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## The role of Dottie in Tracy Letts' Killer Joe: a production thesis in acting

Elizabeth Jane King

*Louisiana State University and Agricultural and Mechanical College*

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THE ROLE OF DOTTIE IN TRACY LETTS' *KILLER JOE*:  
A PRODUCTION THESIS IN ACTING

A Thesis

Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of the  
Louisiana State University and  
Agricultural and Mechanical College  
In partial fulfillment of the  
Requirements for the degree of  
Master of Fine Arts

in

The Department of Theatre

by

Elizabeth Jane King  
B.A., Clemson University, August 2000  
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## **ABSTRACT**

The role of Dottie in Killer Joe by Tracy Letts was selected as a thesis project spring semester of 2003. This thesis is a written record of the actor's work on the character of Dottie throughout the rehearsal process in the form of a rehearsal journal and a character analysis.

## INTRODUCTION

It is beyond my human capacity for understanding this thing called my thesis. It is a journey that I must constantly remind myself is real and actually happening. Two and a half years ago when I began the MFA program I was an inexperienced, uncertain, and extremely doubtful actor. I was incapable of even identifying myself as an actor. I was unsure if acting was what I was meant to do or be in this life. I knew that the little experience I did have was alive inside me. I knew that I had a passion and a deep understanding of humans, our quirks, our pain, and our beauty. I am struck daily by life and people, the he's and she's populating the streets of this town, this country, this life. I have a natural, innate desire to listen and pay attention. I am interested in survival. I am interested in the human struggle. People are a massive contradiction born with an immense capacity to feel hatred or love.

I see now that this profession, this training is a gift. Acting frees me, it allows me to step outside the proverbial box and look inside. As an actor, I am asked to peel away the masks we hide behind to find...truth. I am a truth seeker and that to me is beautiful. Acting is what I want to do and an actor is what I want to be. But, more importantly I have discovered the kind of person I hope to be in this life. My time at LSU has been everything and more. I feel like I have come clean. I have given in and stopped fighting, I can no longer deny or ignore that I am an artist.

My thesis involves my work on the role of Dottie in Tracy Letts's *Killer Joe*. The experience of being her is one I will treasure and one that I will refer back to throughout my career. The director of *Killer Joe*, John Dennis, entrusted the role to me and I am eternally grateful. John Dennis (who I refer to as JD throughout me thesis) was the

leader in my search to discover Dottie. Without his direction, his trust, his insight, and his encouragement to make jumps I would have been lost somewhere in the great state of Texas. I would like to make clear that any references or quotations come directly from the 1993 Samuel French edition of *Killer Joe* by Tracey Letts .

## **CHARACTER ANALYSIS**

*I chose to write my character analysis in character, as Dottie. For me the thing that made sense was to write as Dottie. I felt, in beginning the process of knowing and understanding her, I should take the journey in character responding and answering questions as I believe Dottie would answer. For me it forged a deeper and stronger bond of love, compassion, and understanding between Dottie and myself. At times, the writing may seem fragmented and or incomplete and that is exactly how it is meant to read. I invite you to go with me into her world. Dottie exists in a very unique place, one of childlike innocence and cosmic intuitiveness. She exists in a trailer. A trailer that, like a prison, has her locked in, immobile. She has few escapes, few places to hide. Dottie has television and she has the night when she closes her eyes and goes to the dreaming place.*

**I am...**

My name is Dottie Smith; I am twenty years old. I'm from Texas. I live in a trailer park in Dallas. Sorry, it's not in Dallas. I mean, it's just outside of Dallas. I live with my daddy and my step mom. My daddy's name is Ansel Smith and my step mom's name is Sharla. We have a dog. His name is T-bone. I don't know what the "T" stands for. My dad makes him stay outside. T-bone and my daddy don't get along.

My daddy is 38 years old and he likes beer. His favorite thing to say is "Sharla would you get me a beer". Some of his other hobbies include cigarettes, marijuana, and channel surfing. He hides under the couch. I mean he hides the "pot" under the couch. My dad gets his "pot" from my brother. My brother's name is Chris. Chris is twenty-two. He is two years older than me. My momma used to always say that Chris was an "accident." See, my momma was fifteen when Chris was born and my daddy, he was 16.

That means that daddy was 18 when I was born and momma was seventeen...see they say I can't put two and two together but I just did that. Anyway, they got divorced cuz they never wanted to get married in the first place. At least that's what they always said, "we didn't want to get married." My momma, she doesn't treat anyone real good. So, my daddy remarried Sharla.

Sharla is...I don't know how old Sharla is? She works at Pizza Hut. Sharla is very concerned about preserving her youth. She puts on those masks at night and she won't go anywhere without making sure her face is on. Why do people have to put on another face? My brother says that half of Dallas County has seen Sharla naked. When me and Sharla are home and no one else is there she usually talks on the phone. She talks on the phone a lot and I know she lies about who she talks too. I know that her friend Jenny from high school is a boy, cuz her tone of voice changes and she gets all excited and can't sit still. I told Sharla that she deserves a cute boyfriend and I told her that I wouldn't tell my daddy. My daddy and Sharla have been together longer than my momma and my daddy.

My momma's name is Adele. I don't see her. She drinks a lot and she tried to kill me when I was real little. She thought she did it too and she was happy. She put a pillow over my face and tried to stop me from breathing. But she didn't do it; she didn't give me back to Him. My momma dates a guy named Rex. My brother stays with my momma, until she kicks him out and then he shows up at our house. Adele and Chris don't get along- Chris hits her sometimes. He has one of those short tempers and he can get pretty violent but he's protective of me, well kind of. I love him. Nobody treats me like a twenty year old; I mean twenty is getting up there but Joe does- Joe Cooper.

Joe is a detective from the Dallas Police Department that my brother and my daddy hired to kill my momma. They weren't gonna tell me but I heard them talkin' and I thought it was a good idea so that's what I told them, I said "I think it's a good idea." The first time I saw Joe he scared me to death- I was practicing my kung fu to one of my favorite Bruce Lee movies, "Enter the Dragon." I didn't hear him come in; I didn't even hear T-bone bark (which is strange cause that is one of the things I can always hear.) He told me I should get a teacher for my kung fu and he wanted me to make him some coffee. He was wearing this long black coat and I hung it up for him and could feel his eyes on me, I could feel heat on my back and that heat rushed into my cheeks...his eyes hurt. Joe is a real detective. He has drawn his gun and I asked him if he ever shot anybody and he told me it was nobody that I knew...WOW. Joe told me this story about a man setting his genitals on fire to teach his girlfriend a lesson. So, I told him the story about my Aunt Viva who burned to death. Viva was wearing a long lace dress and it got caught in the furnace and she died before they could put out the fire. They say Viva is the one I look most like in the family. Viva. Isn't that a great name?

### **I come from...**

I was born in Dallas, Texas, well outside Dallas. My brother Chris says he hates Texas. He says, "it's really a bunch of goddamn hicks and rednecks with too much room to walk around in". But, I think it's warm. We live in a trailer and we don't keep it too clean. There's a lot of stuff lying around: beer cans, ashtrays full of cigarettes, fast food sacks, just junk everywhere, and it's always been like that. The trailer has two bedrooms. My dad and Sharla share one room and I get the other room all to myself.

## **My childhood was...**

When I was younger, me and my brother Chris would lie in bed late at night and he would put on these little shows, with his knees. He would get a flashlight and put his knees up and he would put a pair of sunglasses on one knee and some kind of hat on the other knee...and he would put on a little show. "The Greatest Show on Earth" that's what he called it. We said, "Into Time and Forever From Now On. No Ventures, or Time-Outs, or King's-X's, Everlasting, One More Than You Can Say, Into Infinity, and Outer Space. Amen." I liked that. I know that he did it to distract me from the fighting. Mostly my momma and my daddy sometimes noise from other people outside. That was sweet of him. I'll never forget that, just like I'll never forget about my momma tellin' Chris and me about her divorcing my daddy...she was drunk, "I don't love your daddy no more. I never loved him." I screamed something that didn't make any sense and I ran out of the house and into the yard and under a streetlight and I was crying. Chris came out, he hadn't said anything and he laid on top of me. He stretched his body out and laid on me until I stopped crying. I'll never forget that and we haven't talked about it, ever.

I told you about when I was real little and my momma tried to kill me. She put a pillow over my face and tried to STOP me from BREATHING. I remember. She didn't want me to grow up and be the part of her that was cut out and grown into a better thing then she had been, had ever been. Because that would mean the best part of her was me. She didn't do it. She only made me sick, made me not be for awhile. My momma was always drunk. Chris told me that is why she said and did the things she did. Like calling me stupid or making me eat a can of dog food. If Chris was an "accident", what was I? Probably an accident too.

I loved cartoons and I still do. My favorite is the Roadrunner. My brother says the coyote never catches the bird. How does he know that? I think one day he will catch that bird. I had a doll. I named her Viva and I took real good care of her. I didn't care if she ate my food or slept in my bed. I loved her with a pure love but T-bone tore her to shreds. My Daddy throws things at T-bone to try and stop him from barking. One day he grabbed Viva out of my arms, opened the door, and hurled Viva at T-bone. I had a boyfriend in the third grade. His name was Marshall and he was fat. But I loved him. It was our secret me and Marshall. All the other kids always made a big show of going together; writin' their initials in each others notebooks and holdin' hands at recess, but me and Marshall kept it a secret. We were boyfriend and girlfriend and we never told nobody. We never saw each other at recess and we never hand no lunch together and we didn't write notes and he never walked me home from school. We loved each other and we didn't have to talk about it. If we talked about it, it wouldn't of been what it was which was true.

### **My family conditions...**

We are poor but there is always something to eat. My Daddy and Chris aren't good with money. They first buy pot, beer, and cigarettes before getting groceries. The trailer is a mess, just trash and dirt and shit...my room is clean and I don't like anyone to go in there, our walls are like paper, and nothing nice comes out of their mouths, fighting words, and fighting fists. I stay quiet, I go away, not literally cuz there is no where to go. I stand under the streetlight, it's warm light, and I imagine things...

### **Major influences...**

Television is my reality. It is my escape from the nightmare that is the trailer. I love Christy Brinkley- I want to be a model. My brother Chris said he would help me get into a modeling school. My butt is too big. My second grade teacher, Miss Lester, said I was talented at art. We were using finger paints and I liked how the wet, cold paint felt on my fingers...my drawings are my secret- no one at home has ever seen them. I like to draw picture of eyes, only one eye at a time and I put inside it what I see. I put in the eye what I see inside people. I like cartoons. Sometimes I feel like a cartoon character and that makes me laugh. I am a cartoon surrounded by monsters who speak in strange tongues and they can't understand me and I don't understand them.

### **Experiences, making a lasting impression on me...**

I have already mentioned some about my momma and things growing up but I haven't talked about Joe, Joe Cooper. I had sex with Joe. He was the first one ever. His eyes hurt. I could see that and I could see that he had something inside that was pure. He was tender. At first it hurt but then I liked it. It made me feel somewhere else and safe. It made me feel understood. I feel like maybe he is a cartoon character too.

### **Ten most important facts about me...**

- 1) I am a kung fu master I am physically strong
- 2) I keep my room clean.
- 3) I learn a new word from the dictionary every night before I go to sleep
- 4) I am not always asleep when people think I am
- 5) I know about love different than my daddy or my momma or Sharla or even Chris
- 6) I want to be on television or in a magazine
- 7) I make jokes in my head and I think I'm funny
- 8) I see things
- 9) I hate my momma
- 10) I'm not stupid.

**Five people whose opinion I value most...**

This is hard. Most of the people in my life don't value me...I care about Joe's opinions. I value Bruce Lee's opinion. I know he is dead but I do... What is an opinion? Something you believe to be true? I don't like it. People are bad, my daddy will say to Chris, "why don't you do us all a favor and kill yourself"...I don't value that opinion. I don't really know anyone.

**My outlook on life is primarily determined by...**

My outlook on life has been shaped a lot by television. I see a life out there that people are living and that gives me hope...I learn by example, I learn what not to do and say by the people in my life...I know that the word stupid is something I would never say to anyone. I know that asking people how they think and feel is important instead of assuming and talking about them in the third person. People are always making decisions for me without asking. It's frustrating and there is a limit a person has, there is only so much a person can take of being quieted and ignored and babied. I feel like I am existing and that's what I do but I don't think my life has started. I have the hope that one day I will actually be living...I will be alive.

**External influences, Education, Lingering Forces...**

I stopped going to school my tenth grade year of high school. I just stopped going. I woke up one morning and I didn't walk to the end of the road to catch the bus. I walked out of my room and I stood in the middle of the trailer and I listened and there was no one there, there was this quiet and I laid down in front of the TV and I was gone...

My Daddy took me on a trip to Oklahoma once and that is the only time I left Texas. It was warm there too. My Daddy went there to drop off a car. We towed it behind the truck. I remember it was a red mustang and the sun was dancing off the hood...I counted dead animals on the side of the road: four cats, six dogs, three armadillos and five that were unidentifiable.

I feel like the forces of my life are all untouchable there is nothing I can physically touch...I have very little that is mine and the things I understand are in my belly and in my heart. I don't know what I would do without that time in the trailer alone...

I like action shows, police dramas...I think guns are mysterious? Death is mysterious? I watched a bird die...and I looked deep in its eyes for a sign...I want my momma to die and I want to look deep in her eyes...I pray. I pray every night before I go to bed...I talk and He listens, I can feel Him listening. He doesn't shut me up or stop me from talking or dismiss me...

### **Factors influencing how I feel at this moment...**

My mind is in a state. My Daddy and Chris set me up. I feel betrayed by them. I am twenty years old and no one in my family treats me like an equal, no one is honest. I hear things, I get information, I hear the truth...I put on the black dress, and my Daddy told me I looked like a movie star and for a moment I was. I felt beautiful. The reality was that I was being wrapped up as a gift to Joe. The situation reminded me of a movie, it didn't feel like it was happening...I changed, I felt dirty and filled with hate. That dress wasn't right, it's not me. Beauty does not exist here.

I am sitting in my room, my clean room with no way to clean myself...I can hear him out there, its Joe. He is talking about Hank Williams, fishing, and Oklahoma and for second I was gonna tell him that I had been there once...but what difference does it make? My stomach is in knots and my heart is racing. There is something in his voice...I would like to look at his eyes again and I could tell him...tell him that they hurt. He listened to me tell about my momma and Viva...he listened. I hope he knows that I am a virgin.

**Other people tend to describe me as...**

Sharla says that I can't put two and two together like Ansel or her or Chris. I say, I wouldn't want to put two and two together like those three. If their answer was four than I would say twelve. Chris calls me sweetheart and Joe calls me honey and my dad calls me honey too...I never call people anything but what they are. I think my butt is too big but my Daddy said its not. I know that I'm not ugly; I have seen people look at me with those eyes...

**I often use these terms to describe others...**

I don't describe others. I see things but I don't describe. To me that would be participating in the thing I hate most...I hate when people judge me, tell me how I feel, and tell me what I really want. I think people like to talk about other people...its easier than really looking at yourself ...I think most people are afraid. When Joe told me he was a detective I compared him to Mannix, who isn't a real detective but that is what I had to compare. I told Joe that I love my brother and I told Joe that he could poison my mom...I don't give descriptions, I tell a story, something I remember, something true...that's how I choose to help people understand.

**In groups I...**

I don't talk very much. I like to watch and observe. When I was in school I spent my lunch watching people. I watch people like I watch television. I learn that way. I get nervous. In fourth grade Mrs. Dryer said I was rude and inconsiderate, she said I acted like I was better than everyone...she said that a young girl shouldn't spend so much time by herself and that I should learn to play with the other kids. She said it was disrespectful to not respond when she asked a question. But for me, sometimes I just saw her lips moving and I would stare into her eyes and then there was no sound.

**I am basically...**

A chameleon. I know how to blend in and disappear into my surroundings...

**My appearance is...**

I am plain. I like to wear sweatshirts and jeans...sometimes I wear flip flops and then sometimes my sneakers. Around the trailer it doesn't matter what I look like, no one cares. Joe told me that he likes my hair back and out of my face...so for him I put it in a bun.

**My physical life involves...**

I exercise a couple of times a week to old karate movies. I memorize the moves and I take on the world...I fight the entire planet. I turn the volume up as high as it will go and I do it until I physically can't any longer...I have thrown up. I like to sweat, I like the feeling of the first bead of sweat when it sets itself free and trickles down my neck...I went to the Dallas airport with Daddy to pick up Sharla and I saw all these people, these strangers...and they were hugging and kissing...my family never does that; our touches don't come from a good or pure place...maybe it is because we are never flying out of

town or into town but it's more than that. I like to dance. I dance in my room by myself, I do the two-step, I spin and twirl, and I make myself dizzy until I fall to the ground. My Daddy caught me and he laughed at me and smirked for days. I have to be careful now.

**My vocal life...**

I don't have anything to exclaim. I don't shout or raise my voice very often...all my life the people I am surrounded by constantly yelling- the walls shake...they never listen to me and if I want to be heard I have to match them on their level...its exhausting and pointless. I do talk at length with Him at night, He saved my life and sometimes I have to ask why...for what? I ask a lot of questions...I like asking questions like a detective or like Barbara Walters...I ask Joe things. Sharla and I talk sometimes. Chris and my daddy just talk at me. My momma and I... we never-

**My most distinguishing characteristics...**

I have a funny birth mark that looks like a can of Dr. Pepper...my favorite soda. It's on the inside of my right thigh. My butt is disgusting, I hate it...I have freckles on my nose...two summers ago Chris brought home a plastic inflatable swimming pool and I laid in it for three days straight and my whole face peeled of like a snake. There is something about my legs; in eighth grade when I would wear shorts, the boys would call me "legs"...I don't wear shorts anymore. I am trying to become one solid muscle like Bruce Lee. One thing I like is when I look at my eyes in the mirror I can see sunflowers.

**My temperament...**

I have a short fuse, it runs in my family. I let people get away with a lot. I believe that if you are bad it will come back to you someday. It is not my job to punish or put people in their place. But I have a limit...when my daddy wouldn't let me change

out of my dress, I let him have it- I yelled and screamed and I was getting out of that dress...I do what the TV does. I turn my volume all the way up.

**My lifestyle involves...**

I feed T-bone...he likes me, he never barks at me...I let him in and give him leftovers and give him beer from my daddy's unfinished cans...I watch my shows and they leave me alone. I like to go out on the stoop when its raining or at night when the stars are really bright and just stare, lose myself in it all...a lot of times I feel like I am waiting for something, someone, or some moment.

**I am most and least interested in...**

I am most interested in what I see in people's eyes; it's like a TV screen the eyes of people. I am least interested in getting drunk or stoned like the rest of my family or getting fat off chips and greasy fast food...I am least interested in being disregarded by people who think they love me...and they piss their pants or pass out or get the shit kicked out of them and I wash the clothes, heal the wound, turn out the lights and lock the doors...I am least interested in wasting away and I am most interested in a life that is not this one.

**Three objects surrounding me that mean a great deal emotionally are...because**

- 1) my pillow- it is my silver cross, my future, my past, my present, it is magic carpet, it is my butterfly wings, it is what I squeeze when I need affection and love, it is a reminder that someone didn't want me here but He did
- 2) My picture of my aunt Viva- my true friend, my confident, my kindred spirit
- 3) TV- transports me, teaches me, takes me wherever I want to go and it shuts out the sounds to my imperfect world

### **My interior monologue often sounds like...**

You are looking at me but you are looking right past me. Your lips move blah-blah-blah and I can't hear...you aren't making sense. You don't understand me and I completely understand you. Why do you pity me? Am I sad to look at? Do you feel sorry for me? Why can't you see me? You lie. You drink too much. You don't know love. You don't know truth. You misunderstand me...so I will turn you off- I will turn this up and see if the coyote catches the bird. I will go to my room and shut the door. I will run into the yard and under the streetlight and I will stare until I'm gone. You underestimate the coyote and you underestimate me!

### **Scenes in my life I often repeat...**

My day is a repetition- same things, same people, the same tree outside, same trailer, same carpet, the same thoughts of me with a pillow smothering the world-conquering the world...Joe Cooper is new: new face, new voice. He looks at me and he listens...he is different and he is a light.

### **Three major contradictions in my behavior...**

I love my brother- I would like him to die. I want to leave- I stay. I want to feel beautiful- I feel dirty.

### **Things which surprise me about myself...**

My want of pure love and my ability to hate. My reservations about Joe and how comfortable I feel with him...I love the warm air, fresh outside air, and I stay inside. My ability to know and understand people...I hate my mother...I believe in god and I don't go to church...I love to learn and I quit school...I'm going to have a baby...my memory...I don't know how to drive.

**I usually deal with problems by...**

Sleeping, go to my room, draw eyes, turn up the volume, disappear, watching TV, my kung fu, dancing and twirling...staring...remembering.

**Above all else I believe...**

That I know more than my dad and Chris will ever know.

**Self descriptions...**

My diet consists of too much grease and carbohydrates. I hate biscuits and we eat a lot of biscuits. There is more to me than people see. I am not horrible to look at. I am muscular. I have long legs. My posture and social skills are awkward and unrefined. I don't hold my fork correctly but that's okay because I like to eat with my hands. I have gotten flowers once in my life...from Joe Cooper and they were the most beautiful flowers I ever saw. I am guarded. I wear loose fitting clothes and I pull my sweatshirt over my butt. I love to look into people's eyes; eye contact is not a problem. I have a nice smile and a nice laugh. My laugh usually has a crack in it at the beginning because of the few instances it gets released. I like to sit on my knees at the table and I like to lie on my belly right in front of the TV. My rhythm of speaking has few ranges or colors. I have a Texas accent. My voice has power when it wants too. I like patterns and routines that I set for myself, but I don't like being told to do things like at school or work. I think I would start working or finish school if it were on my terms. I am curious about sex. I have heard enough through the walls and on television to know it's exciting and also dangerous. On TV they call it "lovemaking" and that is what I want. I want a pure love. I want trust. I rarely get held or hugged. I do get poked in the butt or grabbed but

nothing tender...my needs aren't met, my human need for love and comfort cannot be found in this trailer.

### **How I feel right now...**

I am scared right now. Joe Cooper coming into my life has changed things. He has the strength, the power to get me out of here. He tells me I am not crazy or dumb. He holds me, he makes love to me, and that is setting me free. I know what my Daddy and Chris did. I know the deal they made and I know the way I have been used. It's not right. I hear things and see things that are bad...and I have been hiding and denying the way I feel here. I am not living- I am lost and slowly being suffocated. I understand the decisions they made, their plan, the money, Joe, me...I have prayed for something to come into my life and now Joe is here...

Chris won't let me leave with Joe, he wants me to go with him, he thinks I will do whatever he tells me...and why does he think that? What does he know about me? I don't trust Chris. He has never followed through with any of his promises to me. All he cares about is money...and I feel sorry for him.

Maybe I will just go, I could take T-bone and go...I will take the TV too and I will start walking and I will keep going until I'm somewhere else...Joe could come and we would be okay- I see that he loves me and it's crazy but I love him more than Marshall, more than anything, ever...I love into infinity and outer space. Amen. I would be a good mother- I have learned all the things not to do and I know I'm not smart but I know things...and I would never care if she slept in my bed or ate my food and I wouldn't care if she grew up to be the thing that was better than me.

# JOURNAL

**December 31, 2002**  
**THE MILL**  
**Lincoln, Nebraska**

*I escaped from my family. I am sitting in the solace of a cappuccino at my favorite coffee shop in Lincoln. I am about to crack the script and my stomach is turning.*

The violence is extreme. *Killer Joe* is ugly and it is real. The play is a Martin Scorsese meets Cohen Brothers cocktail. It is *The Deer Hunter*, *Raging Bull*, and *Taxi Driver* mixed with *Fargo*, and *Blood Simple*. *Killer Joe* is disturbing in its truth. Why in a certain light does Dottie seem unafraid? I watched the Bruce Lee movie *Enter the Dragon* today and in an interview before the movie Mr. Lee was being questioned about his philosophies, his approach to life, and to martial arts. The interview was surprisingly useful and raised curiosities in me about Dottie's strength and physical life. Maybe Dottie understands an eastern way of looking at the world and things. There is something inside her, a spiritual side, it's not something she can articulate but there is this thing that she gets. I will just have to keep asking questions until an answer comes.

Images are flashing into my head of movies and actors. I am thinking of Johnny Depp and *Edward Scissor Hands* and the lost, unique characters he always plays and then to *Benny and Joon* and the woman who played Joon. I can picture Dottie, like June in the film, walking out in the middle of the road with a snorkel mask and a ping pong paddle in her hand. I see a person who is off the wall random. A person who makes impulsive quick switches and has a completely skewed sense of reality. I am thinking of silent movies and Buster Keaton and then the character Amelie from the French film *Amelie*. I

fell in love with her beautifully absurd imagination. I am having idea, after idea for Dottie, and I can't control the excitement.

I emailed JD yesterday about Dottie's hair- I was in the supermarket going through magazines: car mags, WWF mags, hair stylist mags, etc. because I haven't cut my frickin' hair in a while and I was thinking about a female mullet and it was a brief thought but I e-mailed him about it and he wrote "don't do anything until we talk." I realize in putting it out there how wrong a choice that would be. I think Dottie's hair just is, it just exists, and it's nothing special. I think my hair will keep growing and thus Dottie's hair will continue to grow and it might just be that way for her, it just grows and then maybe one day she cuts it or maybe not. It's simple; however it lies, whatever it is.

I am thinking about her imagination about fantasy and magic and seeing things that aren't there, just wondering. Wondering how far she is beyond the norm. She leads such a secluded life. How does she entertain herself; when she is in her room and everyone is home, when she is by herself and the entire trailer is empty? Her seclusion, her naivety must breed and feed her mind with images, fictional images, from television. What does she see? And how defined is her reality? Her link to the rest of the world is that TV set. I am thinking WOW and fuck.

I remember JD saying before the Holiday Break (this may not be his exact phrasing,) "she is a bud and we see her blossom." I think that is striking and a beautiful thing to envision. I went out for a drive sometime before the Fall semester ended when I was unsure if I had the role and we were waiting and waiting and then auditioning again and then waiting and waiting. So, I went for a drive to seek out trailers or just to seek out and I turned off the highway onto a back road and discovered Dutch Ville (I think that

was the name) and I saw this lone turquoise but sort of light blue trailer with a white stripe. The trailer appeared to be like circa 1968 and it was painted metal or aluminum and what struck me, against this background, was this single bush, leafless except for one blossomed deep pink rose-like flower it was... a camellia.

**January 2, 2003**  
**THE MILL**  
**Lincoln, Nebraska**

*Came to The Mill to go through the script. I plan to ask a lot of questions, drink a lot of coffee and take notes.*

Act One. Scene One

--Chris knocking calling for Dottie- am I the one who usually or always answers the door? Its 2:45 in the morning, am I usually up? Do I stay up the latest? Can I hear him- do I awake and decide not to go to the door?

--Sharla answers door bottomless and in t-shirt, she is exposed so there is an element of zero privacy and zero cares for what is hanging out or falling out...this sense of careless freedom creates, paradoxically, a very imprisoned discomfort. No privacy! The walls aren't walls, everything is heard, felt, and seen.

--Chris doesn't want Dottie to have to stare at "her own stepmother's pussy." Chris stands up to Ansel. Is he protecting Dottie?

--The line "you don't live here"- why doesn't Chris live there? Chris talks about their abusive mother. What does Dottie feel for her mother?

--Chris and Ansel discuss the splitting of the life insurance policy and they are going to give Dottie a cut and it's unquestioned. Do they respect me? Do they feel I deserve the money? Why?

--Chris talks about how mom treats Rex and Ansel says, “about like she treated me I bet”, what was the atmosphere of those two in the trailer? Is it the same trailer? Was it constant ugliness? Do I have any memories that are good?

--The “Amazon school”, what is the desire there for Dottie? Is it a passion? A true desire or something she mentioned once or twice?

--Dottie enters sleepwalking. This is the first time she is seen. There is a huge choice to be made about whether or not Dottie is really asleep. If Dottie is asleep or if she isn't, there is still something very childlike, very romantic, or fairytale-esque about dreaming and sleeping. The stage directions describe her in a robe and nightgown. This outfit clearly expresses she is not as forward and comfortable as Ansel and Sharla. She is layered and this is important.

--SLEEPWALKING, a lot of questions and decisions to be made about this. Is she fucking with them? There is a certain power in it if she is aware and pretending. If she is faking, the line “did you build this city all by yourself” is extremely inventive, imaginative, brilliant and hilarious—and thus the question is, is that beyond her capabilities? It gives her a power that is all her own, she can “creep” them out. Or does she sleepwalk and does she then also fake it at times? It's a tool, a weapon- they have verbal abuse and physical she has the guise of sleepwalking. Kids use many defense mechanisms when they grow up in extreme circumstances: denial, imaginary friends, etc. Soooooo interesting and a huge character decision.

--Does she hear the entire Ansel/Chris plot about killing Adele? She hears enough to decide that it's a good idea. Is there any question in that decision for her? She isn't one to really ponder over a task. She may forget about a task at hand and be distracted by a

branch hitting the window. When she decides “yes let’s kill mama”, is that it? Has she always wished death upon her mother? Where does the hate come from and how deep is it, how real and violent, how inside of her is that rage? Does she even understand the consequences or the reality of it?

--She makes two entrances and two exits within a very short time and the color of the two are drastically different. The pace feels different, the mood, and the tone. What is it? Is it as simple as slow vs. quick? And what is she doing? There is a reason she comes in the second time. Does she need them to know what she has heard? But, what is she doing?

#### Act One. Scene Two.

--The script says Dottie is working out to a Karate movie, the volume of the TV is earsplitting and her face is red and she is sweating heavily. Dottie does not hear Joe enter. Does she have a hearing problem? Is she in such a zone that all that exists in that moment is she and the TV screen? Is there a “Dottie zone” that I must find? What is she wearing to work out? Is she athletic? How often does she workout? Is the TV volume always this loud? She is alone in the trailer. What are the rules, because her status changes?

--Joe asks Dottie for some coffee. This is new; it’s fair to assume that most people who walk into that trailer go for a beer? Is this a point or a score for Joe?

--Joe tells Dottie he is a detective and her immediate response is a television comparison “Really? Like Mannix?”

--“What are you?”- I love that she said that.

--He tells the story about the boyfriend and the girlfriend and genitals on fire- and then I tell him about my aunt. WHY? It doesn't seem that she would confide in many people? What is it about Joe? Is Viva my Mom or Dad's sister? Who told me that she is the one I look most like? What and who was Viva? I need a strong image for her.

--I trust Joe with the story about my mom trying to kill me. The line "made me not be for a while" the "not be" is a huge thing.

--Joe asks for a payment of twenty five thousand and the discussed amount that was understood by Chris was twenty thousand. Is that Chris' mistake? Does Joe know what raising the price might mean?

--Dottie standing outside in rain is a beautiful image. What is she doing? Can she hear? Does she do this often? I picture her standing face pointed up at the sky. Does she like rain? If Dottie hears the line from Ansel, "You know, it might just do her some good?" What do those words feel like?

### Act One. Scene Three.

--The stage directions say Dottie enters in sweatshirt and blue jeans. Is that her uniform?

--Sharla talks about Dottie putting on her "new dress." How new? Was it bought for this specific occasion? Did Sharla take her shopping? Was Dottie involved in the purchase or did someone just bring it home for her?

--Dottie asks Sharla about her boyfriend. Wow, she knows what's going on around her and the people in the trailer refuse to acknowledge it. Is Dottie truly interested in connecting with Sharla? It feels like she really wants Sharla to have a cute boyfriend. This makes me wonder if she feels sorry for Sharla. The Sharla and Dottie relationship is hard and I need to figure out how Dottie feels about her. I think it's fair to say, safe. I

also think Sharla's indifference to Dottie is hurtful. Sharla doesn't listen to Dottie just like Ansel, she dismisses her. Dottie is aware of that.

--Marshall (Dottie's boyfriend from third grade) brings up so much. What was going to school like for Dottie? And if that is love to her, how does she see love? She has zero unconditional love around her. She uses words like "pure" and "true" and there is innocence in that which is incredibly deep and powerful--the idea of unspoken love, of just knowing is beautiful. And the secrecy of their relationship, "it was our secret." The trailer is lacking in privacy and is an overtly exposed place. Therefore, a "secret" has a heightened meaning. In the trailer there are no secrets, people try, but it seems Dottie is the only one with mysteries. She has possession of secrets that are all her own.

--The first acknowledgement of Joe's eyes is with Sharla. Dottie says, "his eyes hurt". Does she have an obsession with eyes? Is it the uniqueness of his? Has she ever seen eyes like that before? What an amazing thing; hurting eyes. This statement makes me wonder how Dottie feels about eye contact. She has shy qualities. Does she avoid or is she intoxicated, drawn like a TV set, to the eyes of people?

--When Dottie enters in her dress, Ansel says to Dottie "you look like a god damn movie star." I hear it just echoing in her ears, the best compliment, the most flattering. Dottie can hear that he means it and suddenly it seems she is somewhere else: a red carpet, a different life, a different fate...she is way up high floating and her balloon is filled and then, it bursts! She falls, bam, when Ansel says "it's just going to be you and Joe for dinner." It is then she knows what is happening. She is hurt; she is back in that trailer and feeling dirty.

--The dinner scene. Why do I come out from the bedroom? What does he say? What does she hear? Or is she just hungry or does she think he is gone?

--She says it to him, to Killer Joe Cooper, "your eyes hurt". Has she been dreaming about them? Thinking about them? Drawing them? Imagining them...

--LAUGHING. How often? Just with Joe? When she watches TV? Does she amuse herself? What is funny and how are things funny? I have to play with and think about, how she laughs? Does she snort? Is it controllable is it a giggle or a loud HA HA? What is it or is it not at all? Is it new? Does it begin after the first Joe encounter? Is he the one who helps her to discover laughter?

--When he asks her, "what are you drinking" and she says, "nothing" it's a simple response but in it is a naked truth. Dottie looks at things literally and she makes discoveries in the moment. This is different than most people, more honest and real.

--There are big questions about her love for her brother? What happened the night when he laid on top of her? Did it happen more than once? Is she a virgin? Has Ansel ever sexually abused her? Does she love Joe?

**January 8, 2003 Wednesday**  
**Highland Coffee**  
**Baton Rouge, Louisiana**

*About to start rehearsal, in one hour and I am here drinking coffee and revving up for the first day.*

I need to commit, it begins today, the ride. The lights go up on Valentine's Day, Feb. 14. For me Valentine's Day strays from its intended meaning because my friend Jenny Janda died six years ago on that day. I will dedicate the first show to her and her

family. *Killer Joe* will be my last play at LSU; my last show until who knows? I don't know when I will work again and there is this excitement in the unknown that seems to fuel me and fill me and create a strong desire to treat this with care and make it special and to be thorough. My priority is Dottie and this play, this fucking fantastic play that I am grateful to be a part of.

*Later on in ROOM 106. Jd gave us "the talk".*

1. bring rehearsal clothes
2. be early
3. be in dialect the moment you walk in
4. when the character leaves you will be taped, talk about relationship and what just happened...there maybe some stuff you may not want to talk about
5. bad teeth and dirty nails
6. these people are not pretty
7. nudity- do it when you want
8. Paul coming to choreograph fight- so we will get there soon
9. trailer knocked off blocks; the trailer is hanging on and pulling towards downstage right towards the television
10. keeps show in the moment you may think you know Dottie and then it changes
11. everything is a surprise, you can never move out of now
12. what do you want to touch or scratch?
13. don't want to see same choices from before
14. be specific

15. don't want to see what you *look* like
16. don't be afraid to talk to the other Dottie about it
17. if it looks good and it works, rip it off
18. Jacobean tragedy
19. impact, violent thoughts easy
20. buy into culture
21. these people are not politically correct
22. the brutal honesty is the humor and beauty
23. "I want to kill" and then it happens and no one says "no" and in the midst candlelight
24. value system numbed – drugs, alcohol, food, TV.
25. diets consist of what?
26. sucking on something all the time, nurture, feed off something all the time
27. so cold or so hot
28. no parody love these people
29. have a mission
30. this is happening to me because \_\_\_\_\_ didn't do this- everyone has an excuse or something or someone else to blame
31. this is Chicago theatre: strong, not polite, you are throwing yourself in, no bullshit
32. start bringing clothes now...for Dottie
  - \*flannel night gown (bunnies)
  - \*sweatshirt and Capri pants
  - \*clear plastic rain coat
  - \*flip flops, blue jeans, sweatshirt

- \*black evening dress, possibly open in back, maybe a few sequins...needs to be able to just slip to the floor
  - \*robe possibly at this point because Joe is staying at the trailer Dottie has nothing on underneath
  - \*funeral dress, some kind of flower print, maybe ruffles, possibly pink
  - \*robe and then later jeans and sweatshirt or maybe even the evening dress
33. be in character 2 to 3 minutes before entrances
  35. T-bone probably doesn't bark at Dottie
  36. these people have wants they have been shortchanged
  37. LIGHT SOURCE: skylight, fridge, TV, exterior from windows
  38. the paradox of a trailer that does not move, no place to go...what if you had no options
  39. where do they go at the end of the play
  40. middle class America reads about these people in newspaper headlines "Trailer burns to the ground"
  41. think about relationships
    - \*Dottie vs. Sharla
    - \*Dottie vs. Chris
    - \*Dottie vs. Ansel
    - \*Dottie vs. Joe
  42. think about private vs. public
  43. point system who has done what for who
  44. think in physical action...to rip open Frito bag

45. try to feel better (balm)

46. CHANGE YOUR LIFE TODAY!

*My notes during read through...*

I am going to try and stay open to the two cast idea and let it push me. Selfishly, hearing her read a scene as Dottie and then I read as Dottie is awkward. BUT, I trust Jd and this is the way it is. Brace was late today. Why? It's the first day. It really pissed me off!

\*think about things Dottie might suck on: gum, fast food straws, suckers

\*think about Dottie's hygiene

\*ideas for personal props: magazines, colorings books, Chap Stick, hair clips, journal...

\*Did Chris and Dottie share a room? Did they share a bed?

\*Does Dottie see Joe as her ticket out?

\*Does she understand that she has to sleep with him? At what point does she make that connection?

\*I feel like she is incredibly intuitive...am I giving her too much credit?

\*They share this beautiful moment of humor and laughter together...how long has it been since someone has made Joe laugh? There is power in making someone laugh.

\*Jd said look at "Lone Star" and "Urban Cowboy" for dialect and Texas mood.

**January 9, 2003**  
**ROOM 106, 11am**  
**ACT ONE**

*Jd general notes...*

\*Dottie lose some brain cells

\*everything is a problem (sitting on the couch maybe you sit on a cushion- it's a problem)

\*keep track of everything that counts, if it's cold we need a sense from everyone that it is cold...

\*first act rituals and power NOT actors inhabiting space...

\*don't be afraid to jump when you have to jump, make the trailer shake

\*we have "knowns"...remote is not reliable, its cold in Act One Scene One, there is no coffee, we know where the pot is stashed

*My notes...*

\*feels like Dottie has power over Sharla because she knows there is someone else, a boyfriend...

\*Dottie's memory? It seems she doesn't forget much and she remembers in very clear images and pictures.

\*Is there an ear thing

\*She definitely has a pillow that is hers and it's old and special and it's like a blanket or an old stuffed animal...need to get it soon, so I will talk to Marshall and maybe she will let me go find one...does she use the pillow to reenact for Joe how her mother tried to kill her when she was little???

\*not in love with Joe too soon...be scared and be intrigued. Dottie's definition of love is what? She is having an experience with Joe heightened interest/ fear/ excitement/he is different, strange, unique...

\*thinking about Pee Wee Herman and his foil ball and wondering if Dottie has a ball of gum in her room where she discards her pieces

\*I had a grapefruit I brought to eat today and it feels right that Joe would bring something foreign like a grapefruit into the trailer...he is her vitamin C pill.

\*where is my spot in the trailer, how do I watch television, which chair is mine at the table and how is it distinguished as mine because it has the best view of television because I have picked away at the plastic...how does she sit at the table? Does she sit on her knees???

\*Jd said make a list of the things you are touching and keep track of the chain of events: the casserole for Dottie or setting the table..a lot to keep track of and start now...

\*the kung fu workout moment ...what is she fighting...who? The world?

**Jan. 10**  
**ROOM 106, 11am**  
**ACT ONE**

*My notes...*

\*Trying different pair of jeans and a different sweatshirt.

\*Nothing works right. Not even the TV. Everything is difficult. The door sticks, it smells, there's just crap and shit everywhere.

\*Where does Adele live?

\*Thinking about sitting on knees and melting or molding to chair. If I sit on my knees it gives me the range of levels. I can come up onto knees or sink down.

\*Thinking about Dottie's interest in detectives, in shooting somebody, in death...does she have an obsession with death and dying?

\*They say she doesn't put "two and two" together. In Dottie's world two plus two do not go together. She sees through you, she sees deep and vertical.

I am watching Jd giving John (who is playing one of the Chris) direction. Jd is helping him to see the beats and the pace. I am thinking, Jd is brilliant and it's so hard but it's easy. I am watching this scene unfold into its truth. I don't feel like John is really listening. It's all right there. I am sitting here filled and ready, prepared and ready to try things and fail and struggle and just do it.

*Jd notes...*

1. if someone is doing something you don't like change it
2. 30,000 bucks in this shithole!!!
3. JD says people are giving intermediate no's and yes's they need to be STRONGER, they need to be a real no and a real yes...maybe does not exist
4. remember to get some stuff, need something to suck on
5. bring empty cans

*Libby remember...*

\*Talk to props master about getting a pillow, it will help me get there with story to Joe about my mom, both hands on either side and struggle, physicalize it and it will take you

\*The pillow, enter to get it with Chris and Ansel.

\*Play with Dottie's strength but be careful. She can snap. She can only tolerate so much.

\*Scene with Chris was wonky, couldn't remember lines, lost character and groundedness.

\*Sharla scene, get specific about the task, what you are doing and what you need.

JD notes for Dottie...

1. great entrance, like Lady Macbeth
2. when there are no transitions she is most interesting
2. idea for a movie- Jodie Foster in "NELL"
3. moments of surprise
4. creeping across
5. gets together with Joe cleaner but moments of strangeness
6. deep well of a life
7. moments of incredible fantasy
8. JUMP- be there- JUMP
9. "the laugh" BIG SHIFT
10. Monday know lines and know props

**January 13, 2003**  
**ROOM 106, 1pm.**

Feeling totally nervous and near tears. I am scared. Maybe that's how Dottie feels perpetual sadness. I was running lines this morning and I got a ring in my head so I took my palm and whacked my head- I'm going to try that today. It is possible she has this reoccurring ring in her ear. I am pissed right now and I don't like the feeling. Part of it is Adam not being with us. It is the lost dream, the lost picture that I imagined a long time ago. The dream has been shattered, it will never exist. I will deal and I need to get over it, life works this way. Nothing is as it seems and I know that. I know this is happening this way for a reason.

Just ran the second scene with Chris, Brace, and Smitty. I really want to know the casting. In this play with these high stakes, the vulnerable places we have to go, how can we look into the eyes of a scene partner and fully trust them if we don't know if they're going to be the one? It's difficult and it's essential to fully commit and be present in this play and it's a barrier. The unknowns of this process are causing insecurities and distrust. It is not easy watching another actor play your character and I am upset today. I feel hurt.

*Think about...*

\*experience with Chris under streetlight = monumental

\*she has grit

\*has she ever gotten flowers?

\*Jd is talking about a trailer excursion and possible sleep over

**January 14, 2003**

I am looking over 2.1 and it's the scene when Chris shows up totally beat to shit and Dottie regulates. Dottie tells Sharla to get a wet rag, she diagnoses that Chris has a broken nose, and she questions his need for a trip to the hospital. She seems calm and alert. Has she played doctor for a beat up Chris before? Does she watch television dramas that give her the tools to play the doctor role of an emergency room? Is she afraid of blood or the opposite? I need to watch a couple episodes of *E.R.* (reminds of Dave and his role as healer, putting our alcoholic mother to bed.)

Dottie has this very pure thing about her she is surrounded in an atmosphere of impurities. Her mother was an alcoholic, so was my mother, I understand what that means, and I can use it.

Libby, WAKE UP! You have weeks and then its time; you have been waiting for Dottie. Get over the casting- get over it...DO YOUR JOB!

*AT REHEARSAL, it is 6pm and we are going to work Act Two Scene One and Act Two Scene Two...*

\*Do I like Sharla?

\*What are the differences between the first Joe meeting and the second?

\*We are running it tomorrow night so remember the picture of Mom for Viva. I found an awesome picture of her in 1973 and therefore the line, "they say she is the one in the family I most look like," is a truth. The picture helps propel me into the monologue about my mom because even though my mom never tried to kill me, she did try to kill herself by drinking. It just helps to look at her face and I don't have to fake it.

**January 15, 2003**  
**Running Act One**

JD's mom passed away, she is older but it was unexpected and I feel awful for him. I love him so much. He is leaving for Chicago tomorrow. Madison and Nathan are taking over. The timing of this is crazy. Life is crazy.

I feel like I am making ½ choices, my confidence is down, I am trying new things but I am not committing to them. I am in and out. I have clear moments and then fuzzy and insecure moments. I am driving *me* crazy..

\*Didn't get naked

\*Chris said I was, "stepping on his lines"

\*Liked looking in Shawn's eyes, I trust him

\*love Brace's energy onstage

\*Tara and I encouraging each other and we ran lines together. We bonded.

\*I need to work my Marshall monologue and pillow monologue. I need to be fully off book. I want to start thinking about breath more and pacing.

**January 16, 2003**  
**Thursday in film class**  
**Conference room**

*Talking about Killer...*

1. what is the status
2. the ones who get shot... the ones who touched her, has Ansel done something??
3. Don't be afraid to make jumps

4. Shy- is not the most interesting
5. Tortes and the Hair
6. Dottie becomes number one
7. Strong about dress...NO DRESS
8. Claim territory
9. Stop them, see it, hear it
10. More specific
11. For a better life...what do they need?
12. What is in the bedroom
13. What are Dottie's shows? What time do they come on?
14. Attention to our space, this is where we LIVE
15. Fill in lives MORE

*6pm at rehearsal, running Act Two Scene Three.*

Jd loved the flowers we got him. He said he wasn't going to come tonight but the flowers got him to the theatre.

*My notes...*

\*remember to EARN YOUR PAUSES

\*Chris and Smitty just came up to me and were complimentary about my work

\*I feel like I can really connect with Brace. He and I are developing a good working relationship. I went up to him and asked why I don't just turn the TV back on, so we

took it back and he stood in front of the television and wouldn't let me get to the TV to turn it back on and so its fixed and it feels right.

\*Made an extreme choice tonight but it felt right. I am washing the dishes and Ansel, Sharla, and Chris are fighting, fighting, fighting and Chris isn't putting it together that Rex is the "beneficiary" and that we are all screwed. So, I jumped up and down, I made the trailer shake and said "Rex was momma's boyfriend."

\*Get specific with dishes. How many? How long? Where do I put them? The silverware clinking is chilling. Is there a spot above the sink, something Dottie can lose herself in? Does she lose herself in the ritual? Is she able to shut out the madness?

\*Joe is not there before the funeral. Where is he?

Adam Miller called today and asked me for a couple quotes and all I could think to say was something about how cool it is to show up and walk into that trailer and cook a casserole and really wash dishes and really sit in front of a TV. I should have said more, it's so much more than that; this character is fucking awesome, there is so much. Dottie is beautiful and I am in love with her.

**January 17, 2003**  
**JD is gone to Chicago**  
**2.1/2.2**

The scenes today are short. I feel line solid. I am nervous with Jd gone. I am afraid we will get behind and we need to work, work, work. We have the weekend off and less than a month to go. There will be no ensemble trailer excursion. I will have to do my own.

**January 20, 2003**  
**JD is in Chicago**  
**2.1/2.2/2.3**

\*I felt like I lost some of the moments with Brace that I felt Friday.

\*Madison gave Tara a good note on 2.3- let us see how Dottie feels about Joe (important for me to hear).

This play, this character is allowing me to play with the fourth wall. It's this beautiful thing I am discovering. If I can get the audience with Dottie, they will be with me for the whole ride. They will be inside of her. I can't articulate exactly what I mean but it happens in several moments. For example, when Joe puts me up against the table and my head is down and he says, "your boyfriend," and I look up straight into the audience and say, "Marshall...he was fat." It makes it feel more inclusive, more exposed and I can feed off that. What the hell am I talking about? Something, something, something that I can't...explain.

I am playing with a lot of Suzuki and Viewpoints stuff. Anne Bogart talks about "couch potato realism," where we sit around and our energy is sucked into the fluffy cushions, the cozy chair. I have to try and maintain energy, you sit but you aren't sitting. Your whole being is engaged.

**January 21, 2003**  
**JD is in Chicago...soon to return**  
**Running all lines and working 2.4**

\*In Act Two Scene Four the lines are all over the place, overlapping, repeating...WOW, Sharla, Ansel and Joe have a doozy here.

\*We have been rehearsing with the same cast- Smitty, Jen, Chris, Brace, and myself. It is still not known that this is the cast. We are all hoping that when JD gets back he will set it in stone.

\*I am realizing that I have a good chunk of time offstage during the interrogation sequence. So, to prepare for the fight, I need to keep my focus and my energy up. I need to be there with them.

\*The stakes when I enter are through the roof. It is literally life and death and the tension is unbearable.

\*Does Dottie's mood or presumed mood need to contrast?

*I have a fitting tomorrow and am excited to see the black dress and the sweatshirts and the other stuff they have found for her.*

**January 22, 2003**  
**JD not present**  
**Running Scenes**

We ran scenes consecutively. The scenes seemed to flow and felt connected. I felt very present, honest, and in the moment. I got to tears with the pillow and tried new stuff. My hand touched his shoulder and it did something. When is the last time she

reached out and touched someone? It was accidental and happened without a thought but the heat of his shoulder on my hand- WOW. We need to work the Sharla scene, I need to get back to the script and look hard at beats. I need to break it down more specifically. It's a hard scene because we are both trying to complete tasks and one would think that would simplify it, but it's difficult. I know we will find it. Jen and I have such a deep friendship off stage and it's like we have to work extra hard on stage to hide it and maybe that's the problem. I may need to trust that we are interesting and just be.

\*What does Dottie want in her scene with Sharla?

\*Why is she entering the room?

\*I need to go over the beats of taking my clothes off with Chris and putting my hand down into his pants. We need to clean it up and make it specific!

\*Feeling line confident.

\*My activities feel forced. I need to take ownership of the kitchen and the trailer. I know where everything is. I always open up the oven this way. I always use the same pot holder. I must make it Dottie's.

Made a choice about having a picture of Viva and I hope JD keeps it. The choice feels right and it feels like a necessity. I am worried he will cut it over a time issue but it doesn't break up the inherent rhythm of the scene. There seems to be a natural extended beat there and if I can earn that pause then it should be cool.

I watched the other cast some and I am trying not let it fuck with me but I feel like I did a couple of Tara's choices. It felt wrong. It confused me and I went directly into my head. I have to be careful, I want to be able to watch and support, but I want to own

what I am doing and I want it to be mine. Tara and I are so different physically and vocally and of course, we are two unique individuals. We have different histories; different bodies and thus our Dottie's will be different. That is the reality and it's good and okay. It's not something to fight or be pissed off about. There are two Dottie's and they will be two distinctly different people.

**January 23, 2003**  
**Film class with JD**  
**Conference Room**

Jd is back from his mother's funeral. He talked about his trip to Chicago and he described himself as an absurdist romantic. He said we all must keep looking at the irony in the living of life. He said that on the runway of life you have to believe anything can happen.

*Later on that day at rehearsal...general notes after Act One run.*

1. Stop for the plot points
2. Goose it vocally, it's easy to get quiet because of the intimacy of trailer...DON'T.
3. Hit line, "made me not be for a while".
4. It's about people doing what they have to do and then dropping bombs on each other.
5. TASKS, TASKS, TASKS
6. Find more moments of weird Dottie land bliss.
7. "IT IS," with Sharla can be a positive.

*My notes...*

\*think about containing, containing and then the release

\*get on top of cues and lines

\*breath on other persons line

\*think about volume

My heart feels filled with love, love for my classmates, this play, Dottie, but mostly love for John Dennis. He is so good and I feel safe again with him back. I keep reminding myself that this is the last show for me until who knows when. I love what I get to do. Nothing is certain.

### **January 24, 2003**

I AM CRUISING DOWN HILL!!! I have been feeling a lot of growth and progress with Dottie. Today it has stopped; I have frozen up and feel like my uphill climb is now a descent.

### **January 25, 2003**

**“The day of the nude”**

**Act One**

*JD Notes...*

1. entrance to early in scene one
2. she doesn't know how to make coffee, must see that
3. open up and save yourself

My notes...

Let it out, felt forced. I felt like I was faking it. I took my clothes off and then couldn't get the stupid dress on felt vulnerable and scared. And Jd didn't say anything and maybe its better that there isn't a conversation. My classmates, GOD BLESS THEM. They love me so much and check in with me to see if I am all right. It's just going to take practice and at least Dottie is scared in that moment so I can be too. It's honest. What is comfort to Dottie?

### **January 27, 2003**

We haven't worked Act two Scene 4, so time was taken. I have my third robed entrance and then the prayer; I made the choice to grab hands just like my family used to do and hated to do. JD agreed with the choice. It is tough grabbing Sharla's hand but it feels right. Why does she ignore Joe and get up on Chris's command? Is she having any guilt about killing mom?

Jo Curtis Lester is here which feels good and suddenly safer. I can talk to her about what's going on and she has a way if making everything okay. I went to JD's office today and told him that Dottie feels like Humpty Dumpty and she has fallen off the wall and is in pieces. He was honest and told me that Friday wasn't my best rehearsal, but it's not a big deal. He felt like we got a lot of work done. He seemed chipper. I know he trusts me; I just have to trust myself. At this moment I am watching the other cast and I am frustrated because one of the actors is still carrying the script but also calling line, blowing over beats and wasting everyone's time. It's nauseating and it feels unprofessional. One option seems to be since you are carrying your script – USE IT. I

feel like this unpreparedness is unacceptable, we had yesterday OFF. I feel sad and I feel tired.

### **January 28, 2003**

Tonight Act two Scene one still feels fake- the stakes are high and we need the blood on Chris' body to really get there but we can do better now. The urgency isn't there and it feels forced. Every time I say, "what happened to you," I think bullshit. I can feel the dialect slip away. Where is the cut? How deep is the cut? What do I notice first? What is the worst, the nose or the cut on his head? I need the wet rag and it drives me crazy when Sharla takes so long to give it to me. But, that is how it will be. So, what can I do while I wait for the rag? He has the shit beaten out of him.

#### *JD notes...*

1. drying dishes- he likes the gesture of putting them on shelf above...
2. we have all dried dishes to get something done
3. get off couch with Chris TO GO
4. more overlap
5. Meisner stuff...when in doubt mirror
6. Sunday, Monday, Tuesday with PAUL, be ready

I went down to Marshall's prop chambers today and got my pillow. Adam was working and he helped me pick it out, which was special. I hate that he is down there doing props for the show. Adam informed me that Leon is probably going to get the

artistic director position at Swine and that made me feel good about the future and about possibilities. I am on a good roll right now running, not smoking, read the paper the last three days, watched Bruce Lee in “Enter the Dragon” my mom finally sent the tape I left in Nebraska...

*Think about...*

\*shooting the gun

\*go into coffee with JD tomorrow, talk about gun and the line in the old script when Dottie says to Chris, “you touched me”

\*speed it up and drive it

I am at Highland Coffee working and thinking about lunch today with Neil. He had just read *Killer Joe* for the first time and he was on fire about the play. He was saying it was one of the best plays he ever read and I was sitting there like YES, yes! Neil reminded me of my first *Killer Joe* encounter two years ago. The play got inside me, Dottie got inside me, and it’s like an addiction you can’t shake.

Going over the Viewpoints, trying to nail some things down and see what else I can play with- sleepwalking floor pattern, play with tempo and duration during washing dishes sequence, think about shape- when at TV, in robe, sitting in my chair, scene with Chris “do you feel bad”.

**January 29, 2003**

*Jd note...*

\*right now we have a real nice watercolor and the direction, where we need to get, is a real nice OIL painting.

**January 30, 2003**

**Act One**

*Jd notes...*

1. Thinks everyone should have a cyber Dottie
2. Loves pillow, sucked on and dirty, always in same spot by the TV
3. In raincoat scene, Dottie is too close on platform
4. Think about the world you are entering. Why are you coming in?

What for? What do you smell? What do you see?

*My notes...*

\*My energy was a little crazy, I was shaking- why was I not grounded? Is it because I'm not sure of some choices?

\*My first scene with Joe, felt good.

\*My scene with Sharla went really WELL- beats felt clearer.

\*The dinner Scene with Joe, lines seemed off.

We had an amazing warm up tonight, a group ensemble beauty of a warm up...but Brace had trouble tonight and JD seemed upset, he fell off a chair and was supposedly all over the place... it reminded me of myself before I could take that intense

group energy and then hone it and focus it...I really understand what may have happened to him and there is beauty in it and next time he will be able to breath into and relax...

**January 31, 2003**  
**Act Two Run**

It felt HEAVY and OUT of SINK! Too much spaaaaaacceeee between LINES.

**February 2, 2003**

We have entered the month of February and I can feel it getting close. Tonight is Paul D's night. He is in town and is going to work the fight with us. It is so good to see him- the leprechaun.

John was late and is outside missing everything. And I don't know how he will be able to get this- this fight is a dance in which the Chris character leads. He is missing it all. I am pissed off. Of all days, he picked the worst fucking day to be late.

**February 3, 2003**

I am at Popeye's having lunch by myself. It is strange this new craving for fried chicken. I never had it before this show. It's weird but suddenly I am hooked. I am in love with the stuff. With TV and kung fu- I am taking on the world!

*Later on 5:15...*

Adam is in and John L. is out. I talked to Adam about letting go of the "yuck" or "gook" and look at it in the professional sense. This is a role, if it was his career there

would be no question, you take the part. We talked about the *Killer Joe* dream that never came to fruition, the dream of two years ago, of us, the threes, on our way out- and DOING IT. I told him that it was affecting my process and I had to let it go and develop a new dream or just really exist in the what is, which is a fucking great script and a fucking great character.

Thinking about tonight and the FIGHT. Where am I coming from? What are the circumstances? What do I see after I fire the first shot? What do I see in that silence, all eyes on me, crazy eyes and no real love? No pure love.

*At rehearsal...*

Paul and I worked the moment when I enter back into the main room after have been told by Chris to go get me stuff. Last night it was unclear and I was fuzzy on what exactly was my action. Now, I am coming back out of the hall because I hear Ansel and everyone react to Chris pulling the gun OUT. There is a big beat when Chris gets loose and asks me for the gun. Is giving the gun to him a possibility? Is she even really aware of the gun in her hand? Sharlas second stab—WOW. It is awful. Why do I stand there?

I am watching the other cast and I am thinking BRAVE ADAM over and over in my head. I am seeing big things that need reactions like the potato peeler moment is (huge). Sharla is stabbing Chris over and over again, so it needs that kind of reaction. How sad that it takes a GUN for Dottie to get their attention, their respect, their acknowledgement. The discovery of the gun is a BIG moment. Think about how many times you have tried to bring up the baby and no one will listen, they interrupt, they don't care.

**February 4, 2003**

**Third night with Paul and fight**

The moment after you shoot Chris...BEAT...then hear Ansel that takes you to him...BEAT...BANG...and then Joe when you hear him, it's fast, whip around controlled, dead on my target...she's in the zone.

Paul Dillon thoughts...

1. Ansel's fight captains
2. Talk with JD about specific beats of fight
3. Gun safety
4. Never less vocal
5. Find moments
6. If you find a splinter don't let it work itself in deeper and fester-

COMMUNICATE

Libby look at lines that are not solid. The pillow monologue, stuff with Sharla about Marshall, keep forgetting the "let me go" with Ansel and dress, forgetting the "but not on purpose" about Viva.

We talked over pre-show schedule and we are going to have a mandatory ten minute group warm up. It looks like fight call will be very intricate with a lot of stuff to work. We also talked over certain scenes that need to be run every nigh. I love Smitty he is my "oh captain, my captain".

**February 5, 2003**  
**Act One**

*JD general notes...*

1. Ansel more grounded
2. Sharla a little to Irene Ryan
3. Dottie's entrance in first scene to soon
4. Dottie choice with pillow- keep it!

*My notes...*

\*Need to address blocking with Joe and dinner scene. It has to be more specific. We both need to know what's happening and when

\*not the best listening

\*Sharla and Dottie scene felt forced- weird head moves, not turning to listen for a reason, turning because I felt like I needed to

\*first sleepwalk- nailed

\*Act One Scene Two with Joe felt out of sink. If I don't want to shake his hand, if it doesn't feel right, don't do it

Why, why, why wasn't I there? Where was I? I came early to the theatre tonight, sat on set and listened to Radiohead- warmed up HARD. I tried to get in the space, get grounded, and take ownership. I wonder about impending nakedness nerves. We hadn't run it in days, so it was a bumpy ride. I did not feel at home in the trailer. I should be easier on myself, I tried new stuff tonight and so of course it's a different feel. At this point it is okay to feel thrown, if I was too comfortable- that would be the opportunity for worry.

**February 6, 2003**  
**Act II**

Dottie, Dottie, Dottie....I love you but you are driving me batty. I feel like I have her at moments and then I am thrown from the car. Act II needs more attention.

*Jd notes...*

1. Eat the food
2. Killer and Dottie at dinner table open up, can't see Dottie
3. Dottie and Chris on couch, Dottie finish line then Chris in lap

**February 7 and 8, 2003**  
**TECH**

This tech was a process, a process that I felt minimally involved in. One of the essential and most beautiful things about doing this thing we do is when it all comes together, the lights, the sound, costumes...It was shitty watching the other cast tech the show. It was uncomfortable for both casts and there were individuals from each making sacrifices. The Ansel's had made many different choices, different blocking and suddenly in order to set a cue it became one person's choice. I am trying to find the real emotion here, hurt. I hurt because I didn't get to put the costume on first, hurt that I picked out my pillow and now it's the other Dottie's pillow too. It feels trite but when you are trying to own something and you know that there is this other person, it's hard. I am frustrated. I feel like I'm walking in another's shoes. Right now, I sit here, watching the other cast and retreating inside myself, into my head.

*Prop issues...*

- don't forget picture
- silverware and plates set before Act Two
- need to talk to Tara about stove light cues

**February 9, 2003**  
**FIRST DRESS**  
**RUNNING IT...**

*My notes...*

- \*GUN DID NOT GO OFF AND AGAIN I PUT THE DRESS ON WRONG.
- \*in first scene with Joe, his voice turns you around...BEAT... "Jesus" sends you under the table
- \*Sharla and Dottie scene, I got to kitchen to soon...
- \*Remember cue in dinner scene...turn off the STOVE AND LIGHT
- \*Talk to Joe about the end and letting me do the tea pouring
- \*We were told tonight that our show ran nine minutes longer than the other casts

*JD notes...*

1. "infinity" speech keep it going up and up then...Amen
2. Loosing some of pillow speech
3. W/ Sharla "his eyes hurt"- make sure it is different beat
4. Lost "babies" in dinner scene, could not hear it

I'm trying to have a good attitude and everything feels FUCKED. I feel messy and Jd said he was having trouble hearing me. That note drives me crazy because it means I am internalizing and not committing fully to what I am doing. The people watching today had already seen the other cast. They had been at the theatre all weekend and were tired. I could feel their lack of energy and it was a tired energy. These people wanted to be somewhere else and it spoke to me about what you need, the contract between audience and actor has to be an agreement.

**February 10, 2003**  
**SECOND DRESS**

Dottie, talk to me, what's wrong? Besides your fucking ankle, what is going on babe? Feel like I am indicating...sensory work, I see \_\_\_\_\_, I hear \_\_\_\_\_, I smell \_\_\_\_\_, etc. Ground yourself, LOVE IT, interested- interesting, commit to the task...its throwing me a little bit having a dresser. I was doing all those changes myself and had no problem staying in character, but now as Libby I feel like I have to say "thank you." Maybe I can play a game- an imaginary friend- maybe Ann is Viva.

We need an audience, that is where we are and that is what we need. This is the last night where both casts will have to be at the theatre on the same day, at the same time and we need that. We need to separate.

**February 12, 2003**

*Getting prepared for tonight...*

Thinking about Joe and seeing him for the first time. Dottie is scared but interested. His eyes, eyes, eyes. Don't shake hand if uncomfortable and don't fall in love

from the top. Let awkwardness of a guest in the trailer and of this presence throw you.  
Feel his eyes on you. Remember cues, cues, cues!

*Later on at "PAY WHAT YOU CAN" ...*

\*nailed light cues

\*audience laughter, there was a lot of it and it was unexpected

\*Act One vs. Act Two...act two slower and a little flat

\*the fight and final scene felt powerful...tears were released on "I'm gonna have a baby"  
and they didn't stop, I was still crying during curtain call...I felt there, exhausted, like I  
had done it, I gave them all I had.

There is a sense of relief after how things have been going the last few days. The  
response from people, the truth of the response in their eyes is inspiring and hopeful. It  
means we are doing something important and hard and real and good.

## CONCLUSION

I have written many conclusions. I graduated from college with a History major and during my four years as an undergrad I concluded many a paper. But this conclusion, this moment of finality, is difficult. Dottie and I have had this amazing thing, this relationship that has been going on for a couple of years. I can feel that it's truly the end now and it is painful. Walking off the stage on Saturday, February 22<sup>nd</sup> was the end of the beginning. I realize that I am beginning as an actor. I understand the real test starts when I am walking the streets of New York City in a few months. I am scared. I am anxious. I am in love with all of it and I can't wait to start. This feels like one huge good-bye and one gigantic hello. I am an optimist and maybe that's what happens to a person who hates very much for good things to end.

I am proud of my work and my fellow actors' work in *Killer Joe*. It was a bumpy ride at times, full of surprises, filled with emotion, and one I will cherish. There is a need for this kind of production to be happening. We need to leave the theatre affected, changed, mouths hung open, heads shaking, and stomachs churning. We need an experience.

## VITA

Elizabeth Jane King, “Libby”, was born on October twentieth, 1977, in Lincoln, Nebraska. She received her Bachelor of Arts degree from Clemson University in 2000 and the degree of Master of Fine Arts from Louisiana State University in 2003.