat Pig*, which not only critiques our unquestioning devotion to Hollywood's ideal of beauty, but brashly questions our own ability to change what we dislike about ourselves (Spencer). In *Fat Pig*, LaBute is "concerned with the cruelty of the thin mocking the fat, and our lack of courage in accepting human differences" (Spencer). The story is about Tom and how he must stand up to society and his shallow friends as he falls in love with a plus-sized woman, Helen, who is both bright and amusing. "The role [of Helen] requires skill and guts, as it calls on the actress to show a great deal of flesh. Exposure, after all, is one of LaBute's themes. The relationship stalls as Tom cannot make the leap from private affair to a public one; he's embarrassed to be seen with Helen. As much of the play is told from Tom's point of view, we're meant to share his discomfort" (Spencer). LaBute forces us to come to terms with our own preconceptions of the importance of having "good looks." "LaBute's sharply drawn play not only critiques our slavish adherence to Hollywood's ideal of beauty, but boldly questions our own ability to change what we dislike about ourselves" (Ketay). As *Fat Pig* develops, more and more of our allegiance swings towards Helen. As explained by Peter Marks in the Washington Post article, *In 'Fat Pig,' a Slim Chance for True Love*:

By the scene late in the play set at Tom's company beach party, in which Helen walks on in a bathing suit, an audience is thinking of Helen in a way fat people rarely are in American culture: as a sexual being. We're unsettled by the vulnerable position in which a woman can place herself through the simple act of baring her arms. If we look hard enough, the playwright seems to be saying; maybe we can learn to stop staring.

Marks later explains how “body image is a national fixation” and a popular theme for LaBute’s plays.

In LaBute’s brutal and exhilarating play *Reasons to be Pretty*, he discusses America's obsession with physical beauty and forces his audience to answer the question that everyone must answer: How much is “pretty: worth? (Ketay). In a review written by Elyssa Somers for the Internet Theater Magazine of Reviews: CurtainUp, she explains:

Our modern world has upper-cased and bold- faced the reasons for wanting to be pretty. The national obsession with physical appearance keeps too many of us from nurturing more grown up and durable goals and relationships — with people having the least educational and job opportunities most likely to be trapped by this sort of group think about the value of being pretty.

Somers defines the play as an “exploration of what lies beneath the surface of contemporary America within the context of the relationships between lovers and friends,” a recurring theme with LaBute.

### **Production History**

*The Shape of Things* premiered at the Almeida Theatre, London in 2001 with Paul Rudd as Adam, Rachel Weisz as Evelyn, Gretchen Mol as Jenny, and Fred Weller as Phillip, and was directed by LaBute himself. In accordance with the author's instructions, it was performed without an interval or a curtain call. *The Shape of Things* also was performed at the Promenade Theatre on 2162 Broadway from October – January 2001 and was adapted into a film in 2003 with the original cast and LaBute once again

directing. The production later premiered Off-Off-Broadway at The Access Theatre on 380 Broadway in August 2010.

### **The World of the Play**

Every play has its own society, morality, and consciousness. In *The Shape of Things*, society is made up of two groups that intertwine: friendly companionship and intimate relationships with Adam, Jenny, and Phil forming both of these societies. Phil and Jenny are engaged and form an intimate relationship. Phil and Adam are friendly companions whose relationship shifts towards the end of the play. Their friendship is based on Adam's insecurities and Phil's confidence. Once Adam begins to gain confidence in his appearance and sexuality – with the help of both Evelyn and Jenny – his need for Phil's confidence and approval diminishes. Phil uncovers his own uncertainties with his relationship with both Jenny and Adam. Adam and Evelyn form the "intimate relationship society," as do Adam and Jenny. Just like in LaBute's play *Your Friends and Neighbors*, both couples or "societies" intertwined with each other, both friendly and sexually. At the end of *The Shape of Things* both societies are nonexistent.

The morality throughout *The Shape of Things* is never constant, but LaBute's investigation of people's moral frameworks is. Every person comes equipped with a set of morals that they submit to as a human being, some more than others. Adam's integrity changes throughout the show affecting his relationship with Jenny and Phil and also with Evelyn. Jenny's goodness also does a complete rotation. Jenny is not as innocent as she appears; she acts on her feelings for Adam even though she is engaged and Adam is in a



relationship. Phil's morality also changes when he is betrayed by both Jenny and Adam and then later has physical relations with Evelyn.

In *The Shape of Things*, LaBute also examines the consciousness of the ego and the world around you, and the consciousness of the real self, the real you. The audience gets to view the inner desires and thoughts of all four characters. Each character – other than Evelyn – seems to have a false awareness of the kind of person they are. Phil is not so tough and confident when he is without a girlfriend or a best friend to boost his ego. Jenny is not so innocent when given the right circumstances, and Adam is not so shy and uncomfortable around girls. Evelyn is aware of the world around her and very sharp, but her perception of her real self is unclear. She believes her life revolves around art, but when she reveals to Adam that they did share a genuine moment, a secret, it shows that there is more to Evelyn's life. Evelyn has been hurt in her past by her father, by past lovers, and therefore she has no trust in others: yet she did allow herself to trust Adam. By allowing herself to trust again, Evelyn realized there can be more to life than art and she can let people into her life. *The Shape of Things* is based on two essential principles: the inmost desire of every person is to like the world and the people in it and the utmost threat is having a hatred for the world and what is in it.

### **Analysis of the Character**

Portraying a character with traits and beliefs alien to one's own is a challenge to anyone. When that character is sociopathic, an even greater challenge arises as one must first understand what it truly means to be "sociopathic" and without a conscience or remorse. One must understand what it feels like to never feel wrong and have no regrets

for any of their actions. Evelyn will be the most mystifying, yet rewarding project that I've ever attempted to date. My extensive research on the sociopathic mind, along with my research on the beliefs of an iconoclastic and the conceptual artist will help me convey a true illustration of how Evelyn might behave; leading me to a greater understanding of this this crafty vixen that LaBute has created.

Evelyn is first and foremost sociopathic. Evelyn has no conscience and no concern for others – family, friends, or strangers. She has no emotional attachment to others. She has no struggle with shame, and although she takes responsibility for her actions, she feels no remorse. Her superficial charisma allows her to seduce others – figuratively and literally. It is difficult for many people to imagine how they would feel if they had no conscience. Most people believe sociopaths are killers who are threatening and unattractive in appearance as well as unfriendly and cruel (Stout). Evelyn is not what most people would call a “killer” or “unattractive.” To the contrary, Evelyn is successful, charming, and beautiful, with the magnetism that makes her seem more interesting than the people around her. She is more spontaneous and more intense than others, with a sexuality and allure that causes others to gravitate to her. This “sociopathic charisma” is accompanied by an impressive sense of self-worth that is compelling at first glance (Stout). Evelyn has a greater need for stimulation, which causes her to take frequent social and legal risks. Evelyn could charm others into trying a dangerous risk and lying or cheating to their friends. She appears to be well-educated and too clever for her own good. Evelyn's shallowness causes her relationship with Adam and others to be one-sided and short-term (Stout). For all these reasons, Evelyn is a sociopath.

Very few people, whether educated or not, truly understand the meaning of the word sociopath. Even fewer people understand the word can be correctly applied to a handful of people that they might know. In the 1830's the term sociopath was defined as "moral insanity." By 1900 it was changed to "psychopathic personality." Most recently it has been termed as an "anti-social personality disorder" (Soukhanov). Encarta World English Dictionary defines insanity, in terms of a psychiatric condition, as "legal incompetence or irresponsibility that results from a psychiatric disorder." It defines a psychopath as "somebody affected with a personality disorder marked by aggressive, violent, antisocial thought and behavior and a lack of remorse or empathy." It defines antisocial, in terms of behavioral standards, as "hostile or indifferent to the comfort or needs or other members of a community or society as a whole." And lastly, the definition of sociopath and psychopath are considered the same.

In Martha Stout's book, *The Sociopath Next Door*, she asks her readers some very important questions to help them comprehend what it means to be a sociopath. Stout begins by asking them to clear their mind and imagine a different view on life. Stout begins the experiment by asking us to:

Imagine – if we can – not having a conscience, none at all, no feelings of guilt or remorse no matter what you do, no limiting sense of concern for the well-being of strangers, friends, or even family members. Imagine no struggles with shame, not a single one in your whole life, no matter what kind of selfish, lazy, harmful, or immoral action you had taken (1).

Stout then asks us to:

Pretend that the concept of responsibility is unknown to you, except as a burden that others seem to accept without question, like gullible fools. Now add to this strange fantasy the ability to conceal from other people that your psychological makeup is radically different from theirs. Since everyone simply assumes that conscience is universal among human beings, hiding the fact that you are conscience-free is nearly effortless. You are not held back from any of your desires by guilt or shame and you are never confronted by others for your cold-bloodedness (8).

Stout states that the blood flowing in the veins of a sociopath are so inexplicable that people close to them seldom guess their condition.

Stout defined a sociopath as someone completely free of internal restrictions and the "unhampered liberty" to do as he/she pleases, with no "pangs of conscience" (25). She states that the sociopath is consistently irresponsible with no remorse, which clearly defines Evelyn. Stout uses words such as deceitful, aggressive, and manipulative which could be used when describing Evelyn. Evelyn does not spend time trying to find someone to love and does not worry about friends or family. She cares nothing for others and therefore, as Stout explains, is brilliant at winning. She can dominate. She can bend others to her will. She can ruin a career, break up years of friendship, frighten people, and win any man she wants. When Evelyn decides that Adam needs to update his wardrobe or reconstruct his nose, Adam buys expensive clothes, gets rid of his favorite jacket, and even gets a nose job. When Evelyn decides that Adam should stop eating meat and drop

his friends – that is exactly what Adam does. To Evelyn, strategies and payoffs are the only thrills she knows and she spends her entire life getting better at whatever “game” she decides to play. For Evelyn, the “game” is everything and she thinks the rest of us are too naïve or stupid for not playing the “game” as well. This is what happens to the human mind when “emotional attachment and conscience are missing” (Stout 46).

By Stout’s definition, “most people, including sociopaths, are average in intelligence and looks”, and the “games” that average sociopaths play are not in the same league as Evelyn (47). Evelyn illustrates what a sociopath wants: “controlling others – winning – is more compelling than anything (or anyone) else” (Stout 47). But do sociopaths understand what they are? Do they have awareness of their actions or do they neglect to see what they are? Stout answers these questions by stating “for the most part, people whom we assess as evil tend to see nothing at all wrong with their way of being in the world. Sociopaths are infamous for their refusal to acknowledge responsibility, the decisions they make, and the outcomes of their decisions” (49). In fact, as Stout later explains, the result of “one’s behavior as having anything to do with oneself – ‘consistent irresponsibility’ in the language of the American Psychiatric Association – is a cornerstone of the anti-social personality diagnosis” that Evelyn illustrates (50). If anything, “people without conscience tend to believe their way of being in the world is superior to ours. They often speak of the naïveté of other people and their ridiculous scruples, or of their curiosity about why so many people are unwilling to manipulate others” (Stout 50). I want to believe buried somewhere deep inside the sociopath’s core is a faint whispering that something is missing, something that others have – a conscience. I believe this because sociopaths speak of feeling empty and they usually

envy people with a conscience. Sociopaths feel the rewards of winning and so they must understand the meaning of love, caring, and friendship. If they did not they would simply go on governing, denying, and feeling exclusive.

Evelyn could also be labeled as and limited to a “covetous sociopath,” one who believes that life has cheated them somehow and they must even the score by secretly causing destruction in other people’s life in order to gain stature or power. Stout further explains that a covetous sociopath believes they have “been slighted by nature, circumstance, and destiny, and that diminishing other people is the only means of being powerful” (76). Evelyn used vengeance and control against people who have no idea they have been targeted; this is an important activity in the covetous sociopath life. But why would Evelyn direct her destructive impulses against Adam? He has nothing that she wants. It is because he is ordinary and she can feel powerful by merely standing next to him? Evelyn is not classified as a criminal: criminals get caught, usually. Evelyn will never be prosecuted for her wrongs or sued as Adam threatens her in the final scene. She will never be punished for her lies, manipulative behavior, and her viciousness towards the innocent Adam and his friends.

Understanding a character like Evelyn also requires one to explore the mind of an iconoclast. The Encarta World Dictionary defines iconoclast as “somebody who challenges or overturns traditional beliefs, customs, and values,” and “somebody who destroys religious images or opposes their use in worship.” Iconoclasts are creative visionaries with a limitless imagination, extraordinary leaders and risk-takers. They see life different than other people – the possible in impossible. Seeing differently and having no conscience creates a unique individual, an individual with no regrets and no

fear of the impossible: Evelyn. Most people associate the word “iconoclast” with the destruction of religious figures and the ways different cultures damage or destroy the physical forms of the religious symbol. But the definition from freedictionary.com relates well to Evelyn, an iconoclast can be unpleasant company, but at least the modern iconoclast only attacks things such as ideas and institutions. They seek to defeat or break with the traditional or popular ideas or institutions. Evelyn attacks the ideas of morality and what society believes to be “desirable” or “beautiful.” She creates beauty and desire by transforming Adam into the “perfect man” and believes she is doing Adam a favor by making him more attractive by societal standards. She believes that everyone can be beautiful with the correct tools and alterations.

Evelyn is also an extremely gifted and talented conceptual artist. As defined by the artist Sol LeWitt, “the idea or concept [for the conceptual artist] is the most important aspect of their work. When an artist uses a conceptual form of art, it means that all of the planning and decisions are made beforehand and the execution is a perfunctory affair. The idea becomes a machine that makes the art.” Justin Wolf, the founder of The Art Story Foundation, describes in detail exactly what conceptual art is and his information is vital in my understanding and portrayal of Evelyn. Since visual art and all its emphases are foreign to me, most of my information relies heavily on Wolfe’s description. He states that:

Conceptual art describes a movement that emerged in the mid-1960s and the prized idea over the formal or visual components of traditional works of art. The artists who became involved in it were often motivated to challenge conventional

assumptions about art - concepts such as beauty, quality, and the difference between a document and an artwork.

This statement ties directly to Evelyn since she pushes the ideas of traditional art and uses a human and his physical appearance as the base of her artwork. Wolfe goes on to say the artist "questioned the conventional means by which the public consumed art, and how it was processed through an increasingly complex network of galleries, museums, and critics - institutions which, they believed, gave their work new meanings which they were sometimes uncomfortable with." Evelyn's iconoclasm is on display as we see her attack and break from the traditional or popular ideas and institutions.

Wolfe says:

To question these conventions, they [the artist or Evelyn] deconstructed the conventional art object - often by-passing traditional institutions - and presented work in diverse mediums. Never a tightly cohesive movement, Conceptualism was instead an amalgam of various tendencies, most of which lost their impetus in the early 1970s, but it remains one of the most influential developments in recent art.

There are several key factors one must consider in exploring Evelyn's motives for using Adam as her thesis project. Justin Wolfe further explains:

In some sense Conceptual art represents an extension of the urge to self-reflection and self-criticism in modernist art. Conceptual artists merely pushed this further, abandoning traditional media in the process. An important characteristic of most Conceptual artworks is their radical 'dematerialization.' Artists who pursued this



path were often influenced by the simplicity of Minimalism, but wished to do away with the bold and bulky forms of Minimalist sculpture and find an art of the barest essentials, one that need not take any physical form at all. Abandoning the traditional notion of the art object as something beautiful, finely crafted, and highly finished, Conceptual artists sought to trouble the category of art itself. The analysis of art that was pursued by many Conceptual artists encouraged them to believe that, if the artwork was begun by the artist, it was in some way completed by the audience.

Evelyn's thesis project – or artwork – Adam began with their first encounter and could only end when she presented her “artwork” in a public presentation. So it was completed by an audience, as Wolfe said. Wolfe finishes by saying “this idea later gave impetus to what has been called 'institutional critique,' in which artists turned their attention to the institutional contexts in which art is exhibited, and hence to the social, political, and cultural values of society at large.”

### Chapter Three: The Process

During my search for a play, I was encouraged to read LaBute's *The Shape of Things* by my friend and fellow graduate student, Becca Helms. I was familiar with LaBute from his plays *In Good Company* and *Fat Pig*. I read *Shape* in one sitting and then re-read the play later that night. I was so impressed by LaBute's writing and my ability to create a clear image of who these characters were. Evelyn was a rare character and a type that I have never portrayed before. The next day I ran into my fellow graduate student, Lyndsay Hicks and I immediately told her about the script. Lyndsay's emphasis is in directing and I knew she needed a show to direct for her thesis project, so I asked her if she would consider directing *Shape*. I had worked with Lyndsay before and I respected her as both a director and a friend. She told me she would read it and get back to me. At the same time I asked our mutual friend, a fellow graduate student with an emphasis in set design, Pippin McGowan, to read *Shape*, because I knew she also needed a thesis project. Pippin loved the show after the first read and was on board. Lyndsay took a little convincing since she was also in the process of reading other plays, but soon she too fell in love with *Shape* and we had our dream team.

After we received approval, the production was announced in the monthly theatre department meeting and auditions were held shortly after. The initial audition seemed promising for actors to play Jenny and Adam, but finding the right actor for Phillip was where we faced difficulties. Lindenwood is limited on strong, straight male actors; most have a musical theatre emphasis or look too young. We called back ten women to read for Jenny, and Lyndsay called back every male who auditioned. After several reads, Lyndsay, Pippin, and I came to an agreement: Cassie Ballard for Jenny, Billy

Walkenhorst for Adam, and Brent Nowack for Phillip. I had some misgivings about Brent playing Phillip, but there were no other options. Our first objective was to have our lines memorized for our first read through. Over the course of the next several weeks Lyndsay found out some troubling news: due to unforeseen circumstance, Brent had to be removed from the cast. Lyndsay was extremely disappointed at having to recast Phillip since there appeared to be few viable options. She asked her own brother to play the part, but he was not allowed due to the fact that he was not a Lindenwood student. Finally, Emily suggested a new in-coming student, Josh Wolk. Lyndsay observed his audition and offered Josh the role. Our cast was complete and Lyndsay seemed confident with Josh and therefore, I was too.

Lyndsay gave all the actors their scripts and required us to be memorized for our first rehearsal, sometime mid-August. I had planned on focusing my entire summer on line memorization, finding the Evelyn in me, and working on characterization. My summer went from being eventless to completely chaotic. I had received news that the internship that I applied for was approved and they wanted me to start immediately. The internship was more demanding than I had initially thought and I was there over 30 hours a week and was required to be on-call some weekends. I also received news that my younger sister was engaged and would be getting married in July, with me as her maid-of-honor. Another key point was that her fiancé was away at boot camp and that left me to plan the entire wedding with her in a matter of three months, while working another full time job and my internship. Needless to say, I was overwhelmed and extremely busy. Perhaps it was selfish of me to apply for an internship, but honestly, I applied on a whim and didn't think I would get it. I could have said no, but this was an amazing

opportunity for me and because I accepted the internship I was hired to teach an acting class post-graduation. The time I had planned on memorizing lines and working on Evelyn was pushed aside and limited to when I had spare time, which was few and far between. Once my sister's wedding was complete, I was able to focus all the time I spent planning her wedding on rehearsing my lines and forming a background for Evelyn and work on my objectives. The night before the first rehearsal I honestly felt great about my line memorization: I had every scene memorized with Adam. The scenes I had with Jenny and Phillip were a little rocky, but I still felt comfortable. My monologue was also rocky, but I had the first five pages out of seven memorized, so I felt positive.

At the first rehearsal all four actors were present as well as the director and stage manager, Courtney. After introductions we discussed our characters analysis, read through the scripts, and went through the rehearsal schedule. Lyndsay allowed us to read from the script, which I thought was a little unexpected since she asked for lines to be memorized. Lyndsay discussed that rehearsals were going to run Monday through Thursday 6:30 to 10 pm and would often run later. Lyndsay had a very organized rehearsal schedule, but we frequently got off track. Each rehearsal was different from the schedule and our departure time was later and later. We had roughly four weeks of rehearsal and with each rehearsal it seemed like we, as a cast, were exploring more and having more discoveries that should have appeared earlier. These later discoveries seemed to push us back; therefore, we had to make each rehearsal count. Opening night was worth all the hard work and late hours. We received a standing ovation and celebrated reviews: a welcomed reward for our hard work.

## Chapter Four: Evaluation

Portraying Evelyn in LaBute's *The Shape of Things* was the most stimulating, yet satisfying, role that I have played. The challenges I faced were finding those moments to identify with Evelyn and believe her justifications for her actions. There were moments that were easier to relate to, such as Evelyn's complete and absolute dedication to her art. I too have sheer dedication for my art, but her methods and how far she would go for her art is something I have never touched, and I could never go that far. In areas such as theses, substitution was vital. Other challenges were finding the balance between the honesty in the "real" Evelyn and Evelyn as "Adam's girlfriend." The reality of Evelyn is her art and art as a whole. She is completely dedicated and nothing is out of bounds when it comes to her art. Balancing that complete dedication and never letting go of her objective, while playing Adam's girlfriend was challenging. I had to create two different identities while creating an equal balance between the two. I didn't want to play the vixen part and the "real" Evelyn more than the Evelyn as "Adam's girlfriend." This was a challenge that I believe I was successful with.

My goals with Evelyn were to illustrate my range as an actress, to dare myself to take on a role I have never played, and to showcase to my peers and family members what I have not only learned and discovered while at Lindenwood, but what I have gained as well. If I were to rate myself on a scale of 1 to 10, 1 being "I did not achieve any of my goals" and 10 being "I achieved all my goals" I would give myself a 5. The goals that I achieved were to inspire myself with a new role, thereby illustrating my range to myself and my peers.

Feedback on this production from my peers, family, and friends was uniformly positive. All those who attended *Shape* were very complimentary; my peers commended the work that I put into this role and were practically impressed with my performance of Evelyn's final monologue. Audience members who approached me after the show said they truly enjoyed my performance, but noted how much they hated Evelyn, yet loved the monologue scene, as well as the last scene between Billy and me. That felt very satisfying, because I accomplished some of my goals. I wanted to represent Evelyn as this edgy, dangerous, mysterious, and eccentric vixen. I believe I represented her in just that way.

There were elements of the rehearsal process that I would change, given the opportunity. I disliked the idea of having our lines memorized before the rehearsals began. I believe that memorizing your lines during rehearsals allows you to develop a connection with the other characters, whereas memorizing your lines by yourself provides less opportunity for exploration. I feel if Billy and I had worked on our lines together while running the scene, the blocking, the flow of our lines, and our chemistry would have been more natural and less forced. I would have liked to focus more on listening exercises and objectives. We wouldn't have had to struggle as much to motivate our blocking or develop our physical relationship. I had no idea how Billy was preparing to portray Adam, so I walked into rehearsals blind. I had been rehearsing my lines with my sister and boyfriend who just read the other character's lines back to me. They are not actors or Billy. Given the opportunity to rehearse my lines with Billy, I could then react to what he was saying and have a stronger foundation for our relationship. We only rehearsed for four weeks and a majority of the time was spent

either correcting line mistakes, working on Billy and his habits, or trying to get Josh and Billy to represent their characters honestly and play their objectives. Neither of them knew their objective or how to play it or cared enough. This was a huge role for me and I cared a great deal. This was not acting 101; this was my thesis project and I can never get it back. Lyndsay and I only worked on Evelyn's final monologue once. She had me read in throughout rehearsals, but we never had the time to work one-on-one. Part of this is my fault; I did not have the monologue completely memorized until a week before tech. I had planned on focusing my entire summer on memorization, but my summer was busier than I had planned, as stated before. This is no excuse and I do regret not working more on the monologue over the summer. The one time Lyndsay and I worked one-on-one with Evelyn's final monologue was only for an hour right before we had our very first run through with Emily Jones, my thesis director, in the audience. This was also the first time we had all our props to use. We had been using a couple rehearsal props like wine glass and blankets. I believe Lyndsay had requested rehearsal props earlier, but had not received them. Time was running out and I believe Lyndsay was picking her battles. All the time during rehearsals was focused on Billy and Josh and none on me and my character. I was forced to do most of my character work at home, instead of in rehearsals. We were only able to do character work once and worked on our objectives a few times. I would have liked to change everything about the rehearsal process. We needed at least six weeks, not four, for a show like this with so many themes and symbols and so many arcs. We should have had a week for just table readings so we, as a cast, could explore our characters and what we wanted to accomplish as an ensemble. I would have like to work with the rehearsal props the moment we got on our feet. Props are vital

for every show and rehearsal props help the actor become familiar with their setting, their character, the scene, and most important: the actual prop. There was so much I would have changed. I know not every rehearsal process or show is without errors and we learn from them: but the things I would have changed from this show are things I've done since undergrad.

When I first read LaBute's *The Shape of Things* I hated Evelyn and couldn't imagine a person like her, which is why I couldn't wait to portray her. I loved the idea of portraying an unlikeable character where the lead male character falls in love with me and therefore the audience will both love and hate me as well. Evelyn is extremely complex with multiple layers and a majority of those layers are for the actor to decide and discover. Evelyn's background is unclear which gave me the opportunity to create her vivid past and explore various options. It was a true gift for any actress and I was able to make Evelyn my creation. With all this excitement and anticipation, I couldn't wait to start the rehearsal process. During rehearsals the cast as a whole weren't given enough time to explore our characters how we should and therefore our choices weren't as strong; our stakes weren't high enough and our objectives weren't as clear. I am only as good as my team and I can only explore so much on my own. Most discoveries are found during rehearsals, but our rehearsal time was not used correctly. I was able to portray a new character and therefore I grew as an actress, but only by a small fraction. I had imagined rehearsals to be full of real, genuine moments and acting that would leave me emotionally exhausted. Perhaps with another two weeks of rehearsal my imagination would have been a reality.



## Appendix A: Journal

Monday Aug. 20<sup>th</sup>

Today was our first rehearsal! Lyndsay had the cast meet and greet; I already knew everyone in the cast, but Josh Wolk, who will be playing Phillip. Lyndsay went over the set plans and discussed who was involved including crew and designers.

Lyndsay has us discuss our character analyses.

1. **DESIRE:** My desires are only things that will benefit me and my personal gain.

Adam is like my puppet that associates with me and only talks about what I want to talk about. I desire dominance over Adam. Adam is my “project” and my desire is that he will be my greatest work. This is my thesis project; my time to shine in this small town and actually showcase my art and my gift. I build a “relationship” with Adam only to keep him close and make sure he stays on track. Adam is my work and my work is the most important thing to me. I use a fake relationship with Adam to achieve my desires and then discard him once I’m finished and have received what I want.

2. **WILL:** My inner will is exceptionally strong. I will stop at nothing to obtain my desire. People do not shock me or intimidate me. I have survived on my own for a long time and attained my goal.

3. **MORAL STANCE:** I’m willing to lie, cheat, steal, manipulate, destroy, hurt, and humiliate in order to accomplish what I want. I know this about myself and I accept this. But I do not believe what I’m doing is wrong when it has to deal with

my work. My work is very important to me and doesn't come without a price. I must do whatever I need to do to accomplish my work.

4. **DECORUM:** I am a tall, strong, confident, and beautiful woman. I have a mysterious façade and a strong sex appeal. I am an artist. I am unique. I intimidate others easily and I have a rare beauty about myself. I don't wear make-up; I don't believe in being fake.
5. **ADJECTIVES:** inventive, cunning, stimulating, crude, and seductive.

Then we had a read thru of the entire show and Lyndsay then discussed the rehearsal schedule. It was very exciting to read the show aloud and hear the other character's voices come alive. Billy sounded wonderful as Adam. He will be great opposite me. Cassie and Josh seem committed as a couple and I was very impressed with our first read thru.

### **Tuesday Aug. 21<sup>st</sup>**

Second day and Lyndsay had us up on our feet. She first took us to visit the black box to see our amazing set! It is so unique and the set just gives us so much playing room and leaves a lot of room for imagination. We then went back to the choir room and worked on scene three: the living room scene. This scene includes the entire cast. We worked this scene for about two hours. Working this scene was incredibly helpful with memorizing my lines. Also we pretty much blocked the scene so that was exciting! Working this scene really made me dig deeply into Phillip and Evelyn's relationship. Why does she hate him so much? Why do the two of them not get along? This was a huge discovery for me. Evelyn and Phillip are so much alike. Evelyn realizes that she

could never control/dominate Phil. Phil isn't impressed by Evelyn and can see right through her. Phil doesn't crumble or grow weak at the knees like most guys do when they're in Evelyn's presence. Phil doesn't flirt or seem the least bit interested in Evelyn. Phil also has some kind of control or power over Adam and this causes Evelyn to become worried. She must be the only one to have power of Adam in order to complete her work and her thesis project. She must show Adam that Phil is a corrupt friend who Adam doesn't need in his life. This was also the first time that Evelyn felt threatened or less important. Evelyn was surrounded by Adam's first love, Jenny, and his best friend, Phil and where did Evelyn stand? She must be the MOST important person in Adam's life and be the only person who Adam desires or listens to. Great discoveries for my character today!

### **Wednesday Aug. 22nd**

I had the day off from rehearsals. Lyndsay worked on the Adam/Jenny and Adam/Phillip scenes. It was nice having the day off so I could focus on scene nine; the exhibition scene. Evelyn has a six page monologue and today I spent time rehearsing my lines and breaking the monologues into paragraphs so I could easily memorize them. I haven't yet dove into my discovery with Evelyn's speech and how person could reveal such intimate details about someone in such a crude manner.

**Thursday Aug. 23<sup>rd</sup>**

Today's rehearsal we worked on scene eight; the Coffee Shop Scene with Evelyn, Jenny and Adam. My character's relationship with Jenny was really pushed today, as well as my relationship with Adam. I'm disappointed with my current project, Adam. My control over Adam is not as strong as I thought it was. I feel threatened by Jenny. She has a control over Adam that I can never compete with. Jenny was Adam's first love and it has become apparent to me that Adam is still in love with Jenny. I still have a lot of work to do with Adam and Jenny is getting in the way. Jenny is beautiful and sweet and has so much life to live. I'm jealous of Jenny, jealous of her hold on Adam and perhaps I'm even jealous of her relationship with Phillip. Jenny is much stronger than she knows and has a lot of fire in her. The fact that Jenny acted on her feelings towards Adam is extremely courageous and shows how brave and just how unhappy Jenny is. It also shows that she has always had feelings for Adam just never had the courage to tell him. Phillip pursued Jenny; therefore she didn't have to have any courage. Jenny has been trapped in this relationship and doesn't know how to get out of it. I see this. I see that Jenny sees hope and freedom with Adam, but I can't let that happen, not yet. Jenny is therefore my enemy, in a sense, and I must keep Adam away from her.

**Monday Aug. 27<sup>th</sup>**

We worked on the last scene in tonight's rehearsal. I was able to rehearse my lines and work one-on-one with Billy. This scene was frustrating, because Billy didn't seem to be really listening to me. He focused more on his own insecurities and his nervousness. This scene is Adam's scene and I don't think Billy understands this scene yet. I'm sure

with more time Billy will get a true grasp of Adam and his emotions. This was also the first time we worked this scene so hopefully we will see improvement.

### **Tuesday Aug. 28<sup>th</sup>**

We were supposed to work through three scenes today: scene six The Doctor's Lounge, scene two the Restaurant Lobby, and scene one The Museum. But instead we worked on only two. We blocked and ran scene two for an hour and a half. Billy was so awkward during this scene. Lyndsay wants this scene to be flirtatious, kissy, and for Adam to no longer be uncomfortable around Evelyn and to show the audience why Adam likes Evelyn. Billy is uncomfortable sitting next to me let alone kissing. I am driving the scene alone and need Billy to meet me half way. Did he not realize that we would be kissing? We spent a majority of this rehearsal period working the two kisses that we have in scene two. We didn't get to focus on our objectives, finding discoveries, and exploring as a couple and as our individual character.

Next we blocked and ran scene one. This scene's main issue is blocking and Billy's habits...bouncing on his feet, breathing heavily through his nose, and no eye contact. His eyes keep wandering everywhere but on me. This is the first time the audience sees Billy and they should be able to see who Adam is from the moment he talks. Adam is shy, awkward, nerdy, and not comfortable around beautiful girls. But later as the scene progresses, Adam tries to be funny and clever and gains enough confidence to ask for Evelyn's number. The audience needs to see why Adam is attractive to Evelyn. I need Billy to believe he is Adam and that he is attractive to me, because right now it looks like Billy is afraid of me and doesn't want to be here.

### **Wednesday Aug. 29<sup>th</sup>**

This evening we re-ran scene two for an hour and once again Billy was afraid to touch me and wouldn't commit to his character. Adam likes Evelyn. I don't care if Billy likes or doesn't like Kelsey, but he is portraying Adam and should be thrilled to have such an amazing role. There were no improvements from yesterday's run except the blocking.

Next we re-blocked and ran scene three. This scene continues to be a challenge for us mainly because some actors cannot get their lines down. We are trying to explore and block this scene but if we cannot get these lines down then we are stuck. I'm just hoping we all work on our lines, because this is a great scene and the only time all four of us are on the stage at the same time. I don't want this scene to look unrehearsed or chaotic.

We then re-ran scene one and there were improvements in the blocking, but still Billy's habits or "Billy-isms" were still there. I could tell Lyndsay was getting very frustrated with having to repeat herself. When a director gives an actor a note she should only have to give that note once. If the director has to give you the note more than once, it then falls on the actor, and that actor needs to step it up and do work outside of rehearsals.

### **Thursday Aug. 30<sup>th</sup>**

This evening we worked a lot of scenes. First, scene five with Cassie and Billy, and then scene seven with Billy and Josh. Later we worked scene six The Doctor Lounge and scene four The Bedroom Scene. Scene six went smoothly as we focused on blocking

and expanding the scene. Finally we worked the blocking for scene four. We didn't focus much on the sexuality in this scene since Billy was already embarrassed before we started this scene. I had a one-on-one moment with Billy during our break. I asked him some personal questions about his past relationships and I opened up about mine as well. I was able to share my experience with love and heartbreak and Billy shared me his. But still after our talk Billy was still so shy and awkward. Billy told me he has never had an onstage kiss and would rather do musicals and "G" rated shows. I have to understand Billy is so young and I must remember how I felt at that age and how inexperienced I was then. I'm happy that Billy has a chance to grow so much in this role and I'm proud of his improvements.

#### **Tuesday Sept. 4<sup>th</sup>**

Today's rehearsal involved scenes eight through ten. We first worked through scene eight involving Cassie, myself, and Billy. We ran through this scene several times working with the blocking and the lines. It was very valuable to work this scene several times tonight. Cassie and my relationship as Jenny and Evelyn were really examined and I was able to complete my objective with that scene.

#### **Wednesday Sept. 5<sup>th</sup>**

This evening we focused on lines and also on character work. We worked scene one, two, and three. Scene one showed little improvement. The energy was down for both Billy and me. Billy continued to bounce his feet when he entered and slouched his shoulders so he appeared like an old man. Scene two's issue was blocking and the awkwardness between Billy and Josh. Lyndsay wanted the boys to have a simple

handshake or greeting and they just looked so awkward and unrehearsed. We worked Josh and Cassie's entrance more than the entire scene. This was very unsatisfying, because Lyndsay focused more on their entrance than the connection between Billy and me. This isn't entirely Lyndsay's fault; Josh and Billy have no natural instincts and are afraid to explore and try something new. Both of them are having difficulties committing to their characters. Scene three was a disaster. Nobody was focused this evening and once again actors kept messing up their lines and the blocking. I was both nervous and frustrated. I feel very anxious about the progress with scene three. We have a lot of work to do.

#### **Thursday Sept. 6<sup>th</sup>**

We worked scenes seven the lawn and scene three again and did warm ups and characterizations. Billy and I worked all of our scenes together and discussed our objectives and tactics and played them big. Scene three was worked on twice, both an hour long. This scene is our biggest challenge and every time we work on this scene Lyndsay changes the blocking. It is tiresome, because we spend less time on characterization and ensemble work and more time on lines and the blocking. All of Lyndsay's time and energy is consumed with working on the blocking and getting rid of actor's habits.

#### **Monday Sept. 10<sup>th</sup>**

This evening we ran the coffee shop scene for the first time since our first week of rehearsals. We have lost so much time working with lines and blocking that we have been neglecting those important scenes: scene eight, nine, and ten. I haven't had a



chance to work with any of the props as well. That is very frustrating and worrisome. Props are vital for any show and I have several props to handle and become familiar with. I don't want to sound ungrateful, but this is my thesis project. I have not had the opportunity to showcase my acting skills here at Lindenwood. I haven't had a lead role during my masters and this is my time to shine and this is also my last show in an educational setting. Needless to say I'm very thankful for this opportunity and I want it to be amazing.

Next we ran the living room scene three again. Once again Lyndsay changed the blocking every time we re-ran the scene. This was super discouraging, because it appears that Lyndsay is not happy with what we are giving her. Billy and Josh had a hard time with this scene tonight. Billy still has a lot to discover about his character and needs to work outside of rehearsals. I wish we had time to work on listening exercises. I think that would help with Billy and Josh, as well as the entire cast. Nobody is playing their objective strong enough and the stakes still need to be higher.

### **Tuesday Sept. 11<sup>th</sup>**

Tonight was the first time we did a full run through. This was also the first time we used props. This was also the first time I was able to run through my monologue. Lyndsay and I worked on my monologue prior to this evening's rehearsal and this was the FIRST time we were able to work on my monologue. I felt that this was unacceptable. Emily came and saw our show and I was so nervous and later embarrassed. I did my best with what was given, but everyone's energy was down. After Emily left, Lyndsay tore into all of us. She was upset and also embarrassed. She didn't like

anything we did and gave us strict orders on showing our objectives and that we needed to come with full energy tomorrow and show Lyndsay that we went home and worked on our lines and our notes.

### **Wednesday Sept. 12<sup>th</sup>**

Tonight the heat was brought. I think what Lyndsay said to all of us last night lit a light under our butts. Billy impresses me in scene one and scene two. I could really see Adam coming to life and Billy started to make choices with how Adam stood, walked, and even sat. Scene three was better but actors continued to mess up their lines. The bedroom scene was much better and Billy was really trying to explore different ways to touch me and get closer to me. Scene six was improved as well as scene eight; our objectives were clear for both scenes. I felt that Cassie and I have a strong connection in scene eight and we work very well with each other. I trust her and feel confident that she knows her lines and blocking. Scene three still makes me so nervous, because we have never been consistent with both line memorization and blocking.

I need to stop playing my Kelsey-ism: holding both my hands up. Billy and I need to work on that "spark" in scene one and continue to play Evelyn edgy and dangerous. I need to be a little more psychotic in scene four with the "fucking knife through his throat" line. In scene six I need to work on my determination. Adam MUST get surgery or my art has failed and therefore I die! It's life or death. In scene 8 work on subtext for the "You fell?" line. This is the first time I'm hearing Adam lie about his surgery. Also in scene eight become more patronizing, sarcastic, and crush Adam with the demand to

leave his friends. During my monologue I need to become more professional with a twist of psycho-ness and no emotions.

### **Thursday Sept. 13<sup>th</sup>**

Tonight we started rehearsals with notes and Lyndsay's expectations for this coming week. We then did a run through and it actually wasn't too bad. The first two scenes went great. I was impressed with Billy and choices he made with Adam. He was cute, nerdy, and funny. He felt comfortable to be around and he let his guard down. For the first time I saw Adam and I believed Adam was interested and drawn to Evelyn. I wore my jacket, my purse, had all my props, and wore my hair color extension. It helps me get more into character and I really enjoyed working on scene one and two tonight. Scene three was better with less mistakes, but scene four still needs work. After rehearsals I had a one-on-one moment with Billy. I explained how lovers touch each other and we need to connect. Scene nine went fine. My monologue was down. All of us need to listen and responded more and be in the moment.

### **Friday 14<sup>th</sup> tech**

Tonight I received a lot of helpful notes. In scene one I need to slow down, challenge Adam a bit and be flirtier. I need a bigger discovery on the spray paint, punch the "dick" lines and be less obvious that I'm going to get my way. In scene two just continue to play up the flirtation. In scene three I had Kelsey-isms, louder stage whisper, a little more edgy like in scene one, bitchy, and build on my inner struggle.

In scene four slow down and more sex! Also punch the "knife" not "fucking" in that line. Knife is the operative word. In scene six remember to be convincing and

direct with my line “it’s natural, it’s beautiful.” With the handicap stall – see the idea. In scene eight work on “you fell” line. Great job on bitchy and sarcasm. Plead with Adam to tell me the truth about him and Jenny. Smirk on the line “anything I say” and on “grasshopper.” Remember to crush Adam at the end and stab Jenny with the Phillip lines.

In scene nine with the great monologue square off to the audience and bigger pause when Jenny leaves. In scene ten crush Adam with the buying the jacket for four dollars at Goodwill. Be stoic; no sympathy. Remember I’m a bad ass woman. At the end have a moment of should I do this or not...

### **Saturday 15<sup>th</sup> tech**

First we had to meet at theatre at 12:30 to do cue-to-cue from 1 pm till 4 pm. Then Lyndsay gave us actor notes for about an hour. After notes we had a dinner break for about 30 minutes and then had to come back for a full run through and yet another hour of actor notes. I did not get home till 11:30. I felt cue-to-cue was acceptable; everyone was professional and the actors and crew did warm ups and cue-to-cue got my blood flowing with anticipation for next week. Our run through was agreeable. Energy was low; probably from exhaustion and so much repetition. All the props and blocking seemed correct, but scene three was still rocky. Looking forward to tomorrow and working on scene three.

### **Monday Sept. 17<sup>th</sup>**

Tonight run through went smoothly. Quick changes were a little rough. The wine that we used stained our teeth. Tonight was another late night. Notes were very long. In

scene one bigger discovery on “installation thingie” and playful with the line “what do you wanna call me?” In scene two remember to reward and compliment Adam and work on being flirtatious. In scene three play more on the pretentious side. In scene four work on seducing Adam and sexual coaxing. Scene six remember to coax Adam into having the surgery. Remember life or death. Play the stakes high! Scene eight continue to patronize Adam about his nose job and his lie that he fell. Stab Jenny with Phillip lines and just continue doing what I’m doing. In scene nine bigger build on the monologue. On the “still with me” lines remain professional. Really hit the “living, breathing obsession” line. In scene ten appear overly sweet with Adam enters. Very cruel and evil with the jacket line. Remember my objective.

## **Tuesday Sept. 18<sup>th</sup>**

Another long rehearsal. I think we are all ready for an audience. Energy was down a bit this evening on my part. Lyndsay changed my tank top in scene three to a long lacey black shirt. We took photos this evening of the show. None of my notes repeated just new ideas and suggestions. All of them are respectable, just getting overwhelmed with constitutently changing the blocking. Some of the big suggestions were: scene two work on connection and slow down; listen and react, scene three cut Adam off with the “okay” line, scene four play with Adam’s hair and build anger, scene eight remember to “bait” Adam with my questions, scene nine look at notecards even though I know my lines, smirk at Phil during the “relations with best friend’s fiancée” line and scene ten Lyndsay loved everything. Scene ten has become my favorite scene. And I had a light bulb moment tonight: God made Eve out of Adam’s rib and in *The Shape of Things* Evelyn creates Adam. Just a thought; not sure if it means anything but I

know LaBute is a smart man and there has to be some kind of significance with the Adam and Eve names and similarities. In the lawn scene with Phil and Adam Lyndsay chose the boys to be eating an apple.

### **Wednesday Sept. 19<sup>th</sup>**

Invited audience night really turned into the normal crowd plus my boyfriend. I fumbled on a couple lines during my monologue and got stuck on a couple words. Work on scene six's lines and scene eight's. Tonight went fine, but we are ready for an audience. I'm nervous. I hope they enjoy the show and nobody messes up. I trust my cast though and I know we all want a great show. Just looking forward to acting in front of a live audience!

### **Thursday Sept. 20<sup>th</sup>**

Opening night! Thank God! Oh man how amazing it was to have a live audience and a full house! We got laughs and oohhs and ahhs! They loved me and the hated me. I received the most incredible feedback from my peers and I can't tell you how amazing that felt. I was actually surprised how well we did and that we received a standing ovation. Billy was the most amazing Adam and I'm so proud of him! Cassie was brilliant and I love acting with her. She is so honest and real and has the most natural instinct. She is an amazing listener and our chemistry one stage is never forced and I love her! Best part: scene three was amazing and had no mistakes! Honestly the best we have ever performed it. I nailed my monologue and felt incredible!

### **Friday Sept. 21<sup>st</sup>**

Another wonderful show. The audience enjoyed themselves and my monologue was flawless. Billy and I seemed to really connect and be playful in both scene two and four. Scene ten was so intense! Love it! I definitely saw a progression in my acting for both scenes nine and ten. I trusted Billy completely.

### **Saturday Sept. 22<sup>nd</sup>**

Tonight was amazing! I feel like we are improving every night and no big mess ups. I'm proud of my cast and myself. The energy felt a little down at first, but picked up towards scene three. Scene 3 seemed off, but still a fantastic show.

### **Sunday Sept. 23<sup>rd</sup>**

Bitter sweet today. My mom came up to see my show and she loved it! We had an astonishing final show! My monologue was the best I had ever done and scene ten was marvelous! Everything went great! Good bye cast and crew. Good bye *Shape*

## Appendix B: Character Analysis

### TEXT WORK

- 1. What Adam says about me:** “Thanks. But, you’re not gonna return the favor right?” p. 3 “No I understand the words you’ve used here, although they’re both subjective: art. Truth.” p.5 “Ahh, so, you’re a student, then, or is this just basic anarchy?” p.6 “Thesis? You’re graduating?” p.7 “...I meant every day. So far, anyway, since we first went [to pizza hunt]...” p.10 “Anything, any moment I can get with you...that’s what I’d like.” p.11 “PDA Public display of affection. I’m not used to that...” p.11 “I think this is a bigger discussion than before Jenny and Phillip get here...” p.11 “...you amazing me.” p.11 “Because you suggested it. Which is kinda pathetic, but true...” p.12 “...I mean, I’m doing it for you.” p.12 “I really don’t know anything about you...” p.13 “Illinois. Near Chicago...Twenty-five...Gemini.” p.13 “...why would you like me? I’m not anything, I mean...and you’re so...” p.14 “I think you’re amazing...and you have a great ass.” p.14 “Those’re very wise words from someone with such a great ass...” p.15 “I’m not taking sides, I’m trying to get outta here with just a touch of dignity, okay?” p. 21 “...I wanna tell you something, and this isn’t because we’ve been sleeping together or because you mentioned another girl, it’s not, I can’t stop thinking about you. I can’t.” p.25 “...I am so whipped. You are dangerously close to owning me.” p.25 “...it may be a touch early to start dictating who my friends are.” p. 30 “Geez, he really got under your skin, didn’t he?” p. 30 “..she’s amazing, really.” p.35 “It’s Ann. Evelyn Ann Thompson.” p.36 “Wait a minute, your name’s ‘Thompson,’ that’s not Jewish.” p.42 “I love



your arm.” p.45 “She doesn’t drink coffee.” p.51 “You don’t think coffee...”  
p.62 “This is inappropriate okay?” p.65 “She’s making that up...” p.66 “Let’s  
just drop it okay? If you’re angry with me, alright...” p.66 “No, listen, what you  
did was shitty, and awful and just plain wrong.” p.67 “You have no right to do  
that.” p.68 “It was still wrong to treat her like that! And me.” p.68 “I’ll do  
anything you want.” p.70 “...I love you.” p.71

**What Phillip says about me:** “...What does that mean, anyway? ‘I’m an artist?’”

p.19 “No, wait Adam, I wanna hear...what ‘impulse?’ It’s called ‘vandalism.’”  
p.19 “This is like, uncalled for okay?” p.20 “Which ‘take back the night’ rally  
did you find her at, Adam?” p.21 “Who the hell do you think you are, a few  
double dates and telling me anything about who I am?” p.21 “Adam you can  
really pick ‘em.” p.21 “You are not ...she’s not trying to take a poke at my being  
an undergrad, is she? Adam, tell me she didn’t just...” p.22 “...where in hell did  
you meet that bitch?! What’d she do, give you a haircut and a blow job and now  
you’re her puppy?!” p.22 “Well, I’ve gotta hand it to her, she certainly made a  
‘statement.’” p.50 “...that doesn’t seem to happen to her very often. She’s pretty  
sharp.” p.51

**What Jenny says about me:** “What kind of statement would that be? It was  
pornography...” p.19 “...and getting cuter by the day. What has this girl be doing  
to you?” p.35 “Right, but later he [Phillip] said something like, ‘He [Adam]  
could do worse.’” p. 36 “...this girl is a messiah.” p.37 “..I love this woman.”  
p.37 “Right, you’ve got a big thing you’re doing, or, what do you call it?” p.59  
“...you know, I was gonna say, I think what you’ve done with Adam, it’s really

great." p.60 "...sorry I'm not an artsy person or cool enough, sorry about that."

p.68

**2. What I say about myself:** "Anyway, you helped me, that was nice..." p.3

"Truthfully? I'm building up my nerve, and if I go back over, I'll probably be a big wuss about it and take off..." p.4 "I was going to deface the statue." p.4

"Because I don't like art that isn't true." p.5 "False art. I hate that..." p.5

"Exactly! That's the beauty of art...it's subjective." p.5 "Yep. Student." p.6

"...M.F.A. Applied theory and criticism." p.6 "No, I'm just getting started on my thesis project now." p.7 "Anyway, this is only a pet peeve." p.7 "My brothers

loved that show [Kung Fu]." p.8 "Ask and you shall receive [kisses, sex]" p.11

"...Kiss if we want to, make love in the bathroom stall...who cares?" p.11

"Another time...I'd rather do it [make love in the bathroom stall]." p.11 "And do I seem to know my own mind?" p.15 "So, don't you trust me, then, to know how I

feel?" p.15 "...I think it's great. It's really amazing to find anyone willing to take a risk today. To look a little silly or different or anything." p.18 "I'm an

artist." p.19 "It means nothing, really, just that I understand the impulse..." p.19

"No, it [college] chose me, actually. Full scholarship." p.21 "...an educated

guess." p.22 "...That's nice to see, every so often. Someone gallant..." p.25

"Don't be so frightened of everything." p.29 "I don't think you need that kind of person [Phillip] in your life. No one does." p.30 "I hate that kind of guy

[Phillip]." p.30 "The only thing that would help him is a fucking knife in his

throat..." p.30 "I've been around his type, that's all. And I don't like 'em." p.30

"I'm one of those people [who had a nose job]. Would you ever've guessed that?"

p.41 "I had this terrible hook. 'The Jewish Slope,' we called it in Lake Forest..."

p.41 "You can guide my sleigh any night." p.43 "Stop being so morbid...it's just flesh." p. 43 "It's [flesh] one of the most perfect substances on earth. Natural, beautiful. Think about it..." p.44 "What's the matter with scars? Not a thing. Look at these...see there?" p.44 "They're scars...lots of little scars." p.45 "...I cut on myself a little, tried to get attention when I was a teenager, but I didn't want to slit my veins open. Or I would have..." p.45 "I'm a very straightforward person." p.45 "...They signify experience...make us unique." p.45 "...the idea of you having some surgery. It's an experience." p. 46 "Go check the handicapped stall. I'm suddenly very hungry..." p.47 "Thesis project. For my degree..." p.59 "...I hate sci-fi." p.60 "Yes...romance is good. Especially when you least expect it." p.60 "...or it could just be that I care about him [Adam]." p.61 "Good point. So I drink coffee, then, I just don't like the caffeine..." p.62 "Sometimes it's hard to read me. Know when I'm joking..." p. 64 "She knows Adam, she already said you've changed. And I already agreed." p.64 "I peeked twice [Adam's journal]." p. 65 "I'm just having coffee. Decaf." p. 65 "...I'm very open..." p.65 "No, no he didn't...Phillip did. We met and he told me all about it, Jenny. What you told him, anyway. The rest I got from lover boy's diary." p.65 "We're just talking. People need to share more, that's how this stuff happens, this covert stuff, because we hide it..." p.66 "No, I knew that...I'm sorry, I've confused you. I meant about my kiss. With Phillip. That's the part I wanted to talk about with you guys...I didn't make that clear?" p.66 "No that's getting even..." p.67 "...I could've told her about the blow job I gave him

...kidding.” p.67 “I don’t care what happened. I don’t. I just want the truth...I told you about I did...you think I wanted to kiss that guy? I only did it for the effect.” p.68 “Even if I tell you I know something else went on.” p.68 “No, it was a bluff. Because I could sense it...” p.69 “I don’t believe you.” p.69 “Are you tired of me? ‘S that it?” p.69 “...I don’t wanna sound old fashion here...” p.69 “...I know the type [Jenny]...” p.69 “I just wanna know where we stand...I thought I could trust you.” p.70 “...I’m your girlfriend...where’s the trust in that?” p.70 “Anything I say?” p.71 “That’s what I want. That’s the proof to me about how you feel.” p.71 “One should always be careful when asking to be put to the test.” p.71 “My task here tonight to unveil my semester’s work...” p.75 “...since I realize I have been my entire academic life, at someone’s mercy that is, which reaches back to when I was five.” p.75 “I was given an engagement ring two days ago and I haven’t answered the guy yet.” p.75 “My graduate advisor gave me this advice five months ago, ‘strive to make art, but change the world,’ ....and so, as a good little student that’s what I set out to do.” p.75 “With that in mind, I present to you this, my newest work. It is a human sculpture on which I’ve worked these past eighteen weeks on, and of whom I am very proud.” p.75 “In fact, I’ve done all I could to be as visible as possible with him this year. I’m more of a stay-at-home person myself.” p.75 “...the piece itself is untitled since I think, I hope, that it will mean something different to each of you and, frankly, anyone who sees it.” p.76 “...I coaxed him into eating his first vegetarian meal...it does mark the beginning of my systematic makeover, or sculpting, if you will, on my two very pliable materials: the human flesh and the human will.” p.76

“He even tattooed his body for me” p. 77 “I made sure nothing was ever forced...I made suggestions, created the illusion of interest and desire, but never said, ‘You must do this.’ Never.” p. 77 “You may be asking yourselves, did she at least tell him? Of course not, no, I couldn’t. He is more than that...he’s my creation.” p. 77 “I’ve gone a step further. I found that with the right coaxing, yes coaxing, often of a sexual nature, I’ll admit, I could hone the inside of my sculpture as well as the outside.” p. 78 “I have no regrets or feelings of remorse for my actions, the manufactured emotions...none of it. I have always stood by the single and simple conceit that I am an artist. Only that. I follow in a long tradition of artists who believe that there is no such concept as religion, or government, community or even family. This is only art. Art that must be created. Whatever the cost.” p. 79 “Doesn’t matter now, do what you want...you’re finished.” p.80 “...yeah, that might’ve been a bit too far.” p.80 “I don’t get that...[Gregor Samsa]” p.81 “...listen, I know my work relied on not telling you what was going on, but I...” p.81 “I did lie to you, yes...” p.81 “I had to say that. Sorry.” p.81 “I’m not sorry. I mean, not what I’ve done. I just feel bad that you’re so upset.” p.81 “I even thought maybe you could handle it. I did, really...” p.81 “I just want to keep it as truthful as possible.” p.82 “What’d I do wrong? Seriously, tell me...” p.82 “...what was so bad? I wanna know, tell me...from your perspective.” p.82 “Go ahead...tell me what I did wrong. If I did something wrong.” p.83 “Everything I did made you a more desirable person, Adam. People began to notice you...take an interest in you. I watched them...” p.83 “You [Adam] are my installation thingie...” p.83 “All that stuff we did was

real for you, therefore it was real. It wasn't for me, therefore it wasn't. It's all subjective. Everything." p.83 "Just so I'd have it...all of you." p.84 "I did take that risk [to get sued]." p.84 "...Adam, this is my work. I'll give back whatever you want, soon as I get my grade." p.85 "...so you're saying I should be a better person." p.86 "My mom's name is Anderson..." p.87 "Twenty-two. Just...I skipped two grades." p.87 "I made it up [the scars]." p.87 "No, Pisces. Sorry." p.87 "I meant that. I did [the whisper]." p.87

## PAST

1. My childhood was short and lost. I was an only child raised by parents who were socialites. My father came from a wealthy family and inherited a lot of money from his father's death. My mother was a spoiled brat who was a party planner for the rich and famous. Therefore, my mom and dad went to every party and every event and left me with a nanny, Raja. I was spoiled and was never denied anything, except their attention and time. Raja was an unsuccessful artist, but continued to paint and explore her art for herself. Her parents abandoned her and the only thing that was consistent and always there for her was her art. Her dedication was inspirational and I could relate to her, even though she was three times my age. She educated me on all legendary artists and the unknown artists as well. She was brilliant and was more of a mother to me than my own. She was stoic and wouldn't allow others to put her down. She taught me not to feel sorry for myself and those around me and always remember there were no limits when trying to get what you want. I had no friends and trusted no one, not even my nanny. She wouldn't allow me to because she told me that one day she would

disappoint me and hurt me. I was educated at the finest schools and graduated with honors. I never had a relationship, but had many lovers. I rarely drank and never allowed myself to alter my mind with drugs.

2. Three experiences that made a lasting impression on me were: Raja's death (she committed suicide when I was eighteen), getting accepted to The Art Institute of New York City, and my first sexual encounter with a French man who worked with my father; he was 45 and I was 16, although I told him I was 18.
3. What are the five most important known things about me: art is the most imperative thing in my life: it gives me oxygen. I'm sexually unrestricted. I'm well educated. I speak my mind. I never take no for an answer.
4. The five most powerful members of my private audience are: Raja, my graduate advisor Ian, David Smith (the most influential abstract expressionist artist), Jackson Pollock, and Wassily Kandinsky.

## **PRESENT**

1. My super objective is: I want to transform Adam into my thesis project; become my human sculpture.
2. My scene objectives are: Scene 1 – To get Adam to ask me out so he can be my project. Scene 2 – To motivate Adam to continue his progress.  
Scene 3 – To defend my art, my statement I made with the statue.  
Scene 4 – To get Adam to realize he doesn't need people like Phillip in his life. Scene 6 – To get Adam to go along with the idea of surgery.  
Scene 8 – To get Adam to give up his friends once and for all.  
Scene 9 – To reveal my semester's work to Adam and his friends.

Scene 10 – To get Adam to understand that everything I did was subjective and for my art.

3. My obstacles are Adam's friends, Jenny and Phillip. Adam is in love with Jenny, who's everything I'm not: adorable, optimistic, and in love with Adam. Phillip is arrogant and disapproves of me. He both wants me sexually and wants me gone. In order for me to complete my thesis project I need Adam all to myself and Jenny and Phillip both stand in my way.
4. Tactics/actions: Scene 1 – flirt, challenge, charm, impress, attract, play, excite, and entice. Scene 2 – motivate, flirt, tease, seduce, and compliment. Scene 3 – fake enjoyment, play, impress, intimidate, mock, and provoke. Scene 4 – seduce, excite, relax, force, and persuade. Scene 6 – comfort, relax, motivate, reveal, and seduce. Scene 8 – investigate, patronize, question, crush, intimidate, threaten, coerce, make uncomfortable, and tease. Scene 9 – engage, reveal, present, explain, and expose. Scene 10 – explain, defend, risk, crush, and block.
5. **Locations:** the museum, the restaurant lobby, Adam's bedroom, Phillip's apartment, the doctor's lounge, the auditorium, and my exhibition gallery.  
**Environment:** an un-artistic and mind-numbing cluster of friends – Jenny, Phillip, and Adam, fellow artist who inspire and push the limits of creativity and law, and art professors.  
**Mood:** positive, confident, harsh, facsimile, concentrated  
**Weather:** late winter/early spring. Light jacket weather
6. I am most interested in art.



7. I am least interested in ordinary.
8. In this play I discover how dedicated I am to pursuing my art and accomplishing my objectives.
9. In this play I decide that the following things are important: truth and art.
10. In this play I decide that the following things are **not** important: being liked or agreed with.

**Appendix C: Cast List**

Evelyn ..... Kelsey Amann

Adam ..... Billy Walkenhorst

Jenny ..... Cassie Ballard

Phillip ..... Josh Wolk

## Appendix D: Rehearsal Schedule

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
	20 R 2:30 – 5 Read thru Character analysis	21 R 2:30 – 5 Block scn. 3,9	22 R 11:00 – 1:30 Block scn. 5,7, 2 Phil call @ 12:00 <i>Evelyn OFF</i>	23 R 2:30 – 5 Work scn. 8,4 <i>Phil OFF</i>	24	25
26	27 R 6:30 – 9:30 Block scn. 6,10 <b>NO SCRIPT</b> <i>Jenny, Phillip</i> <i>OFF</i>	28 R 6:30 – 9:30 Block scn. 1,2 <i>Jenny, Phillip</i> <i>OFF</i>	29 R 6:30 – 9:30 Work scn 1-3	30 R 6:30 – 9:30 Work scn. 4-7	31	1
2	3 Labor Day No class No rehearsal	4 R 6:30 – 9:30 Work scn. 8-10	5 R 6:30 – 9:30 Work scn. 1-5 <b>NO LINE CALL</b> (except E's mono)	6 R 6:30 – 9:30 Work scn. 6-10	7	8
9	10 R 6:30 – 9:30 Scene touch-up	11 R 6:30 – 9:30 Run thru	12 R 6:30 – 9:30 Run thru <b>NO MONOLOGUE</b> <b>LINE CALL</b>	13 R 6:30 – 9:30 Run thru	14	15
16 TECH WEEK Time TBA Run thru	17 Tech Time TBA Run thru	18 Tech Time TBA Run thru	19 PREVIEW NIGHT Time TBA	20 OPENING NIGHT!	21 SHOW	22 SHOW
23 SHOW (Matinee)						

### Tech Week Rehearsal Schedule

<b>Friday, Sept. 14th</b>	6:00 PM	Crew Call
	6:30 PM	Actor Call
	7:00 PM	Cue-to-cue - GO
	10:00 PM	Tech Notes
<b>Saturday, Sept. 15th</b>	12:30 PM	Actor/Crew Call
	1:00 PM	Cue-to-cue - GO
	6:30 PM	Actor/Crew Call
	7:00 PM	Full Run - GO
	10:00 PM	Tech Notes
<b>Monday, Sept. 17th</b>	5:45 PM	Actor/Crew Call
	6:30 PM	Warm-Ups/Half Hour
	7:00 PM	First Dress Run - GO
	10:00 PM	Tech Notes
<b>Tuesday, Sept. 18th</b>	5:45 PM	Actor/Crew Call
	6:30 PM	Warm-ups/Half Hour

	7:00 PM	Press Photo Day/Dress Run - GO
	10:00 PM	Tech Notes
<b>Wednesday, Sept. 19<sup>th</sup></b>	6:15 PM	Actor/Crew Call
	7:00 PM	Warm - ups/Preview & Taping Night - House Open
	7:30 PM	Show - GO
<b>Thursday, Sept. 20<sup>th</sup></b>	6:15 PM	Actor/Crew Call
	7:00 PM	Warm-ups/House Open
	7:30 PM	Show - GO
<b>Friday, Sept. 21<sup>st</sup></b>	6:15 PM	Actor/Crew Call
	7:00 PM	Warm-ups/House Open
	7:30 PM	Show - GO
<b>Saturday, Sept. 22<sup>nd</sup></b>	6:15 PM	Actor/Crew Call
	7:00 PM	Warm-ups/House Open
	7:30 PM	Show - GO
<b>Sunday, Sept. 23<sup>rd</sup></b>	12:45 PM	Actor/Crew Call
	1:30 PM	Warm-ups/House Open
	2:00 PM	Show - GO

Appendix E: Production Poster & Photos



**Scene 1: The Museum with Evelyn and Adam (Photography: Jim Koehnle)**

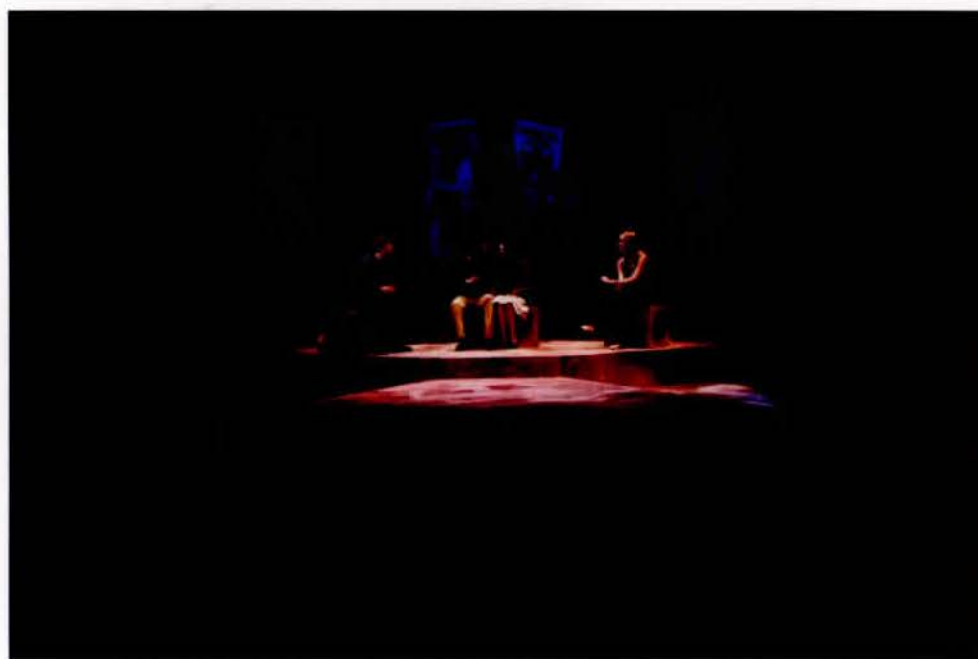


**Scene 2: The Restaurant Lobby with Evelyn, Adam, Jenny, and Phillip**





**Scene 3: The Living Room with Evelyn, Adam, Jenny, and Phillip**



**Scene 4: The Bedroom Scene with Evelyn and Adam**



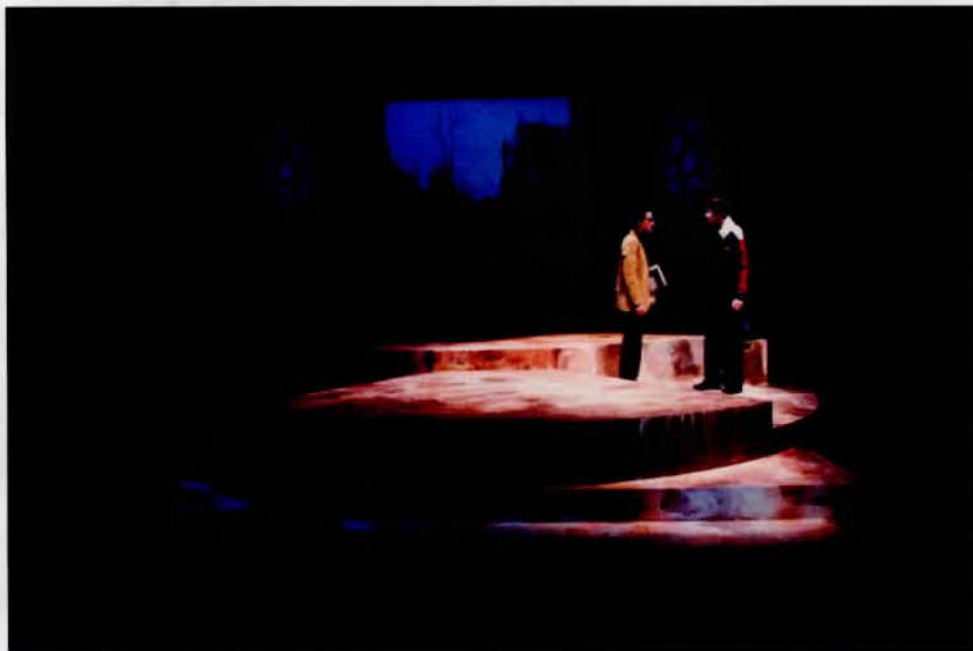
**Scene 5: The Park with Jenny and Adam**



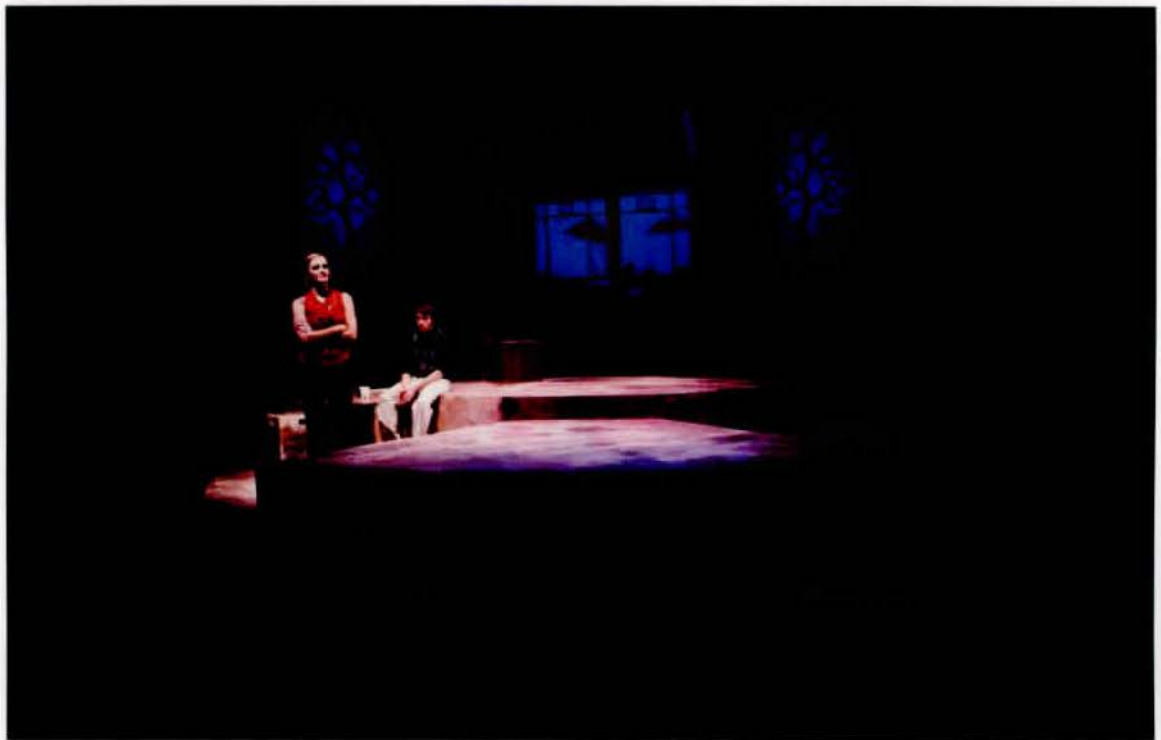
**Scene 6: The Doctor's Lounge with Evelyn and Adam**



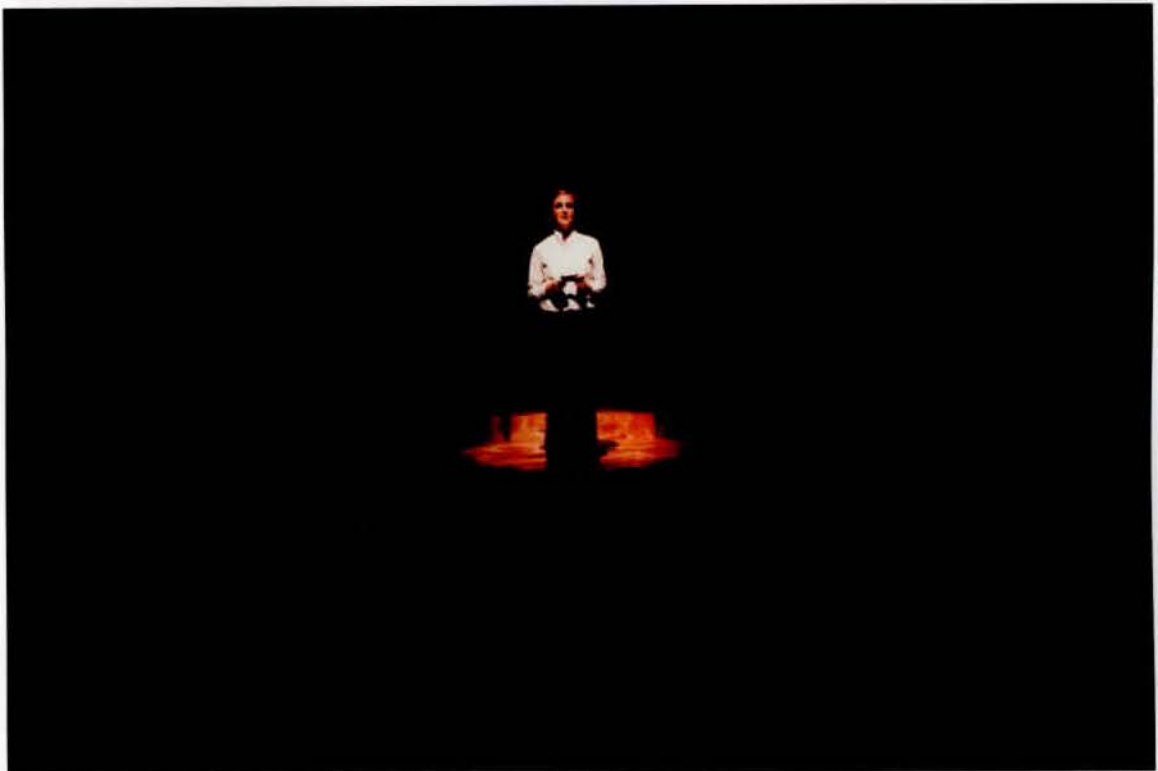
**Scene 7: The Lawn with Adam and Phillip**



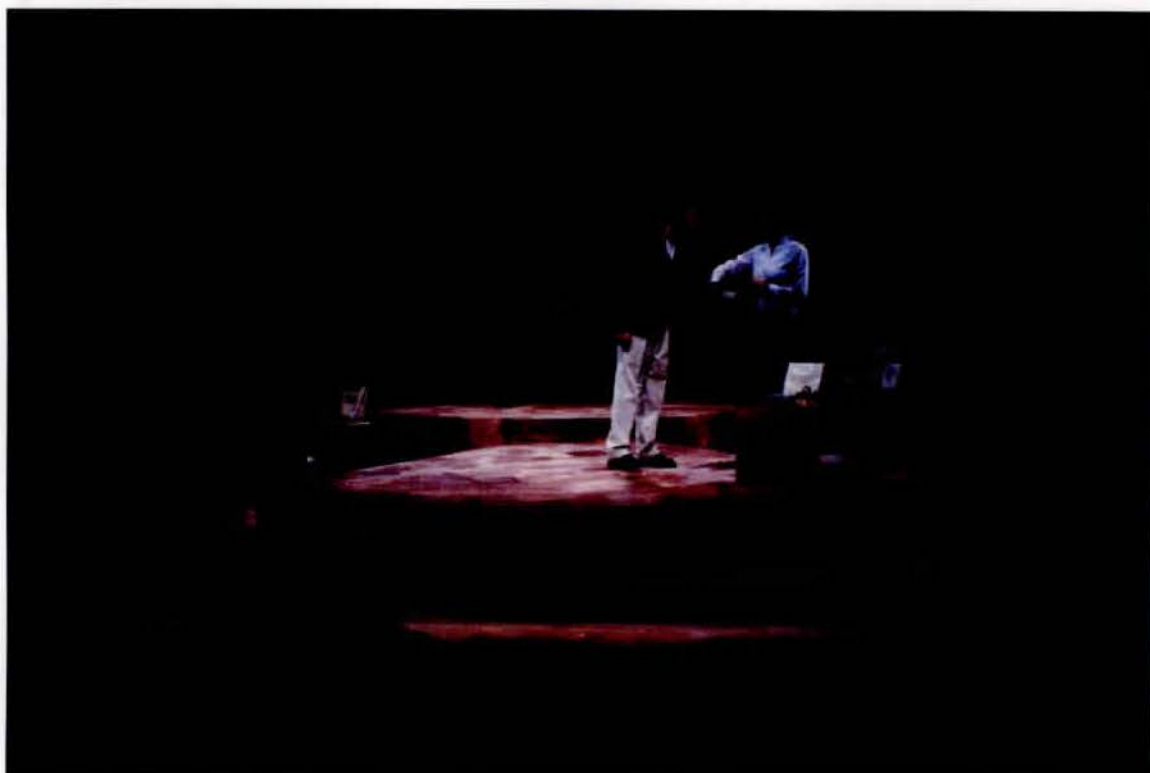
Scene 8: The Coffee Show with Evelyn, Adam, and Jenny



**Scene 9: The Auditorium with Evelyn, Adam, Jenny, and Phillip**



**Scene 10: The Exhibition Gallery with Evelyn and Adam**





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