

**A HAMLET:  
WEST OF WHY**

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\* \* \* \*

Good my lord, will you see the players well  
bestowed? Do you hear, let them be well used; for  
they are the abstract and brief chronicles of the  
time: after your death you were better have a bad  
epitaph than their ill report while you live.

—Hamlet (Act 2; Scene 2)

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**THE PLAYERS:**

ALAIN: 25-30, plays Hamlet  
CLAY: 25-30, Plays Horatio  
JOYCE: 30-40, plays Gertrude/Ophelia  
CHASE: 25-30, plays Laertes  
PAUL: 30-40, plays Claudius/Ghost/Polonius

**PLACE:**

This is a road play, with two vans touring the American Southwest. The isolation of the desert and the distance between destinations and people pushes the action. While they are driving through a vast, dark, and enigmatic world, inside the vans is intimate and operates on micro-levels. This tension defines the world.

**About the Vans:** These are not tricked-out, sexy vans; these are the kind of vans you may consider kidnapping someone in—generic, non-descript, no back windows, uncomfortable. Behind the front seat or bench there are a couple of jump-seats, so that up to five people can be in the cab. Oh, hey, also, these are those new self-driving vans you’ve been hearing so much about, although at the time the play takes place, they are maybe a bit long in the tooth, the 1.0 version. Regardless, they are navigated by some sleek GPS interface embedded in the vehicle. The front seat could be abandoned all together, but two people are required to “stand watch.” More will be discovered about the self-driving functionality during the ride, and will help shape how the vans are represented theatrically on stage.

The Lead Van navigates, and has an unseen cot in the back for naps; the Gear Van has all the props and shit a traveling band of players might need.

**TIME:**

A few years from now, toward the tail-end of a tour.

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**Prologue:**

*From next to near darkness, the tense first moments of a condensed version of Hamlet as played at Castle Dome Middle School in Yuma, Arizona.*

CLAY

Who's there?

CHASE

Stand and unfold yourself.

PAUL

Stand ho! Who's there?

CHASE

Thou art a scholar; speak to it, Horatio.

CLAY

Stay! Speak, speak! I charge thee, speak!

CHASE

Shall I strike at it with my partisan?

CLAY

We do it wrong, being so majestic,  
To offer it the show of violence.

CHASE

'Tis gone.

PAUL

It faded on the crowing of the cock.

CLAY

Let us impart what we have seen to-night  
Unto young Hamlet...

*Lights shift.*

**Scene One:**

*Clay "drives" the Lead Van, Alain, in the passenger seat, looks out the window, searching the dark desert.*

*Joyce "drives" the Gear Van, Chase, in the passenger seat, looks at a device, which he swipes every few seconds. Joyce stares in disbelief at what he is doing.*

*Silence in both vans except the sound of the road. In the Lead Van, Clay reads a road sign as they pass.*

CLAY

Why.

ALAIN

What?

CLAY

Check it out, the sign up there—

ALAIN (*reading*)

Why: Gas-Food-Lodging-Camping. 5 miles.

CLAY

We're rolling up on Why! Why, Arizona. Welcome to Why U.S.A.!

ALAIN

*Welcome?* Seriously, given-the-givens? Strike the welcome and leave it at: Why U.S.A?

CLAY

Something is definitely rotten in the state of Denmark, my Lord (. . .) But man, try and stay positive, nothing's definitive yet, he's going to be all right.

ALAIN

I'd rather have met my dearest foe in heaven  
Before I had seen this day, Horatio.

CLAY

Aye, my Lord. (. . .) Hey, hey, let's do that classic Who's on first routine, but with Why.

ALAIN

Dude, I'm not feeling up for—

CLAY

Come on, it'll take your mind off it. You be Costello, I'll be Abbott. Ask me: "Hey Clay, where are you heading?" Come on, Alain, play....say: *Hey Clay*...

ALAIN

Hey Clay, where are you heading?

CLAY

Why.

ALAIN

Why? Because I'm pretending to be interested in where you're heading.

CLAY

Why and then I'm on to What.

ALAIN

What? Why?

CLAY

No, no, Why first, then What.

ALAIN

I don't know what you're talking about.

CLAY

I Don't Know is my last stop, after What. Why, then What, then I Don't Know. I better get going.

ALAIN

But where are you going?

CLAY

Why.

ALAIN

Because I'm interested in where you're going.

CLAY

And I'm telling you, Why.

ALAIN

You haven't told me anything!

CLAY

I've told you everything!

ALAIN

I just want to know where you're heading?

CLAY

Why, I told you.

ALAIN

That's what I keep asking you! Why?

CLAY

Exactly, Why! (...) That was actually pretty good! I love comedy, tragedy too, but comedy.... Like, what if we made Hamlet into a comedy?

ALAIN

Would have to end in a wedding.

CLAY

We could figure it out.

ALAIN

I'm sure it's already been done. Every douchie thing you could think to do to poor Hamlet has already been done.

CLAY

Agreed, but man, everything is so heavy right now, we could use a good comedy these days.

ALAIN

There's nothing particularly funny about this moment in our history.

CLAY

Even the air feels heavy. OFF WITH THEE, HEAVY AIR! For these mortal coils are in despair.

ALAIN (*looks out the window, searching the dark desert*)

(...) My father—methinks I see my father.

CLAY

Where, my Lord?

ALAIN

In my mind's eye, Horatio. (...) Somewhere, crossing this desert, years ago, when he was my age. And here I am, criss-crossing the same desert, touring, like it was nothing...all cause I'm a Dreamer. This is on me, my fault. I should have never signed on as a Dreamer.

CLAY

These are but wild and whirling words, my lord. This is not your fault.

ALAIN

He never talked about it—where he crossed with us—not once, but he...we must have crossed...in my bones I feel this...we crossed here. West of Why.

*In the Gear Van, Chase swipes, it annoys Joyce; she attempts to engage.*

JOYCE

You think Alain's ok?

CHASE

Why?

JOYCE

He's just seems, more and more—I don't know, *what?* Did something happen?

CHASE

What isn't happening? It's like some demon switch has been flipped, like, like, like, oh those lights in the cheap motels? In the bathroom? There's those crappy heat lamps you always forget about, but you flip the switch on them anyway. And you're sitting there taking a dump and suddenly you feel like you're getting a sunburn and your head is melting so you jump up! Stare at the ceiling, and there it is: that creepy heat lamp, glaring-staring, pushing all that weird orange heat down on you. And you are like: God why am in this place where this weird kind of heat can be flipped on so easily?!

JOYCE

I was talking about personally. After the show today, he was having a really intense conversation, and I was trying to do that thing where you really try not to listen, but then end up just basically listening—

CHASE

That thing is called: eavesdropping. And I wouldn't know, we're not all that close.

JOYCE

Oh, I thought, because you work out, spot each other in the hotel gyms—

CHASE

We spot each other, talk about barbells, dumbbells, kettlebells, and occasionally Snackwells, but that's about it. He's a brooder, that's his thing.

JOYCE

A birder?

CHASE

Brooder.

JOYCE

Breeder?

CHASE

Brood-er. One who broods.

JOYCE

Oh, a brooder. Hah! See, where I'm from a brooder is a mini-coop, a warm place where we raise the chicks.

CHASE

Where I'm from a MINI-Coop is a hot car we use to pick up chicks.

*Chase taps on his device.*

JOYCE

Two sides of the same coin?

CHASE

I'd say: two different coins.

JOYCE

But of the same value, the coins, like two nickels?

CHASE

Sure, but why nickels? Make me a half-dolla! Go big or go home, Joyce.

JOYCE

Go big or go home, huh.

*Lead Van.*

CLAY

I miss driving. I mean driving *driving*. ...My dad was a driver. Like old school—arm out the window, map on the dashboard. When I turned sixteen and got my license, he gave me a copy of Keourac's, *On The Road* and inscribed it: "Clay, on the open road is the only place you'll ever find *it*." And I'm like, Dad, what is *it*? And he made his *your no son of mine face*, lit a cigarette and got in his truck and drove off. (. . .) He OD'd before I turned 17. Fent-head, idiot, always chasing that high. Always chasing *it*. (. . .) So I know this sucks, but it's not like your dad is dead.

ALAIN

If he's sent back, it's like a death sentence.

CLAY

You don't know that for sure.

ALAIN

I know the cartel he informed on is a lot more brutal today than 20 years ago.



CLAY

Shit. So what do you want to do? Drop the rest of the tour?

ALAIN

Drop? Why would I do that? Besides, the lawyer said there was nothing to do until his appeal is granted or denied, I can't even see him. So why drop a part I've waited, wanted my whole life— the part of a lifetime?

CLAY

Technically, it's only part of a part of a lifetime. Hamlet in 59 minutes!

ALAIN

It's still Hamlet.

CLAY

Right, my bad. I didn't mean it like that. Shit. My bad. I think it's super awesome for these kids to see you as Hamlet.

ALAIN

Spare me the at-risk youth, bringing art to under-served communities speech, it's something white people say to make themselves feel good.

CLAY

Fair, but you don't think it makes a difference?

ALAIN

I know it makes a difference. For these kids who are struggling with English, to hear how beautiful the language can sound, to hear how words can soar, glide, and fly.

CLAY

Even when they don't understand them?

ALAIN

Especially when they don't understand them. When I was a kid, I didn't speak much English till like fifth grade. The public school put me in these classes, ESL, which basically was like detention, like *"forget these kid they'll never learn, never catch up."* And I got more and more isolated. But my dad had this thing he'd always tell me, he'd say: *"Alain, if you think you can catch the bus, you'll run for it."* So he loaded me up with these super heavy books: Animal Farm, books of poetry, things way above me, and I started reading and reading. But, my speaking was still like (*grunts*), so we went to the library and he checked out the entire collection of Star Trek—

CLAY

Next Generation?

ALAIN

Told me: "*Cause you're the next generation.*" And I *became* Captain Jean-Luc Picard with the craziest accent you can imagine, this sixth grade Mexican kid, like way beyond Spanglish.

CLAY

Spang-Trek!

ALAIN

"*Make it so, Number One.*" "*Tea. Earl Grey. Make it hot.*" "*The line must be drawn here! This far, no farther.*"

CLAY

So crazy....

ALAIN

Anyway—where I grew up there was this thing called Shaking Hands with Shakespeare—and when I was going into middle school my Dad decided I was ready to move on from Captain Jean-Luc Picard and he took me to their production of the Tempest.

CLAY

Started you off with something easy?

ALAIN

Right? And even though I didn't understand a word of it, I wanted to understand every word. And that's the thing about performing for kids—any kids—what happened to me at the Tempest, was I saw a world that was bigger than where I came from, and it opened up space, and I reached and reached for it and it really was like shaking hands with the divine.

CLAY

If you think you can catch the bus, you'll run for it.

ALAIN

So I know what we're doing makes a difference, I just hate how the race thing's always got to be pointed at. If we were performing for kids in gated-communities and country-clubs no one would be saying how *incredible and noble* it is to bring art to the privileged. We're performing for Latino kids, but they somehow make it sound dangerous, like we're performing for prisoners. And if these kids feel like I felt, trust me, they don't need that, they already feel like prisoners.

CLAY

Prisoners, my Lord?

ALAIN

When I was growing up, and certainly right now. Yeah: *Denmark is a prison.*

CLAY

I think not so, my Lord.

ALAIN

Why, then, 'tis none to you, for there is nothing either good or bad, but thinking makes it so.  
To me it is a prison.

CLAY

Dude, are you acting, or do you really feel you're in a prison?

*Gear Van. Chase still on device.*

JOYCE

Hey, half-dolla? Why do you gotta do that in front of me?

CHASE

Do what?

JOYCE

Look at porn?

CHASE

It's not *porn*.

JOYCE

It's pictures of women posing for the camera.

CHASE

It's an app.

JOYCE

It's disrespectful.

CHASE

It's what people do.

JOYCE

So, that's what you'll do while we're in Tucson?

CHASE

We'll be there for a night, why not partake of the local flavors?

JOYCE

Gross. We're not flavors, like cartridges for your ridiculous vape.

CHASE

So I'm ridiculous for wanting to open myself to all the sensations life has to offer?

JOYCE

You're ridiculous for vaping...vapidly vaping.

*Lead Van.*

ALAIN

There's another sign.

CLAY (*read sign*)

CAUTION! Illegal's crossing. Text #US-B-PROUD to report.

ALAIN

There's more and more on this stretch, we're seeing them like every mile.

*In the Lead Van, Clay and Alain jump as Paul suddenly sticks his head out from the back, and clambers into the jump-seat.*

PAUL

Master Players! WHAT HO!?

*Clay instinctively grabs the wheel, the tires hit the rumble-strip, there is a loud alert as the Van course-corrects. The VAN speaks.*

VAN VOICE (V.O.)

Auto-correcting. Is everything OK, Clay?

CLAY

Yeah, fine, fine. We're fine.

VAN VOICE (V.O.)

OK. Now relax, and leave the driving to me. You are in good hands.

CLAY

Jesus, Paul, a little warning.

PAUL

Tis now struck twelve. Get thee to bed. My turn to take over the watch. Plus, I gotta pee like a banshee. How much longer till we hit Tucson?

ALAIN (*looking at itinerary on device*)

Couple hours.

PAUL

I'll never make it. Look for a place to pull over. And what garden paradise do they have us lodging in this fair nigh?

ALAIN (*pulling up itinerary*)

Motel *La Siesta*. Because there's nothing Mexican's love more than to nap in Arizona.

PAUL

Ugh. I hate the motel nights. My kingdom for a Holiday Inn Express!

CLAY

(...) What exactly *is* a motel, anyway?

ALAIN

Motel is a portmanteau, a blending of two worlds, words, in this case: motor and hotel, makes motel.

PAUL

Like brunch.

CLAY

Oh, right! Like Pornado. (???) When your girlfriend comes in and on your screen is like this tornado of porn? You're caught in a pornado. Then she fumps you.

PAUL

Fumps you?

CLAY

Fucking dumps you.

PAUL

I guess that's something that could happen.

CLAY

It is definitely something that happens, trust me.

*Gear Van. Chase no longer swipes on his device; he types.*

JOYCE

Want to listen to a podcast?

CHASE

I'm all good.

JOYCE

It's called "Embrace Your Fear," one of my faves, have you heard it?

CHASE

*(Continues tapping.)*

JOYCE

It's these really raw interviews with people who confront and practice things they're afraid of. Some are really deep, like there was this one where this woman was so afraid of her house burning down that she couldn't leave it. And so she embraced her fear and literally had the fire department do a controlled burn of her house, and it changed her life, she said she'd never felt so free. There was this quote she said, from some like Japanese Buddha guy: "Barn's burnt down, now I can see the moon." Isn't that, I don't know, like letting go of something you think you need, can open up a whole new perspective? "Barn's burnt down, now I can see the moon." And then some are just kind of silly and fun. This episode is about kids facing their fear of lima beans.

CHASE

Lima beans, seriously, Joyce? I'm trying to seduce someone here.

JOYCE

You find some....body?

CHASE

Yup.

JOYCE

Now what, you're like sexting?

CHASE

Why does this bother you so much?

JOYCE

Cause I'm sitting a foot from you, in the dark, alone, and you're like, like, I don't know what you're doing with her right now—

CHASE

I'm gingerly running my hand up her—

JOYCE

I don't want to know! Eww. Just. Stop. (. . .) Gingerly?

CHASE

I thought you didn't want to know?

JOYCE

I don't! Just questioning your choice of adverbs: *gingerly*? Doesn't sound so sexy, more like something a retired couple might do: he gingerly dunked his ginger-snap into her tepid cup of tea.

CHASE (*laughs, genuine*)

Ok, ok. That's fair. (. . .) How would *you* have me do it?

JOYCE

Gross. You are so gross!

CHASE

I'm just asking.

JOYCE

And I'm just engaged.

CHASE

Yeah, yeah, we all know, about Saint Matthew and your pending nuptials. Believe it or not, Joyce, no one on this tour is trying to get with you.

JOYCE

Umm (. . .) Paul.

CHASE

Paul (. . .) No! *What?*

JOYCE

Paul kissed me, in Yuma. Act one, scene two, he's playing the King, I'm Gertrude, and Hamlet is so pissed at them for marrying so soon after his father's death, that he calls Claudius out, and the King says—

CHASE

"Be as ourself in Denmark. Madam, come." And then makes a big display of kissing his new queen to show Hamlet who's in power, I know the play, so?

JOYCE

So, he usually just stage kisses me, but in Yuma he kiss kissed me.

CHASE

He kiss kissed you?

JOYCE

Tender, sincere. But like *deeeeeeep*.

CHASE

Like with tongueeeee?

JOYCE

No tongue, but it freaked me out, it was a real kiss.

CHASE

Sounds like a rom-com kiss, a PG-13 kind of—

JOYCE

He kissed me! Without tongue, but it was a real, authentic kiss! (. . .) Always taking the dude's side, you're such a broh, is this going to be your life?

CHASE

I am who I am, *shiver-me-timbers*. And truth, I assumed Paul was, I don't know, gay? Asexual?

JOYCE

Why would you think that?

CHASE

I don't know, he just never goes there with us?

JOYCE

That makes him gay?

CHASE

No, and I don't care, I'm just saying when me and the other guys are talking about, you know, it's not anything he engages in when we ....evaluate....a certain member or aspect of the opposite sex, you know, when we *go there*.

JOYCE

Umm gross. And do you ever *go there* about me?

CHASE

NO! Absolutely NO. No, no, no—

JOYCE

The lady doth protest too much, methinks.

CHASE

Guilty as charged. Broh code numero uno: protect each other's inner monologues at all cost. Trust me, the world could *not* function if what men think about inside here was heard out there.



JOYCE

Broh code; boy's club. I'm baby-sitting four man-cubs. It is so typically unfair of the home-office to double cast Gertrude and Ophelia, but not Horatio and Laertes.

CHASE

I didn't make up the rules.

JOYCE

Of course not, you just benefit from them.

*Lead Van.*

PAUL

Good lords, I am primed to piss and then stand my watch. Pull over and we'll do ye-ole Chinese fire drill.

CLAY

(. . .) Is that racist? Chinese Fire Drill?

PAUL

No, it's an actual thing—

ALAIN

Of course it's racist.

PAUL

How do you know?

ALAIN

My Spidey-sense. Anytime something is modified by a group of people, it's usually racist. Gypsy Cab, African Warlord, Indian Giver, Paddy Wagon, Chinese Menu—

PAUL

Mexican Air Force?

ALAIN

Mexican Air Force?

PAUL

The guy who blows your leaves.

CLAY

Now, *that's* racist—

PAUL

Joke, guys, it was a joke, trying to show the difference between something that is actually racist and something that is an actual thing, like Chinese Fire Drill.

ALAIN

Rimshot: Is Chinese Fire Drill racist?

RIMSHOT (V.O.)

Here's what I found for: *Is Chinese Fire Drill racist?* (. . .)

Chinese Fire Drill is a covert form of racism. The term is used to describe a frenzied or chaotic looking situation. When early Westerners first made contact with China, they found the language *incomprehensible*, the country *cramped*, and the people *confusedly busy*. In Western societies, the word *Chinese* became associated with these *pejoratives* often with the intent to disparage.

*Rimshot!*

ALAIN

Thanks, Rimshot.

CLAY

Rimshot? Awesome! That in the new voice-pack update?

ALAIN

Totally, there's a bunch of new voices: Rimshot, Slow Jam, Darth Vader, Sorority Girl on Helium—

PAUL

So our Digital Assistants are free to be any fill-in-the-blank stereotype, but I'm a covert racist for saying Chinese Fire Drill?

ALAIN

Yup, cause you're part of a systemic societal class of people so unaware of your own privilege, you can't even see—

PAUL

O heavy deed! Mercy! Mercy, I cry my Lord, spare me your self-righteous slings and arrows! I know you're upset about your Dad, but can we talk about *anything* else?

ALAIN

What? (. . .) What do know about my Dad?

PAUL

Umm, I heard you guys talking.

ALAIN

Eavesdropping?

PAUL

I couldn't sleep, that Arby's Jalapeño Roast Beef Slider I ate in Yuma was more slider than beef.

ALAIN

So Mrs. Paul's sticks his nose into other people's business.

CLAY

He is Polonius, dude, maybe he was just doing a little method work.

ALAIN

And you know what happened to Polonius.

PAUL

I'm sorry. Really, and I bet there's some sort of amnesty he can work out on a case-by-case basis in his appeal.

ALAIN

You don't know anything about it, Mrs. Paul's.

PAUL

Stop calling me Mrs. Paul's, it's sexist.

ALAIN

Right, sure it is, Mrs. Paul's.

PAUL

Your intent is to disparage me, calling me a nosy, weak woman. A red-blooded MAN would never do something like that. If I'm a covert racist; you're a covert sexist.

CLAY

There is a drop of truth in what he proclaims, my Lord.

ALAIN

(. . .) So, *Paul*, why are you riding with us tonight? You always roll with Joyce, and Chase is our third wheel.

PAUL

I thought I'd roll with you Lords this fair eve. Mix it up.

ALAIN

Hmm. Strange, 'cause Joyce really hates—

CLAY

Joyce does not use the word hate, she only "seriously dislikes". Joyce hates the word hate—  
Rephrasing: Joyce seriously dislikes the word hate.

ALAIN

Joyce seriously dislikes riding with THE Chase, she filed a complaint and everything against him to the home office. You sure nothing happened between you two?

PAUL

Nothing happened.

ALAIN

Huh, cause backstage in Yuma this afternoon Joyce was pretty upset, she told me you totally kissed her on stage.

PAUL

What! No, no, I was just— (. . .) The scene, I got so into, and Alain man, you were on fire, and giving me so much attitude and disrespect, I wanted to really, really show Hamlet how much passion there was between me and his mom.

CLAY

Dude, we're playing for a bunch of 7<sup>th</sup> graders—

PAUL

So, that means you just phone it in?

*As Alain slips into the Shakespeare, his DNA shifts a little.*

ALAIN

It means: "Suit the action to the word, the word to the action, with this special observance that you o'erstep not the modesty of nature. For anything so overdone is from the purpose of playing, whose end, both at the first and now, was and is to hold, as 'twere, the mirror up to nature, to show virtue her own feature, scorn her own image, and the very age and body of the time his form and pressure. Now this overdone or come tardy off, though it make the unskillful laugh, cannot but make the judicious grieve."

PAUL

So talented, it pisses me off. I'm telling you Alain, it was your performance that made me forget myself.

ALAIN

So it's my fault? How convenient.

PAUL

All right, already, I was overacting, crucify me.

CLAY

(. . .) You should apologize, dude. She's pissed, upset. Told me she was thinking about talking to the home office, she said it was creepy, you should say something to her.

PAUL

Fuck me.

CLAY

Don't— (. . .) Don't say that to her.

*Gear Van. Chase turns off his device.*

JOYCE

What happened to the girl? Ginger?

CHASE

Ginger snapped, while I was talking to you about those scary lima beans #boner-killer.

JOYCE

(. . .) So what would you embrace? (! ! ! ) No, no (! ! ! )— I mean, your fear. What would you embrace, if you embraced your fear?

CHASE

I don't know. (. . .) Being alone. Only with myself. No friends. Dying alone. You? (. . .) Come on, I showed you mine, show me yours.

JOYCE

(. . .) Chaos. Losing control, like Ophelia. (. . .) That light, the heat light you talked about in the motel bathrooms. I love those lights. The brooders we had back on the farm used those kind of heat lamps to keep the chicks warm. And all during this tour, when I finally get to my own room, alone, and then into the bathroom...I imagine it's my own little brooder, filled with chick-sized bottles of questionable complimentary soaps and gels, and starched-white towels in uniform stacks. I crawl in, turn on the heat lamp, and feel like finally, the world cannot grab at me anymore. I know, it's a cliché, women and their bathrooms, their sanctuaries, but there's a reason for it. I am undressed all day by others, even on stage, I look out there and I know what some of those kids, their teachers, have in their head. But in my brooder, finally, I can undress myself, take a shower, and wash it all away. And when I come out there's all this warmth. The towel is warm, as if it's been sitting on a hot rock in the sun all day, and I wrap myself in warmth, love. I call Matthew, we talk about the wedding, he shows me pictures of the cat, and I never want to leave my brooder. But life forces you out, and at every turn you can lose control and never get back to the brooder, never home to your nest. Just like Ophelia.

CHASE

How's that like Ophelia?

JOYCE

Her boyfriend, Hamlet, is off at college; his father dies, suddenly. Hamlet returns home full of grief, anger, confusion, but now feels estranged. His home, his hamlet, is no longer welcoming him home. He's a stranger. And Ophelia can't control any of it, she wants to guide him back to the brooder, reestablish his sense of home, but she's young, doesn't know how. Her dad, Polonius tries to help, but ends up making it even worse. Then Hamlet murders her dad, and suddenly her world is now a swirl of chaos, no fixed points, no bright bulb, no warm sun to orbit, and she drowns herself in all that uncertainty. It makes a frightening amount of sense to me.

CHASE

( . . . ) Switch off the auto-pilot, let go of the wheel, close your eyes for 10 seconds, and scream.

JOYCE

What? Why?

CHASE

Embrace your fear, practice being literally out of control.

JOYCE

And kill myself, and maybe you?

CHASE

I'm good with that. Come on, try it. Come on, I'll count.

*Joyce pushes a button or something.*

VAN VOICE (V.O.)

Joyce, are you sure you want to turn off auto-pilot? It is not recommended.

*Joyce pushes another button.*

OK, Joyce, but it is your funeral.

*Rimshot!*

JOYCE

Is that supposed to be funny—

CHASE

Don't get distracted by snarky technology. OK. Ready and let go and scream. 1...2...3...

*Joyce let's go of wheel and screams, as Chase counts. It's a bit underwhelming and she only gets to three, but she's exhilarated.*

That's a start.

*Lead Van.*

PAUL

Seriously, I'm about to spring a leak. Up there, there's a place to pull-over—

CLAY

Got it. I'll pop the hazards on and we'll do a completely boring, orderly white-man missionary position fire-drill.

ALAIN

Sounds awesome.

PAUL

I didn't mean shit by that, sorry.

ALAIN

Why you apologizing to me? I'm not Chinese.

PAUL

(. . .) Hey RimShot: Missionary Position? Racist?

RIMSHOT

I have found a lot of video results for *Missionary Position Racist*. (. . .) Shall I stream them for you?

*Rimshot!*

*Lights shift.*

**Scene Two:**

*A pull-over on the side of the road. They all stretch, wander. Chase smokes a vape, it is like a mini fog machine. There is no moon, yellow hazards from the vans provide the only source of illumination.*

CLAY

Whoa....soupy doupy, dude. Like a mini-smoke-stack. Careful, or THE MAN will start regulating your vape.

CHASE

No doubt—can barely spy me own vape in front of me own pate.

JOYCE

Eww... Chase, what- *what* is that *flavor*? It smells like, uh, what is *it*?

CHASE

Guess— No, you can't handle the truth.

ALAIN

Peppermint with ape's ass?

CLAY

Brand name: Pepass!

ALAIN

Nice portmanteau!

CHASE

Guys, you know THE Chase don't smoke the minty shit.

JOYCE

So what's the flavor, for real?

CHASE

Ancient Chinese secret: if I told you, I would have to kill you.

CLAY

Covert racist: ancient Chinese secret?

ALAIN

Probably, we'll check later. So Chase, seriously, me thinks it smells like it must be: licorice with arm-pit?

CLAY

Licpit.



ALAIN  
Urine with ashtray?

CLAY  
Urash!

ALAIN  
Stale beer and splooj.

CLAY  
Bloojie!

JOYCE  
They'll just keep going till you tell them.

CHASE  
Fine, fine. It's called: Manly Juice.

JOYCE / ALAIN / CLAY  
No it is NOT! / Manly Juice! / So much worse! / MANJU!

CHASE  
See, see, what did I say? What did I say?

CLAY  
No wonder all the smoke! It's Man Juicing!

*And indeed, Chase's vape is billowing an impossible amount of smoke,  
enveloping them in a dense fog.*

CHASE  
Whoa, me vape's totes blowing up.

ALAIN  
Guys, guys, quiet, do you hear something out there? Listen.

*Long pause.*

JOYCE  
AHH! Something grabbed me!

PAUL (*entering*)  
Sorry, sorry, I was taking a leak, I couldn't see.

JOYCE  
Seriously, Paul?

PAUL

I'm sorry, I couldn't see!

CLAY

You were taking a leak ( . . . ) *on* her?

PAUL

No, you idiot. I was taking a leak over there, coming back, tucking in my...shirt, and then all this fog, and shit. I'm sorry.

JOYCE

Guys, guys, let's just put *all* the manly juices away and push through to Tucson. First performance is not till after lunch tomorrow, so we could actually get some sleep if we keep moving.

PAUL

I'm really sorry, Joyce. I didn't mean to grab you, I really couldn't see.

CLAY

Who's riding shotgun with me?

JOYCE

Me!

CLAY

Alain, you can crash in the back. ( . . . ) Alain, time to roll.

ALAIN

Something's out there. Listen.

CHASE

I'll take the gear van.

PAUL

Looks like I'm your wing-man, Chase.

JOYCE

All right, let's go!

*From out of the fog...an eerie moan.*

CHASE

Whoa, shit.

ALAIN  
What is that?

CLAY  
A cow?

ALAIN  
A cow in the desert?

JOYCE  
Can we just go?

*Another moan, louder, closer.*

PAUL  
Coyote?

*Another moan, and a shadow.*

ALAIN  
That is no coyote, that's....Who's there? HELLO? HOLA?

CLAY  
Who's there?

CHASE  
Stand, and unfold yourself!

ALAIN  
You see it?

JOYCE  
We should definitely go, all those signs about smugglers!

CLAY  
Alain, what is it?

ALAIN  
Papá? Papá is that you?

JOYCE  
Guys!

CHASE  
Oh yeah, embrace that fear!

*Alain turns on his phone's flashlight. Another moan, louder, closer. The vape spews more and more fog.*

ALAIN

Be thou a spirit of health or goblin damn'd?

PAUL

Alain, Joyce's right. We're in the middle of nowhere...let's call the cops, or-or text—

JOYCE

#US-B-PROUD. I'm not getting any service!

ALAIN

Bring with thee airs from heaven or blasts from hell,  
Be thy intents wicked or charitable?

*Another moan, Alain steps toward the shadowy fog...*

PAUL

Alain, if you're fucking around.

JOYCE

Stop being crazy!

CHASE

Embrace the crap out of it, dude!

CLAY

Just chill out. Everybody chill.

ALAIN

Thou comest in such a questionable shape  
That I will speak to thee: I'll call thee,  
King, father, papa: O, answer me!

*Alain disappears into the fog...leaving the others standing there blinking into the void, as the hazard lights blink, and the fog builds.*

CLAY

(...) "On the open road is the only place you'll ever find it." (...) I guess my dad was right.

*Lights shift.*