

SNOWBOUND: VOICING THE ACTOR'S PERSPECTIVE

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Abstract

This work is both a project of self-exploration as well as an attempt to give voice, as a writer and a director, to a child actor's 20 year perspective of the television, theatre and film industry.

Through a series of writing exercises and directorial projects the author experiments with and refines the use of metaphor to universalize her personal experiences. Investigations into memory and autobiography prompted the author to re-order her primary experiences into a work of art that might speak to adolescent and young adult identity formation. The two-year process of writing, performing and directing resulted in the production of the play *Snowbound*, which is an examination of how those we love influence our identity and of who we are outside of the roles we all play. This play, following the life of one actor from child to adulthood, speaks to the particular challenges of those who grow up in the shadow of the entertainment industry, as well as to the generalized difficulties of navigating adolescence into adulthood.

Dedication

For Erika Batdorf,

whose artistic vision has given me the courage to be seen.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Abstract	ii
Dedication	iii
Acknowledgement.....	iv
Table of Contents	v
Chapter One: Artistic Challenge.....	1
Chapter Two: Performance Research Document.....	12
Conclusion.....	21
Works Cited	27
Appendices.....	29
Appendix A: Snowbound by Madeleine Martin.....	29
Appendix B: Selected Journals.....	73

Chapter One: Artistic Challenge

The Dramaturgy of Autobiography; Voicing the Actor's Perspective

Having lived exclusively in the world of performance, in the television and theatre industries over the last twenty years, the artistic challenge I have embraced in this program is to give voice to the actor's perspective through my own writing and directing. Accompanying me through the process of discovering my own voice and perspective as a playwright/director are other actors who have transitioned to writers and directors, academics who research identity formation and autofiction, and writers dedicated to sharing their seeds of inspiration and practical techniques. In addition to this academic research, I explored sessions with Thomas Costello, Director and Instructor at Atlantic Acting School, NYC, and Maggie Grace, a former colleague and actor in NYC to workshop scenes from my play. Throughout this studio and academic research, I've discovered the benefits of professional feedback at every stage of the creation process. Having actors and directors read the scenes I am writing is essential to the editing process, especially because the medium of drama works synergistically with an audience. I am also discovering the importance of metaphor in providing material that resonates with audience members in their interpretation of their own lives.

During my time in various theatrical productions in NYC, I participated in Q and A's with high school students who attended the performances as part of their educational cultural studies programs. These were largely not Performing Arts school students on an acting trajectory, but students from public high schools who had a scheduled trip to the theater, and a talk-back with the actors was scheduled after these performances. As a performer in *Picnic* by William Inge, I played the role of Milly at The Roundabout Theatre Company. Milly is the "book smart" sister

rather than the “world class beauty” sister Madge. In Inge’s play, Milly continually plays a role subservient to her sister Madge’s romantic life. Milly doesn’t have any romantic involvement, and by the end of the play she’s going to go off to New York City to become a writer. A young woman, from one of these high school classes, asked me in the Q and A after the show, “How do you deal with being the ugly sister?” I was taken aback, because although Inge’s script never describes Milly as unattractive, I suspected she was simply comparing my ordinary appearance with that of the dazzlingly lovely Maggie Grace. After reading Maria Tatar’s *The Heroine with 1,001 Faces*, I now realize, however, what this young student was really asking was, “how do you get through this time in life when one becomes so painfully aware of how one is perceived by the world?” Young women, in particular, routinely confront societal preoccupation with physical beauty which interferes with how they see themselves and which limits their ability to forge their own authentic identity in the world. The young women I listened to, in the Q and A’s after my theatre performances, often expressed preoccupation with their shifting identity at a time when the external world is bombarding them with restrictive images of how they should be.

As a way of addressing my own answer to this perennial and essential quest for identity, I began writing my play *Snowbound*, based on my experience as a performer in the television and theatre industries. *Snowbound*’s main character Lily is a former child actor who faces challenges as an adult because of having grown up in the fantasy worlds of theatre and television. *Snowbound* follows Lily’s interactions with Sam, a fellow former child actor with whom she grew up performing with in various productions, and her search for her identity outside of the roles she plays.

As a first-time playwright from a performance-only background, I researched a Philosophy of Aesthetics approach to theatre, meaning analysis of a drama in much the same way

one analyzes a painting: exploring who the creator is in their personal life and how their unique experience of the world may influence their creation of their play or painting. This perspective lends itself to the intense identity exploration experienced particularly in adolescence and corresponded with my desire for my dramatic creation to possibly work as a vehicle of empowerment as well as entertainment. While I was a student in Professor David Jansen's Graduate Research Seminar, I was given the space to explore this field for my final research paper, which introduced me to this scholarly work which has assisted me in writing my play. The study of theatre from a Philosophy of Aesthetics perspective lends itself to focusing on why certain theatrical productions evoke an emotional response in us and what that response can tell us about the creator, ourselves, and those around us.

One resource for studying theatre from a Philosophy of Aesthetics approach is Jeffrey Leptauk Moreau's article "Does It Matter If It's Beautiful: Aesthetics in Education, Part Two." Moreau posits that by studying theatre through a philosophical lens one will achieve higher levels of "cognitive development", as a result of the structure offered by aesthetics, through which one may organize and articulate one's perceptions of art, and also one's experience of the world (2). Because one of my goals with *Snowbound* is to eventually perform it in an educational setting in which I can lead a workshop with students afterwards and they may connect elements of my play to elements in their own lives, I found Moreau's suggestions for philosophical discussions with students instructive.

Although I am writing about the narrow experience of a child actor wondering who he or she is outside of the parts they have played, everyone, at some a point in his or her life, grapples with the determination of where they fit in the larger world. One desire for my play *Snowbound* is that individuals may experience this work as a springboard towards self-examination of their

own lives. Professor Tzachi Zamir, in his book *Acts: Theater, Philosophy, and the Performing Self* agrees that theatre offers an opportunity for reflective self-analysis. Zamir writes that the audience of a theatrical performance is “invited to play along with the actor’s leap into being other” (171). For Zamir, the actor also grows and changes as a result of taking on a character for an extended period of time, and members of the audience may similarly experience growth and change, to the extent they are able to identify with the character being portrayed (171).

The idea that an actor changes through the portrayal of a part resonates with me. As a teenager I frequently portrayed characters on stage who were assertive and confident in a way that I was not in my own life, but through the portrayal of these characters I came to find that even after the play ended, I carried a sliver of each character’s self-assuredness with me, and it gradually became my own. Zamir sympathizes with this idea as he writes that individuals are generally exposed to a limited number of identities in their lives of who they may be, but through acting a role in a play one may try on various identities on the stage and this embodied work with an alternative self may assist one in “[choosing] who one is” outside of the theatre as well (5,173). Zamir’s observations provided a perspective which clarified my own viewpoint as an actor; these insights assisted me in the creation of my main character Lily and her experiences as a child performer.

A further resource providing guidance to me as an actor writing a play is Marcia Muelder Eaton’s *Basic Issues in Aesthetics*, in which she stipulates “...what makes artists special is not their ability to feel but to understand” (29). For Eaton, simply because one feels an emotion after witnessing a work of art or a play does not mean the creator feels the same emotion when creating the work, but rather, the playwright understands that emotional feeling and can recreate it for the audience to process (25-27). In this sense, having been an actor throughout the most

formative stages of my life is fitting preparation for becoming a playwright, since actors regularly concern themselves with recreating emotion. Thus, creating a play which inspires young people to examine their lives requires a playwright who has reflected on the emotional significance of past events in her life, in order to elucidate these experiences for others.

One of the obvious differences between being an actor in a play and being playwright and director of a play, is that a playwright has authority over the story being told. An actor in a play may make a role one's own, but one necessarily receives direction. As playwright and director of my play, most responsibility for bringing the story to life rests with me. Professor Maria Tatar's book *The Heroine with 1,001 Faces* provides many templates of female characters who employ writing as means of asserting agency in their lives. Tatar's book is a compelling counterpoint to Joseph Campbell's *The Hero with a Thousand Faces*, since Campbell focuses exclusively on male hero's in literature and Tatar focuses her attention on female heroines. In her book, Tatar explores the heroine's journey through folklore, literature, and Hollywood films. Tatar plays particular attention to female characters who "...[claim] agency through storytelling" and "...write to make [their] own way in the world" such as Jo March in Louisa May Alcott's *Little Women* and Francie in *A Tree Grows in Brooklyn* (105, 154). Tatar quotes author Carolyn Heilbrun's idea that writing is "...a form of self-actualization and also of self-creation", and for whom storytelling is the way to "...transform the culture in which she lives" (225, 10). Heilbrun's view of storytelling dovetails with my own desire as a creator to address ways in which society perpetuates unhelpful female stereotypes.

In one chapter, Tatar writes of the way in which reading is a formative experience for Francie in *A Tree Grows in Brooklyn* (182). Through reading, Francie discovers the "magic" of the world of imagination where one can "...build a solid bridge between the mental conception

of things and their real-world embodiment” (Tatar 182). I find this idea correlates to my experience in the theatre as a child performer. As a child, I’d watch the actor performing the role of the Mother Abbess in *The Sound of Music* while she was singing “Climb Every Mountain”, and from the wings backstage I could also look out on the audience and witness the tear-stained faces of audience members affected by her performance. Just as reading is Francie’s introduction to the power of imagination and storytelling, theatre was my introduction to the human response to an elevated emotive experience on stage, an experience which synergistically connects the playwright to the audience.

A further source influencing my work on identity formation is Carol Gilligan’s *In a Different Voice: Psychological Theory and Women’s Development*. In her book, Gilligan explores the “psychic split” which occurs in adolescent young women in which they dissociate from their authentic voice as a result of societal influence and conditioning (xiii). Gilligan posits that young women, in particular, are indoctrinated with the belief that selfhood requires selflessness and the care of others, a view which can cause women to view relationships as the core aspect of their identity (12-13). Thus, during adolescence, when a young woman could be discovering and defining her authentic self, she instead focuses on defining herself as a friend, a sister, a daughter or any other relational role. Gilligan cites Jean Baker Miller’s research that because women are taught that relationships are of primary importance for a sense of self, women alter aspects of their identity in order to fit into their relationships (xxiii-xxiv).

Gilligan’s research caused me to re-examine my experiences as a child actor and inform Lily’s journey in *Snowbound*. While previously I considered my own identity crisis as the result of having spent too much time playing characters written by others, I now see that all individuals experience societal pressure which impacts the emergence of an authentic self, and the

questioning of one's identity is not unique to child actors but is also common among women and in the general population. Just as my character Lily desires to forge her own identity outside of the roles she performs, all individuals yearn to discover who they are outside of their relationships to their family and friends. Consequently, it is my goal that Lily's struggle with self-definition outside of the roles she plays as an actor will resonate with the identity formation journeys of the readers and audience members encountering this play.

As a first-time writer, I studied Natalie Goldberg's *Writing Down the Bones* in which she offers practical advice for getting past writer's block, dealing with imposter syndrome, and finding one's own voice. Goldberg posits that writers are too often creatively stifled by the pressure of producing a full-length piece of work such as a novel or a play, and so it is beneficial to allow oneself time to write "without a destination" (11). This directionless writing gives one creative freedom and can operate as a warmup for one's directed writing of a play. I found this advice intuitively helpful since it reminded me of the physical exercises I do to warm up my body and my voice for a performance. Similarly, as a playwright, I now begin each writing session by writing down pressing thoughts or memories without the goal of including these pages of writing in my play; ironically, I frequently find I do end up including pieces of my stream of consciousness writing practice within my play.

Writing a play inspired by my personal experience requires me to sift through early childhood memories from the beginning of my career as an actor. Goldberg offers the useful advice that one should not get embroiled in unnecessary details of a story which will only disorientate one's reader or audience (55). When recalling memories, it is common to want to include every detail one remembers of an experience; however, as Goldberg points out, just because something is memorable to oneself does not mean that it will be helpful for converting

one's experience into a narrative arch. Instead, as Goldberg suggests, one should aim for "precision [not] self-indulgence" in one's storytelling; meaning that one should keep in mind one's "goal" in writing and omit extraneous details that will detract from the narrative (55).

Since it is imperative to me that my play speak to those who may not have experience in the entertainment industry, now when I write, I focus more on details in my memories which are more likely to be relatable to a wide range of individuals, not just those who have spent time working in theatre or television. Goldberg's writing manual instructs one to approach writing as a way of mining one's unique experiences to achieve greater understanding of one's own life. I found *Writing Down the Bones* to be a valuable guide for what I should look for in my memories as I attempt to bring them to life on the page.

Because I'm writing a memory play based on my own experiences, I've found it helpful to look into autobiographical theatre. Colette Conroy, Sarah Jane Dickenson and Giuliana Mazzoni in "The Not Knowns': Memory, Narrative, and Applied Theatre" outline their work producing theatre with individuals from underrepresented communities. An interesting finding from their research is the use of theatre, as opposed to film or a novel, as a valuable space for articulating and sharing one's memories (Conroy et al. 70). One reason for the usefulness of theatre as a space to share memories is that "memory is more theatrical than filmic" (Conroy et al. 70). As Conroy, Dickenson, and Mazzoni illustrate, one's recollections of the past are not static, but rather, change as one interacts with one's environment (70). Theatre is therefore a fitting medium for sharing one's memories because "each iteration is thought to be both repetition and an original moment" (Conroy et al. 70). Theatre is the only medium in which one is able to share the same story over and over again each night finding "new details" which put one's "memory in action" (Conroy et al. 69-70). Thus, theatre, like memory, is fluid and changes

with each performance and each recollection, which is why I chose this medium for the telling of a story based on my experience of being a child actor. Night after night, for example, as I performed the same role for two years of Jean Fordham in Tracy Letts' *August Osage County*, looking out at the audience members in each particular performance, I found new and varied emotional chords to strike within my continually repeated lines.

For Conroy, Dickenson and Mazzoni, the retelling of one's memories in a staged play is an act of defining oneself. For a playwright, "the process of recollecting is not a process of accessing stored pictures or files but more a process of narrative construction" in which memories are "reconstructed or reimagined at every recollection" (Conroy et al. 62). Conroy, Dickenson and Mazzoni speak of the danger of the "canonical memory" which "casts the rememberer as the victim of an event which s/he finds overwhelming and in which s/he has no control (68). However, through the "process of making" one's memories into a theatrical experience one may recall forgotten details of a traumatic event which aid in the transformation of this memory into one in which one has agency (Conroy et al. 68). Conroy, Dickenson, and Mazzoni's research regarding memory has helped me process my experiences as an actor and as a grieving child dealing with the loss of a parent into a narrative arch for the character of Lily. The process of translating memories in which I was an actor without agency and a child without control over a life tragedy into a play of which I am the writer and director provides me with control and therapeutic agency.

I found parallels to Conroy, Dickenson, and Mazzoni's research on memory in Sarah Polley's autobiography *Run Towards the Danger*. Polley also finds memory to be fluid and that "the past and present...are in constant dialogue" (2). Polley writes:

When I was lucky enough to have experiences in adulthood that echoed pivotal, difficult memories, and to have those experiences go another, better way than they had in the past, my relationship to those memories shifted. The meaning of long-ago experiences transformed in the context of the ever-changing present. (Polley 2)

Polley's articulation of memory, and the way in which she is able to give voice to her young self through the choices she makes today speaks to what I wish my play to inspire others to do for themselves. By writing a story based on one's memories, one may convert a childhood trauma into an opportunity for individual and community catharsis.

An insightful source for caring for oneself in the process of writing a play based on sensitive personal aspects of one's life is Sarah Jane Dickenson's article "The Playwright and Applied Drama." Dickenson writes that the use of metaphor in a play both protects the playwright from having to lay bare emotionally devastating moments of their life while also creating a work of theatre that allows audience members to "...craft their own interpretation of socially available narratives and tropes (287). For example, in *Snowbound*, Lily speaks of her desire to retreat into her snow globe rather than deal with the discomfort of sexual exploitation she has experienced on the set. Inspired by Dickenson's idea that metaphor protects the playwright and opens up the stage experience to audience identification, I chose to use snow as a metaphor for Lily's desire to escape and anesthetize herself from pain. Additionally, Dickenson writes of the use of "mini plays" used in "workshop contexts" which "...contain rounded characters gifted with inner life and the possibility of transformation" (286). In the Spring of 2022 when I worked with BFA students in York University's CODA project, I was able to experiment with creating scenes in my play with my secondary character Sam. Through my work

in this project, I was able to workshop aspects of Sam's personality in a way that I would be unable to do on my own, while also receiving critical feedback on my writing and directing.

Over the Summer of 2022, I continued to workshop scenes from *Snowbound*, which contain dialogue between Sam and Lily, with a director and teacher at Atlantic Acting School in NYC, Tom Costello. We worked together by filming our readings in which he portrayed Sam, and I portrayed Lily. As I viewed the scenes afterwards, these recorded readings facilitated my ability to step into the role of playwright and director. Through my work with Mr. Costello, I edited my stage directions for clarity and made changes to Sam's dialogue. Additionally, I worked with actor Maggie Grace and had her read Lily's monologues so that I could hear them read by another actor other than myself, and thus view them from the director and playwright's perspective. I find Lily's voice becomes clearer to me the more actors I hear speaking her lines.

Finally, I saw *The Nosebleed* by Aya Ogawa at LCT3 in August of 2022. Ogawa is writer, director, and one of the performers in her play which depicts her unresolved grief over a traumatic failure in her life, as well as her struggle with her cultural identity. Audience members are asked to participate by sharing a failure of their own. I chose to see this play because I wanted to view a production where the writer and director is also a performer. Interestingly, Ogawa's play asks many of the same questions I am asking with *Snowbound*, but while Ogawa poses these questions to her audience by literally asking the audience for their answers, I am using metaphor to pose questions. The friends with whom I attended the performance of *The Nosebleed* spoke of their discomfort in being asked to participate in the performance. Their discomfort caused them to disengage from aspects of the performance. The experience of seeing this play and experiencing this feedback from audience members leads me to adapt Sarah Jane

Dickenson's research on metaphor as the most productive way to explore emotional turmoil on stage.

Through my research on the work of performers who became playwrights and academics who explore self-actualization through autofiction, I am working towards finding my voice as a dramatist. Additionally, workshopping my play with theatre artists helps me refine the voices of my characters. As I embark on the challenging journey of writing a play inspired by my own experiences as a performer, I've discovered beneficial resources and tools which make construction of my next play a more attainable goal.

Chapter Two: Performance Research Document

The germ of my play *Snowbound* came from overhearing a conversation about a former child actor who as an adult became an alcoholic with a drunk driving record. Over the years, I have noticed the tenor of that conversation often repeated in print and television media, because of the large numbers of child actors who, as adults, suffer from depression, anxiety, and substance abuse. In my twenty years experience within this industry, I've reflected on what it is about growing up as an actor in the entertainment industry that seems to lay the groundwork for the actor's instability as an adult. Actors are continually forming a familial type of bond, encouraged by the industry as a way of enhancing show-chemistry, with the cast of each production in which they are employed. These bonds can sometimes last years, as on a Broadway show, for example. The relationships terminate at the end of a particular show run, and the actor moves on to the next production crew and set of actors. The child and young adult actor, in the midst of their own personal identity formation, often works only with adults and has little opportunity to relate to peers. This disorienting situation, combined with the lack of a traditional

education, can persist throughout crucial years of self-development, causing young actors to experience low self-esteem and to search for a sense of belonging.

While many adolescents face issues of self-esteem and identity formation, the young actor has the additional challenge of assuming various personas in the workplace and the difficulty of sometimes distinguishing between dramatic versus actual identities. Based on my own experiences as a child and young adult performer, I wanted to create a young woman character, Lily, who travels from show to show in search of her own identity and who faces interpersonal challenges as an adult, because of her time spent growing up in the fantasy worlds of television and theatre.

Also, as a way of answering society's preoccupation with child actors who appear to self-destruct as adults, I conceived of my play, *Snowbound*, as providing insight into factors affecting young adults growing up in the entertainment industry. I wish to provide a view counter to the dominant perception that depression and self-destruction are inevitable for the young actor, since, also based on my own experience, the diverse experiences in which many young performers engage, can also enrich their imagination and sense of creativity.

These enriching influences may also enhance the young actor's sense of connection to the larger world. Sarah Polley's biography *Run Towards the Danger: Confrontations with a Body of Memory* reinforced my inspiration for *Snowbound*. Polley, a former child actor, writes about how her time as a child actor continues to inform her adult life. She writes about overcoming the powerlessness she experienced as a child actor when she transitions into work as a filmmaker.

My own journey to adulthood was influenced by the philosophy I read, first given to me by my philosophy professor father and the courses in philosophy I studied as an undergraduate in

university. Seneca's *On the Shortness of Life* is one such text, which inspired the writing of *Snowbound*. Seneca writes that the reason we feel we aren't given enough time in life is that we misuse our time by focusing on superficial things. When I have been cast in a dramatic play, one of the best aspects of being an actor is that one gets to live important moments in a character's life over and over again, eight shows a week. As an actor in a play, one is aware and fully present for all of the crucial moments in a character's life, and one gets to refine these moments night after night in a live performance. In real life, however, we frequently miss critical moments, or are only aware of a moment's importance in retrospect, because our attention had been scattered at the actual time. In *Snowbound*, Lily laments one of the troubling ways in which real life differs from a play performance is that in life there is no script to follow, and one may miss a significant moment simply due to lack of attention. Similarly, Seneca's proposal that "life is long if you know how to use it" influenced my characterization of Lily who is anxious not to squander her time in *Snowbound*.

Another philosophical perspective informing Lily's character in *Snowbound* is Sara Maitland's *How to be Alone*. Actors are sometimes required to live a solitary existence when they must film on location in a foreign city, away from one's family and friends. Maitland's book partially influenced Lily's viewpoint on solitude in *Snowbound*. Maitland writes about the irony that production of art requires some degree of solitude, and yet the art one makes is intended to be shared with others (177). Maitland quotes Anthony Storr's idea that "art is communication...explicitly or implicitly the work which [is produced] in solitude is aimed at somebody" (177). The reality that one requires some alone time to produce work in order to reach others on a deeper level significantly informed the writing of *Snowbound*. At the beginning of the play, Lily feels disconnected from others because she has spent so much of her life

portraying characters, which is a consideration I have had throughout my career as an actor. Through engaged self-reflection and the process of writing *Snowbound*, I've come to recognize that the solitary actor/artist is actually an expansive communicator.

One source that helped me clarify how creating theatre can be understood as a way of engaging fully with one's community, is Suzanne M. Jaeger's article "Embodiment and Presence: The Ontology of Presence Reconsidered." Jaeger articulates the "special communication between the artist(s) and the audience" and how a good performance involves a radical openness and vulnerability to the present moment on the part of the actor (123). In this sense, an actor is required to live in the moment, and be alive to one's surroundings in a heightened way. I find this description of acting compelling, and I had it in mind while writing *Snowbound*. My main character Lily is not disconnected from the world because of her time spent acting, rather, she is well versed in engaging with her fellow scene partners, and her audience.

Joshua Landy's *The World According to Proust* is a further source of inspiration for my play. Landy questions whether we are the same person throughout our lives, or if we undergo so many life-altering experiences in our lives that we can't really think of ourselves as a continuous and stable self (78-88). Landy posits that perhaps one can take all the seemingly "disjointed episodes" of one's life and meld them into a cohesive narrative (88-89). Landy's suggestion that "to achieve wholeness over time...all you need to do is find your narrative" is an idea that resonates with me and has informed my writing of *Snowbound*. As I continue to weave my experiences into the narrative arch of a play, I'm able to make sense of my time as a child actor and to take ownership and control over my story.

Tennessee Williams's *The Glass Menagerie* was always in the background as I wrote *Snowbound*. Williams' poetic writing and use of symbolism in the play was something I wanted to mirror in my own work, which is also a memory play. In *The Glass Menagerie*, Tom uses the fire escape as a reprieve from his stifling home environment. Similarly, in *Snowbound*, Lily speaks of wanting to retreat into a snowglobe when she feels overwhelmed by her present situation. Tom's final monologue in *The Glass Menagerie* in which he speaks of being haunted by the memory of his sister Laura and how "time is the longest distance between two places" was an inspiration to me for how my character Lily feels after her father dies (Williams 784). Williams' captures the way our relationship to our past and to our deceased loved ones changes over time. This idea was key to my own construction of my play.

Snow features prominently in my play, either through Lily speaking about wanting to retreat into her snow globe, or asking for her father to send her a sign by making it snow. I was inspired to make snow a motif in my play after reading Eugene O'Neill's *Long Day's Journey into Night*. The fog takes on a character of its own in *Long Day's Journey into Night*. Both Mary and Edmund speak of the fog in romantic ways. They both express a desire to lose themselves in the hazy mist that blinds them from the reality of life. Edmund speaks of how pleasurable it is to be a ghost invisible from the harsh reality of the world. His desire to find "belonging" in the fog suggests that what he actually desires is to connect with another human being and his family. Thus, O'Neill sheds light on the way we routinely fail to reach out to those we love while simultaneously longing to be close to them. Similarly, Lily in *Snowbound* finds comfort in the oblivion of snow, when what she actually desires is the confidence to share her life with someone.

In O'Neill's play, Mary similarly speaks rapturously of the fog and how it can hide the truth and show the world the way you wish it to be. Mary importantly hates the sound of the foghorn, symbolic of her distaste for reality. The foghorn serves as a warning to keep boats from crashing and Mary symbolically does not wish to be reminded of the danger and tragedy that she intuitively feels close to. Mary, like Edmund, desires to be hidden in the fog and yet throughout the play she expresses how lonely she is, suggesting that similar to Edmund, she desires to connect and yet fails to know how. These are characters who are drawn towards extinguishing painful self-consciousness, and the foghorn in the play is a booming warning sound of their impending crash with reality.

In *Snowbound*, Lily, like Edmund and Mary in O'Neill's play, finds comfort in disappearing into the imaginary worlds of the characters she plays, and she finds that reality is harsh and painful in comparison. As Lily grows up and reality encroaches upon her she creates her own fog to get lost in by ghosting individuals, in an attempt to avoid rejection and confrontation.

"Snowbound" calls to mind the image of the snow being so high and surrounding one's home, that one is forced to remain alone since escape is not possible. Throughout the course of *Snowbound* Lily becomes compelled to end her escapism and to encounter herself and the world as it is.

Rather than seeing the fog and snow as anesthetizing oneself from reality, one may alternately view Lily as being immersed in the creative element. The swirling snow and fog can be viewed more affirmatively as the maelstrom of artistic creation, the result of which is a

performance or work of art which communicates and thus connects the artist, in this case Lily, with the rest of the world.

Practical Creation/Production Elements

While the idea for *Snowbound* had been percolating for a few years, in September of 2021 I began drafting single dramatic scenes, in response to creative writing prompts directed by Professor Batdorf in THEA 5075, Solo Performance Creation class. Each week, in response to MFA cohort feedback on my work and to ideas generated from my participation in the work of my fellow MFA classmates, the overall structure of my play began to emerge. The staged readings at York University April 14th and 15th are the final step before I submit *Snowbound* to my agents, Drew MacKenzie at Great North Artists, and Paula Muzik at Innovative Artists who have both expressed interest in my work.

In the composition of this play, I also experimented with the creation of songs to highlight key ideas within the work, expressed in a musical framework. Working with *Mastering Melody Writing* by Clay Mills and Bill O’Hanlon as well as with musician Thomas Martin, I tried various lyrical versions of themes I wished to express, and Martin worked alongside me to provide accompanying melodies.

Maggie Grace played Lily in rehearsals over the summer of 2022, so that I could view Lily’s monologues from a director’s perspective. I have had actors Devon Graye, Devon Bostick, and actor/director Tom Costello all play my male character Sam through different workshops of *Snowbound*. Actor Devon Graye will be reading the role of Sam; I will be reading the role of Lily, and Actor Monica Dottor will be reading the stage directions in a staged reading of *Snowbound* in studio CFT/139 on Friday, April 14th and Saturday, April 15th. I wrote the lyrics to

the songs featured in *Snowbound* and musician Thomas Martin wrote the melodies. Additionally, musician and vocal coach Ryan Luchuck will be accompanying me on the guitar.

Timeline

Spring 2022	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Work with BFA Theatre students on workshop of <i>Snowbound</i>
Summer 2022	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Rehearse with Maggie Grace reading role of Lily - Rehearse with Devon Graye reading role of Sam - Rehearse with Devon Bostick reading role of Sam - Rehearsals with director Tom Costello reading Sam
Fall 2022	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Continue revising and editing <i>Snowbound</i>
January 2023	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Begin weekly sessions with vocal coach Ryan Luchuck on songs for <i>Snowbound</i> - Work with musician Thomas Martin on new song for <i>Snowbound</i> - Meet with Jamie Robinson to schedule April showings
February 2023	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Meet with fellow MFA candidates to schedule tech days for April thesis showings - Continue editing <i>Snowbound</i> - Contact Aaron Kelly about stage manager for April Showings

March 2023	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Cast Devon Graye as Sam - Reserve CFT 139 for showings - Hire guitarist for showings - Hire stage direction reader
April 2023	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Bring in music stands for staged reading - Tech April 4th - 10th in CFT - Staged reading at York April 14th and April 15th - Oral Exam April 24th

Budget

Revenue:

- **\$1,300 Donald and Murray Davis Scholarship**

Expenses:

- **Actor playing Sam- \$400**
- **Stage direction reader- \$400**
- **Guitarist- \$400**
- **Food and beverages for team during rehearsal period- \$100**

Conclusion

After two decades of bringing to life the artistic vision of other writers and of looking out at audiences from the stage, the idea of creating my own vision for audiences was a compelling challenge. My readings of Maria Tatar's *The Heroine with 1001 Faces* was seminal to my thought processes regarding my desire to take agency of my life by penning the literal story of my growth as a child actor into adulthood.

The directionless writing exercises assigned in THEA 5075 helped me to identify the themes which preoccupied my imagination, and eventually I advanced to the point of recording, based on memory, the emotional events which continued to haunt me as an adult. Meetings with my MFA cohort, in which we each read from our ongoing work, continually reminded me that my personal experiences did not always translate into meaningful moments for others. Their repeated questions in the beginning regarding the lack of clarity in my text regarding my character's age, location, and time frame eventually coalesced around my realization that I needed, somehow, to distinguish the flashback time sequences of my character's past from her present-day awareness. I settled on the inclusion of a theatre ghost light in the scenes when Lily spoke in the present, recalling her past experiences as an actor, from the stage of her own theatre. The ghost light recalls Lily's tendency to ghost significant others in her life, as well as her preoccupation with the loss of her beloved father, also a ghost in the play. Finally, the ghost light further recalls the common shared belief among thespians that the ghosts of actors continue to roam the theatres in which they have performed.

Another tool which assisted me in addressing the challenge of translating my personal experience into a narrative apprehensible to others was the use of metaphor. I knew I wanted

snow to be an image in my play, since from my earliest stage performance I recalled being transfixed, from the stage wings by the billowing gusts of snow in the Broadway production of *The Sound of Music*. I needed somehow to connect the sense of uplifting magic the snow imprinted in me with later staged scenes in the life of my character, since she continues to explore this mysterious transcendence in other staged productions. I settled on the inclusion of a snow globe into my play, which is introduced after adolescent Lily's stressful experience on a t.v set, and conveys her desire to return to the forgetful snow drifts of her youth, visualized through her snow globe. The symbolism of the snow continues through the climax of the play when Lily speaks to her deceased father in the graveyard scene and his response seems to occur through the dusting of snow which ends this scene. The snow of the play's title comes full circle towards the ending of the play when her fellow child actor crush and who is now her adult friend recalls how they used to watch the snow from the stage wings, and he now invites her to join him in watching actual snow drifts in their present adult lives together.

The adoption and refinement of the use of metaphor in my play occurred largely in response to observations I made while directing student performances of scenes from *Snowbound*. Listening to these young bright energetic student actors discuss my scenes, I noted their desire to make symbolic sense of the *Snowbound* scenes which they were now bringing to life. Their process of breaking down the roles thus came to affect my own writing process. Through their questioning, I realized the benefit of both deleting some material which didn't seem to contribute to the overall idea of the play and of repeating certain images to underscore the emotional reality I wished to convey in the final version of my play.

The title of the play, *Snowbound*, conveys a sense of being blocked, since, as an adult, Lily is stunted in her emotional and psychological growth. By the end of the play, through the

process of tracing her earliest experiences, self-analysis, and her confrontation of the forces holding her back, there is the sense she achieves self-acceptance and agency in her life and is no longer restricted in her expression or achievement of meaningful goals. The full idea behind the title of the play came together through discussions with student performers who wished to further understand the character they were playing. The process of working with students to dissect a character who is largely based on my own experience seemed at times to be exciting and therapeutic, since the actors were giving voice to what they understood as Lily's unconscious motivations. After their revelations, I made some adjustments to the script, in one case specifically because they had correctly identified one of the actual people on which the script is based and I wished to preserve this person's anonymity.

Additionally, while working on *Snowbound* with student performers I discovered the tenuous balance between giving an actor the creative freedom to define the character, while also guiding their interpretation of the role so that it articulates my vision for the play. In the beginning of the rehearsal process for *Snowbound* I felt uncomfortable giving actors notes on my writing. As the writer and director of *Snowbound* I understand the character's motivations in scenes, but I also wanted to not interfere with the actor's choices. Because I come to writing and directing from an acting background, I am aware of how beneficial it is for an actor to have agency in creating and defining a character. While working with Jobina Sitoh, Nick Babin, and Tristan Moore on scenes from *Snowbound* for York University's CODA Project, I gained comfortability guiding actors in their conception of the characters I wrote. I found it particularly helpful for the four of us to have long discussions where we'd break down each scene we were working on. During these talks the students would share their own personal experience with the

events I had written about in the play, which gave us a familiarity and trust with one another, and allowed for greater ease when I stepped into the role of being their director.

My work with the students on the CODA Project also affected the direction of character dialogue in the play, since as their director, as I watched them perform the scenes I had written, I heard the parts of my play which needed to be less stilted and more conversational, and I added pauses for emotional resonance. The process of directing others in a work I had only ever performed myself provided me with an objective distance essential to recognition of the play's overall arc.

Once the overall goal and vision of my project became more clear, the role of revision cannot be overstated, as scene after scene I deleted everything that did not ultimately contribute to what I had finally determined to be the overall meaning and effect of the play. After listening each week to the stimulating innovative and experimental works of my colleagues, I struggled with the relevance of my own naturalistic text, and I was grateful to have instructors who encouraged me in the pursuit of my own voice and story. In particular, Erika Batdorf spoke to the validity of the quest for lasting, evergreen truths, an idea which resonated with me and with Lily's interest in philosophical truth. The final song in the play was inspired by this idea and seems the landing place I was seeking for my character.

A further challenge I had to overcome in the production of this play was finding an actor to play both Sam and Jonathan, the two male roles in *Snowbound*. In early March of 2023 I cast actor Devon Graye as Sam and Jonathan. I rehearsed with Devon over the past two years, particularly the scenes between Lily and Sam, and I was very familiar with his interpretation of the roles. At the end of March Devon booked a role on a t.v. show filming in Los Angeles, and I

had to find another actor to play both roles. My Canadian agent, Drew McKenzie helped me cast Toronto actor Greg Calderone, who I began rehearsing with two weeks before my April 14th and 15th readings of *Snowbound* at York University. Greg and I began rehearsing over Zoom as soon as he was cast, and I was very happy with his interpretations of both Sam and Jonathan. We spent most of our rehearsal time together trying to find the sarcastic bravado of the young Sam who appears in flashback, versus the more humane, experienced adult Sam who appears in the scenes of the present time. I am very grateful for my time directing York undergraduates on my play because that process gave me a greater sense of security as I entered the rehearsals with Greg Calderone, as it was now easier to articulate to him my artistic vision for *Snowbound*.

In addition to the challenge of recasting my male characters in the final weeks, I also had to find a new guitarist to accompany me for the three songs in *Snowbound*. I had wanted to play the songs on guitar myself, but because I am a first time writer and director, I chose to focus my attention on writing, directing, and performing the play, rather than learning the chords for these songs. At the end of March, Ryan Luchuck booked a job that had him busy during my two readings at York University, so I hired Don Campbell as my guitarist. I rehearsed with Don Campbell at his recording studio, and we found a comfortable tempo for the three songs which occur in the play. I worked with Don on finding an intro and outro to each song in the play. Because the three songs occur immediately after dialogue in the play, it was important to me to find a way, not jarring to the audience, of easing into each song. Now that I have completed two workshop readings of *Snowbound* in which I was writer, director, and performer, I'd like to learn how to play the songs on guitar myself to see if that enhances a sense of authenticity in the show performance.

During the April 14th reading of *Snowbound* I had a full audience and I found I had a comfortable energy that helped me through the performance. However, at the April 15th reading I had only 7 audience members, 3 of whom were 20 minutes late, and I was surprised by how low my energy was for the performance. Moving forward, I will experiment with methods of self-direction, to free myself from dependency upon the audience for my main source of energy.

The process of writing my memories in the form of a play which I direct and perform has reminded me of the importance of collaboration in theatre. *Snowbound* is the result of many experimentations and revisions, and the feedback from my MFA cohort, and especially Erika Batdorf. I started performing when I was seven years old, and until I began working on *Snowbound*, I'd never had the opportunity to experiment with different methods of theatre creation. In the entertainment industry there is never enough time or resources devoted to creative play, which I have learned is essential to make art. My time as an MFA candidate at York during which I have been writing and workshopping drafts of *Snowbound*, has invigorated my creative imagination, and provided me with practical tools to continue the process of creating theatre.

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Appendix A: *Snowbound* by Madeleine Martin

SCENE 1

LILY is sitting on the edge of a small theatre stage. A ghost light is on behind her, in the center of the stage. A single bulb left burning in a floor lamp whenever the theatre remains dark, the ghost light speaks to the common thespian belief in ghosts who, unable to separate themselves from the enchantment they previously experienced onstage, now haunt the theatre. She addresses the audience.

LILY

Almost three thousand miles across the country, my father's dying, and I'm filming the 6th season of a cable show in Hollywood. Wardrobe has me wearing a tropical print bikini, but I try to convince them, due to my character's teenage body mass issues, she would feel more comfortable with a tank top over the suit. Although he's not in this scene, Marilyn Manson is standing nearby, clad in all-black, with a cape and platform shoes. My conversations with the Antichrist superstar have been pretty everyday, although I have noticed he sometimes drinks absinthe on set. The boom operator offers me Oreos, which he tells me are vegan, a detail which has never influenced my consumption of them.

Before we break for lunch, Marilyn is commenting to me on our shared idiosyncrasies, and I realize he's made the mistake of assuming I am the sardonic Goth my character plays on the show. I have previously disappointed others by my failure to live up to the on-screen hard-partying image of my character. Mid-conversation with the Pale Emperor, I see four suited males from production heading in our direction, and I awkwardly step out of the tub. They inject themselves over our conversation, and one executive makes the request that I remove the top of my bathing suit for this scene.

When I went to work that morning, I never expected several older men in suits to, essentially, ask me to show them my tits, but it's the executive's last statement that resonates with me the most, "This will show the audience that you've really grown up."

Marilyn is now standing slightly back from the conversation, which is not really a conversation, since I'm not speaking, and it's humiliating to my teenage self that a rockstar is within earshot of my embarrassment. For a moment, I think if I remain motionless, maybe, like the Potoo bird, that stays completely still while perching on the edge of dead tree branches, I may be invisible through camouflage, even in my tropical bathing suit. The executive, on the phone with someone, seems impatient for a response. Recalling a story I once read, I manage to respond, "Oh, I'd prefer not to". Then adding, "Thanks." The "thanks" sounds odd, since they didn't offer me anything, but I'm Canadian, so it comes naturally. Marilyn, although silent, is still standing there. The executive is annoyed, "You should think about it." I explain I'm fine shooting the scene in my tank top, to which he spits, "Is that your FINAL answer? Don't you want to make the show as good as possible?" My "Thanks anyway" response of course sounds hollow, even to me, and the men in suits finally leave. Marilyn is still there, and wishfully or not, I sense his support and maybe even his desire to empower me. Shrugging his shoulders in their direction, he offers, "You should only do what makes you comfortable".

Back in my trailer, the executive's words, "show the audience you've really grown up" continue to paralyze me. As a child hired on the show, no one had ever been interested in my tits or any other part of my body. Nude roles went to alluring Hollywood starlets, when a crowd of

production males would huddle around the monitors during their scenes, trying to catch glimpses of their disrobed beauty.

On the opposite coast, my forever north, my father daily slips away. But here I am, in my network-confirmed maturity, surrounded by palm trees, receiving advice from rockstars.

Lily reaches for her snow globe.

The Paris snow globe with the Eiffel Tower, that I received one Christmas in my stocking, beckons me from my dresser. It fits comfortably in my palm, as I consciously place myself inside the swirling gusts of forgetful snow.

Large Images of moving snowflakes are projected on the stage wall, until the stage goes dark.

SCENE 2

Lily sits on the edge of the same theater stage. The ghost light is on while she speaks to the audience.

LILY

“Recurrent Corneal Erosion Syndrome”. As you open your eyes, your lid rips off a layer of your cornea, resulting in pain, blurred vision, and light sensitivity”. A stark diagnosis, delivered by a brusque ophthalmologist with no time for questions... Her bleak assessment and caustic delivery remind me this is a hostile universe, and I need to toughen up. Continually washing away the germs I imagined were causing it was apparently futile. Turns out more was involved than the danger of an unwashed finger casually brushing my eye.

My case is “Idiopathic”——meaning the cause is mysteriously unknown——yet it’s also a “syndrome,” suggesting a “pattern” of occurrence. The treatment is to flood my eyes with artificial tears, so my gaze is even more continually, one of drowning uncertainty. Shielding myself from light, I wonder what I’m failing to see.

Lily stands and walks over to a music stand on the side of the stage.

Would you want to know why someone you were dating no longer chooses to see you, or would you rather that person just disappear, leaving you to wonder? When I get dropped, I’d rather imagine, say, they were thrown off a treadmill and their injuries made them unable to contact me. Or, I might tell myself they just can’t relate to my interest in Demon Slayer.

It would pain me far more to have to listen to someone maturely explain I seem “more like a friend”, or how we just don’t have “the same goals.” Those in-person, somber conversations, without the refuge of wine, always end ceremoniously with a weak smile and a resolution to stay off Bumble forever.

Rather than subject anyone to the tedium of explanations, I choose the more humane policy of “ghosting” and simply evaporate, without a trace of humiliating residue.

I disappear from the date who moaned slightly after each bite of food, as well as from the high-strung actor who stopped driving due to his panic in merging lanes.

I just stop returning their calls, freeing myself of all relationship expectations, the moment I decide “it’s over”. Mornings I can, sip my solitary espresso without guilt for failing to plan joint activities. No longer do I dutifully loiter in museum armor displays; instead, I can linger in the furnished period rooms, imagining tea with Emily Dickinson for as long as I wish. I can walk along local streets, inhaling the spices of neighborhood dinners and take in children’s drawings in windows and pets in the yards, without any expectation that I follow or provide responses to a partner’s train of thought.

Gradually, these exes are barely even remembered voices to me, their faces swallowed, like on Zoom, into a virtual background. For awhile, I avoid the streets where they live, leading me inward to my own apartment.

Listening to the crackling of my Youtube fireplace, draped in my soft wool throw, I find myself gazing out my window, seeing only the spectral reflection of my own face.

Lights fade.

LILY (CONT’D)

(singing)

Looking for a story,

And yours, it caught my eye,

Staring back in the mirror,

Without asking why.

My own story goes through and back,

It's the one that soars most high.

I'm letting go of all I have to guard,

It's nothing.

SCENE 3

Lights come up and Lily sits onstage next to a child's puppet theater. The ghost light is on in the background.

LILY

For my fifth birthday, I received a wooden frame with a curtain that I christened my "Rose Theatre" and for which I wrote and voiced the roles of characters in shows I put on, to the hoots and boos of my brothers.

By age 8, I transitioned from the Rose theatre to stage performances in Broadway musicals like The Sound of Music, Les Miserables, A Christmas Carol and The Nutcracker. Performing in these musicals imprinted in me a sense of the magical possibilities of life. One might, for example, sing love songs through an ornate gate in the moonlight, or in a passionate moment, become enveloped in swirling gusts of snowflakes. I was part of a traveling troupe of actors, and each stage family eventually usurped the roles of my own family back home.

I secretly dreamed the couple playing Marius and Cosette, who were dating in real life and who spent hours with me backstage, would one day invite me to their own wedding. In that particular show family, Cosette eventually ditched Marius, however, and began spending her time with other members of the troupe.

Lily produces a bird ornament she holds up.

In the actual Christmas Day performance of A Christmas Carol, Mr and Mrs Cratchett, gave me a hand painted bird ornament inscribed “With Deep Love To our Martha”, and instead of onstage fake food, they delighted me with Tim Horton Timbits on my plate, which I had to eat quickly before we started to sing.

There were less pleasing stage moments, such as the Polichinelle, under Mother Ginger’s skirt in The Nutcracker, who dug her elbow into my side, knocking me over as she demanded I “Move.” I’m to be a bridesmaid in her upcoming wedding.

I also peed on Richard Chamberlain’s shoes in The Sound of Music and watched in horror as the pee pooled first around my feet and then seeped its way over to his shiny brown leather brogues. It was a touching moment in the musical when we were all singing Edelweiss. All I could think was “maybe he won’t look down”, even as I observed on the faces of the other actors their growing awareness of my misdeed. Afterwards, I comforted myself with the thought that at least I hadn’t bitten him onstage, as a previous actor with my part had done.

Sam was a young fellow actor who worked alongside me in several shows over a decade. Standing with me in the wings of the stage, we’d watch scenes we weren’t in, like the billowing snow in The Sound of Music. Once, during The Christmas Carol, he handed me a piece of paper, onstage, with the hand-written lines “Lily Marie Rose; you make me tingle to my toes; And

tickle in my nose; Hachoo, I love you.” I treasured this slip of paper, keeping it for years, under the tray, in the bottom of my stage makeup box. In *Les Miserables*, we once excitedly discovered a large cache of empty wine bottles in Thenardier’s dressing room, giddily realizing the actor was likely imbibing before his nightly performances as a drunk.

Sam and I together mourned the young colleagues who gained too much weight or grew too tall for their roles, and when one of our comrades, too engaged with his Nintendo handset, missed his stage entrance cue and was fired, we piteously observed he never even received the traditional “Happy Trails to You”, sung by the cast to an actor moving on from a show. The charm we experienced performing our favorite roles over and over again with increasing vitality and freedom, was gradually replaced with the dawning awareness that becoming an adult was a betrayal of the onstage magic we had always known.

Sam and I would take off from the elegant parties hosted by donors, and find outdoor playgrounds where, ignoring our dress clothes, we’d climb to the top of monkey bars, look out with exhilaration over new neighborhoods, and share our impractical dreams. I wanted to have my own theatre one day, named *The Rose*, and Sam planned to become a Hip Hop artist.

Back then, only our parents had cellphones, and with adult obligations, they rarely managed to keep Sam and I in touch, until eventually we were practically strangers. By the time of my first adult Broadway role, I kept only stage makeup in my wardrobe case, not the handwritten lines of a child’s first love poem.

Lights out.

SCENE 4

When lights come back on, A flashback scene now occurs backstage at the Imperial Broadway theater.

Lily comes back to her dressing room and the stage manager announces over the speaker that Sam Logan is there to see her, and he is being let upstairs. Lily hastily looks in the mirror, quickly pulling on her leather jacket; then she tips her head over, brushing her hair downwards for volume and stands upright. She sits in the chair with her leg crossed casually. Just as quickly, she stands up and leans against the window air conditioner. There is a knock on the door, and she now moves into the middle of the room, facing Sam as he enters.

LILY and SAM are now teenagers. They haven't seen each other in a few years.

LILY

I wished I'd known you were coming, I'd have done a better job!

SAM

What would you have changed? Don't you always do your best?

LILY

At least I didn't fall asleep tonight in the scene where I watch television.

SAM

Seriously?

LILY

(Lowering her voice)

I did once. The director thought I was experimenting, but I was just exhausted from dance and rehearsals...Do you remember the handshake we used to do backstage when reviewers were in the audience?

SAM

That was a long time ago. You still remember that stuff?

Lily seems disappointed. Sam moves around her dressing room and picks up the signed photo of a NYC Ballet dancer from The Nutcracker on her dressing table.

SAM (CONT'D)

I forgot you did that show. You were obsessed with ballet.

LILY

I wasn't tall enough though. Seems the caffeine from too many frappuccinos stunted my growth.

He puts down the photo and sits in the chair, his legs stretched out across the room.

LILY (CONT'D)

Remember watching the snow every night from the wings in Sound of Music? They use paper for the snow at Lincoln Center so the dancers don't slip...

She notices he seems uninterested.

SAM

What are you doing next?

LILY

Next? The dreaded question. Maybe the voice of a mouse for a Dutch cartoon?

SAM

I booked a pilot, direct-to-series, so I'm moving to L.A.

LILY

No way! You used to say you'd never leave N.Y....but I bet it's a good part.

SAM

Yeah, and I'm ready for change.

LILY

Did you keep in touch with anyone from our shows? I emailed Kristen, but never heard back.

SAM

After our last show in Texas, I never kept in touch with anyone.

LILY

I thought I'd see you at the reunion, but then it never happened...

SAM

How's your Dad?

He picks up her copy of Twilight and laughs at the title.

SAM (CONT'D)

This any good?

LILY

(self-consciously)

Kimberly, my friend in the show, gave it to me.

(and then)

He's still teaching Philosophy.

SAM

Yeah, what'd he used to say? You can't step twice in the same river?

LILY

Because the water's always changing. Heraclitus. It's flux.

SAM

(Nodding)

Right. Which you hated, but I enjoyed.

LILY

What are you talking about?

SAM

You loved the long show bookings for 5 weeks or more, while the flux of two cities in a week was more exciting to me.

LILY

That's because in a new place it takes at least a week to get settled.

SAM

(Looking out the window)

Those picketers against Scientology are still out there. "Scientology kills". Did ya hear?

LILY

I know, it's been hard to concentrate over all that chanting.

SAM

(Turning away from the window)

If you keep doing this, I bet you do get your Rose theater, one day.

Lily Smiles because he remembers.

SAM (CONT'D)

Let me know if you're ever in LA, Ok?

They look at each other a longish time.

LILY

Remember, the water may change, but the river does stay the same.

SAM
(Laughs)

And who or what in this analogy is “the river”?

LILY

You. Your core.

SAM

You’re a philosopher, Lily. You should get a beret, like your Dad. My core is fluid, because I’m always changing. But you stay the same, and I think that works for you. Good to see you.

Lily laughs feebly as Sam move towards the door, opens it, and leaves. She sits in front of her mirror, somewhat dejectedly, leaning her head on her hand. Lights go dark onstage.

SCENE 5

Flashback to a Los Angeles film set. Lily and Sam are 18 now. She is seated at a cafeteria table. Finished with her dinner tray, she’s reading Being and Nothingness when Sam approaches her.

SAM

So you’re reading Being and Nothingness? Can I join you, or are you feeling that hell is other people about now?

Lily looks up and closes her book.

LILY

Only if they seem like objects to you...Like the women on this show.

SAM

But not your character. Can we talk about our scene?

LILY

Sure.

SAM

So, it seems like you've settled on one way to do the scene, and I thought maybe you'd like to experiment with different ways.

LILY

You're giving me acting notes on my show?

SAM

It's your show now?

(Smiles good naturedly)

I'm just talking about being improvisational and in the moment.

LILY

You're a guest actor on an ongoing series, and you want to improvise your dialogue? We have writers for that, and you're supposed to use their dialogue. I don't think Tom would appreciate you changing his script.

SAM

I'm not really changing the words, and I'm not giving you notes, I just thought we could be more responsive to each other in the scene.

LILY

Is this the "method" that worked so well your show was cancelled after one season?

SAM

You're blaming that on me? It was the writers who dumped that whole time-travel story on us.

LILY

You know the guy who played Hector in Breaking Bad, Mark Margolis, he's about 80 years old and been a guest star in practically every film we've ever seen. He was my grandfather on this show, and he told me "There's no bad writing, just bad actors."

SAM

So now I'm a bad actor?

LILY

No, what I think he means is the actor defines the character, not the writers. We can go over our scenes again, and this time I will listen more to your voice.

She smiles good-naturedly.

SAM

You think the female actors' voices on this show redeem the exploitative scripts they get?

LILY

Depends on whether they choose to be sexualized. Alison said her nude scenes empowered her on the show, and she was expressing her own identity.

SAM

So you have no problem shooting nude scenes?

LILY

I have a "no nudity" clause.

SAM

That's not what I asked. Would you feel objectified by nude scenes?

LILY

Depends on the scene. I have my own personal boundaries. And that's not where the characters I play usually go, anyway.

SAM

Like the 6 ft. tall one-eyed monster you played on Netflix?

LILY

The producer told me that character was "the most beautiful person with the most hideous body."

They both laugh.

SAM

You still seeing the Canadian actor from that show?

LILY

I never was. He loves all women and is exclusive with none. You still seeing Sara?

SAM

No. I don't have time with school and work right now to make a relationship work.

LILY

How's NYU?

SAM

Expensive, but at least I can work while I get my degree... Are you ever planning to go to college? Study Philosophy like your Dad?

LILY

I'll be a "mature student". Isn't the point to socialize with peers your own age?

SAM

Not always. Funny, out of all of us, you were the one I swore would never leave New York. You and Fran Lebowitz.

(quietly)

Peggy told me you were working when your dad got sick.

LILY

The producers said I had to come back to finish the season...He was gone in less than a year.

SAM

(Quietly)

So you weren't with him.

LILY

At the end, I was.

She starts to straighten things on her food tray, readying to stand up.

SAM

I'm sorry, Lily. You always gave your all to things, so I know that must have torn you up.

LILY

I'm still working on it...trying to find my independence.

She smiles and stands carrying her tray offstage. Stage goes dark.

SCENE 6

TORONTO. A UNIVERSITY COFFEE SHOP.

Lily, now in her twenties. She sits down across from her Ethics Teaching Assistant, Jonathan.

JONATHAN

Thanks for meeting me. Since classes are almost finished, I wanted a chance to talk with you.

LILY

That last paper was kind of challenging.

JONATHAN

No, it's not about your paper. Your coursework has always been solid...what I was wondering is whether you'd ever consider seeing me outside class.

LILY

Are you allowed to see students outside class?

JONATHAN

The course is nearly over, so there shouldn't be an issue.

LILY

I would enjoy keeping up our conversations...

JONATHAN

I'm glad you feel the same way, because I'm familiar with your work as an actor, and I've actually thought of being a performer myself.

LILY

Oh...I'm not acting right now; I'm working to get my degree... That's kind of surprising you want to be an actor.

JONATHAN

I worked with a theater group after high school, and I've always wanted to get back into it.

LILY

I couldn't really help you with that. My courses seem pretty challenging; your's was actually my first time in a classroom.

JONATHAN

(Realizing his ineptitude)

I understand how new university is for you, and I want you to know I'm here as a resource or a guide for you in this new chapter...But I just have to ask, What's David Duchovny like? Do you still talk to him?

Lily was not expecting this line of conversation.

LILY

We've kept in touch. . . distantly.

JONATHAN

I told my friend you were in my class, and he said if I'm lucky I'll need Duchovny's permission to date you!

LILY

(Soberly)

I don't need anyone's permission to date.

JONATHAN

(Recovering his sense of decorum)

Of course. Your essay on Singer's Utilitarianism had a unique perspective, weaving in your conversations with an 103 yr old.

LILY

Yes, I FaceTime her regularly; but, she has a hard time holding the camera up, so I usually only see the top of her head. In all her decades in NYC, she experienced so many cultural upheavals.

JONATHAN

I'm sure your conversations with her are fascinating. With everything you have going on,...is there anyone who looks out for you?

LILY

Friends... Although, my oldest friend is distracted with planning her fairytale wedding right now.

JONATHAN

The Wedding Industrial Complex? The fantasy of ultimate fulfillment.

LILY

Yes, I don't even recognize her anymore; she used to be so free-spirited, but now it's as if she morphed into this frenzied consumer of bridal products.

JONATHAN

Is she an actor I might know?

LILY

(Somewhat surprised)

No. A real estate lawyer. Although she's more interesting than her job might suggest.

JONATHAN

I know you must be going through so many changes, and you should be proud of what you've accomplished this term. But now that I'm almost finished being your instructor, I hope the changing role I'm going to have with you is one you'll enjoy more...

LILY

Yes, of course.

JONATHAN

Can you tell me,...what was it like being on that show?

LILY

I worked with a lot of fascinating people, but I also missed out on all the usual teen milestones my friends in school were having.

JONATHAN

Like what?

LILY

Well, it may seem trivial but...no senior prom. And my first kiss was scripted on an episode with an actor I'd barely met.

JONATHAN

But you met so many talented people. What was it like working with Marilyn Manson?

LILY

He was entertaining on set. Sometimes gave me pretty wild dating advice.

JONATHAN

Like what?

LILY

He said guys should bathe my feet and worship me and told me I was special since he had "sprinkled his essence" on me. I remember one of the crew guys overheard him say that, and he told me I'd probably die that night.

JONATHAN

What about Rob Lowe?

LILY

He also missed his high school prom, because he was working. And I noticed in his scenes, whenever there were multiple takes, he hit his lines the same way every time. It's like once he discovered the best take, there was no reason for him to vary it.

JONATHAN

That's interesting. I think we have a lot we could share with each other. Could I make dinner for you?

LILY

After the final?

JONATHAN

Sure. And then we can plan dramatic readings together.

LILY

Oh, I associate "readings" with work.

JONATHAN

We can can take things gradually.

Lights fade as Jonathan exits.

Lily, now in the present, sings the song "Without a Trace"

LILY (*SINGING*)

You cast me in your play

And I enjoyed the part

But when I take off the mask

You see yourself as Descartes

The greatest mind has the greatest vice

And I'm seeing yours today

I'm leaving without paying the price
You won't see my phantom ballet
You're ghosted
And I only see myself
You're ghosted
Together we no longer compel
You're ghosted
A recollection from the past
The greatest mind has the greatest virtue
and I'm learning how to last

SCENE 7

NYC. MCNALLY JACKSON BOOKSTORE

Present day Lily stands on the street wearing large black sunglasses to hide her red tearing eyes while she speaks on the phone.

LILY

You have twelve bridesmaids. Chris has a lot of friends, I get it. Pre-wedding Miami cruise... with 10 lawyers. Yes my dress arrived. A seamless undergarment? Ok I'll look for one... You have to approve my shoes for the "overall aesthetic." So, my chain-link boots are out? ...We're all wearing Essie Princess Charming color manicure? Wow. Do you remember when you were so high on molly you hugged everyone outside the Billie Eilish concert, even the homeless? Sorry, the "unhoused". No, it's just I never realized you had an "aesthetic" that was so important to you.

Sacred Heart wouldn't let your father replace the red velvet seat cushions in the chapel. I did not notice they were garish. Well, let's hope my red eye doesn't happen on your wedding day, or my sunglasses will definitely detract from what you're going for. Yes, I do think my eye will be under control, by then, and I'll send you a photo of me in the dress. Bye now.

Lily ends her phone call, showing exasperation, and she spots Sam, who has not yet seen her, walking in her direction. She turns away, looking into the window of McNally Jackson Bookstore, hoping he will pass. Sam does a double-take of Lily and stops in front of the bookstore.

SAM

Lily!

(with uncertainty)

Were you trying to avoid me just now?

LILY

Of course not... I just saw there's a new Daniel Pink book.

Sam looks in the window with her.

SAM

The Power of Regret: How Looking Backward Moves us Forward. So just now, when you pretended you didn't see me, I shouldn't be offended, because you were looking backwards?

LILY

(Avoiding his question)

Are you back in NY?

SAM

Just for a wedding. Jeff from PCS. I'm his groomsman.

LILY

Addison's getting married this summer too, and I'm a bridesmaid. What are your duties?

SAM

No duties, as far as I know. Attend a bachelor party?

LILY

Guys have it easy. I have an engagement celebration, bridal-dress fitting, brunch and bubbly at Lafayette, a Miami cruise with 10 real estate lawyers...and bridal boot camp where we're supposed to take cross-fit classes together to get ready for the epic day.

SAM

Wow...(Smiling) She means business.

LILY

The wedding, you know, is a rite of passage towards self-perfection.

SAM

(Laughing)

I remember how you used to stand in the wings every night watching Richard Chamberlain get married, while the rest of us were all playing spin the bottle in the dressing room.

LILY

I had my own romantic fantasy. Love is finding our lost other half.

SAM

Your Dad told us that story. Humans once had two faces and four arms and legs til Zeus cut them in half. Now we're all solitary beings wandering the earth searching for our other half.

LILY

Addison's other half is a frat-boy tool from Coffee Meets Bagel.

SAM

Didn't you two pay to see Jane Eyre in theaters at least three times?

LILY

"You transfix me quite" was our favorite line. Now, instead of being bound together by a "cord of communion", like Rochester and Jane, she's with someone who works all night, while she gets drunk watching *Selling Sunset*.

SAM

Is this bitterness and those huge glasses because you're stoned, or have you gone full Hollywood like that show?

Lily takes off her glasses and Sam sees her red, tearing eye condition.

SAM (CONT'D)

What happened?...I'm supposed to meet my manager, but I have time for coffee from the truck. Do you want one?

Lily nods and sits down on the bench outside of the bookstore. Sam brings them both coffee.

LILY

It's recurrent. Sometimes my eyelid rips off a layer of my cornea.

SAM

Is it autoimmune?

LILY

(Shrugs because she doesn't know)

Do you know Addison never told Chris about her bulimia? They've been living together for two years; she's planning to have kids with him, and he has no idea she's barfing to fit into her wedding dress.

SAM

We all edit ourselves for relationships. Remember when Joe Sullivan pretended he never drank, so he could convince Amira to go out with him?

LILY

But don't you think if Chris was truly Addison's "other half", she would tell him what's really going on?

SAM

Everybody has secrets, and I don't think being in a relationship changes anyone that much. I may be inspired to be a better version of myself for awhile, but partners usually end up being just as disappointing to me as I am to myself.

LILY

So who are you bringing to Jeff's wedding?

SAM

I'm not sure who'll be around. If I were you, I'd just enjoy Addison's Miami party. You guys used to be so close. Is that what's getting you down, maybe? That Chris replaced you as her bestie?

LILY

At the doctors today, I had no emergency contact to put down. She used to be my person and I was hers. I just can't get over the sense that she's settling.

SAM

For sharing her life with someone she loves?

LILY

The wrong kind of company is worse than being alone.

SAM

(Smiles)

So who are you bringing to Addison's wedding?

LILY

No plus one. That option's only for established couples.

Sam looks at her.

SAM

This eye condition makes it look like you're crying. Is it painful?

LILY

The drops help, but it affects my vision.

SAM

Everything looks blurry?

LILY

(Ironically)

I can see what I need.

SAM

Inner moonlight, Lily. That's all you need.

LILY

(Smiles)

Still reading the Beats.

Sam stands to leave.

SAM

Yes. I am large. I contain multitudes.

Lily shakes her head. They hug, and she walks off stage. He stops in front of the store window taking in the Daniel Pink book, and after a minute, he exits. Stage goes dark.

SCENE 8

SAM'S APARTMENT. Some months later, in the present day.

A half-eaten pizza is open in its box on the floor. Sam is sprawled on couch, wearing headphones, and doesn't immediately respond to the insistent knocking on his door. He slowly gets up and opens door. A distraught and somewhat disheveled Lily excitedly barges into the center of the room. Her hand is bleeding.

LILY

I cut him off! I never gave him a chance.

Sam is confused, appears to be high, and becomes increasingly more agitated.

SAM

You're bleeding... Why did you come,... here?

LILY

(Distracted)

It killed him.

Lily paces back and forth in the center of the room.

SAM

What killed who? You're dripping blood on my rug!

Lily stops pacing.

LILY

I was mugged outside, just now,...on the street. A gangbanger. I mean, a "high risk individual" knocked me to the sidewalk.

SAM

(Confused and horrified)

And you killed him?

LILY

(Observing Sam's state of inebriation)

No, he got away. Are you high this early in the afternoon? Don't you have a part you should be working on?

SAM

I don't have bandages for that, just a napkin and maybe some tape.

He fumbles in a drawer producing a roll of tape and grabs one of the napkins on the table, handing them to Lily with a bottle of Smirnoff vodka.

LILY

You want me to get as drunk as you, so we can talk?

SAM

I think it kills germs if you pour it on the cut.

She cleans the cut with vodka on a napkin, and tapes another napkin around her hand.

SAM (CONT'D)

What the fuck happened, Lily? You're not making any sense.

LILY

(Recalling)

I saw this man on West 4th wearing a French beret, just like my dad, and he was looking right at me. He seemed about to speak to me, and for a moment, I forgot everything. I wasn't paying attention, when this teenager got off his bike and lunged towards me. He pushed me down and tried to grab my bag. The man in the beret just disappeared; I was on my knees fighting to hold on to my bag. He kicked and punched my hands, but I wouldn't let it go. Then he just rode off, and I was bleeding...

(she holds her wrist)

but he never got it away from me.

Beat.

SAM

Your passport and phone were in there?

LILY

The bag's empty. My keys and phone were in my pocket. The bag was for my toilet paper... I ran out.

SAM

He could have killed you! Why didn't you just let it go?

LILY

I don't know why... It just seemed like I needed to fight for myself. Afterwards, I remembered you lived upstairs here; I just wanted someone to know what happened.

SAM

(Becoming increasingly sober)

That guy in the beret is a mime who asks people to hold a juggling ball during his act. He's on the subway sometimes.

LILY

So, probably because I was staring at him, he was approaching me to be part of his act.

SAM

(Gently)

Think so... I guess there were no apparitions of your father today on West 4th Street.

LILY

(Surprised and in shock)

It did seem like he was there. But after that thug rode off... somehow I realized how I ghosted my Dad before he ever left me.

SAM

But you were with him.

LILY

(Trance like)

Ever since that day, we were 5 mins from home; he took a wrong turn, and we ended up in Brooklyn traffic for hours. I asked him why he made that turn, so close to home, and he just kept

repeating, “Everything’s okay.” But I had to direct him back to the house that day. After that, instead of keeping him company, I just kept leaving, for errands or anything to get away.

SAM

It was the meds. He shouldn’t have been driving.

LILY

He didn’t drive after that; the doctor told him he couldn’t. By that time, I told myself he’d already left, and I wrote him off, just because he couldn’t remember how to drive me home.

SAM

You ghosted him. That is the way you deal with people sometimes.

LILY

You mean like the way you get stoned every day and act out to ruin your own success?

SAM

Act out? Thank you, Freud. I wasn’t cut from the franchise because I got arrested; they just went in a different direction. But you completely shut down anyone who even tries to get close to you. The funny thing is you’re an actor, but you can’t handle emotion.

LILY

Don’t you realize we’re both screwed! We were never kids; traveling from show to show without solid schooling, making friends on the job, but then losing those friends every time the shows ended. What’s most damaging is what we’re doing to ourselves right now!

SAM

(surprised)

Talking? Oh, you mean our relationship.

LILY

We don't have a relationship, Sam. And that's because that's how we want it. You're shocked I came by, because I never have, and I never have because I don't wanna get high with you and just see where it goes... And you've always been into temptress types anyway.

SAM

I tried with you. I tried that summer in Venice Beach, remember...but you ghosted me, Lily, admit it.

LILY

That was you trying? Whenever we went out, you spent all our time talking to those guys who live on the beach.

SAM

What were you even looking for? (*scornfully*) A Peter Gabriel serenade with a boom box?

LILY

And you want a muse who makes no demands and who only shows up in between your training work-outs.

SAM

(*Laughs ruefully*)

Yeah, I guess we are messed up. But it's cold to say we have no relationship. Every time I run into you I'm glad I did.

LILY

Same here. Sorry I about your rug.

Sam is sobering up. Lily has that effect on him. And Lily's hand is starting to pain her more.

SAM

Are there any bodies outside my apartment, I should know about? There's a First Med down the block; you should get your hand looked at. And here.

He opens the cupboard and tosses Lily a roll of toilet paper. She smiles putting it in her bag, and he glances out the window.

SAM

The mime's back: he's doing his act.

Lily stands, looks out the window, and taking in a deep breath, they both exit the apartment, closing the door behind them.

SCENE 9

QUEENS GRAVEYARD Present day

Lily places a Dunkin Donuts bag and cup of coffee on a tombstone in the graveyard, and she sits down on the grass, her back leaning against the stone.

LILY

Buttermilk krueller- double double coffee. Your usual. Ever think the donuts might be what got you? Na, more likely the Borkum Riff, right? That pipe really helped your thinking though. Did you see how Mom had shades installed on all the windows except the bathroom? And the toilet lines up directly in front of the window, so the neighbors have a clear view, every time we wipe our butt.

It doesn't seem like it's been ten years. I've been trying to carry on your plan for me. What was that plan, exactly? Did you ever think I'd follow you by studying philosophy? I found that book you were writing. The terms you use are pretty dense, but if I keep studying, I could end up being Plato to your Socrates and finish writing it for you. Like the Stoics, I pre-meditate each

day on the likely torment I may have: There's my eye condition; Addison has no time to hang out with me anymore, because she married a man-boy video-gamer; and I can't drink and talk about the family anymore with my cousin, cuz Philip now has alcohol-induced suicidal ideations...

I know I never really talked to you in your final weeks; it's just it was confusing, since you refused to admit how sick you were, so I figured I couldn't share my actual thoughts with you. I also wasn't sure you wanted to hear them.... But your will power was amazing. Remember how you walked the entire length of the park and back again one week before you died? No wheelchair for you, even though I offered to push you through the park. "Forty-thousand daughters/Could not with all their love/Make up my sum."

Lily reaches up and takes a bite out of the donut and has a sip of coffee.

So, like Socrates in the Athenian square I wanna grill you for the truth; I mean I'm not gonna drink hemlock to get the answers or anything, but I really wanna know what you meant when you told me I didn't need to marry or find a life partner. Everyone I know is getting married, all the girls we knew from S.A.B.. Hayley actually had two weddings, one in Germany and one in Nantucket. Why did you say that's not necessarily for me? Did you think I should be taking care of you in your old age, like your Irish cousins did for their parents? Or was it because you wanted me to have a more fulfilling life and not buy into society's obsession with romance? Why would you think I don't need a partner? The one so-called "relationship" I managed to have was with my philosophy T.A. who was only interested in me because he wants to be an actor! Yes, I trusted an unethical Ethics instructor who thought I was his ticket to meet David

Duchovny. It turns out I'm pathetic at recognizing trustworthy people, because I had no practice. You wanted me to depend on you, but all I learned is you didn't trust me to handle my own life. You kinda fucked me up, you know. You probably thought you were validating my selfhood, but as a matter of fact, I don't even know who I am anymore. Did you ever think how being my teacher, best-friend, and spiritual mentor might set me up for a crisis, now that you're gone? How am I now supposed to develop a self, when you dominated every part of my identity? I'm not you, Dad; I'm not governed by reason! I just keep hearing your voice, and it makes me overthink every single decision in my life! I don't have the "organizational structure" you always talked about, I just know I want to follow mystery and embrace the uncertain...

Turns out Sam's messed up too, but for different reasons. He thinks he needs to live like a Beat poet for his art, so he abuses alcohol and anti-depressants, but he has a lot of success with his work. We're still friends, even though he accused me of ghosting him. He says I ghost everyone, and he might be right. I don't know how to trust people, because I never learned.

I lost your college ring. It was too big and slid off somewhere. Maybe... you could let me find it, and I'd take that as a sign I'm on the right track.

(Groans)

See? You fucked up my life and abandoned me, and I'm still looking for your approval!...Do you remember that day during your illness when we were out, and you bought that fine stationery. I figured you were going to write each one of us a letter telling us what we meant to you, and maybe where you thought we should go in our lives. But it turned out you just liked that stationery, and you never wrote any final letters.

Lily opens her satchel and removes an envelope which she opens and she unfolds a letter.

Maybe you never wrote them, because the medication made you so tired. So I thought I'd help you out, with what you wanted to tell me.

She reads from the letter.

My dear Lily,

We had a good run of things. I'm very proud of all your accomplishments and even more pleased to have had a devoted daughter with such a forgiving and understanding nature. As we travelled together across the country, I tried to give you an education on the most important principles of life. I didn't always succeed, and I hope you can forgive me about your math phobia, since I know I didn't explain those concepts in a clear effective way.

No matter what work you choose, if you seek for excellence you will create happiness in your life. Art has the power to reveal the deepest insights in life and to change the way we see the world, so if you continue to do this work, it can be a meaningful choice.

Your friend Sam is right that the root of suffering is attachment. I'm just concerned his dedication to "the systematic derangement of the senses" and his reluctance to wholly commit himself to any occupation or person may lead to instability in his life.

Please know, Lily, you are loved and accepted for who you are, and I believe in you. I'm sorry I cannot be here for you any longer, but I hope you think of me sometimes at sunrise with your first coffee. I trust you, and you must trust yourself to know the way forward.

Lily calmly folds the letter and places it back in the envelope and into her satchel. She looks out around her.

You know a sign might still be good...Just to show you get what I'm saying. . .It could be a feather,..or maybe...a butterfly. Or even, . . snow.

She sits there for a moment and then slowly gets up, replacing the coffee and remainder of the donut back on the tombstone. She stands looking at the tombstone for a moment, and then walks offstage. A light gust of snow slowly descends onto the stage.

SCENE 10

A NYC STREET. Present day.

Its winter and Lily stands looking at a collection of Evergreen trees for sale in a NYC parking lot. Sam is walking by, sees her, and stops.

SAM

This is obviously the best one. It isn't even close.

LILY
(Surprised)

Hey, how are you! You're back again.

She sees the tree Sam has picked.

LILY (CONT'D)

That's kinda big for my studio.

SAM

I'm here for awhile, now. If you're gonna do a tree, you shouldn't be shy about it.

Lily seems unconvinced and is still considering the various sized trees. Sam picks up the one he likes which is somewhat unwieldy for one person to carry, so he puts it back down. Lily goes to speak to the attendant and comes back to Sam.

LILY

Turns out your tree is less expensive. I guess people need the small ones to fit in apartments. I

bought the one you picked, but I think I need your help getting it there. Do you have time?

SAM

Sure, I was headed out for something to eat. But we can get this in your place, first. Are you still above that antique shop?

LILY

Yes. Where I get all my clothes.

SAM

I know. You're my vintage friend.

LILY

Because I'm three years older?

SAM

No, because you wear cameos, and when we were in LA you bought that old candle lamp. You walk in front; I'll carry the bottom half.

They begin carrying the tree along the street when suddenly a bat emerges from within the branches. Sam sees the bat, but Lily is unaware. He quickly drops the tree, pushing Lily away, and she falls down on the sidewalk.

SAM (CONT'D)
(Shouts)

Get away!

LILY

Are you high again? What the hell, Sam!

Still on the ground, she sees the bat fly out of the branches of the tree and up over the building. Sam starts laughing and helps her up.

SAM

I'm so sorry, I was trying to get you out of the way, cuz I know they can have rabies. I'm not high, Lily. I don't even drink anymore. Bats are good luck you know.

LILY

I thought they represent death.

SAM

Yeah, death to the old, but they bring new beginnings.

LILY

That's what you call this? I just went to the chiropractor.

She looks at him to see how serious he might be.

SAM

I don't live anywhere near here, Lily. I was hoping to see you.

LILY

You need to run lines?

SAM

No. We just laugh when we try to make a tape.

LILY

(Ironically)

You need an alibi for your latest arrest?

SAM

That wasn't a real thing, Lily. I was kinda framed; it was just a misunderstanding.

LILY

So why are you in my neighborhood?

They are standing beside the evergreen on the sidewalk. It starts to snow, first just a few flakes, but then with increased heaviness. Sam looks up at the sky.

SAM

I thought you might want to watch some snow drifts together.

Lily smiles at Sam and then looks cautiously at the tree.

LILY

I could go for that. I just have to be in Queens for an hour.

Sam smiles too, and they have a moment together, before he picks up his end of the Evergreen. Lily takes up her end, and they carry the tree off the stage together. The snow continues onstage as the lights go down.

SCENE 11

A Long Island City street. Lily is watching workmen lift and install a heavy sign outside a small Blackbox theatre. She stands back, so the audience can read the sign which says THE ROSE. She unlocks the small theater door and walks onto the same stage on which she has spoken her monologues throughout the play. The ghost light is on. Lily walks centre stage and sings her song.

LILY

(Singing)

It always seemed, I needed to escape the blue

Now I know, I was looking through what can't be true.

Day to day, we're strangers in a scene so

Come with me now, we're finding out what's evergreen.

Cities across the continent, cast their own spell

Yet the call of the wilderness rings like a bell.

Sometimes the moment comes together,

Come with me now, we're finding out what's evergreen.

It all comes down to you,

And the briefness of a winter's day.

Finding the light break through,

Bright and fractured in the icy boughs.

As time goes on, I wander back the avenue,

To the rooms, memories, that bring me back to you.

Finally, the moment comes together,

Come with me now, we're finding out what's evergreen.

Come with me now, we're finding out what's evergreen.

END OF PLAY

Appendix B: Selected Journals

These journals document my transition from performing scripts as an actor to creating scripts as a writer and director.

April 21, 2022

Today I recorded a rehearsal of scenes from *Snowbound* which will be presented for York's CODA Project. Nick Babin is playing both Sam and Jonathan, Jobina Sitoh is playing present day Lily who addresses the audience, and Tristan Moore is playing Lily in flashback. I will be playing both present day Lily and Lily in flashback for my final presentation, but I'm finding it helpful to solidify the difference between Lily in the past and Lily in the present by having two different actors play the two different versions of the character. Lily in flashback is at times young and idealistic, she is enjoying forming her opinions on philosophical ideas, whereas Lily in the present is more sardonic and has an analytical dryness. Losing her father has made her more pensive and uncertain.

April 23rd, 2022

Today Jobina Sitoh, Nick Babin, and Tristan Moore performed scenes from *Snowbound* for York's CODA Project. Working with the three of them has helped me step into the role of director and writer of *Snowbound*. I found it really interesting that Jobina's impulse when performing Lily's monologues is to laugh when Lily is recounting the boyfriends she has ghosted

or how she is going to be a bridesmaid at the wedding of a girl who used to knock her over. My intention is that these monologues will be delivered in a dry manner, since I see Lily as a Stoic. Working with Jobina on making her delivery more dry has really helped me get better at giving notes to actors. Over the summer I want to continue having actors other than myself read Lily's lines so that I can view the scenes purely from a writer/director standpoint.

June 6th, 2022

Today I returned to editing *Snowbound* after a break. I'm in NYC, and I have been rehearsing with director and actor Tom Costello playing the role of Sam. I filmed the two of us reading a couple of Lily and Sam scenes, and I watched the scenes when I got home to see what is missing or needs greater clarity in the dialogue. Tom advised me on how I might edit my stage directions in the scene where Lily realizes that she ghosted her father before he died. I am discovering that the scene is too wordy right now and doesn't flow sufficiently. I think I might have to remove the police from the scene, because I don't know who would play them, and I think it's too late in the play to be adding in additional characters. I also like the intimacy of a cast of only two actors. I've also been rehearsing with actor Maggie Grace playing the role of Lily. Maggie brings something different to the role than I do, and I really enjoy watching her interpretation of the script. It has been so helpful to have her read Lily's monologues, because it makes it clear to me what parts of the monologues require greater clarity. Maggie taped herself reading the monologue where Lily speaks about how she prefers to ghost her dates, rather than communicate what isn't working in the relationship. Although Lily speaks of how pleasurable it is to be single, I want it to be clear to the audience in this monologue that Lily is, herself,

becoming a ghost. I'm debating beginning the play with this monologue because it depicts some of the challenges adult Lily faces in her personal relationships, as a result of having grown up in the fantasy worlds of t.v. and theatre.

August 17th, 2022

Today I worked with actor Devon Bostick playing the role of Sam. Devon is really perfect for Sam. We worked on the present day Sam and Lily scene where they run into each other outside of McNally Jackson bookstore and talk about how all their friends are now getting married. Devon required very few notes from me, and he played Sam exactly the way I had imagined him. It was thrilling to hear the ease with which he spoke the dialogue, because I have had doubts about the natural flow of the narrative. This is my 4th edit of the scene after working on it with York undergraduates, my MFA cohort, and Tom Costello, and I think it might be ready to share in September to faculty. I don't know if Devon will be free to read Sam/Jonathan with me in April, but after seeing him play the part I know that I need to find an actor who can portray Sam as a brooding method actor exhilarated by life, the Beat poets, and being high.

September 12th, 2022

Today I received feedback from faculty on my September 6th showing of scenes from *Snowbound*. Jamie Robinson spoke about the new monologue that I wrote for Lily when she mistakes a mime for an apparition of her deceased father. He says that monologue feels like an important piece of the play and that I might expand on it more as I move forward. Keira

Loughran mentioned that the dialogue is sounding natural and easy for any actor to perform, which I am happy to hear since I spent the summer editing the dialogue between Sam and Lily. Erika Batdorf suggests I ask myself where I'm going to detour in my fictionalized autobiography from what has really happened in my life. I found this helpful because I'd like to not be limited as I write by my own experiences. My next step is write a scene which detours from what has actually happened in my life. I'd like it to be a scene between Lily and Sam in which they confront one another and talk about their relationship.

February 3rd, 2023

I've been working with vocal coach Ryan Luchuck on the songs in *Snowbound*. I haven't sung live in a long time, and he's helping me get comfortable doing so. He suggests I practice the songs after I get my heart rate up by doing anything physical, so that I'm practicing singing in the same physical state I'll be in during a performance in front of an audience when your heart rate is naturally a little faster. Additionally, he's helping me refine the guitar part on the songs to match the tone of the show. I want a brief intro to 'Without a Trace' that has the same melody but different lyrics, and Lily will sing it after she tells the story about the executives asking her to take her top off. I have ordered the scenes in *Snowbound* to fit an arc I feel depicts Lily's journey from childhood to adulthood, and how she learns avoidance of painful confrontation only further isolates her, but I'm still looking for an organic ending to the play. I'd like the play to end with Sam and Lily together, but that may be too pat and uninteresting and may also undermine her increasing sense of independence.

March 22nd, 2023

Today I shared the arc of *Snowbound* with Erika Batdorf and my MFA cohort. Erika had some great directorial notes for me. I've been letting my director hat fall off because I've been focusing on writing and refining the script in these last weeks before my showings in April. I find I need to focus on one thing at a time. I can't direct the play while I'm writing it. I shared an ending of the play in which Lily is alone, busking on a street corner. I have been struggling with ending the play. Erika brought my attention to the fact that Lily says in the beginning of the play that her life dream is to have her own theatre named The Rose and she asked if there's a way for Lily to get her theatre. I don't think I'd realized until Erika said this that having my own theatre one day seems like an unattainable goal, and so I never even considered that Lily should realize this goal. I would like to find a way for the play to end with Lily playing her song in her Rose Theatre, rather than simply in the park or on a street corner.

April 5th, 2023

I have an ending to the play that feels right. Lily gets her theater. I began writing this play as my love letter to theater and the way working in theater imprinted me with a desire to find magic in my own life, and this feels like the right way to end the play. Devon Graye and Ryan Luchuck are both unable to perform at my staged readings of *Snowbound*, so I have been working with Greg Calderone playing Sam and Jonathan, and Don Campbell, on guitar. Now that I'm finished writing, I can focus exclusively on directing. I'm really enjoying collaborating with both Greg and Don. They both expressed their desire to serve the script which allowed me

the comfort to express my ideas and notes with them. During the process, I've learned I need to get to know the people I'm working with a bit more on a personal level, before I feel comfortable giving them notes. I like to hear how they see the story, before I tell them what I have in mind. As an actor I never had a director ask me for my opinion on a character I was playing, and I'm finding it fun to be the kind of director I've always wanted to work with.

April 15th, 2023

Yesterday I had my first reading of *Snowbound* with an audience at York. I was surprised there was a full audience. It felt really good to step into the role of actor in the play. I've been focusing on writing, and then directing, but yesterday when we began, I felt purely like a performer, and it was great to be able to give the performance all of my attention. I've really enjoyed the challenge of being able to write and direct my own work after so many years of performing the work of others. I also feel more confident as an actor after working as a writer and director. I now have a more holistic understanding of the many different moving parts required to bring a script to life.

April 16th, 2023

Yesterday was my second and final reading of *Snowbound* at York. It was a much smaller audience, and I was surprised by how low my energy was during the reading. I didn't feel as engaged with the material as I did on Friday's sharing. An actor can't be dependent on an audience for his or her energy. If I could go back and do it again I would have taken a moment

to direct myself to focus on bringing the story to life for one particular person who was there, or imagine one person there for whom I'd really like to provide a cathartic experience. Instead, I noticed very few people were there, and then nervously rushed into the performance without grounding myself. If I'd allowed myself to think as writer and director, and not just as an actor, I may have facilitated a more balanced production.