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## The creation of "Habitat Five: The Children's Crusade" a solo play

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THE CREATION OF  
“HABITAT FIVE: THE CHILDREN’S CRUSADE”  
A SOLO PLAY

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  
Katrina Despain  
B.F.A University of Wyoming, 2010  
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## ABSTRACT

This thesis essay chronicles the writing, production, and performance of the one-person play: *Habitat Five: The Children's Crusade* performed in the LSU Studio Theatre January 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup>, 2013, as a member of the M.F.A. Class of 2013 Thesis Showcase series. The assignment was to create a 20 to 40 minute solo-performance piece that highlights the actor's individual strengths. *Habitat Five: The Children's Crusade* takes the audience on a journey through the trials of a young human zoo exhibit, Adara, as she is prepared by her guardians to enter the "wilds" of Earth. The play is written to be a social commentary on the way Americans rear their children without crucial knowledge, social skills, a creative culture, or experience of the greater world. *Habitat Five* portrays zookeepers following a strict, American-modeled training program, for their wards. The audience watches key moments of one young female ward, Adara, as she transitions from childhood to adulthood, with great emphasis on her experience of "Prom." This essay discusses initial concept ideas, development of the script, technical aspects, rehearsals, and the performance of the play. It delves into the author's perspective as a performance artist and her concerns about Americans' lack of "connection" as growing isolation, consumerism, and media stifle quality of life.

## CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

*Habitat Five: The Children's Crusade* was written and performed to fulfill the Graduation requirements for Louisiana State University's Master of Fine Arts in Theatre, acting program. The assignment was to create a 20 to 40 minute, one-person-show that highlights the actor's strengths, and then write a thesis essay discussing that process. Though fairly straightforward on paper, I viewed this graduation requirement as more than just an actor showcase or an essay. This was an opportunity to write my own work, to tell the stories I wanted to tell and raise the issues I wanted to raise.

I believe poor education in life-skills, isolation, and lack of creative opportunities is causing a decline in America's quality of life. I believe re-introducing multi-generational interaction, social dance, and creative encouragement is key to alleviating this decline. *Habitat Five: The Children's Crusade* was written to demonstrate how modern American parenting practices are perpetuating America's poor quality of life, and it also alludes to possible solutions.

Though the assignment was to produce a solo performance, every artist knows that no show can be performed without the help of others. Theatre is a community and must be in order to survive. Producing a show on this scale with lights, sound, sets, and costumes would have been impossible without the support of the LSU theatre community. As was anticipated, the eleven people in my MFA class (the ensemble) helped each other with the technical elements both in pre-production and during the performances. In addition to my peers, I had the support of the MFA faculty to help with direction in blocking, script, vocal-use, and movement. I am grateful for their support and this chance to create a story with the potential to change the way the audience views their world.

Between January 15<sup>th</sup> and January 20<sup>th</sup> of 2013, the eleven MFA Candidates performed their thesis pieces for the public. This thesis essay chronicles the journey of *Habitat Five: The Children's Crusade*, which was performed January 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> in LSU's Studio Theatre, from the development of the concept, the creation of the script, the performance challenges, and plans for its future incarnations.

## CHAPTER 2: SYNTHESIZING A PERFORMANCE VEHICLE

“To dance, above all, is to enter into the motions of life. It is an action, a movement, a process. The dance of life is not so much a metaphor as a fact; to dance is to know oneself alone and to celebrate it.”- Sherman Paul

### **2.1 In the Beginning There Was Dance**

My journey of questioning social traditions, and parenting methods of modern Americans began in adolescence when I observed the disparity between the vibrantly complex social traditions learned in Ballet practice, movies, and literature class vs. the fear, discomfort, and paranoia I felt in modern school dances.

Between the ages of ten to fifteen, I trained in a ballet conservatory where ballet vocabulary, hard work, musicality, poise, rhythm, discipline, coordination, and anatomy were taught and where connection with my predecessors and social skills with contemporaries was deeply developed. Despite my flat feet and tight hamstrings, I grew to crave the natural “high” achieved through movement and connectedness—connection between my own mind and body, connection to the world around me, and connection with peers and audience. I loved it, but recognized that not all my schoolmates or people I associated with knew of this “high” or how to achieve it, even if they were performers. This recognition, coupled with my growing awareness of my physical limitations, prompted me to question if there were other ways to achieve this connection I craved without the competition or self-antipathy inherent in the professional dance world.

Through films, I was introduced to the styles of ballroom dancing, salsa, country line, square dancing, folk, tap and jazz — people of all ages dancing and enjoying themselves. The films showed thrilling examples of what social dance once was. Reading in English class of Jane Austin’s ballroom scenes, Oscar Wilde’s comedy of manners, and Shakespeare’s wedding dances clued me into the splendor of other eras, that there are variations of social norms, and that dance is a reflection of a society’s mores. So when I attended my middle school dances and the easy flowing movement, splendor, and bliss of bygone eras were nowhere to be found, I questioned, “What are our social mores? And why is a school dance so trauma inducing?”

Years later, in hindsight, I’ve tried to analyze the disparity I experienced at these school dances. I’ve deduced that rules of engagement or strategies on how to succeed in that environment were never agreed upon nor taught to the children. There was no structure, no pre-rehearsed dance moves to strut and celebrate with. It is paramount to sending a little-league football player out with pads and a uniform into a packed arena with no practice, not even an explanation of the rules, and expecting that child to win the Super Bowl. Sound ridiculous? So is a school dance. The lack of training forces children to parrot the only two “school-dance” steps they’ve seen. The “bump-and-grind,” or the dizzying “sway step.” If fortunate, one member of the peer group may know the Electric Slide or YMCA choreography and be able to pass that coveted information on to the rest. Most children turn into wallflowers, trying not to be eaten alive by the fragile egos that mask their uncertainties with vicious judgment. Depending on the

differences of the population, one is either “too cool” to dance, or similarly shunning others for not knowing the “cool steps.” This dancing lair of uncertainty breeds antagonism and social friction, all because sufficient guidance was not given.

Slow songs force children to cross the un-traversed boundaries into male-female relationships with no foreknowledge of how to interact or what a good relationship means. The dizzying “sway” step where the couple sways side to side in a tight circle at varying degrees of closeness is a child’s best attempt at the partner dances seen from the past and possibly the only step a teacher or parent ever taught. By taught, I mean the guardian explained the institutions “bible between” or “ruler between” rule designating the appropriate distance between pelvises. Thus the only clue as to how to dance came from teachers telling children how *not* to dance. Anxiety of the unknown and lack of etiquette equates timid interactions that mirror modern adult relations. America’s unresolved sexual insecurities are embodied in the bump and grind, a bastardized version of music video choreography entwined with the slightly pornographic exotic dancing seen by some children in music videos or teen movies.

Just as dancing reflects the child’s best attempt at an untaught ritual, the dimly lit gymnasium with streamers, balloons, and a punch bowl are what’s left of the harvest festivals or balls of old. What used to be a multi-generational celebration of a person’s rite of passage, when all facets of local society came together to show off their hard work, is now a class of 300 eighth graders and some chaperones trying to uphold a tradition without knowing its function.

At the age of fifteen I moved to Loveland, Colorado. Loveland’s classical dance studios were non-existent and the “dance schools” they did offer had such poor dance technique, my young-egotist ego felt I would be doing myself a disservice by training with them. With no dance schools to grow from, I satisfied my love of performance by joining high school theatre and local performance groups; acting, singing, choreographing, and gaining musical theatre dance vocabulary when possible. In rehearsal one night, I accepted a friend’s invitation to learn swing dance with her church group and my first-hand experience of improvised social dance began.

What I loved most about Dave Arns’ the “Dancer Guy of Fort Collins” pedagogy is that he had several methods, each tailored to different types of people and learners. “Dave has taught dance to doctors, nurses, psychologists, x-ray techs, and so forth, and for these people, Dave often uses illustrative examples from anatomy, physiology, kinesiology, cognitive functions, auditory figure ground, ECG patterns, etc.” (Arns, Physics). His classes give people a vocabulary, rules, and guidelines of ways to connect. With Arns I once again found a dance instructor I felt I could trust. He knew the history of the different eras and how their world influenced their dance styles, the similarities and differences between the genres, and possible reasons for why. He taught basic vocabulary and then allowed improvisation as to how to sequence that vocabulary. We traded partners around, and learned the roles of both leader and follower and how to give value to both. There was camaraderie and sensuality without the expectation of it leading to sex which made swing clubs my favorite weekend activity. I longed for that athleticism, mental stimulation, and unconditioned sensuality to be at my school dances as well. But alas, high school dances and proms were just as depraved as middle school. The few friends who took Dave’s classes with me enjoyed the handful of swing songs on prom night. But aside from these exceptions, the monotonous bump-and-grind-sway medley dominated the evening.

I wanted to know why this happened. Why did we go from the complex splendor of the 1940's swing era to the excruciatingly painful discomfort of modern American schools? This question stuck with me through undergrad at the University of Wyoming where I studied acting and dance performance, and in December 2009, I completed a research paper entitled "Why Social Dance Died in White-America" for my undergraduate level Theatre History class taught by Professor Lou Anne Wright. The summary below describes my findings on the cultural changes that produced modern American society.

### 2.1.1 Why Social Dance Died in White America

America's competitive nature combined with the horrifying devastation of the World Wars and the advent of mass media changed how Americans learned and interacted by creating a new, isolated social structure. Media, parenting books, and school systems created a family dynamic in which the children were "other." (*Making Sense of the Sixties: In a Dark Time*) The emotional and physical horrors of the wars were never really addressed and the media painted a Levittown, "Leave-It-to-Beaver" life as what was expected. For the first time in American history, happiness became an expectation, not a pursuit (*Makin Sense of the Sixties: Seeds of the Sixties*). The rebellion from the 1950's rigged-hypocritical structure that comprised the 1960's civil rights and counter culture movements was the final peg in the coffin of what was once social dance.

America's competitive spirit back in the 1940's killed off most multi-generational dance forms during the Swing Era's dance competitions. In urban America this was the beginning of the end. Rural pockets of America where strong communities were vital for existence have retained more of their folk and social dance than the emotionally isolated upper-middle-class urban metropolis. But the media's diminution of rural life is slowly killing off these last remaining links to our social past. In effect, we've stopped having multi-generational social gatherings. Thus the ability for the older generations to pass down their knowledge has been shut off. The long and the short of it is, people have stopped listening and people have stopped teaching.

In the book *A Pattern Language* by the Berkeley California Center for Environmental Structure, written by Christopher Alexander et al, Alexander discusses the importance of "Old People Everywhere," how "Old people need old people, but they also need the young, and young people need contact with the old" (216-220). He brings up the point that traditional cultures frequently place their old and their young together while the able-bodied go to work. "These oldsters, in their wisdom and experience, have protected and instructed the little ones, while the children, in turn, have acted as the 'eyes, ears, hands, and feet' of their feeble old friends" (217). Alexander also has a section devoted to the importance of community celebrations as a vital means for clear demarcation of one's passage into the various stages of the life cycle. His ideas fueled my beliefs in the importance of multi-generational cultural celebrations. Art and dance are a reflection of a society's structure and beliefs. What better way to rebuild an integrated society than by physically working on connections with social dance?

After writing this essay, I wanted to start a campaign to revamp social dance. I viewed this MFA thesis project as a place to start that journey. I wanted to produce a piece that would raise public awareness about the importance of gaining and passing on social dance traditions.

## **2.2 Content Gathering and Happenstance**

One night, between undergraduate and graduate school, I witnessed several very influential television shows that had such a profound effect on my psyche that the next afternoon I felt compelled to write about them in my journal. After finishing my final performance in preparation for this thesis essay, I reread that journal entry and was amazed at how all these seemingly unrelated stories seen late one night, mixed with my personal experiences, provided the fodder for my eventual zoo story.

Below is an excerpt from my stream-of-consciousness journal:

So I was watching Animal Planet last night and Discovery channel and probably something else but they all blur together, flipping through documentaries on: a monkey rehabilitation center in the jungle; a show about indigenous people throughout the world; evolution on the pacific Islands; and a comparison between two mama polar bears' approach to raising their cubs in a climate that is drastically changing their traditional rearing methods due to global climate change. Now I am watching Nanny 911 where these nannies come in and teach parents how to raise their out-of-control children. And all of these things run in my head.

The most heart-breaking story was of this little monkey mother that the facility spent a great deal of time finding a good mate for. These particular monkeys mate for life and it's important that the power of balance be equal between the male and female. If one is too domineering it is too difficult for the other partner to have a good existence, and the human facilitators are very observant in this issue. Well this one little monkey was pregnant with her first child, but this little monkey was raised in captivity, she never watched her mother raise a younger sibling (as they showed another successful monkey family do) so she had no idea how to take care of her new child.

In the wild, the children stay with their parents at least through another sibling being born and reared so they learn how to take care of them before going off with their life-long mate. This little monkey, raised without a monkey family by humans, tried to care for her baby for several days but eventually abandoned the child because she couldn't figure it out, and there was no one to really help her. That means the facility has to take over the child rearing for years, making that new little baby's reintroduction to the wild that much harder.

This inability to take care of her baby sent the little mommy into a major depression. The facilitators were very worried for her, trying to touch her and give her assurance as much as possible. You should have seen her face. It was heartbreaking. It took a while for her to feel up to being reunited with her mate. The goal of the facility is to have these monkeys create strong family units so that they can then be released into the wild with a chance of survival found only in family cooperation. Now this little couple is set back and her depression is gut-wrenching.

On the pacific island program, they showed how a local fisherman spends each morning looking for a certain type of spider web. They show how he uses it to catch a specific fish whose mouth is too small for hooks so that they can only be caught with spider-web bait. The narrator of the documentary says something like, "Because this man's father passed down this discovery of catching the needle-toothed fish with spider

web, this man can feed his family.” And I got to thinking again about instinct vs. common sense vs. education. What is education? Reading? Writing? Arithmetic? Grooming? Hunting? Planting/harvesting? Cooking? Cleaning? Social norms?

As I watched this indigenous tribe build a tree house, a house in the tallest tree in the forest, making the ladders, the two-year-olds learning and knowing “instinctually” (I say not instinctual but observationally) how to live in a house hundreds of feet off the ground, instant death if you fall. Why would they build a tree house? Was it to escape flooding during the rainy season, or to avoid bugs? They had puppies and piglets up there with them. The whole family and neighboring families came to help with the build, like a barn-raising in *Seven Brides for Seven Brothers*. These people have the same mental capacities, emotional reactions and instincts to further life as I do; they just had different sets of circumstances that lead them to develop specific group dynamics and goals for the community and individuals.

It reminded me of the monkeys in a reverse way. The indigenous tribe represented what the monkey family should have been or could have been had their society been able to continue uninterrupted by human deforestation and captivity. Because these monkeys are deprived of their education in feeding themselves, avoiding predators, and how to raise their young, they are reduced animals in a cage –depressed, unfulfilled and unaware of how to help themselves because the chain of education was broken. They are completely dependent on humans for their survival. If they were to be released, some may figure it out on their own, but they would be starting from scratch, and all the mistakes their ancestors made and learned from, would inevitably be repeated by the captive monkeys. For us: how do you make fire? How do you catch food? Grow food? Prepare food? Protect yourself from those who would eat you? Shield yourself from disease? Get clean water? Raise your children when so many things can easily go wrong if you are not mindful of these dangers.

When I look back on this process in hindsight, I see that this little monkey girl is the seed of Adara’s character. The journal continues:

Nanny 911, who raises children? Historically the women helped each other, mothers, aunts, grandmothers, someone in the clan who had a knack for childrearing, loved to do it and took charge in helping to teach the new mothers how to raise a newborn or toddler. The child starts helping around the house with chores from the time that it can. There was no huge distinction between “adults” or “children” in the sense that children are “other.” They are humans in training - souls who are developing their muscular skills. They are vulnerable and need protection, yes, but our current distinction between children and adults begs the question - when do you stop being a child and become an adult? When do you stop sheltering your child from questions about the outside world? When do you start treating your child as a contemporary, worthy of his or her own opinion? This is a complex question.

As Nanny 911 points out, for the first, I’d say, seven years of life, a child needs structure, boundaries, lessons and rules for how to survive in the culture and environment. Once those basics are in place and questions arise as to why these rules exist, honest discussion and explanation of the clan’s reasoning should be explained so that children as they grow can begin to gain an opinion through experience as to what

they believe and why. There are hierarchy power structures in society for reasons, but that does not mean that when a young pup wants to challenge the structures he should be discouraged. The wheel of life is such that the need for structure never ends, but the people filling those niches will change through time. Nanny may have been the best child rearer, but when she passed on, someone was needed to step into her place. Nothing stays the same, it is important to train and be trained so we don't slide back into ignorance because we were too lazy to pass on our skills.

This journal alludes to recurring themes in my search for answers to why Americans seem so disjointed and cut off from their creative, communal nature. Themes of: parent/child relationships, family units, education, passing on learned survival skills, being trapped by ignorance that leads to fear, depression and contention, captivity, and isolation. With my personal experiences as a backdrop, and these stories viewed on television as addition paints on my palate, let's begin to analyze how *Habitat Five, the Children's Crusade* came to be created.

In spring semester 2012, my MFA ensemble took a Performance Theory and Criticism class with Professor Alan Sikes in which we began research and initial ideas for our performance structure. The majority of the class was spent learning about various genres and performance styles of the past and present theatre artists. The other part of the class was spent writing and brainstorming ideas for our solo performance pieces. Much of the information below contains excerpts from, and my commentary on, these assignments for Professor Sikes in which my play began to take shape.

Below are excerpts from my first paper to Professor Sikes that will give goals and insights as to where I originally thought my piece would lead.

My goals are to alleviate the pain and suffering I see in American Culture that comes about as a result of isolation and luxury, to alleviate the trauma that occurs when a person encounters the life and death cycles, and to increase the joy and pleasure of the earth through an understanding of co-dependency and balance. For my presentation I plan to use the story of Buddha's childhood to reflect the mollycoddled-American child's story of depravity, and the Edible School Yard's philosophies to support my views on social dance reform, all in an effort to demonstrate the importance of honesty, trusted teachers, and the necessity of socialization for a full and happy life.

The first half of this paragraph remained the overall goal of my piece, but the method of presenting that message morphed. There are a few stipulations that set immediate boundaries on my performance vehicle. A) It had to be performed by me, the sole actress on stage. B) My physical appearance can only alter so much. C) My professors wanted me to highlight my skills as a performer. My strengths being: emotional vulnerability, song, movement, and "fearlessness." With these stipulations in mind I began to search for a story that would point up all the social issues discussed above and be performed by me alone.

My original idea for a performance vehicle was a young American child who may age over time in her home, her school, and possibly, her extracurricular activities. One thought was to have the young child act out the Suddhodana and Siddhartha story with her dolls. This story would serve

as the exposition for her initial state of being. For those less familiar with the tale, Suddhodana is the father of Siddhartha Gautama, the eventual Buddha of Buddhism. Suddhodana sheltered Siddhartha from all “old age, illness, and death,” keeping him in the palace of luxury for 29 years (Orias, Berkely) After much persistence Siddhartha sees the village and encounters for the first time human suffering, old age, and death. He is traumatized; ironically his first encounters with death come on the eve of his son’s birth. This double shock of confronting both sides of the life cycle with no previous processing methods or examples sent Siddhartha packing. His guardians had not exposed him to these eventualities, thus he never developed coping methodologies in the relative safety of their guidance and support. So rather than embrace the responsibility of his new child, he fled to a religion he assumed would give him answers to expel human suffering and death from his life. The religion and practices of the austere monks did not absolve him from death. Buddha experienced both extremes of life’s pendulum. His father gave him every luxury at the expense of others; the ascetics denied every indulgence at the expense of their health. Neither provided the answer to a “good life.” So “after six years, he found that the severe practices did not lead to greater understanding, abandoned them and concentrated on meditation and the ‘middle way’ a practice of non-extremism.” (Hesseling, Katinka)

In my first essay to Alan I explained:

This I feel is a perfect allegory for modern American society, more specifically the middle and upper class children; baby boomers on down. We are so delicate, living in our extreme luxury; our lack of “dust or dew” causes allergies, epidemics, and people with little knowledge of the outside world. Unfortunately, this tragic tale of how Siddhartha abandoned his son out of fear is the chilling allegory of modern Americans who abandon their responsibilities because they were not prepared by their guardians to handle the cycles of life. They were not prepared because they were never exposed to them or given a positive method to cope. We are sheltered from care, responsibility, hard work, suffering, and death, but eventually we see the unknown, are frightened by it and run.

If, after years of struggle and searching, we eventually develop our own coping skills, do we pass them on to our children? Or do we raise our children like the old king—striving to give our children a “better, stress-free life” than we had, starting the cycle all over again. If we mollycoddle, we inevitably set them up for failure because we have not passed on our coping skills. No matter how hard we try, we cannot shield our children from “old age, illness, and death” nor from the responsibilities of parenthood (barring extreme measures). They can ride on the backs of us enablers for only so long. Eventually some part of the life/death cycle will appear and they will have to face that fact.

To expand upon these concepts, I would like to have a little girl character, whose father left when she was young and her mother was a career -oriented woman who relied on public school and television to raise her child. The child has never known much physical contact, is allergic to everything, and sees her extended family only at Christmas every few years.

I compiled the Buddha story from several sources, re-wrote it in the voice of a child of amorphous age. As an attempt at performance structure, the child's story to her dolls would extend until Siddhartha abandoned his child. The girl character would recognize that she is the little son and view this as the story of her father abandoning them. The rest of the story would unfold throughout the piece as the child begins to understand why he left. That he left out of fear and that she would choose a different path.

Though the Buddha story never made it into the final play, his father's world of extreme luxury that sheltered him from anything deemed "bad" is the mentality of the Zookeepers towards Adara. Much of this original concept came out in the final script as the foundation for the Zoo Habitat and the Lulu/Adara relationship. The Zoo exhibits are given every luxury, never wanting for anything, but have very little physical contact with live beings. Like Buddha experiencing the city and encountering new discoveries about humans that scared him, the eventual Adara character begins to fear and grow frustrated when she leaves her habitat walls and experiences "Prom," where she learns there are key facets of life she hasn't been prepared for and now questions what else she doesn't know.

In trying to conceive a way to point up the discussion of the life and death cycle in my play, one idea was to have a teacher at school implement the Edible School Yard program which teaches kids about the life cycle of plants, getting them involved in school gardens that supply their School Kitchens. Though this concept did not make it into the final production, the following thoughts and research on the life cycle had a profound impact on Adara's world.

William Shakespeare delineates the human life cycle in his famous "All the World's a Stage" speech from *As You Like It*. He divides a man's life into seven stages. The infant, the schoolboy, the lover, the soldier, the justice, the aging pantaloon, and a re-infant state he labels second childishness. We are helpless and skill-less and as infants, grow, progress, learn, develop and blossom into fully functioning adults (the apex of the flower, some might say) then slowly decrease until we reach a helpless, powerless, diminished state "withering towards death." It seems customary for Americans to idolize one life stage over the others, labeling their favorite stage "perfection" or the blossoming flower, but by placing a value judgment, saying one state is the "best" and demeaning all others is causing unneeded anxiety and depression. Americans have lost this reality. The majority of the things we encounter are in its ripened or falsely ripened state. We do not experience or witness it growing into this state nor its decline. We are stuck in "perfect" limbo with little knowledge and infinitesimal gratitude/appreciation. Even in our relationships. We only know how to interact with people of our own age within a span of 4 years in either direction. We have little to no shared experiences with anyone outside of that 8 year peer group and relate best to those in our same school year. Aside from teacher authority figures, which we are taught to mistrust, we have little encounter with infants or the elderly.

Idolizing one phase over the other becomes the framework for Adara's American Princess zoo exhibit. The Guardian's idolization of the child phase of life produced Adara's whole world and leads to her trauma. It was a tough decision whether to have them idolize childhood or sexual youth. America seems split on this subject. Those two stages seem the favorite in our culture,

with parents trying to keep their children “children,” while the parents fight to stay “young.” And children, parroting their parents, try to mature into sexuality too quickly. I chose to demonstrate the dangers of keeping children “innocent” and dependent for too long. Sexual trauma can be traced to parents’ not offering an honest, loving, and healthy introduction to sexuality by teaching pros and cons, personal hygiene, or respect for partners and by not creating open lines of communication. This lack of communication can make a child a victim of sexual predators capitalizing on their innocence or lead to pregnancy due to ignorance of preventative measures.

Initial ideas continue:

Because we have no social practice and are wary of the unknown we fight desperately to stay in a place of “perfection,” but we inevitably fail. The depression that ensues is the result of idolizing only a small part of the life cycle and the conviction that we can only be fulfilled if we are happy with that small part. Because we are not benefitting from the knowledge acquired by our elders, we have essentially developed a society that is “worse off” than pre-civilization. We are “worse off” than wild animals because they do have social order. To raise an animal in captivity and then release it into the wild with no survival skills is tantamount to a death sentence. We humans are like zoo animals eventually released into the wild and forced to fend for ourselves in this present day society with no life skills to enable us to thrive. We are clueless. We don’t see birth, we don’t see death - we see only artificial perfection.

It’s interesting to note the little monkey girl’s influence on my subconscious as her story is alluded to in this first essay. The above analogy of American children to captive animals being released into the wild later becomes the construct for my script. It was not until a later brainstorming event that this concept fully moved forward as the dominant mode.

Below continues on with other thoughts that informed my piece:

Everything takes, and is, “practice.” Eating, drinking, defecating, holding your bladder, thinking, talking or singing, literally everything is practicing a series of events that are then classified as skills. These skills allow us to make connections “within our own bodies through patterns or plans which our neuromuscular system develops for executing movement sequences. Habitual ways of organizing the body to deal with relationships within the body and with other people and the environment are constantly being laid down in the neuromuscular system (Hackney.13).” It is all learned. Everyone, be they athlete or genius, will attest that it takes practice to retain those skills.

We relate to the world through thousands of various relationship classifications, be they to self, friend, romantic partner, parent, child, sibling, class-mate, teacher, stranger, pet, etc. and they are practiced and ever-changing. How do we learn this? By watching and by using our five senses to gather information about the world we are living in. Every society is different and there are variations in every subculture and in every clique we encounter. To learn what is “right” and “wrong” in every structure requires observation and/or a teacher.

This idea of practicing social skills and a guardian's role of teaching us these skills ultimately became fundamental to the play. Adara is taught some social graces and how to eat, drink, defecate, talk, sing, dress, groom, and obey whereupon she then practiced these skills for years. But problems arose when she discovered that more skills were needed to survive in the "wild" and that she had not been taught them. Her zookeepers had trained her in legitimately important areas just like most good parents do today. However, in the 21<sup>st</sup> century a female child needs more than just these few skills to survive on her own.

One more element, germinated in the first essay to Professor Sikes, majorly influenced the final script: that of a child's relationship to technology and how media and Internet databases teach us who we are and determine what we know beyond our walls more than any other influence in this modern era. In addition to the little girl playing out Buddha's and/or her father's life, in my original version I wanted to incorporate a monologue, written from my own experiences, to exemplify how we have neglected teaching our children about their cultural heritage. The monologue talked about how she didn't know what nationality her ancestors were, only that they came from "Yugoslavia." But her Grandmother had not passed cultural heritage on, leaving the little girl feeling left out. She turns to the Internet to teach her where her family came from.

"Last night I Googled Croatia and I watched Croatian folk dances on YouTube. They were beautiful, and complex. The men and women came from different sides of the stage, in beautiful folk costumes singing and holding hands, and began this intricate serpent and circle dance. The dancers were of various ages; teenagers, adults, and the elderly. I wonder if the smaller children would have been there too had it not been a modern reenactment? I looked up this type of dance. They call it kolo dancing.

[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Croatian\\_dances](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Croatian_dances)

"The circle dance (kolo) is one of the basic forms of Croatian folk dance. The circle dance is regarded as the oldest form of dance, and can be seen as an expression of community, especially in village life. Throughout a large part of Croatia right up until World War II, the kolo had been the center of village social life. The kolo as a dance became a tool for social gathering, and was often the main place at which young women and men could get to know each other. With many dances, the singing of jocular verses during the performance served as a way to express feelings or tell a story. By singing, movement, and gestures one could express what was proscribed in ordinary speech. Many young men and women used this as an excuse for courting and teasing one another. Occasions where people may have performed a kolo outdoors include harvests, weddings, and religious celebrations to honor a special saint. More recently, the dances are performed at weddings, concerts, festivals or ethnic celebrations."

I thought bringing up ideas of lost culture and social dance forms might be a good starting point, perhaps with photos of the dancers in traditional clothing. I contemplated using the kolo dance as a theatrical device to tie the piece together by having Adara pretend to dance or by getting the audience involved with the dance towards the end. Unfortunately this particular theatrical device

never made it to the final script. But the idea of a screen (TV or Internet) being the main teacher of a lone human became the basis for the character “Screen” in the final play.

### **2.3 The Spark of Creation**

After finishing the first paper for Professor Sikes, I still did not have a clear understanding of how I could weave all of my thoughts, Buddha, Edible Schoolyard and kolo dancing, into an active story with just one actress, while also keeping it entertaining. My mind, racing with ideas, was in a Shavasana-like state. Somewhere in there was my little monkey girl who could not safely be reintroduced to the wild, the difficulty of a different species trying to teach her concepts they didn’t understand themselves, coupled with the analogy of the modern child who has been given every necessity except the skills needed to survive in society.

This thinking led me to consider LSU’s mascot, Mike the Tiger. Is his captivity beneficial or cruel? Most people are of two minds when confronted with the moral issues concerning a powerful, highly-evolved, nearly extinct creature that is denied its freedom or contact with its own species. Conversely, are humans any different? We are far from being bred in captivity to preserve the species, but how many of us feel caged, pacing the floor because we do not know what we are supposed to do with our instincts and don’t have the freedom or space to discover them. Is it better to be an animal in a cage that never sees the wild, or an animal in a cage with several screens showing videos of animals in the wild?

The two concepts of a born-in-captivity life form watching what it *could* be doing and of a born-in-captivity life form released into the wild with a questionable survival rate lead me to write the following document for Alan Sikes’ class. It is the aftermath of the shavasana synthesis.

Katrina Despain  
Thesis Project update and materials  
Allan Sikes  
May 12, 2012

#### The Children’s Crusade or Habitat-Five

Intentionally my title is a Kurt Vonnegut reference although my Aliens will not be as intelligent or all-knowing as Vonnegut’s were.

After much more research, stimulation, and contemplation, I have combined and refined my concept for this one-woman show. In order to facilitate my analogies about American culture sheltering their young for too long, not giving them the tools to succeed, where relationships physical and mental are not developed, where gendering is key but relationships among gender and age are not, my heroine is going to be a young female on display inside a zoo. Below are keys to the plot and given circumstances as I imagine them so far: Parts are stream of conscience to indicate I am not 100% solid on those issues. (*In Italics, is my post-performance commentary on differences or changes from this original brainstorming session*)

Environment/Set:

- Her “habitat” is set up like a stereotypical American princess’s room.

- Pink, ruffles, ponies etc.
- Bed, ruffled, pillowed, lots of stuffed animals that she uses as friends
- Vanity and mirror for adolescent scene when she learns to apply make-up, either from her mentor handler, or from the television, not sure yet which
  - This application of make up becomes part of her daily routine that the zoo patrons love to watch

#### Relationships to Zookeepers

- Still trying to figure out her relationship to the zookeepers.
  - Are they actively involved or not? Is there one she trusts or not?
    - Not sure as of now which is more powerful or isolating.
- Aliens can't speak, but teach her a sign language (I'll use or modify ASL?).
  - This is to parallel how the younger generation can barely speak but prefer text or non-verbal.
  - There is potential to change this from ASL to a hand-held texting device but I fear that may be too literal a parallel.
  - The ASL references the human-Ape relationship in a way I like. *(No ASL made it into the show, this idea was scrapped for clarity and technical difficulty)*
- She is their first attempt at reintroducing human animals back into their "natural habitat" back into the "wild" of earth at that zoo establishment. *(In the final draft, she is not the first, but one of many)*

Chronology of her life story in the zoo, I expect the plot and given circumstances can be derived from this: (rough Draft)

- She was born in captivity
- Her mother who she never met abandoned her but not sure this is ever revealed to audience.
- Raised in captivity by a handler/trainer (Lulu?)
- They cannot physically touch bare skin to skin without "contamination" so Lulu always has teddy-bear fur between them when she was a baby and they do not touch when she is older. (There could be reference to this in play as analogy of germaphobic/allergy crisis in America.)
- They do not have the same vocal anatomy so they communicate by teaching her a basic sign language (I will use or adapt ASL)
- They teach her to sing? Or she learns show to sing and harmonize with their music? They would play her a "lullaby" or maybe a record of someone
  - Need to find what potent, meaningful song they teach her that is her song throughout? Something ironic. *(This initial idea become Adara's "Princess Song" that was sung to a slightly-varied "It's Beginning To Look A Lot Like Christmas" melody. It proved very haunting, I found peers singing it often, annoyed that it was stuck in their head. I count that a success!)*
- Lulu teaches her the signs for food, water, and potty training
- She is nourished and deals with excrement in the alien way, she is in an oxygen rich container, much like an aquarium decorated in an alien esthetic until age 6 when it is

- determined they want to reintroduce her back into the “wild,” back to earth to live a “normal life”
- They are basing their research off of American mainstream rearing methods (This is where more research needs to be done)
    - What are experts calling this type of morals I’m talking about?
      - Conservative minus the religious indoctrinating
    - They don’t show her death, sickness, very little old age found in Disney movies.
      - But??Do they show her movies with death like Lion King? Do they show her violence??
    - What do children learn about Gender and humanity through television?
    - I think I’ll keep her world strictly PG so when she asks questions about male female relationships, sexuality, the differences between her male and female Barbie’s, they are not addressed by her handlers because either they are following a conservative parenting method or perhaps they just don’t know. (Not sure this needs be explained why in the show, it could be purposefully ambiguous)
  - They begin the process of introducing her to her new habitat.
    - A stereotypical little girl’s room with a detached bath.
      - It includes a television (named “Screen”?) from which she is shown PBS style educational videos to teach her how to speak English.
    - Lulu helps teach her American toilet training, eating with utensils, at a table, sleeping in a bed, making the bed, dressing, tidying up her room. How to operate the TV which looks like a TV with a remote but with a touch screen, she can pause it, touch something on the video, sign, “more” and the TV will show her related video (much like advanced YouTube) but as we found out later, it won’t always continue to show her images especially if it goes into PG 13 areas, particularly about sex, death, or violence.
    - As she learns about things and sees images on the TV, these things start to appear in her room.
      - Sesame street, birds, animals, large teddy bear she uses to comfort her when Lulu no longer comes in the room
  - Once these tasks are learned, they slowly extrude themselves from any physical interaction and remain outside the glass on one side of her room.
    - This is a traumatic experience, she cried and cried and cried.
    - They gave her stuffed animals and dolls to try and sooth.
      - Perhaps a doll shaped like her original caretaker? That she uses to sooth her self and also to communicate?
    - The large bear, the TV that is now teaching her English language and an introduction to painting is what keeps her pacified.
  - She has a shock collar?
  - She communicates still through sign language through the glass fourth wall that she notices zoo patrons frequent.
  - They develop a routine for the patrons (this may be a good opening sequence)
    - I want this reminiscent of animal acts, dolphin, ASL Gorillas etc.

- I'll find stereotypical toddler/parent acts
  - "It used to be enough for Lulu and I to go through our routine, 'show me your eyes, your ears, your mouth, your nose'" then they would play a melody and I would sing it back for them. They loved it and I loved them. When I moved in here we started learning new things like toilets, eating with forks and spoons, painting, drawing, and watching the screen. "
- Barbie dolls, Ken dolls, and their accessories, car, pony, etc. are introduced when Disney movies are? This is her first intro to other humans, and there is a scene where she notices the differences between the Barbie's hair, skin color, and gender. She asks why and they give her no answers.
- She watches sleeping beauty? Or some Disney princess movies? She asks to learn more about the boy girl relationship from Lulu, no answer, from the Screen, no answers, they wont tell her more than it's "beautiful"
- They (Screen mainly) teach her how to put on make-up to look like the princesses in the movies. She adds this to her routine. The audience loves it.
- She sees a kiss and asks more. The answer "it's beautiful" "it's good"
- She sees dancing for the first time and asks the screen for more.
  - She watches Baryshnikov ballets, swing, Fred Astaire, Charleston, kolo folk dances and she wants to try!
  - She is inspired by the music with them and starts to move, imitate their movements and quickly learns she can't do it on her own.
- She gets frustrated with her confined space. Frustrated that her dolls and animals cannot move with her, frustrated that she doesn't have a partner to spin around with.
- She throws a fit so Screen shows her solo Ballet.
  - She finds it beautiful, sees the woman is dancing by herself, and the girl wants to learn more.
- The next day they expand her room to include a ballet studio where screen teaches her ballet bar, full class, and solo variations.
- She adds this to her daily routine and the zoo patrons love it. For years she puts on concerts with Lulu and Screen guiding what she learns and performs.
- A similar incident could happen with Choir when her animals can't sing. Screen provides her video of Choirs to sing along and harmonize with
- She laments that her toys and Screen's video are not combined to be more like her.
  - One she can touch, feel, and smell, the other moves and talks.
  - "Why is there no other thing like me that combines both to sing and dance with?"
- She laments that she has no Ken Barbie to sing, dance, or kiss like in the movie.

That feels a well-rounded sketch of her first 17 years above. Now I want to transition to developing the "Prom" section and her first conjugal visit that are key to the plot.

- Screen starts showing her movies of Prom, picked up in nice cars, dressed even more like a princess to a room with lots of real people, a disco ball, a boy, a kiss. Fast splicing of cars, kissing, dancing
- Next day there appears a prom dress
- Lulu appears in the widow and signs to change into the dress

- She is told to reapply make-up
- Lulu explains she is going to go see a man, and that she is going to a dance with other people
- The girl is so excited!
- The door opens for the first time she can remember and she is a little scared.
  - I need to think more about this moment, is she drugged, wear an oxygen mask, or walk into another aquarium? Is she scared? Excited? Both? For now lets just continue on and say:
- They put her into an aquarium cage shaped like a car, she is scared, she is shipped to another zoo where the boy and others are.
- She sees stars? Life outside her cell? Or is she doped up and just awakes in the car, opens it to the prom room decked out like high school prom. Is the boy in the car? Where do they first meet? Car or dance floor?
- Are there other humans on the dance floor or are they life size dolls that she tries to dance with and they can't, except for him?
- Regardless of if dolls or real, they are all dressed in prom attire, there is a disco ball, music starts to play and she want to dance to it, she is so excited to be there, but she doesn't know how.
- She doesn't know how to talk to the others. They are all scared, they mostly hug the wall. Perhaps some live in groups in their zoo and those cliques stay close together.
- They don't know how to interact with each other.
- She tries to say hello, interact,
  - This needs to be fleshed out.
  - This is symbolic of every awkward dance ever.
- Lulu and other caretakers are all standing around outside the large-disco-prom tank.
- She signs she is scared, she doesn't know what to do!
- Lulu responds, it's ok, just be yourself!
- The girl is curious, she want to know what the others feel like.
- She sees a boy across the room. She is attracted. She sees him sign to his care taker, "what do I do!?" his answer "just pick one!" He scans the room. Their eyes meet and they stare at each other. Her heart starts racing. She looks away. Then back to him. His collar shocks him. He crosses to her. Eyes meet again. They take each other in. Circle around each other. He reaches out and touches her. She backs away, this is the first time she has been touched. Both are scared. They both slowly, reach out hands and touch.
  - Big point driven home about how amazing it is to touch another living thing, the energy, the warmth.
- She wants to dance with him, to touch him again, to see what his back feels like, what his hand on hers feels like, to move to the music, they both want to, but they don't know how. She wants to dance like Fred Astaire, to waltz like *Dancing with the Stars*, she wants to dance with him but they can't.
- No words were spoken but they could tell.
- All the patrons and caretakers were watching. Waiting for them to do something, but what.
- Maybe the other human's in the room are just big dolls?

- Little fuzzy on the order of this next one but: maybe after a time of just standing there, the boy is shocked by his collar again and he moves to the car. He holds out his hand for her to join him and then gets in the car.
- She follows, looks at Lulu who is encouraging, and gets in the car.
- They sit there for a long time.
- Finally brave enough to glance at each other, their forearms creep towards each other. Forearm, then backs of hands, palms, eyes lock, heart rate mounts, she looks at his lips and wants to try kissing them.
- “And it was beautiful.” That first kiss as they experienced that energy for the first time. They ease apart and look at each other again. She likes the smell of him, she likes the taste, she wants to taste more and as they explore she is feeling things she’s never felt before.
- Then I think there will be a collar shock for the two of them, or maybe the drug again, anyways the room or they are transported to a hotel looking room straight out of a porno film.
- Lulu appears with a change of clothes into something out of a porno film (I honestly have never seen a porno film, but the point I am trying to make, please give your advice if it isn’t working, is to say that while the girls training about sexuality was vague Disney references and glimpses of dancing, the boys training was porn.)
- Below is possible dialogue for the next section:

She wanted me to change into something that exposed a lot of my skin and there was nothing covering my pee or blood holes. She wanted me to change but I didn’t know why, I didn’t want to and told her so. She shocked me for the first time in years and when I fought back she shocked me again. I think the boy was going through the same thing.

We changed and here we were in this room with a giant bed at least twice the size of my bed. What, are we supposed to sleep? I asked, Lulu said no, not sleep but ‘beautiful’ What? I said. ‘Beautiful? How?’

The boy and I stood opposite each other, extremely uncomfortable with all those eyes on us and feeling so exposed. I looked at him and he seemed just as scared as me. A shock from both collars and we moved close together. Another shock, “stop it! What am I supposed to do?!” Another shock and the boy pulled me close threw me on the bed and then pain ripped through my whole being. If that is beautiful then I don’t want it. What Screen, Lulu and the Ken doll didn’t tell me is that boys have five limbs not four, and that the fifth is used to rip open my insides on Prom night. When the pain and the movement stopped, I looked at the boy, who was panting and breathing and upset, and my other insides hurt too. We both rocked and stared at each other until the blackness came and they took us away.

I woke up back in my room. Two weeks later my bleeding didn't come and it hasn't for 5 (8?)months now.

I do not sing, I do not dance; I want nothing to do with Barbie's or Kens. Screen has been showing me lots of video of the wild. Tall buildings with tons of cages in them full of tons of Barbie's. I want nothing to do with them.

My belly has grown and I am scared. I don't know what this is. Screen has been showing me video of Barbies with big bellies like mine, something awful happens, and then there is a new creature and they have smaller bellies, and look sick.

In my room I found a doll in the shape of those smaller creatures. Lulu and Screen wanted me to hold it like the Barbies in the movie, but I'm scared.

Lulu says my preparation is complete. I am now like (% of single mothers in America today) of the females in the wild, I have all the training of an 18 year old single mother.

You lied, Lulu. You said it would be beautiful and it wasn't. It was nothing like singing, it was nothing like dancing. The kiss was nice, but the room? What is that? If that is what touching leads to then I don't want to have anything to do with it! Why did you shock me? We were both scared, what is the rush? Will I ever see him again? Does that always happen when you touch someone? Does it have to? The people in the movies touched so many times and never had to wear those clothes, or expose holes and limbs. Why did we? It seems possible. Why didn't you teach me that? I didn't know what to say what to do. You taught me so many other things, why not how to talk with someone and dance with people? Why not how to touch without pain?

So this is where I'm at to date on the project. This scenario synthesized in my brain two days ago and I think it the best way to accomplish all of the many issues I want to point up.

I would love to know your thoughts. Obviously I have indicated above where I think further research is needed, and then beginning to write the script from here is taking shape.

Thank you for all you help,

~Katrina Despain

After writing this document, I did not look at it again until after the script was written. I did not want to get bogged down in all the unknowns or be tied to this story line yet. Much of my original ideas came out in the final script, but some initial thoughts, like the ASL and the ballet-choir sections had to be cut for time and clarity. In the “Prom” and rape scene a major shift happened when I decided I didn’t want the little boy to be the “bad guy” and I also wanted the girl’s training to be more reminiscent of our better-educated American children. The Barbie plot point needed to be removed and the relationship with “Screen” needed to be more prominent in order to achieve the social commentary I desired. The next leg of the journey sculpted and defines what was roughed in with the document above.

## CHAPTER 3. DEVELOPING THE SCRIPT

### 3.1 First Draft

After the brainstorming documented above, I began to flesh out a script. The first section of the script came easily to me and has remained relatively unchanged since its first incarnation. The second “Prom” section, particularly the rape, was much more difficult. Using my actor’s imagination and trying to put myself in the given circumstances I had set up, I tried to imagine what that experience would be like for this person. The third section, or the last scene, I felt was the most difficult and when turning in my first draft, I deleted much of the dialogue because it didn’t ring true for my purposes.

The names were chosen for several reasons. Adara and Abigail were derived from “Adorable.” I was going to name the baby Able, so they would be “Adara” and “Able,” but Able connotes “able-bodied” to me, or “capable” and I did not want to give hope that the baby would be able to escape the ignorance cycle on her own. Adara, the first half of “Adorable” sounds like a possible princess name but it is not a name that is common or already in use by other princess franchises. I looked up Adara on line and found (<http://www.sheknows.com/baby-names/name/adara>) that Adara means beautiful, virgin, fire, catches birds, from the ford at the oak tree. How apropos; virginity is a main theme, she is full of life and fire, and birds and nesting would become a subtle motif in the play.

I then searched for names that would complement Adara. I searched “beloved” and found Taavi. Again it was a name that was uncommon, with a meaning that fit his role in Adara’s story. Taavi is also a kind of inversion of Adara’s name. The “d” sound is the voiced cognitive of “t.” Adara’s vowels keep the throat and mouth open; Taavi’s vowels close the mouth to a smile. I intended their obscurity to help with the otherworldly quality of the play, and possibly be interpreted as futuristic, as though these are popular names from the future. I did not want to compete with well-known character names of princes or princesses from our pop culture.

#### 3.1.1 Feedback

I sent the first draft to friend Michael Stevens and professors for feedback. The following e-mail from Stevens is typical of what most friends and my Movement Professor Nick Erickson said was their first response to my piece:

I think there's still something missing. You have most of the broad strokes, but now you need a clincher, even if it's pure fiction. I think we need one of two things to make it great: REDEMPTION or PROFOUND TRAGEDY. Right now it goes out with a whimper. Some random suggestions on the redemption side:

1) Change the set somehow to a big computer room or something; the "guts" of the zoo; wires, cogs, etc. Have her somehow destroy the place in rage/ cut the cord/ blow the thing sky high (maybe make it so that she knows she can't escape but that she's willing to end the cycle for future generations with her sacrifice)

- 2) Have her undergo extreme military training in the outside world and come back to free her daughter.
- 3) Have a human meet her upon her release. This human explains that Adara is part of a \_\_\_\_\_ experiment/exhibit for some alien group, etc. and that while she was unlucky to be part of her program, it is fortunate that she has been found afterwards so that she can be rehabilitated. This expert needs to explain that Adara is woefully unprepared for real life as no real skills have been taught and no sense of priorities established, etc. In general we need a lot more exposition...

On the tragedy side, I'd need to think... Let me get back to you on that.

More later...

What was troubling about this feedback is that I got somewhat the same response from others. They seemed outraged and wanted her to fight to save her daughter. The problem I have with that ending is that the point of my piece is to hold the mirror up to society and say, “this is what you are doing to your children, especially your female children!” Do we have mentors who seek out 18-year-old women to imbue them with life skills? Perhaps an older sibling, a knowing friend, or a concerned college professor may help ease their suffering, but there is no societal precedent that females who find themselves in Adara’s position at the end of the play, will resort to violence to avenge their oppression.

I was glad to know that my male acquaintances’ feedback was so impassioned and they felt it wasn’t “right” for her to be released so ill-equipped, but I wanted to make the point that this is not one woman’s story, but several generations of women’s stories, and it is more than just science fiction. Ibsen’s *A Doll’s House* points to the same issues. The trend is cyclical and the practice is rampant in every class and race distinction found not only in America, but the world.

### **3.2 Developing an Ending**

I ultimately agreed with my critics that the ending fades out and she seems to give up too easily. I also wanted to use that final section to point up many of the issues previously mentioned. If the play is ever expanded I may choose to re-work a more fleshed-out iteration of scene four, as seen below.

LULU: You are too old Adara, the patrons only like the young.

ADARA: Why are you obsessed with the young and the ignorant! What’s wrong with age?

(No response)

What don’t I know about Age Lulu?

(No response)

Or really, what do you not know about age! You and your silence! Its—aggravating! I can’t tell if you don’t know or you just don’t want to tell me. All these years of training us and you still don’t have a clue what humans need.

We need each other Lulu, humans need each other! And we are not meant to be separated from other life either! And this (*her with them*) this doesn't really count! You insist we are an "other" that we don't belong together. You have never touched me, not once. Always wearing those suits! Not since I could dress myself do you even enter the Habitat while I'm awake. Are you allergic to me? Can you not breathe my air? Are you even alive?

And these (*animals*) these are all dead! No matter how much I loved them and wanted them to come to life and talk to me and love me like in the movies, they never do! Everything is dead in this room except us! (*She and the baby*). And you even want us to stay the same. Alive but the same, it's impossible!

This teddy bear never grows, it does not change, it does not "age" He knows nothing about sex, why not watch him sit here and be innocent all day long. You love us because we move, because we are alive, because we change every nanosecond, but once we change too much once we "lose our innocence" we are no longer desirable. What's so terrible on the other side of innocence that you hate it so much? Being with Tavi felt good! Kissing him felt good! His penis and my vagina liked each other, what's so wrong with "non-innocence"? What aren't you telling me, or what don't you know? Aren't there safe, good ways to be non-innocent and happy? Teach me that! Don't the humans have ways?

(No response)

Did you raise my mother too?

LULU: Yes

ADARA: Will I meet her? Out in the wild? Will she be there for me?

LULU: I don't know

ADARA: Don't you keep track of us? Are your humans out there? What if we need help? Where do we go?

LULU: You are now an adult. You can fend for yourself. We are not needed nor are we responsible for your care.

ADARA: An adult... A person who can take care of themselves? Is that what "Adult" means Lulu? Fend myself against what? Fending, what's offending me?! What else is out there that I don't know exists yet!?

*Walks to the microwave*

Where does the food come from? Before it's in the microwave, where does it come from?

LULU: In the zoo or the wild?

ADARA: The wild.

LULU: You have to buy it from the store, or cook it.

ADARA: And this (*over to the dresser*)

(Screen flashes “STORE”)

(*Adara walks/points to everything in the room*) and this and this and this and this?

(STORE flashes 4 times)

So a store’s like the zoo? It has everything humans need to survive. Well do I live in the store then?

LULU: No, lesson 157,

(voice-over of Adara, a recording from her past) “A store is where humans buy products and supplies. A house is where you live. Stores provide all the necessities and pleasures of human life fit for human consumption.”

ADARA: So I just go in there and they give it to me.

Pulse.

LULU: Adara we’ve taught you this! Have you forgotten your lessons? No “you must pay money first”.

ADARA: I don’t know Lulu, Have I !

Pulse

Perhaps I’ve recited it back to you, but now I am starting to understand what those words mean! (*Stands to the left of desk, as if reporting*) A Store, like a Zoo, is the most powerful thing that gives me life. But more powerful than a Store is Money. I have to have Money to live. I have to have money to buy things from the store and pay for the house where I live and put the things from the store that I bought. How do I get money? Where does it come from?

YOUNG ADARA VOICE-OVER: “You have to get what humans call a Job. Or you have to find someone who has money who will give you some.”

LULU: Lesson 78.

ADARA: You have money, you give me some!

LULU: No Adara, that’s not how this scenario works. We are not responsible for you anymore, you are an adult.

ADARA: Well if I’m an adult then I should be able to take her with me.

LULU: Abigail stays with us.

ADARA: But if I can take care of myself I can take care of her too.

LULU: You are not capable. She stays (Pulse)

ADARA: Not capable of taking care of her or me?

(No response)

What are the odds of me surviving if I take her Screen?

SCREEN: Less than 1%

ADARA: Without her?

SCREEN: 50%

ADARA: And I can't stay?! I have a one in two chance of surviving! These are terrible odds!

LULU: You will be placed in a College Adara. You know that. There is no need to fear. You will have the best education, the most a human can ask for.

ADARA: So this way everybody wins—or at least has a chance to survive(irony)! You need an exhibit, I can't stay young forever so you forced me to get pregnant then stole my baby, so the patrons have a new child to ahh over. I get a college education, and she gets 17 years of ignorant bliss. But what happens when those 17 years are up? When 4 years of college are up? What happens when we are no longer cute and adorable and wanted?

(No response)

(Beat)

Abigail stays with me, and she has less than 1% chance of survival. Less than 1% chance that my natural instincts, my intuition that you put so much faith in, and the resources I don't have will keep her alive. Well that makes perfect sense. No wonder Prom was such an epic failure. You expect me to survive on this zeugmatic instinct. You want some primal nebulous force to teach me modern day social rules and structures. How idiotic! I'm no better off at 18 then I was at 7.

Reciting facts and figures,--geography, geology, calculus, physics and American pop culture are all wonderful subjects when there's nothing else to do with my time, and when you give me everything, it filled those 10 years up quite well. But if I'm expected to take care of myself, 100% as an Adult, couldn't we have spent a little of that time on survival skills?

Let's see: (*retraces her morning routine*) I can sleep in a bed, defecate in a toilet, wash my hands, shower, put on cloths, put on make-up –beauty, the most important thing!-- eat with silverware then watch a screen and regurgitate information for 16 hours a day. You should be proud.

Oh, I keep forgetting, you are going to send me to a school where I'm told I'm going to learn everything I need to know. Well I'm having doubts. Here's *my* question from lesson 2048: How can I take 18 hours of classes, study, do homework, travel I-don't-know-how to a store to get "groceries", learn to cook, learn to clean, eat, find a job, get a job hold a job so I can pay rent, something called taxes and voting and insurance in less than a year. A Job? I have no skills, who will hire an 18 year old baby? College is the best start a human child can have, but only if I don't take her. College is where humans send their isolated young adults for job training but only for hypothetical jobs, there is no sure job afterwards right screen? Lesson 2048 appendix c? Well great, four more years in a new zoo, to prolong the inevitable because for the first year I am fed and housed much like this. What about year two? And three? And fifty? What will I do then? Who's going to teach me about where food comes from and how to cook it if it wasn't you? My college professor? Is it his job to teach me about what \_what's it called-- "stoves", and "washing Machines" and "cleaning" and Where will I sleep when that year ends?

(Beat)

Here's what you missed, here's what you missed Lulu. The part of a human's childhood you overlooked or neglected to give me. Creation. (*pointing to Abigail*) Until first intercourse, you never let me create anything. I watch screen every day, and every day I see the wonders of live animals creating things. Nests, homes, families, shelters, tools, weapons, Paintings, buildings, clothes, food, houses, airplanes, screens, everything. (*Recites*) Creation is reorganizing existing elements for a purpose. But it doesn't just happen-- perfectly the first time you try. That's what you missed. Creating is trial and error and making messes and learning skills from those messes and it's best if you are making messes in a safe place. Or so I should think! I remember the *one* painting you let me do --when I was five. I spilled the paint and you wouldn't let me paint again no matter how much I begged. One mistake, one twist of my arm and you cut me off. So I would watch wild artists on screen during free time. They all had supplies already made or given to them, or they'd find them, then they'd make a big old mess but in the end it was beautiful.

Man is a creative being. Like the birds! Man takes what he is given and makes the most out of it. To create you have to have supplies, supplies that were created by you before or given to you by something else, and success is determined by how well you use those supplies. Joy is earned when you did the best you could with them. But you start with supplies and then you develop skills to use the supplies. And you learn skills by trying and messing up! Tavi and I had all the supplies but none of the skills. If you refuse to teach me guidelines for innocence sake, then let us mess up and make up our own. Give us the time, give us the space and give us a safe place so we can experiment, create something beautiful and enjoy the process. Your method ruined it. Like my spilled paint, I was punished for a lack of skills you never let me learn.

To create life out of nothing is impossible and asking me to survive out there is like telling a three year old, to paint the Sistine Chapel with no paints, no canvas, and no

picture of the original. Oh I'll try, but you expect me to paint the cathedral when I've never done a still life. It's worse than being on a deserted island trying to reinvent the wheel, because I'm in the middle of a city reinventing wheels while others zoom by on hovercrafts. Human relationships, human contact is the most important necessity of human life and I have no skills, no vocabulary, no guidelines to the game, nothing. But someone out there must be farther along. I know they are! I've seen them on screen! I will find that person and... --watch them! All of them. All the time. Not just the little bits I see on screen. What happens when the camera jumps away or they cut scenes. When you drug me that's when life is happening, that's when skills are learned. Maybe they will take pity on an 18 year old baby and let me try with them, let me fail by them, maybe teach me what they know. One way or another, I will find out how to live and when I do I will do all the things I've seen wild humans do on screen for years. I will cook my own food, and I will eat it, all of it! I will paint, I will sing *with* them, I will dance together, I will find Tavi and practice sex and mess up and feel good about it, about learning and growing and not pretending to be dead anymore. I will be outside of this habitat. I will be with the birds and the animals and the flowers, I will see all the parts of the wild that screen skips over. When you drug me, what have I missed? I will see it, I will feel it, I will know it, and in 18 years, after you've tortured her with ignorance, when she is no longer wanted by your sick obsession with the moving-dead, after you have traumatized her first encounter with love, I will be there, at that college, waiting for her on the other side.

LULU: It's time to go Adara

*Adara runs back to Abigail, kneels down next to her.*

ADARA: Abigail I would stay here if I could  
I would hold you  
And sing to you  
And read to you  
And we would play and talk and eat together  
I would love you and hold you forever. (*Goes in as if she's going to touch her.*)  
(Pulse)

You will grow to be a big strong girl  
This will be your room, and these will be your friends and Screen and Lulu will raise you, but I want you to know, that when you leave here I'll be waiting. (*pulse that pulls her towards door, first time she's experienced this*) When you are no longer wanted or needed, when they have scared you beyond control, I will be there on the other side waiting for you to get out. (*Door opens*) I'll find the missing pieces, (*Referencing the habitat being pulled*) There has to be more to us than this. There has to be more to life than this.

*Gives Abigail a kiss as she's shocked.*

*Abigail starts crying*

*Adara is horrified she wants to see the baby but keeps getting shocked for resisting. It keeps trying to pull her to the door*

ADARA: Please! Please let me see her!  
(Shock)

*Baby is still crying, overhead we here “I’m Adara the American Princess, Here to bring you Joy” as Adara is crying, being pulled towards the door.*

No! I’m sorry! Please don’t drug me!

*Overhead we hear a musical round of princesses past singing*

I’m Able the American....I’m Alana... I’m Maria...I’m Katie I’m Abby, I’m Samantha  
I’m Brittany the American princess, here to please you all  
I learn American-facts all day, happy to live the ways  
Of earthly humans young and sweet and small  
Till the day I return, a human after all. *Adara gets a jolt that sounds different then the shock sound, head flies back, goes limp and stumbles out like a drunk puppet on strings. (they drugged her) Baby still crying throughout, other voices Crescendos until Adara stumbles through the door.. Doot! Doot! Black out.*

### 3.2.1 Feedback

The feedback from this draft was that it made the piece too long for my time limit and Adara seems to have far more knowledge of the real world than what the previous given circumstances made plausible. Professor Judy also wanted to re-work the “Prom”/rape section from earlier so that the piece stayed happier longer. Rather than see her re-enter the Habitat after the rape and then transition into “memory,” the piece would go straight from the first section into the “Prom” scene so that the audience goes on the ride with Adara, so that the trauma is as shocking for us as it is for her. The piece was reworked several more times with the above suggestions in mind, paring down for time, clarity, effectiveness and with the restrictions of technology and resources in mind.

## CHAPTER 4. TECHNICAL ELEMENTS

After the script went through its various drafts, I knew I needed to begin the technical elements that I felt were vital to the effectiveness of the piece. Lulu's voice-overs in particular, "Screen's" video tutorials, and all the various sound cues from the microwave, toilet, dresser, alarm clock underscoring etc. needed to be acquired and prepared for the performance.

### **4.1 Audio**

To begin the process of creating the technical elements was to acquire the help of fellow MFA Jason Bayle and use his expertise to record all of Lulu's lines as voice-overs. He set the system up so my recordings would download into Garage Band so that over the break I could use that software on my personal computer to compose the required sound effects. We went to the sound studio on the third floor of the Music and Dramatic Arts Building (MDA) where he set up the microphone and we recorded 47 voice-overs. I then went to the database on the sound studio computers and gathered 56 additional sound effects to take with me over the winter holiday to compose the play's additional underscoring and sound cues.

Over the break, using the sound supplies gathered with Jason and my MacBook Pro's Garage Band software, I taught myself how to use Garage Band to cut, mix, and change the sound of my voice for the voice-overs. Then I assembled underscoring and sound cues to compose the following sound effects:

The Opening sequence with the American Princess accompaniment (3:21 sec.) This tract required 3 different music tracks, alarm clock, pee sounds, toilet bowl flush, microwave, all accompanying applauses, and dresser dings. The most difficult part of this section was finding accompaniment for my made-up Princess Song. I had already recorded a section of it repetitively with Jason to compose the final princess cacophony, so I had little flexibility with the melody. By fate, I found underscoring that even had the "Doot Doot!" sound at the end and was able to cut and splice that music heavily to create the accompaniment for my Princess Song.

The shock and pulse I had acquired through the sound library, needed to be cut and reworked beyond what Garage Band was capable of doing. A friend in the tech business (Nicholas Linn) helped me cut and rework appropriately.

Underscoring for "Screen's" movie montages required firework sounds, voice-overs, and a microwave section (1:45). For the transition into, and the underscoring of, the "Prom" section I mixed 5 songs, applause, and a door opening; all timed to the dialogue (14:23). For several videos I inserted Lulu voice-overs and musical underscoring including: the transition into the 3<sup>rd</sup> section with the second alarm and vomiting. The final section has the door opening, the shock collar, the baby crying and multiple past voices singing variations on the Princess Song. And all the Lulu voice-overs needed to have alterations done so they did not sound like my voice. I also gathered music for the preshow and post-show music.

## **4.2 Visual**

The visuals proved just as challenging as the sound. Although I had some working knowledge of iMovie due to a Film class with Nick Erickson and Rick Holden in 2011, acquiring raw materials from the Internet was more of a challenge. Again I called upon the expertise of video editor Nick Linn who helped me acquire the software to download videos from the Internet. With that skill in my tool belt, I set to work splicing and composing the four videos I felt my play needed: First, the school lesson that fed into the celebration section, second dresser sequence, and first : “Prom” montage. Second: the “Prom” montage where she has them stop and show her more about dancing. Third: the make-up tutorial into the transition and “Prom” section. Fourth: the transition into the fourth section with the CGI birth video.

## **4.3 Learning Curves**

Though the learning curves were difficult and took a vast amount of my winter break, I felt confident the products were of good quality. I believed my vision of showing how she was controlled and isolated by technology would be demonstrated with these elements I created and the performance space provided.

The prom sections were particularly difficult to splice. Learning how to get the vocals from Garage Band to iMovie and trying to time out my spoken word with the audio/visual were all great challenges but I felt confident I had done everything to the best of my ability, and was proud of the work I had done.

The irony is that I learned a lot about Adara’s journey through the challenges of learning these new skills. I experienced again that new skills require time and failure and it is most successfully learned when a patient teacher passes on their knowledge. I had Nick and the Linn family’s guidance and patience so that I was not shooting in the dark or totally reinventing wheels to accomplish my complicated vision. They could not do it for me but they could offer wisdom when asked.

## CHAPTER 5. REHEARSAL PROCESS

### 5.1 Difficulties

We began rehearsal after winter break on January 7<sup>th</sup>, 2013, twelve days before my first performance was scheduled. At my first rehearsal, I presented Professor Judy with all my props, costumes, sound, video acquisitions and blocking concepts. Not all video and not all audio were fully completed; I had artistic questions I wanted his opinion on before finalizing these projects. But enough elements were assembled for me to get his expert opinion about the plays direction. Professor Judy approved my sound and video along with the improvements discussed.

Getting the recently approved sound cues from Garage Band into the format Jason asked for was not an easy or efficient process. Another learning curve began. It took a day and a half. Once completed, I gave the sound cues that were not part of the videos to Jason to get plugged into the sound system. That completed I refocused on memorization and finalizing video cues that often worked hand-in-hand with timing and choreography. Around this point in the time line is where the obstructions began.

My files, though in the format I was instructed to have, did not work on the studio sound system. I had two and a half full days left of work before my next rehearsal. Half a day was spent with Jason reworking the format. During this change in format, the pulse and shock sounds Nick Linn and I had developed were lost and, though Jason tried, there was not sufficient time to get them back to the level of quality I had acquired previously.

While reworking the sound cues, my peers who were assigned to work the video projector were demanding I get my finalized script and video to them that day. This was 3 to 4 days before I had planned. My first tech rehearsal was scheduled for Monday the 14<sup>th</sup>, 2013, and so once again the time I had budgeted for memorization was short-changed. I re-configured my time to prioritize submitting scripts and video, but in my haste, I feared not all the changes I had made would be fixed. Setbacks and unforeseen demands resulted in less than desirable video cues.

My second rehearsal on Friday the 11<sup>th</sup>, 2013, became an impromptu tech rehearsal. My soundboard and video operators were there in an effort to get the technical elements working with my blocking. Unfortunately, my soundboard operator was unable to comprehend my explanation that the first 15 minutes of the play had only one sound cue; they were all connected or imbedded in the video. He also refused the script I had highlighted which demonstrated this fact. When we ran my piece, he kept adding in cues because of his confusion. My third video, which I had so painstakingly choreographed with my lines, ran out halfway through because I had not double-checked it in my haste to get it to my peers by their impromptu deadline. In the end, my professors, Judy and Battles, were concerned that by adding in all these technical elements my writing would suffer with insufficient rehearsal time to coordinate everything as planned.

## **5.2 Solutions**

At the end of the rehearsal, Professor Judy and Voice Professor Joanna Battles suggested I cut the sound and video cues altogether. Professor Judy rightly said that we simply did not have the time or resources to rehearse my piece adequately to do it justice, and that in order to allow for spontaneity and get my message across, it would be better to read the sound and visual cues. He felt that the Lulu voice-overs would be beneficial to keep, and felt my sound operator could handle those cues in the time remaining.

Judy would tone down my set, props, and costumes so that I would be performing a “staged reading” with lighting, fewer sound cues, and my script. Though I was heartbroken at the feeling that I had done all I could do, and it still wasn’t enough, Professors Battles and Judy pointed up the irony in this situation’s similarities to Adara’s struggles. Like Adara, costumes, hair, and make-up are my technical strengths in the theatre world. I had had too little practice with sound, lighting and screen projections, though I had demonstrated to myself I was capable of learning, these skills were developed too late for me to have everything in place by the deadlines. This show required the help of many and time was restrictive. I felt Professor Judy sympathized with my frustration and mercifully took the time to re-word my original script so that the original transitions and sound cues would sound evocative when spoken by me in the performance. The two of us had an additional rehearsal to work on those transitions, and when the real technical rehearsal came, he helped with visual blocking and lighting to make the show as successful as it could be.

With these new changes I had to go back into the original sound cues and retrieve all the voice-overs that Jason didn’t have. That took another full day of work for me, but we were able to implement them. I discussed with Professor Judy my desire to have sections of the school lesson and the second “Prom” montage re-implemented since it would only be two cues. These two videos in particular demonstrated how her guardians taught Adara. I hoped adding these back in would not distract from the new tone of my piece, but enhance it. In full disclosure I also wanted some of my month’s worth of work to be utilized, even if only small portions. Professor Judy allowed it, and they were implemented for my second run-through January 18<sup>th</sup>, 2013.

I was fortunate to have very late performance dates comparatively with my peers, so while I used my script on the official tech rehearsal, I worked diligently to be off-book for my second run-through and performances.

## **5.3 Rehearsal Feedback**

I am grateful to my peers and professors for their assistance during the rehearsal process. Only a few knew my subject matter, so the extent of the rape section was shocking for most but helpful for me to get their honest feedback as audience members. The first time they saw a run-through there was a lot of uncomfortable laughter from them and from me, but thankfully, by getting those nervous giggles out of the way, I was able to navigate a larger audience better.

In the second rehearsal back on January 11<sup>th</sup>, 2013, in which all the sound and visuals were attempted, I also attempted the costume changes I had planned. One element that was also cut with the sound and visual cues when we went to a “reading” was the stripping costume changes. My plan was to always have on a black leotard and black biking shorts. Over these I would layer a pair of panties and a bra and then the various costumes for the scenes. This was intended to be another shock to the audience, but since the black leotard and shorts fully cover me, the horror is up to their imaginations. During the rape section, when the guardians shocked Adara to strip totally naked, I would take off the bra and panties but would always have on the leotard and shorts. This element’s removal was never fully discussed, but I assume because of losing the other costume pieces, the music that masked the transitions, and the set dresser that housed the various costumes, this element fell by the wayside for those reasons. I am curious as to how this element would have been taken by the audience.

My peers’ reactions to the play overall were strong and positive. Most said the rape scene shocked them. I received several comments on the horror and humor of the second section. Most said they did not anticipate the rape, and that the finale was depressing. Excellent. That’s the response I was hoping for.

## CHAPTER 6. PERFORMANCE

### 6.1 Final Script

Below is the final version of the script. Many of the original cues are still written in. Many of the measure numbers I used to sync lines with music are indicated by parenthesis and their measure numbers. For the actual performances on January 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup>, 2013, all of the Lulu lines were heard as actual voice-overs through the sound system, and the ending sequence starting with “sound cue 50” played out as was originally intended. I narrated all other sound cues and transitions.

Katrina Despain Thesis Script

FIRST SCENE:

*Sound cue 1*  
(Thesis Show Opening Song (Sweet Caroline))

Lights fade up on Habitat 5, THE AMERICAN PRINCESS EXHIBIT. We see a beautiful little girl’s room, frilly and pink, with a bed, a dresser, a counter with a microwave. There is a partition that hides the “bathroom” up to waist level and a wall size projection screen. Lights indicate the door to the outside world. There is a tea table with four chairs to the right and a school desk and chair opposite the tea table.

As Lights fade up we discover Adara asleep in the bed.

*Sound cue*  
Alarm sounds

*She awakens, stretches in bed, slips on slippers, yawns into bathroom, we hear her tinkle, flush the toilet, step into view and strike a ½ ass TA-DA pose and flash a lovely smile. We hear chattering of patrons as if they are applauding her using the restroom. She washes her hands. Another TA-DA pose and chattering applause. She waits there until she hears:*

*Sound cue*  
Ding!

*She crosses to microwave, pulls out bowl of cereal. Crosses to table set up like a little girl’s tea party, with her favorite big toys sitting in the three other chairs. And Turns to the glass wall (audience) through which the patrons and Lulu her trainer are watching*

ADARA  
Thank you Lulu!

*Adara “eats” her breakfast with a cartoonish animation... Eyes bug out, mouth open, hand and spoon spinning; Finishes with a smile and places her spoon in her bowl.*

*Takes the bowl and the spoon and drops them in the garbage with another TA-DA then turns to her “friends”:*

ADARA

Good morning Teddy, Roxey, Moe, did you sleep well? Yes I think I had a good dream, I was a cat chasing a cow up a tree in a snowstorm...something like that And you? Oh that’s wonderful!

*Sound cue*

Ding from the dresser

ADARA

Good Morning Dresser! What do we have today?

Dresser opens her drawer and Adara pulls out a frilly little girl dress, socks with lace edging and patent leather shoe which whisks her away into a lovely dressing routine as she dances and sings:

*Sound cue*

Princess Song and dance

ADARA

I’m Adara the American Princess, here to bring you joy.  
I awake at your beck and call, happy to see you all  
I smile and curtsy, wash and eat and dress!  
An American princess always looks her best!

*Changing/dance break. Night shirt off. Pants off. Walk around with dress, shimmy into it and TA-DA*

ADAR CONT.

A princess must be kind, and a princess must be sweet  
And a princess gives to everyone, her innocence complete  
She’s washed and perfumed, soft and gentle, tummy in and sentimental  
Over to vanity, “make-up” and Hair.

(Finally)

I’m Adara the American Princess, here to please you all  
I learn American-facts all day, happy to live the ways  
Of earthly humans young and sweet and small  
‘Til the day I return, a human after all. Doot! Doot! (*Blows a kiss!*)

Applause from audience as every task is accomplished with a TA-DA and the music ends with Adara adorably dressed, standing by her desk

ADARA  
I'm ready for my lesson Mr. Screen!

(SCREEN shows her)  
(SCHOOL LESSON DRAFT 2 [shorter].mov)

There is applause as she sits very properly and Screen comes to life with images moving at breakneck speeds. Again almost cartoon like Adara's eyes bug and her head shakes as she absorbs the information until Screen is finished.

LULU  
Report what you learned today Adara.

ADARA  
The Answer is:  $M = b^2 + H$ , 15 hundred four thousand and thirty two times c square miles of the Nile to equal all the fishes in the deep blue sea. AABCDCB, Girls like pink and boys like blue AACDB There will never be another me and I am the most important thing that has never been on the earth or ever will be again. *(Big smile)*

*Sound Cue*  
Fireworks sound, uproarious applause, sparkles and celebration!

*Adara is a little scared, as this is way above and beyond the normal response as the Patrons cheer:*

THEM  
Congratulations Adara! You've done it! You've passed all your school lessons and home-skills tests. You are now ready for College!!!!

*Sound cue*  
More cheers!

ADARA  
Wait, what?

*Sound cue*  
Another Ding! From the Microwave

*She goes to the Microwave a little confused. She pulls out a slice of cake*

ADARA  
Lulu, is it my birthday again?

LULU

No. Humans eat cake for all celebrations. Passing schooling is a celebration. And now it's your turn to celebrate.

ADARA

(Skeptical) This looks different than the birthday cake. More...Red. (Remembering her "manners") Thank you Lulu for this authentic, human treat!

*She goes to her spot at the table. She takes a small bite.*

Lulu, this taste is amazing!

*She takes two more big bites then receives a pulse from the silver collar she always wears.*

Oh sorry! It's a Sweets!

*She puts her fork on the plate and pushes it away.*

*Sound cue*

That means "Surprise" or "Present"

ADARA

Another surprise?! (*To the audience*) Where?!

(SCREEN shows her)

Dresser

ADARA CONT.

Dresser, what is this!

*She looks in the first drawer. Nothing. Looks in the second and finds a lavish prom dress.*

Oh dresser, this dress is so beautiful and the color it's just \_\_\_\_\_ What is it for?

THEM

There is only one test left and a ritual to make your Human Training complete. The social tests and rituals of Prom.

ADARA

Prom?

LULU

Prom, the rite of passage for every young American as they graduate home and school before they go to College as an Adult.

(SCREEN shows her)

A prom montage filled with humans, dressed beautifully, dazzling lights and decorations, amazing tables loaded with food and dancing.

ADARA

I get to go dancing, with other? Will there be real humans there? One's with heartbeats or one's without?

LULU

Real flesh-and-blood humans.

ADARA

Real humans!? Will it be the Wild or will you be there too?

LULU

It is not the wild, but it will be with other American exhibits from around the Tyche galaxy.

ADARA

Real Humans? Real Humans! This is so exciting!!!!!!(*Dancing around with animals, exuberant adlib*) What will I say! (*She practices*) "Hello, my name's Adara, I'm from Habitat 5, I'm an American Princess. What's your name?" And then I shake their hand. But I actually shake their hand! (*It's sinking in*)

Oh I'm so excited!

Screen can you show me again with it will be like? I want to practice so I can be just right! This is my first time meeting other humans; I don't want to mess up!!!

(SCREEN shows her)

VIDEO 2 (PROM 2.mov)

The Montage starts again but Adara stops on an image of handholding

ADARA

Stop there. Hand holding. This seems different then a shake. How do you do it? Am I supposed to say something first, or do I just...grab it? I bet it will be soft, probably warm. I wonder if I'll be able to feel their hearts beating?!

What's next? Jumping? Dancing! Together! Oh yes! Show me more dancing Screen. Oh wow look at that! Oh, they're all dancing together like a routine only with lots! Oh I want to try.

She gets up and dances, watches screen and then tries to imitate the couple dancing but it becomes to difficult to follow.

Walking really close. Hmmm, OH I know! I need a partner! Teddy, will you be my partner? Would you like to dance with me Monsieur?

She curtsies. She tries dancing with Teddy. Tries to do a spin out, it's not working, Teddy falls, she scoops him back up, extremely frustrated.

Lulu I don't get it! That looks way more complicated than me dancing for the patrons. Look how they're touching each other, and there's a lot of holding and stepping. It looks like maybe a routine or a pattern but how do I learn if I don't have a real partner? (*Catches herself*) I'm sorry  
Teddy I didn't mean you're not real it's just.... (Beat)

What else do we do at this Prom Screen?

*She puts Teddy back in the chair.*

(SCREEN shows her)

Prom Montage begins again and shows images of amazing food

ADARA CONT.

Food. Well I do know how to eat! Thank you, Lulu!

Montage shows images of human interaction and finally sees them moving toward a row of beautiful cars

More hand holding...out to cars?

What do you do in the car?

Sit in the car next to each other...

And kiss? On the Mouth!

Oh Screen! Really!? I just meet someone at a dance and now are mouths are kissing? I thought cars are supposed to drive you from point A to point B in the wild. Are they also for kissing?

Do you kiss while you drive? That seems dangerous. I haven't learned how to drive! Am I supposed to drive if I go to prom? Oh Lulu I don't know if I can do this! This seems all very complicated and I'm not sure I'm ready for this. Maybe I shouldn't go to the prom quite yet.

Couldn't we practice a little more here first?

LULU

Don't worry, it will come naturally

ADARA

What will? Driving or kissing?

(No response)

ADARA

Naturally? Like, innately? So maybe... conversation, dancing, driving, kissing, all of those abilities are known inside of me already because those are what humans do, and I'm human, so I already know I just, need another human?... Yeah! You can't do it by yourself! so... you wait, and when two people are in the same room...they just know. Yeah! No practice necessary!

Wow. I had no idea human presence was so powerful! (Big smile) Anything else I should know?

LULU

Just, smile, look pretty, have a good time, and be yourself!

ADARA

Oh Lulu, done and done!

*(Realizing)* Lulu! When I go to prom I'll no longer be a little girl? Isn't that what you said? I'll be an Adult? So this is why! When I go to prom, there will be other humans and this change, this release of knowledge will happen, I'll know all these really important human things, and I'll finally be able to live in the wild! Haha! *(Realization and fear set in)* How long before I get to go to the wild? Do I come back here first? How long until you send me to College, back in the wild?

(No response.)

LULU

You'll come back here for a time and you'll go in a little while. Don't worry; everyone will have what they need.

ADARA

*Smile, she feels better.*

Well then, Screen load up the make-up tutorial, I want to look my best tonight!

Screen comes alive with hyper speed images set to music as Adara Dances through a montage of fashion and make up tutorials. She "applies make-up" in the animated manner, steps into her gown and as the music ends she stands as the perfect American Princess ready for PROM. The door to the habitat suddenly opens and she stares paralyzed for a moment, uncertain and afraid. There is a pulse to her silver collar then she is engulfed by a beam of light that begins to draw her almost trance/dancelike twirling out the door. The space transforms as Adara moves and when the lights restore she stands in the middle of PROM.

SCENE TWO: (One long monologue, written like a poem)

It feels like a dream! The biggest room I have ever seen; balloons and streamers and hundreds of humans...waking up in their own dreams; looking at each other...Their eyes moving, their bodies moving—I want to run and touch everything! I want to throw a fit I'm so excited! But I don't. I stay quiet by my wall, I haven't moved an inch!

I see you! (*Lulu*)

I see Him! (*Taavi*)

(116)

A Prince! A lump on his throat, blond hair, blue eyes, he's looking right at me – another human's real eyes! (125)

My heart is pounding.

He looks away and our connection is broken  
Humans everywhere are moving towards each other, pushed by some unseen force  
He's walking towards me  
He stops.  
I see his chest moving!  
He's breathing! I can see his mouth moving—  
Hello I'm Taavi—something something “good Boy” I don't know!  
His hand is reaching out  
*(Realizing it's her turn to speak)*  
Hi I'm Adara, I'm from Habitat 5 I'm an American Princess. What's your name?  
*(Realizing)* He already told me his name!  
He's smiling  
I'm flushing  
*(Inhale)* I forgot to take his hand!  
I'm doing this all wrong!!!!  
*(Mime of first touch, handshake x 3)*  
*(Sound Cue: Music comes in louder)*  
I'm sorry, what?  
Yes, I would love to dance!  
*(Walks to the floor)*  
He puts his hand around my back  
I put mine sort of, around his shoulder  
His face is so close!  
Scary close! But good close.  
I can't look at him,  
I look at his chest, or over his shoulder  
I'm waiting for the change.  
He seems real enough!  
Oh no! What's wrong with me?  
What am I supposed to do!? *(Panic)*  
*(Pause in music)*  
But wait! His hasn't changed either? He isn't moving either?  
*(Breath)*  
Then side to side, swaying together,  
This feels nice, but isn't there more?  
He leans down, his breathe blows warm across my ear  
A shaking goes through me.  
And he says  
“Do you want to get a Drink?”  
“Yes I would”  
(239)

I follow him through the other humans, all in different holdings, some swaying like we were.  
One girl twirled out—almost like on screen! But nobody was dancing together like the movies.  
Where is our change? Why aren't we like the wild humans?  
*(257) (She sees the food)*

So much food! Food I've only ever seen on screen! Cookies and pies and a fountain of cheese.  
Overwhelming and just...Beautiful!

I want to eat it all!

But I don't!

I want to!

But an American Princess only eats half.

*(Inhale)* That must be why they cut such big pieces!!!! \_

The food makes me more comfortable.

My Prince looks more comfortable too

I want to ask him

Have you ever eaten so many real foods?

What's your zoo like?

Do you know about the Change?

But the music is so loud

I can't hear what he says.

Then he yells

"Do you want to go to the cars?"

"The what?"

"The CARS!"

"Yes!"

Yes, I do!" (308)

He grabs my hand

We wade through humans still trying to dance, every brush every touch like electricity!

Then out a door to a row of cars that seem to go on forever! (320)

He walks to the left side

He knows how to open the door!

I look in

Just like on screen!

I carefully sit in

He goes around to his side and gets in

Now it's not too loud.

I want to look closely at everything, to push all the little buttons and knobs; this is my first time in a real car! But I don't. I don't want him to know I know nothing about cars. So I sit there.

I want to talk but what if I mess up?!

What if he sees I'm not wild enough?

Better to just say nothing.

He says nothing either.

We sit there in silence.

*(Music goes silent. In the silence, before the first note of next section)*

I look over and see his hands and his legs.

*(Sound)*

He raises his arm and puts it on the little divide between us. (370)

I look at it there for a while, all the different folds of his skin, his short finger nails and round tips. (379)

I put my elbow up on the divide next to his and slowly run my forearms up along his. Electricity. (387)

I look up and see his face, so close to mine. His eyes are so beautiful, his cheeks, his nose his mouth.

(402) I found my eyes drawn to the curve of his lips and I wanted to feel them with mine.

(407) He leans in closer,

(410) I lean in, and then our lips meet.

(416 -423)

My first kiss. It was beautiful, just like you said it would be, Lulu. (*I slowly pull away and look in his eyes.*) I think he liked it too.

*(The lights dip and swirl as the beam returns, twirling them in a dance-like drug. Then the space again transforms as Adara's senses return Pulse she discovers )*

(440)

We are in a room. I don't know how we got here...my mind is spinning.

Tavvi's to my left. There's a giant bed in front of us and beyond the glass walls I see you. You and other patrons.

(Pulse)

What do you want me to do?

The boy starts undressing.

You want me to do something, but what?

Where is Dresser? I haven't finished dinner or brushed my teeth. It isn't time to sleep

Why start undressing?

(Pulse)

Another pulse!

I have no idea what you want me to do! The third is always the SHOCK!

I start undressing,

To my underwear

But we never expose our private parts to the public. That is the rule.

The room is surrounded by patrons

And this human boy is still a stranger!

*(She takes off her dress)*

Stripped to my last layer.

Flushing and Afraid.

The boy is pulsed again. I can see his breasts. I want to stare at his nipples, to see if they are like mine, but I am...*(finding word)*--embarrassed.

Am I allowed to look? Are they private like mine?

He walks towards the bed.

The most beautiful creature ever.

Of all the animals on Screen I've ever seen, he must be the most beautiful.

His skin and the fur on his legs, his back and his arms, and the muscles moving underneath. He looks back to me, expecting.

What dance is this? What do I do?

I follow again, crawl up on the bed and look at him.

We breathe for a minute.

He closes his eyes and comes in for another kiss.

This one is different than the first. Harder, more scared

I don't know what to do but sort of press my lips back.

Something wet and slimy is pushing through my lips into my mouth.

I push him back

It was his tongue! Tongues into other people's mouths is part of kissing? I must have missed that in the tutorial!

(Pulse)

A pulse from my collar

I am not to pull away?

we are more cautions, we go slower.

I test it out. Put just a little bit of my tongue through my lips and on to his. It felt amazing. Then I pushed through and find his teeth (*inhale*) - our tongues meet. The shock was ten times more than the ear brush or the kiss from before. It tingles through my spine. I want more. More kissing. More tongues. His hands on my (591) head, my shoulders, my back.

My hands on his back, pulling him closer; I want our bodies to combine! I want my rib cage and his to mesh into each other's. So our lungs and hearts that are screaming to be together can beat as one!

His hand (611) under my bra. He squeezes my breast.

(*Push away*) "Is he allowed to do that?"

No one can touch my breasts not even me!

(Pulse)

"Undress."

And be *exposed*?!

What was shock-ably wrong this morning, I'm shocked for not doing tonight?

(Pulse)

Pain. Tears. Fear.

I take off my bra

(*Another shock--She removes all her clothes and stands completely bare*)

My panties are drenched but not with blood.

(638) I see his privates.

This, appendage, surrounded by fur.

Something I vaguely remember from a human anatomy lesson.

This penis, that's what it's called... so different and bizarre from anything on me!

I want to touch it!

Surely that is not allowed? What is it like?!

Is it slimy like me, or dry like an arm? Is it squishy or hard?

A pulse from his collar.

He moves forward for another kiss,

His body close to mine

His penis brushes my leg.

His tongue-less kisses push me back onto the bed

He holds the weight of his torso up on his arms, on top of me.

He kisses my face and hair gently

But his legs, rougher, more insistent try to open mine,

I pull them back together strongly

(Shock) A shock from my collar. He feels it too, through my body.

He stops. He looks at me.

He whispers  
It won't hurt you.  
I think it's supposed to feel good!"  
A gentle kiss on my lips,  
And I slowly opened my legs.  
His pelvis moves around, I can feel his penis;  
A wetness returning to my lower privates.  
My body feels hungry, hot  
I wanted his body inside of mine.  
He tries to find the whole but he can't!  
Impatience!  
I reach down and grab his penis. He was surprised, I was surprised.  
I didn't know if I was hurting it.  
I carefully guided the end of his penis to the opening of my vagina  
I slowly pull him in. Amazing.  
Is this the great change?  
This feeling? This connection? Surely all that knowledge will be released now!  
He presses further in  
Searing Pain surges through me  
I push him back out.  
"It hurts."  
Is it supposed to hurt?  
Does mating always hurt like this?  
(Pulse)  
A pulse from both collars. We try again. Still pain.  
Is there something wrong with me?  
(Pulse) Another pulse  
He pushes in  
Excruciating Pain.  
My insides ripping.  
Something broken, bleeding  
Over both our bodies  
"We're bleeding help us!"  
"Keep going, it's natural, just keep going."  
What? Does this happen every time human's mate?  
Am I supposed to like it?  
How much blood will I lose? The boy is horrified  
He pulls away  
"This wasn't in the movie" he says  
Trying to stop  
(Pulse) He says "no"!  
(Pulse) No! Again.  
And the collar shock comes. (Shock) He fights it.  
His trainer yells "be a Man!"  
(Three Shocks)  
Three more shocks and the boy finally cracks.

Tears in his eyes he pushes me back, spreads open my legs,  
inserts his penis  
and pain.  
It goes in and out as his skin grates across my insides,  
back and forth, it's just, Pain!  
His face contorts.  
His body shudders in a final push.  
He's done. He breathes.  
I am whimpering, crying?  
I look in his eyes. He looks away. He backs away from me. Liquid, I don't know if it's blood or  
something else continues to trickle out of his penis. It didn't smell like blood. It smelled  
like...(*shrugs I don't know*). I don't know- LIKE---I DON'T KNOW!  
He looked lost. I try to sit up but get a collar shock and then darkness....

### SCENE THREE:

The swirling lights return and the space again transforms as Adara is returned by the beam of light to her habitat in a dreamlike/trancelike dance. She is in her pajamas and her bed as lights shift back to Habitat lighting. Her Alarm sounds. After a moment of confusion she runs into the bathroom and pukes. Comes back out and strikes a tentative TA DA pose. There is no Applause. She looks down to discover what appears blood on her body...memory returns as she sinks to the floor flooded by sadness)

ADARA  
Lulu, are we alone?

LULU  
Yes

ADARA  
I didn't get to say goodbye. I wanted to stay with him, why did you take me away?

LULU  
The intercourse was over, you live here and he does not.

ADARA  
But.... for how long? How long before I live at the college?

LULU  
About 10 human months.  
(Beat)

ADARA

It never happened. The change that comes with human contact, where I suddenly know everything, never happened. I felt things but those feelings didn't tell me how to take the next step. Am I not Human?

(No response)

ADARA

Lulu?

(Beat)

LULU

You are 100% Human.

ADARA

But I still don't know how to dance with them, I don't know how to drive or have sex. So if you taught me everything American children know, then why did I fail?

LULU

Don't say Sex, Adara

ADARA

Isn't that what it's called, Lesson 1083?

LULU

Yes but we don't talk about that in here.

ADARA

Then where do we talk about it? Can we go there so we can!

LULU

No Adara,

ADARA

Please Lulu! I go to college in 10 months and I don't know what to do!

(No response)

ADARA CONT.

(Tentatively) Which lesson talks about tongues in kissing? Which lessons says human males and prom night are the exception to the "don't let anyone see you" rule? I'm scared I forgot!

LULU

None. This is a natural part of American rituals.

ADARA  
Knowing nothing?

LULU  
Sex Education is confined to anatomy and pubescent hormonal changes.

ADARA  
But there seems to be more. More, rules, more information. You shocked me for not knowing those things. Why would you do that?

LULU  
Seven out of ten humans have intercourse by 19, average age is 17. You are 17 Adara. You passed all the tests and once you experienced Prom, first intercourse was a natural next step. First intercourse marks your first steps into adulthood. You are no longer a child

ADARA  
That doesn't explain why I know nothing. First intercourse -so there will be more?! Do you have intercourse every time you meet a male human or just at Proms? And how many Proms do humans have?

LULU  
You don't need to know.

ADARA  
If intercourse is a part of Adult human's lives, and I'm an Adult, then I need to know. Why is learning nothing about major issues an important American ritual?

LULU  
Innocence. Innocence is a key element of an American child.  
Once you have Intercourse, you know sex, now you are no longer innocent.

ADARA  
That's what innocent means? Once I know sex (Pulse)...you just said it! Having intercourse completes my knowledge of ...intercourse...But knowledge is a combination of information and experience, lesson 350. But I have no information and you forced my experience, so technically I don't know Sex, I'm still a child.

(Pulse)

LULU  
Don't question. This is the way American princesses live. This is what you were born to do.

ADARA  
Born to have sex without knowing what it is?

(Shock)

LULU  
Conversation over.

ADARA  
Lulu, am I pregnant?

SCENE FOUR:

Lights fade as Screen comes alive with swirling images of labor and birth. Adara moves against the images with pain and confusion and then changes finally into an adult modern travel clothes, reminiscent of first outfit...as the habitat lights returns she stands with a suite case. In the habitat with her is a beautiful baby cradle, which she seems to remember as her own....There is a pulse from her collar as Adara “wakes up” from her transformation dance.

*She realizes a baby is there. She walks over to look at her but as she reaches to touch her...there is a (pulse)... she pulls back and just looks*

ADARA  
She’s breathing!  
May I touch her?  
*Pause*

LULU  
Carefully

ADARA  
Her hands are so little.  
Is she asleep or drugged?  
*Pause.*

LULU  
Asleep

ADARA  
How old is she now?

LULU  
Five weeks

ADARA  
Back to baby  
She’s beautiful.  
May I hold her?

LULU  
No

ADARA  
Why?

No response

ADARA  
Could I hurt her?

LULU  
Yes

ADARA  
Could you teach me?

(No response)

Please LuLu! Please! I could learn! I want to hold her (*she reaches again and gets (shocked)*)  
Please!

LULU  
Stay back or we'll take her away again

ADARA  
Please.

LULU  
Now that you've seen her, any last questions before you board the ship?

ADARA  
Can I take her with me?

LULU  
No.

ADARA  
But she's mine. She was a part of me; I want to be with her.

LULU  
She will not survive with you.

ADARA  
Why?

(No response)

Why, LuLu!

LULU  
Any final requests?

ADARA  
Yes, I request to stay here! I want to be with her, I don't want to go to the wild anymore. I request to stay here!

LULU  
You are not a little girl anymore

ADARA  
I could stay here as her mother, American Princesses have mothers in the wild.  
No response

Or I could be her little friend! We are the two American princesses! Now that she's out and I'm better, I look exactly the same! We'd be singing and dancing, the patrons will love it! Wouldn't you?!

LULU  
The Patrons only like innocence. You are no longer innocent.

ADARA  
But that's not my fault, you forced me.

LULU  
You are too old Adara, the patrons only like the young.

ADARA  
What's wrong with non-innocence? What's wrong with age?

(No response)

Did you raise my mother too?

LULU  
Yes

ADARA  
Will I meet her? Out in the wild? Will she be there for me?

LULU  
It is technically possible

ADARA

Don't you keep track of us, your humans out there? What if we need help? Where do we go?

LULU

You are now an adult. You can fend for yourself. We are not needed nor are we responsible for your care.

ADARA

Intercoursed persons who can take care of themselves, that's an adult? Fend for myself against what? Fending, what will offend me?

(No response)

If I'm an adult then I should take her with me.

LULU

Abigail stays with us.

ADARA

Abigail...

But I can take care of myself, so I can take care of her too.

LULU

You are not capable. She stays

ADARA

Not capable of taking care of her or me?

No response

Screen, what are the odds of us surviving if I take her?

(SCREEN shows her)

Less than 1%

ADARA

Without her?

(SCREEN shows her)

50%

ADARA

50%?! I have a one in two chance of surviving, and you won't let me stay! Please I want to stay!  
Lulu please!

LULU

You will be placed in College Adara. You know that. There is no need to fear. You will have the best education, the most a human can ask for.

ADARA

The most I can ask for? You need an exhibit, I can't stay young forever so you forced me to get pregnant, steal my baby, the patrons have a new child to gaga over, I get a college education, and she gets 17 years of ignorant bliss. But what happens when those 17 years are up? When 4 years of college are up? What happens when we are no longer cute and adorable and wanted? (Beat) *To herself, gathering information, retraces her morning routine.* I can sleep in a bed, defecate in a toilet, wash my hands, shower, put on cloths, put on make-up, eat with silverware then watch a screen and regurgitate information for 16 hours a day, oh, and I once had intercourse with a stranger, so that makes 8 ½ experiences, 8 ½ skills. Who has a job needing those skills? Who will pay for an 18 year old child?

LULU

Just do your best and it will all work out?

(Beat) My best. 50% chance of survival even if I do my best. Well thank you patrons, thank you for this shot at survival. Because of your gracious upbringing I am prepared to be someone's living doll, their walking, talking, slightly sexy infant, completely dependent and at the wild's mercy. I hope their shock collars aren't worse. Maybe in the new zoo I'll get a pool or a paintbrush.

Do you want to know what your old princess will be doing with her 50%, this is the last time you'll ever see me, do you even care?

I'm going to go out there and learn what *making* feels like. Not just poop or garbage or accidental babies; I want to know how to purposefully make something out of nothings.

I watch screen every day, and every day I see the wonders of live animals making things: Nests, homes, families, tools, weapons, art, clothes, food, everything. (Recites) "Creation is reorganizing existing elements for a purpose." But it doesn't just happen - perfectly the first time you try.

That's what you missed. Or, that's what Americans missed, or whoever made up this system. You have to let me try. You have to let me mess up. Give me information, and supplies all you want, but then *I* have to try. That's the only way I'll gain any skills to survive out there.

You and I did it for 7 years, remember Lulu? It took 7 years of trial and error and every day practicing to perfect those 8 skills, and now I can dress myself!

But then we stopped. We stopped experiencing, we stopped trying, and we just *watched*. We sat and watched other humans live. And now, after 11 years of watching, you expect me to achieve tasks I have no practice doing, no knowledge of. How is that possible?

LULU

It's time to go, Adara.

The Habitat door opens and the pulsing light of the tractor beam begins to draw her.

ADARA

I don't want to!

Please don't make me!

(Pulse that starts to pull her towards the door)

*Adara fights against the light and, against all odds, makes her way back to Abigail and kneels down next to her.*

ADARA CONT.

I love you!

Abigail I would stay here if I could

I would hold you and sing to you and we would play and talk and eat together.

I would love you and hold you forever. (*Leans in as if she's going to touch her.*)

(Pulse grows more violent)

This will be your room, and these will be your friends and Screen and Lulu will raise you, but I want you to know, that when you leave here I'll be waiting.

(Shocked again...the light drags her toward the door)

When you are no longer wanted or needed, when they have unknowingly ruined your encounter with love, I will be there on the other side waiting for you to get out.

*Sound cue 50*

"I'm Adara, the American Princess, here to bring you joy" she sings as Adara is pulled with pain and confusion towards the door.

(Shock)

I'll find the missing pieces; I will learn what they never taught!

Abigail starts crying and Adara fights against the light to reach her baby, but it pulls her relentlessly to the door

Please! Please let me see her!

(Shock)

Baby is still crying,

Please she needs me!

Over head we hear a musical round of princesses past singing

"I'm Able the American.....I'm Alana... I'm Maria...I'm Katie I'm Abby, I'm Samantha I'm Brittany the American princess, here to please you all  
I learn American-facts all day, happy to live the ways  
Of earthly humans young and sweet and small"

(She receives a shock that is different from the rest)

Black out.

In the darkness we hear a final DOOT. DOOT.

And the play ends.

## **6.2 Audience Feedback**

During the first performance I made three discoveries about my piece. I unintentionally wrote a quirk into my character and her journey. When she awakes in the giant prom room and runs around excited to be there and see everything she is thinking, “I want to scream to run and touch everything, I want to throw a fit I’m so excited! But I don’t, I stay quiet by my wall, I haven’t moved an inch!” Then again when she wants to eat all the good foods but she doesn’t. I noticed a pattern there and so when we get to the car scene, I added how she wants to touch and test all the buttons, but she doesn’t. From there on out when she wants to do something she eventually does. This was a character trait that was not intended, but I liked it, and it became a great vehicle for humor in the piece.

The audience was very responsive and with me in the moment. Several people have asked to have lunch or coffee with me later once they had time to “process it” enough to be able talk about it. Unfortunately those conversations have yet to happen. All the responses in passing and with students have been positive. People seemed to be affected in a deep and disturbed way. Often I was asked, “How did that come from you? What’s up in that head of yours?” Students seemed wide-eyed with awe and respect. Perhaps it is my hallowed handling of this piece that everyone seems to touch it with kid gloves and I’m grateful. This was an emotional piece and very close to home.

Several people talked to me about the rape section and the comedy of the “fur” lines, that it was laugh-provoking because it was funny and uncomfortable. The fur lines, “Ta Da” and the Princess Song have been quoted back to me by many people. I would catch my ensemble peers singing the Princess Song or quoting sections of the piece in rehearsals. I take it as a good sign that they remember the piece and seem to be processing it. One undergraduate theatre major told me he thought I had a good balance of humor in the piece, particularly the rape section, so while uncomfortable at times, it was not wholly excruciating.

Erickson lamented Adara had not come back in the militaristic manner he had earlier suggested, half joking and half not. Again I’m glad he and others innately wanted to end the cycle, but it’s interesting to me that they would resort to violence. If I were to follow those analogy lines, they are telling me to storm Media headquarters and religious congregations alike and forcefully do what? Hold them at gunpoint to make them stop undervaluing women? Force them to value life skills, positive sex and human equality, and then force them to teach their constituents? I’m sorry, but history does not prove violence as an effective method for change. I feel the only way to make lasting change on this front, is to shift people’s attitudes about sex and creativity on the ground level then move the trend on up. Adara will never be able to overpower her guardians by herself. No one person could be strong enough. Conversely, a movement on this scale requires inspiration of the masses. If I could inspire others I might be able to change the tides for good.

Several of my highly conservative friends came the second night. I had not anticipated all of them being there let alone all of them in the front row. During the controversial rape scene, I refused to let myself “check in” with them for fear of being thrown off, but the vibe from the rest of the audience was so supportive, I suspect my friends were understandably uncomfortable but also intrigued. And since my character was not promiscuous, just curious, this probably eased their souls. I also heard through the grapevine that one conservative friend said she wished she had known about the rape beforehand, but that since it had a good message in the end, she was okay with it. Another of my highly conservative friends, whom I was most concerned for, sent me a text afterwards congratulating me on my good work. I take all this feedback as a compliment and hope the play’s messages got through to them in some way.

When Professor Judy and Joanna saw the second rehearsal, even with all the fumbled elements, they seemed to be affected by the play’s message. As parents they discussed how it made them think whether or not they were raising their sons any better than Lulu. I hope it really did cause them to examine how they treat their children. Are they teaching them skills that are crippling them with kindness? Hopefully others in the audience asked themselves that and many of the other questions I set out on this journey to raise.

## CHAPTER 7. FUTURE AND CONCLUSIONS

### 7.1 Future Remounts

I am very happy with how my script turned out and I would like to see it have a continuing life with all the technical elements I had originally envisioned. With those elements and adequate rehearsal I think it would be even more of what I had intended. I believe it was a successful first workshop and I would like to tell this story again.

Professor Judy once said he felt my play would be a better screenplay than stage play. My first instinct was to whole-heartedly disagree. A film of this play would be, in essence, rather pornographic. And exactly who, or what, would constitute the audience at the zoo? Would it show the other characters? If it did show the other characters, would that defeat the purpose? The whole point is that there is a living human being trapped among all this technology, isolated from the world and then expected to survive in it. I think it must be played to a live audience. The live element was essential to emphasize the fact that she is not a fictional Hollywood creation but a real person trapped in that bizarre world. I want it to make people uncomfortable; I want it to make them think.

A film would put a barrier between the audience and the material and they would be able to tune it out. They would not be required to have a connection to the actress on screen as a real person. If played live, it's as if the disembodied guardians and the screens in that hotel room trap the audience along with her and hopefully the audience would be less likely to disconnect. This play is not meant to be strictly "entertainment," entertaining as it may be, but as William Shakespeare said, art is to "hold a mirror up to nature" and hopefully have our society take a good hard look at what it is producing.

Now with time to process and to open my mind to imagine more tasteful, yet still effective, ways of filming such a story, Professor Judy's suggestion of a film might be a viable vehicle to get the issues of this play out to a larger audience. I would like to use the film and/or the play as a precursor to my social dance campaign. Adara's story will demonstrate the problem; I will present Social Dance as a viable solution.

If it is remounted live, I will plan extensive rehearsal times and hopefully work with a sound and video specialist to bring my technical dreams to life. I have also learned from past mistakes that I need to budget time for setbacks. Professor Judy told me that my work is in the beginning stages and should be used to show designers at the beginning of the process. While heartbreaking at the time, I now see that I need more support and more time to implement my designs so as to enhance the play's impact. As Adara learns in the play, and as I learned through this process, creation takes time, failure, and practice!

## **7.2 Conclusion**

I have been looking forward to this project for a long time and I am happy to report that I found this process wildly successful. Despite all the ups and downs I really enjoyed producing a piece of art I am proud of. This piece said so well so many of the things I set out to do that I am excited to see if it will continue and how it will progress. At the beginning of this journey I set out to revitalize social dance, but instead, my searching took me to the heart of why art and creativity, on the ground level, are dead in America. I got to mess around with possible reasons for why Americans are so unhappy and why so many of our young people are woefully unprepared for the real world. I feel as though I shot for the moon and hit the stars. I see evidence of this entitlement epidemic everywhere, of people craving self-respect but with no creative outlets, of people falling into traps out of ignorance and I hope that in some way this piece can add to the shift of this tide. I believe in the power of art to change lives, as mine has been forever changed, and I look forward to art's future manifestations.

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## APPENDIX

### Production Photos

All pictures taken by Benjamin Koucherik January 20<sup>th</sup> 2013



Above: Katrina Despaigne as “Adara” striking the “Ta Da” pose in the opening sequence, Scene I



Above: Katrina Despaigne as “Adara” singing the “Princess Song,” Scene I



Above: Katrina Despain as “Adara” watching “Screen” during School Lesson, Scene I



Above: Katrina Despain as “Adara” eating celebratory red velvet cake, Scene I



Above: Katrina Despain as “Adara” watching second Prom Montage, Scene I



Above: Katrina Despain as “Adara” dancing with Teddy to Prom Montage, Scene I



Above: Katrina Despain as “Adara” excited about the Prom food table, Scene II



Above: Katrina Despain as “Adara” as the beam of light is pulling her from the habitat, Scene IV

## VITA

Katrina Despain was born in Fort Stewart, Georgia, then moved all over the South as a young child. She lived three years in Panama City, Panama and two years in Laramie, Wyoming before moving to Missoula, Montana in 1995. In Missoula, between 1996 and 2001, she trained in a ballet conservatory under Pam Copley and Michelle Antinoli. Her theatre training in those years was with Rita Arlent of the Purple Mountain Players and various directors of the Missoula Children's Theatre. In 2001 Despain moved to Loveland, Colorado where she continued her theatre training under Ken Fenwick of Up in Light's Production and Loveland Choral Society. Despain graduated Valedictorian with honors from Loveland High School in May, 2005.

In the summer of 2005, Despain received the Morgan Family Scholarship and attended the University of Northern Colorado during the 2005-2006 school year. At UNC she renewed her dance training with Professor Monti Black and with Margaret Wagner at the Greeley Conservatory of Dance. In the fall of 2006, she transferred to the University of Wyoming in Laramie, Wyoming to pursue a dance degree with Marsha Fay Knight, Margaret Wilson, and Jen Deckert. In the spring of 2007, Despain's choreography piece "Philosophies" was nominated and selected to be performed at the Kennedy Center American Collage Dance Festival in Missoula, Montana. That fall Despain changed her emphasis to acting performance as her major with a dance minor and trained under Leigh Selting, Lou Anne Wright and John O'Hagan. In 2007 she received the Victoria Horne Oakie "Myrtle Mae" Award (Excellence in Theatre/Film Acting, Female), the Jack Oakie Comedy Award (Best Comic Performance) in 2008 and the Peter Koi Simpson Acting Award and Scholarship in 2009.

Despain served as the Department of Theatre Student Council representative from the fall of 2008 to spring 2010. Despain, was nominated three times for the Irene Ryan Acting Scholarship competition and made it through to the semi-finals in 2010. In 2009, Despain performed a lead role in *Six Songs from Ellis* by Marsha Fay Knight, which toured Wyoming and South Dakota and later won the Region Seven Kennedy Center American College Theatre Festival national competition in 2010, ranking it as the top fourth production in the nation. Despain graduated from the University of Wyoming College of Arts and Sciences in May, 2010 with a Bachelor of Fine Arts degree in Theatre and Dance: Acting Performance Concentration, and was among the Top Twenty Outstanding Graduates of 2010.

After graduating, Despain was offered and accepted a graduate Assistantship to Louisiana State University. She has performed in several Swine Palace productions including *Metal Children*, *Heist*, *August: Osage County*, *Pride and Prejudice* and *All The King's Men*. She also worked for the Swine Palace Summer Theatre, performing, choreographing and costuming their summer season. In October 2012 she appeared in the Universal Pictures film *Pitch Perfect* as "The Greeter". For the Warner Brothers film *Prisoners*, which opens in September 2013, she will play "Kim Milland". Despain plans to continue her film and theatre career post-graduation.