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2010

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Lock In

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Lock In

by

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Report

Presented to the Faculty of the Graduate School
of the University of Texas at Austin
in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements
for the Degree of

Master of Fine Arts

The University of Texas at Austin

August 2010

Dedicated to:

Cathy, Max, Marvin, and Deana Thomas

**Without your financial and emotional support I would be
writing movies with dirty branches on a sidewalk called
"home." Thankfully, my family is my home.**

Acknowledgements

I entered film school as a student who knew nothing about the process of making films; the following people gave me the tools and the confidence to leave with a permanent thirst to never stop learning and doing more:

Don Howard, Kat Candler, John Pierson, Ya'Ke Smith, Scott Rice, Kirk Lynn, Andrew Shea, Paul Stekler, Andrew Garrison, Steve Mims, Richard Lewis, America Rodriguez, Steve Degennaro, Anthony Gardinia, Susanne Kraft, Jeremy Gruy, Gloria Holder, Linda Cavage, Sarah Gonzalez, and undoubtedly the RTF graduate class of 2010.

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Alexandra Elizabeth Thomas, MFA

The University of Texas at Austin, 2010

SUPERVISOR: Don Howard

The following report details the formative experiences that led to the creation of the thesis film, *Lock In*. Each chapter reflects both a major film influence and a different stage in the filmmaking process.

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Introduction: Amazed and Confused

I attended many high school parties tucked away in the hills of Kentucky country, away from the cops, the man, whatever might have been keeping a crew of middlish class sixteen year olds down. Most of these parties ended in a lazy viewing of what we considered a classic piece of vintage cinema: *Dazed and Confused* (1993)¹. Even after graduating college, I could not help but compare myself to the protagonist football player whose greatest dilemma was whether or not to toss the ball next neason. For me, doing what was socially expected of would have meant pursuing a PH.D. in English, and remaining at the University of Kentucky, only about thirty miles away from home. Instead, I moved away from what I had mostly felt was the land of bourbon and boredom, also away from the comforts of my family, my "church family" (as genuine Immanuel Baptists refer to one another), and all of my lifelong friends who were mostly determined to live and die in their UK Wildcat, true blue jerseys and caps. But there

¹ *Dazed and Confused*, Dir. Richard Linklater. (1993; Universal Home Entertainment, 1998 DVD).

were few films outside of the home-video genre being made in Franklin County and, if I ever wanted to hold a camera properly and have help doing so, my acceptance to the University of Texas at Austin's graduate film program seemed to be the only ticket for sale.

Bringing with me only what would fit in my Honda Civic made my new apartment and disposition feel somewhat empty, and I wanted to fill both with as much Austin weirdness as possible. In what I first assumed was the independent artist's answer to Wal-Mart, "Whole Foods," I imagined inevitably running into Richard Linklater and discussing which of his documented "slackers" were actors and which were the real deal over a table of all-organic ribeye sandwiches. But, for the first time in my life, I did not recognize nor stop for twenty minutes of small talk with a single soul at my new neighborhood marketplace. The paradox of this film-loving, music-breeding, barbeque-slinging, two-stepping, gay-friendly Texas metropolis called ATX sent my mind a-racin.' Geographically, I had driven about nineteen hours South but, culturally, nothing seemed as hospitable or normal or familiar as Kentucky. Here, people did not smile out of obligation as they passed you on the streets. They looked up, down, and sideways, but rarely at you. Once, I walked past a man who vomitted over his left shoulder without breaking his stride. Even

stranger, his walking buddy continued their conversation as if no one had spewed last night's bloody mary onto my concrete pathway. At least the sick man made eye contact; his face seemed to say with confidence: "You'll get used to this."

Still, nothing was as amazing or confusing as my first day in film school. I knew all about the importance of being earnest, but nothing of the importance of recording "room tone." Learning strictly out of books had afforded me a long history of A-plus-pluses and affectionate English teachers, but I would never understand how to use a light meter until a classmate's life savings' depended on my ability to expose her 16 mm film properly. Looking back now, I can say without regret or degradation to myself that the scripts and films produced during my first year in Austin were total crap. Crap with heart, sure-but stinky, overwrought crap nonetheless. I would like to say that the thesis film is the culmination of everything I have been taught, everything learned by diving head first onto the film sets of unsuspecting victims (or, in academic terms, unsuspecting colleagues). But, more than anything, the experience of making *Lock In* has taught me that just because I will have a degree in August does not mean I will stop being film student. I continue to be surprised by

the things that have become second nature as well as the elements of production that I still do not understand.

What I am most proud of is that the home that I once had, the culture that is still a part of me is undeniably present in my thesis film, *Lock In*. The story is essentially about a youth pastor, Heavy T, who discusses his dark past as a DJ and drug addict to try to convince his middle school youth group to open up and confess their deepest sins and secrets at an overnight lock in. Over the course of the film, kids ages ten to fourteen confess to losing their virginity, smoking weed just before coming to church, and eventually- homosexuality. All of these confessions have come out at one time or another by members of my own youth group. We did not always dance as much as the kids in my thesis film, but we did cry and confess even more fervently. This film should feel familiar to the kids who used to drink bourbon without coke at parties, watch Linklater without written analysis, and then go to church without complaining each weekend. This thesis film should also reflect the style, skills, and personality of a student who is still discovering her role behind the camera, but having fun doing so and inviting an audience to have a good time watching the results.

Chapter One: To Laugh, or Not to Laugh

The Lubitsch touch: films that make one aware that they are watching a movie, films that do not have qualms with making the audience feel swept away by use of cinematic devices. That is not to say that films like *To Be or Not to Be (1942)*² are out of touch with social realities- just the opposite. In the midst of World War Two, the Hollywood-settled, German-born director decided to make a comedy revolving around a Polish theater company that put on plays about Hamlet and Hitler. In the opening of the movie, a stage actor dresses like the Führer in the streets to see how it “plays” to their intended audience, and the line between sentimentality and absurdist humor becomes beautifully blurry. In this respect, Ernst Lubitsch achieves a delicate blend of comedy and social relevance. A constant refrain in the dialogue of the film jokes that every romantic twist and spoken pun “should get a terrific laugh.” Yet at the end of the film, the audience is forced to confront what came before the laughter: war, prejudice, and ignorance. In an ideal world, all of my films would achieve exactly this kind of textured, emotive quality. But it is difficult

² *To Be or Not to Be*, Dir. Ernst Lubitsch. (1942; Warner Home Video, 1998 laserdisc).

to develop an auteur's "touch" on narrative number three. Instead, my fear as I headed into pre-production was that I would shove the audiences' face into the good intentions of creating a genuine dramedy. No one would laugh, except to ridicule, and no one would cry, except out of pity.

Although some of my favorite films are quiet, static dramas with very little comedy, it occurred to me that serious dramas do not carry the same ultimate risk as comedies: What if no one laughs? When no one chuckles as Adolph sits to contemplate his final days in a dark bunker in Oliver Hirschbiegel's *Downfall* (2004)³, the theater's silence is a sign of respect. It can even be assumed that the audience is too immersed in the world on the screen to respond in any public way. But when Lubitsch's actor, in an identical costume and scene on the surface of things, raises his arm and chants "Heil...myself"- laughter is more than expected. In the war of winning the hearts and minds of a comedy audience, a quiet theater is a tragedy, a humiliation, and a defeat. One would think that after experiencing all of these things, I might throw away my bells and tricks and hang up the joker's hat for good. The greater portion of what might have been an extensive pre-

³ *Downfall*, Dir. Oliver Hirschbiegel. (2004; Sony Pictures Home Entertainment, 2005 DVD).

production period (the first semester of my third year) was undoubtedly dedicated to the contemplation and anxiety of choosing and defining what genre my thesis film should claim.

The mixed reception of my pre-thesis film, *Picnic*, weighed heavily on my approach toward making comedies and probably always will. The mockumentary focuses on two black documentary filmmakers entering an all-too friendly and politically-correct white supremacist group, the NAAWP (National Association for the Advancement of White People). Some of my closest friends laughed, understanding that the white people were indeed racists at heart, and whether the characters knew it themselves or not was irrelevant. Their ignorance was intended to be both dangerous and funny. Many more of my friends and future audiences were confused: the white people of the NAAWP seemed so nice and fun-spirited, what was the problem? Even worse, I received comment cards from festivals who had vehemently passed on the chance to screen my nineteen minute short film citing: "This film is racist propaganda. Nothing funny about racism." Perhaps I should have mentioned that I was black, that my taste in humor was somewhere where Dave Chappelle meets Lubitsch, and that I saw it as an inalienable right to poke fun at the racism of others. But deep down, I feared what they sense was correct:

something about the film is off. I could not help but move forward into my third year in film school wondering if it would be easier to approach social subjects that are a part of my life and place and this world with absolute seriousness.

As I concerned myself with the overwhelming threat of what a second social comedy's lack of success might mean for my career, I was blessed with the epiphany that motivated me to grab my tools- a laptop, a bible, and some bourbon- and start making my way to the graduation aisle. I don't have a film career. And here is the wonderful, awful truth: the thesis film does not have to be viewed as the culmination of a filmmaker's life, the thesis film heralds the final work of our lives as a students. If there is any time to take chances and treat our work of moving art as a 100% learning experience, rather than a gamble with our entire life savings, this can be that time. The comfort of claiming the "student" defense at the time of judgement felt like a blanket fresh out of a toaster oven: just, oh, so cozy. Best of all, my defense would not be built on a litany of complaints and excuses. I was legitimately excited to ask questions and learn from inevitable mistakes that would be made while making my thesis film. I could not wait to lie around and ponder how all of my greatest film influences made me feel and how their distinct and wildly divergent

narrative techniques all seemed to bring out my favorite emotion of all: laughter.

After embracing the idea that my thesis film did not have to be built on a production value that I might not ever be able to afford or even a mastery of cinematic skill sets, the primary question that had been nagging at me along answered itself. If I was going to actually consider dedicating my life after film school to producing the kind of dramedy that inspires me most, this was not the time to get serious. In fact, the idea of producing my very first raw, impassioned drama as my thesis film ultimately gave me a terrific laugh.

Chapter Two: Do the Write Thing

After months of repeatedly watching my favorite features and shorts, as well as sleepless nights obsessing over what genre of film should define me as a filmmaker, it is safe to say that the first half of the third year really got away from me. *Do the Right Thing (1989)*⁴ was one of the films I came back to again and again, and it set me on the course to write material that was truly contained and producible. Spike Lee's third feature proved three things that will always stay with me: it is possible to create a film full of life, color, and within a contained space and budget. Each character has a purpose, a history, a reason for being the way they are- even if it is only alluded to. Creating characters that began their lives before the FADE IN is essential to giving life to the film itself. And the fact that there was color jumping from the screen is not only a tribute to production design- the people have color, too. I have never felt responsible to tell stories only about black people, but I have felt a burning desire to bring the colors I see in the mirror, in my family, in the real world at

⁴ *Do the Right Thing*, Dir. Spike Lee. (1989; The Criterion Collection, 2001 DVD).

large to whatever work I am fortunate enough to do. *Do the Right Thing* takes place in one section called Bedford Stuyvesant, in Brooklyn, New York on what is clearly the hottest day of the summer. The self-imposed segregation of most characters brings even more attention to the social separation of colors, races, and cultures: The Blacks, The Whites, The Koreans, The Puerto Ricans, The Italians, The Irish- they all have something to say about each other, but rarely to one another's face. What they cannot say to each other, they say to the camera. This is certainly a technique that one will notice in *Lock In*. But what is most important in this world is how contained it truly is: one neighborhood, one day. Telling a story with such tangible limitations seemed like a fun challenge on paper, and a more than welcome gift to the process of low-budget production.

My first attempt to incorporate some of these techniques came in the form of a full-length play titled *Beulah's Day Off*. Like most stage plays, anyone could produce this with a little imagination and talented people on hand. All of the action takes place on the stage-literally. Like in *To Be or Not to Be*, themes mainly concerning prejudice are communicated through actual theatrical players, and in the form of dramedy. The protagonist, Beulah, is a black actress on 1940s Broadway and the only roles coming her way put a tray in her

hand and apron around her waist. She is stuck being a mammy until the real star of the big stage, Babe Stewart, offers her a “secret mission” of sorts. Originally, this had been a short film, and I very much liked the idea of graduating with a feature-length script that might supplement the short thesis film (which could also function as a visual trailer for the fuller script). But the budget required to recreate 1940s Hollywood and the images I saw in my head were nothing close to what was stored in my bank account. The play would have to remain in a folder of its own for the time being.

In the official pre-production class for thesis students, I wrote a new short script about every two weeks. I left the class with a lot of great notes and support, at least three short films that I still want to produce one day, and absolutely nothing that felt like it could be done efficiently and well within my last few months as a graduate student. But over the course of the semester, I learned something about myself that was even more important to me personally than cherry-picking a favorite genre of film. After trying on (producing, directing, editing) and hanging up (cinematography, sound, locations) many hats of film production, I realized that writing is the only job I could do for free and forever. With every script or outline that finds its way to the dumpster, I learn something crucial about the strengths and

limitations of my abilities and feel inspired to try again. Forgetting to eat or sleep is something that is only possible when one is in love with what is directly in front of them. For me it was my computer screen. Like any passionate relationship, there were days that I hated the keyboard because of the trash it continued to produce, and we would of course stop speaking for days at a time. But by the end of Christmas break, we had made up big. I wrote *Lock In* during the final week of my vacation back at home in Kentucky.

It took one visit back to Immanuel Baptist Church to remind me how colorful and full of life this one, special space truly was. Maybe it was the holy spirit, maybe it was the hamburger casseroles, but something in the air made me feel a little bit joyous and a little bit sick. Churches have that uncanny ability to produce such sharply contrasting emotions, biblical interpretations, and standards for what makes a good life. Heavy T became a lead character in *Lock In* because he recognizes all of these modern-day religious paradoxes. Because he wrestles with the demons of addiction in his own past, but aligns himself directly with the church as an up and coming youth pastor, his perspective encompasses the views of those who remain on the outside of religious communities *and* those who have never left its nest. Like most youth pastors I had the pleasure of being groomed

by, Heavy T presents a willingness to “rap about” the tough parts of being Christian with kids who are just young and fearless enough to enjoy asking those big questions. He also is a goofball, someone who does not demand that the audience take anything too terribly seriously—unless they feel so inspired.

Best of all, the contained space of the church and colorful world of middle schoolers made writing a full length play version of *Lock In* (the play, in *Appendix B*, is titled *Truth In*) a welcome second project. The play began very much like the film, but ended up as a musical. In return, music plays a critical role in the thesis film, establishing the early 90s DJ world that Heavy T still brings with him wherever he preaches. Though no one sings in the film, the kids are encouraged to “dance it out” and “put the freak in Jesus freak” by showing off their wildest moves without fear of being judged. The song that remains both in the play and film is what I call a “Christian remix” of Bell Biv DeVoe’s 1990 hip hop classic, “Poison.” (Lyrics for the final production of “Poisons” are in *Appendix C*.)

Often, writing silly and relevant lyrics was easier, and certainly more fun, than choosing and dictating confessions. At first, I included every single confession that had ever come out during a tearful

session at one of my youth group's countless lock ins, retreats, or mission camps. There were simply too many to choose from, and eventually I had to match confessions to the actors I would meet in casting instead of penning random and abstract revelations originated from the thirteen year olds of my past. Reading over my long list of real-life confessions, it became apparent that, while childhood might be the age of innocence, middle school was clearly a good time for the devil. It seemed that every sin in the good book had been revealed by at least one of my fellow thirteen year olds except one: homosexuality. Part of me felt that writing about a middle school lock in that leads to one child's coming out story was too easy. Yet when I tried to imagine the outcome of one of my own youth group's outsiders confessing to killing his neighborhood bully versus wanting to ask his fellow adolescent man out on a date... I knew which confession would be received with forgiveness and counseling and which one would really mean trouble. There is no way to repent for a sin that you are not sorry for or, for that matter, responsible for. And most churchgoers, as good-hearted as they might be, just do not want to talk about that stuff.

Furthermore, my closest friend—with whom I attended all sleepovers from our time at lock ins to being college

roommates—came out of the closet just as I was explaining the details and dilemmas of my most promising thesis script. To both of our genuine shock, members of her family were appalled and dismayed, and there were consequences that I will not go into for her “life choices.” Her story only motivated me to move forward with my screenplay, draft after draft. *Lock In* would be a story about what it means to be a Christian, what it means to confess, and what it means not to be accepted within your own church family.

In many ways, this is the most personal script I have ever written- including those that no one will ever see. For that, I am still happy as pie. But, the more that time passed, the less in love with my thesis script I became. My greatest sin as a writer is writing too goshdamn much. As you will see in *Appendix A and B*, both of the scripts contain pages upon pages of dialogue that do not appear in the film. Perhaps I was only swept up in the feeling of having found my one great idea. And I took that sexy, perfect script and we eloped all the way into pre-production. By the time filming was underway, I looked at the script without the rose-colored goggles. I loved the world of the story, its connection to my roots, and the characters that felt alive on the page and full of color. If I am to be completely honest, I must confess that it is possible that I loved my script, but

was never completely in love with it. Still, I have no regrets. The right thing for me was to see *Lock In* through, and I ended up with a film I have many reasons to be proud of and an experience I would never trade. In my final year, I confirmed a deep passion for dramatic writing while, at the same time, honestly owning up to my shortcomings on the page. The greatest lesson for me here was knowing that the next script would be better, that I would never cease to be a student of this craft... and I that still wanted desperately to write *something* at five am the following day.

Strife is Beautiful

Like any good Southern Baptist, I studied the characteristics of hell from an early age. In my experiences at UT, each film has required a few months of visitation to a particular realm of the netherworld known as pre-production. This is the time when time is always running out the back door. After the script is “done” (meaning that it can be changed at any given time in rehearsal, on set, or in the editing room), it is up to the low-budget director and her unpaid, heart-of-gold producers to assemble a cast, crew, locations, meal plans, lined script, shot list, equipment rentals and donations, production design, daily production schedule, post-production timetable, grant applications, budget—and the means to keep all said aspects organized and accessible to the pre-production team. I had my hand in all of these baskets. Although complaining about long hours, lack of sleep, and lack of time throughout pre-production is one of the most gratifying perks of producing movies, I must admit that putting all of these pieces together that make the film possible is a beautiful thing.

Keeping track of headshots and emails and phone numbers and trying to convince strangers and—worse—their children to invest their trust, talents, and time in me is truly difficult and it requires a certain level of confidence as a director that I mostly have to make up as I go. But once I found the right actors, spending time with them and seeing their excitement to make these pages of mine breathe- that was one of the best experiences that film school could offer.

As in my pre-thesis, I assembled as many actors that fit the world of the film as possible, and we ended up with about sixteen actors, fourteen being between the ages of ten and fourteen. During our first big group rehearsal, we played the kind of get-to-know-you games that would bring real life youth groups together. So while the cast began to forge friendships (and some young romances as gossip later informed me), I took notes. Each “extra” who did not have a name in the original script still belonged to my youth group and warranted having their own personality and past. I wrote separate confessions after my first night of rehearsals based on the wide variety of personalities I met in rehearsal. One kid had been suspended for selling drugs (of course that was all a misunderstanding); another considered herself to be Christian but had a long list of questions about which books of the Bible might have been better suited as

fairytale. The impression that most writers are, in fact, vampires who suck the experiences and habits and failures and tragedies from the lives of those closest to them—is true. Just as I had done in *Picnic*, I started with a basic structure for the main plot of my narrative and built characters into the world of the story only after meeting my cast. I stole pieces of each one of them and embedded them into my script. In the end of this kind of process, the would-be extras almost always become more invested in the inner-lives of their characters than any one writer or director would ever likely be. At my second rehearsal, we repeated the exact same party games and improv exercises—only this time I asked each kid to come up with their own character name and make different choices when revealing their “two truths and a lie” based on the person they would portray in *Lock In*. We milled about and discussed who they were versus who they could become in the movie. When necessary, I made certain “suggestions” as to which choices their character should make and explained why. So when the actors tackled the script scene by scene, it became infinitely more natural for both them and me to express what the script intended.

During one of these big group rehearsals, I also blocked off two spaces: in one, a choreographer from my playwriting class, Chell Perkins, directed the kids on how to use move their bodies to music

without feeling self-conscious; in the other, my production designers Jennifer Burke and Anna Margaret Hollyman invited the group to add to their collection of youth room posters and give them a youthful touch. Two of my favorite art creations were made on this day. On a beautiful poster one of the designers had made titled: "Just Say No To...", one young actor drew one stick girl shooting another stick girl who lay in a pool of blood. A giant bubble caption read simply and playfully: "Really not cool." On another favorite poster titled "Jesus died for you, Confess your Sins..." a witty youth member gave away the entire climax of the film and confessed: "I'M GAY!" (Please feel free to look for it if you see the film.)

Finding all three principals for the film did not happen until just a few weeks before the scheduled production day one. In my mind, Heavy T was an intense, muscular or heavy-set black man who would have lectured in the prison's Scared Straight program if he had not found a home at this particular small town church. Danny was to be an effeminate, overly-mothered boy of any race; the secret of his orientation was supposed to be something that remained secret solely because he was too young and too scared to discuss how he really felt- especially in church. Debbie, his mother, projected an almost omniscient, judgemental presence over the entire youth group. (This

character was based on someone whose name can be found in earlier drafts.) Finding a boy with the talent and confidence to portray Danny eluded my producers, friends, and me for more than two full months. I saw a lot of talented Debbies, but had no idea if any of their looks would fit the elusive Danny.

As is the case with most casting calls in Austin, Texas, finding minority actors to bring the full range of color I craved was the most difficult task of all. In the end, I called back three men of different looks and ages for Heavy T and went with the least heavy-set and ethnic of the bunch. Bill Price understood what a lock in was, and he played the youth pastor in a wide variety of ways that opened me up to seeing this character as even more ridiculous, fun, and colorful than I imagined. The fact that I cast a white Heavy T was a surprise to myself and even him (as he later told me), but casting him was among the very best of my decisions throughout this process. Nevertheless, casting Bill pushed me even further into making certain that my other two leads looked a little more like me. Like many facets of my experiences in pre-production, the casting worked itself out and I can hardly remember how it happened. Gratefully, Malik Hayes was referred to me by a very gifted actress, the wife of a former UT professor who I had begged to take on the role of Debbie. Though she

could not join the project, she led me to a Danny who proved to be talented and fearless of any judgments or childish ridicule. He treated the role respectfully, yet remained mostly himself among his peers. His *coming out* during the film proved to be more of a genuine surprising reveal than first envisioned, but it works. The last actor to join the cast was Ro' Black, an actress I have been able to rely on and recruit for subsequent thesis films that I have produced for UT comrades. Luck is the best word to describe how the cast came to be; in the final hours, I seemed to have a lot of it.

Every other stage of pre-production takes place in a fog of driving from church to church, delegating food donation hunting to producers, and collaborating with a lot of talented students to assemble the remaining pieces. I remember sleeping very little, eating more fast food than that Wendy's redhead would ever dare, and finding only one church that agreed with the principles of the script and agreed to let us in their doors. Out of every congregation and denomination within a thirty mile radius (and in Texas, there are plenty), only one man named Wim Bent said: *Yes, we will allow the gay child to dance in celebration of his coming out on our sanctuary stage.* The mixture of drama, trauma, absurdity, and the accomplishments of each phase

that made the process truly rewarding recalls all my favorite experiences in cinema.

When asked what my all-time favorite film is, I generally think to myself (well, there are at least fifty answers to that question) but I usually reply: *Life is Beautiful (1997)*⁵. The reason: it gives me a taste of every human emotion. The story follows a father (played by the film's director, Roberto Benigni) as he finds true love in 1940s Italy only to have his family's happiness threatened by the terror of the Nazi concentration camp. He convinces his small and bubbly five year old son that the camp is actually a place to play games and win prizes for good behavior. In the face of a hell that I could never completely allow myself to imagine or grasp, Benigni still embraces the importance in making others laugh. Of course, comparing the experiences portrayed in a Holocaust film to the process of pre-production is melodramatic and perverse, so for the record, this is not my intent. I can only say that my respect and love for this film reminds me that in the movie world, the worst aspects of real life can be made into something beautiful. That is the magic of film. And

⁵ *Life is Beautiful*, Dir. Roberto Benigni. (1997; Universum Film (UFA), 2003 DVD).

being a part of that world—no matter the pitfalls, financial sacrifices, social embarrassments, and artistic disappointments involved—makes filmmakers lucky as hell.

Chapter Four: Tween Streets

No one who has ever worked with more than... two... middle school aged persons at one time needs any explanation for the title of this chapter. The gangsters of Martin Scorsese's movie world were gritty, fierce, violent, impulsive, and dangerous- but nothing compared to the hormonal tweenagers on my set. As the film's cinematographer, Daniel Stuyck, often sighed: "Jesus Christ, it's like *Lord of the Flies* in here." He was right. Working around the school and after-school schedules of all the kids proved almost impossible, so much so that several kids failed to show up on two shooting days and, at that point, I barely noticed or cared. Getting through a scene required an intensive barrage of positive reinforcement and motherly quips from me and most of my crew. As a result, I pushed everyone on set to move so quickly that we finished an entire day early. (Sixteen pages in six days.) I would like to say that I was able to completely focus on my actors and each narrative detail of each scene- without paying mind to the distractions of the constant whining, texting, and wandering young actors. But that would be a lie and a sin. I cannot fault the tweens for being young and vibrant and in love with each other- especially because they were almost always scared

and respectful of me, in particular- but also because they and their parents dedicated so much of their time and talents to my project. So allow me sum up the entirety of the on-location production of *Lock In* as simply this: we made it.

Chapter Five: Best in Post

Writing and editing are my two favorite stages of filmmaking for obvious reasons: I can work alone. That is not to say I do not love people and collaboration, and I certainly relied on the talents of many filmmakers who completely threw themselves into the post-production sound design and mixing (Aaron Malzahn and Eric Friend), technical supervisions (Susanne Kraft and Jeremy Gruy, two of the most selfless and hardworking people I have ever met), color correction and titles (Daniel Stuyck, again, a good friend), and music (Sean Dunne). But in post-production, I preferred watching the mistakes made in my film in a dark, cold editing suite- alone.

Unfortunately, four things kept me from editing at full capacity in the summer of 2010: I was tired from everything that came before; I made plans to move apartments; I agreed in June to be a producer of a friend's thesis film that I truly believed in and wanted to help make great; and I was obsessed with finding a job to pay the rent in the weeks after the thesis and program was complete. That is not to say that I did not have an all together nice and productive summer. However, it did take almost two months (almost the entirety of my given time) to put together a legitimate rough cut of my fifteen minute

short film. All the while, I could not help but think: who wrote this crap? Ah, yes. Guilty. Wearing multiple hats during pre-production and production inevitably leads to multiple personalities in the editing room. Why did the director have the actor mumble that way? Why couldn't the director have made everyone say their lines standing perfectly still so that their microphones never moved? Why couldn't the producer have found a sound proof sanctuary? And why, oh why, did the writer set the first nine pages in just one, claustrophobic youth room? In the end, cutting a great deal of the opening scene and reshooting a portion of the final scene helped a great deal. And, overall, the editor did find ways to clean up most of the mistakes of all those other hacks.

Shooting handheld with two Sony EX cameras allowed the *Lock In* crew to film quickly and "observe" the children in an unobtrusive, realistic way- which is what I wanted. But it also made for some technical problems seen all too late on the perfectly-calibrated computer monitor of my Final Cut Pro suite. Often, mixing a few "stolen" visual moments- of kids just "hanging out" or making strange faces in reactions to Heavy T- with choreographed and scripted scene by scene moments was both freeing and enjoyable for me as an editor. When thinking of the most genuinely hilarious techniques used

in contemporary comedies, I go back to mockumentary-styled pieces again and again: TV shows like *The Office*⁶ and *Arrested Development*⁷ (which hardly ever follows the literal rules of a documentary film); and films like Christopher Guest's *Best in Show*⁸. Finding the humor within a scene cannot be based on writing or performances alone. Finding the right beats, spotting the laughs from test audiences, and making moments as awkward as possible all happened in the post-production of this film. I imagine that, filming in a similar fashion, a film like *Best in Show* went through a similar process that involved cutting out a great deal of material in order to play up the funny. I understand that Guest's material is different from mine in two major ways: virtually *all* of his stuff is funny, even what gets cut, and a lot of it is improvised. In this respect, cutting my material is a bit more painful, because it was all so painstakingly written and its failure to find relevance in the final cut reflects badly on that poor writer.

⁶ *The Office* (NBC Universal, 2005 - ; Universal Home Entertainment, 2005 dvd).

⁷ *Arrested Development* (Fox Network, 2003-2006; 20th Century Fox Home Entertainment, 2004 DVD).

⁸ *Best in Show*, Dir. Christopher Guest. (2000; Warner Bros. Pictures, 2000 DVD).

Still, the process of creating a comedy or dramedy is especially dependent on the post-production process: the addition of sounds, music, cutting, and mixing continues without an end in sight- until someone laughs. After months of seeing my mistakes made in pre-production and production, and reviewing them in post, just watching *Lock In* me want to lock myself up in a straight jacket. But once I found myself finally relaxed, smiling and giggling at those darling young savages and Heavy T, I knew I had almost reached the end of the thesis process. Seeing the film come together in its final stages encompasses the euphoric feeling that arises from seeing a baby script grow up to be a movie. Suddenly, pieces of myself and the people and films who serve as cinematic inspirations were recognizable to me on the screen. And, ultimately, I ended the program exactly as I had hoped: laughing. The worst of my experiences to get me to this point were mere memories and learning tools, but I finally saw the very best of my work in post. I hope that I get the opportunity to press rewind and start the entire process again... soon.

Appendix A: "Lock In" The Script

INT. BLANK ROOM - NIGHT

HEAVY T testifies.

HEAVY T

Hi. My name is Tim. But I go by my street name, my name when I was a DJ all the way back in the nineties, Heavy T.

VOICES

Hi, Heavy T. Hi.

HEAVY T

I can't tell you how happy I am to be here tonight with all you guys, man. I mean, I've been homeless, friendless, motherless. I sold coke- not the legal kind- um, crack cocaine, lidocaine, procaine,

rohypmnol, ketamine, X... Honestly,
the old Heavy T would sell his body
for bag of tortilla chips and some
ranch dip, you guys.

(pointing to someone)

He knows what I'm talking about.

But you don't have to be a
recovering addict to know that it's
never too late to come clean.

A circle of middle school aged KIDS blankly stare. DANNY, the outsider
of the group, is the only one laughing. They circle around him in a
church YOUTH ROOM. It's a messy space; it's been a long night.

INSERT TITLE CARD.

HEAVY T (CONT'D)

Danny, really. Can you please try
to take this serious?

DEBBIE, Danny's mother and a chaperone, makes a face and Danny straightens up.

HEAVY T (CONT'D)

Okay, who wants the Honesty Hat next? Come on, y'all are making me look bad in front of the pastor's wife. Why- what are you writing there Miss Debbie?

Debbie writes and ignores Heavy T. She, then, focuses on Heavy T's physical shakiness.

HEAVY T (CONT'D)

All right you guys. Step one to keeping it real with the Lord is what?

ALL KIDS

(mumbling)

Be honest with God.

MONICA, the popular girl, is loudest.

HEAVY T

Step two.

ALL KIDS

Be honest with yourself.

HEAVY T

Step three.

ALL KIDS

Be honest with each other.

HEAVY T

And what do we get when we follow
Heavy T's three step program?

ALL KIDS

Love.

DANNY

A new car.

DANNY, the group outsider, does his Oprah imitation.

DANNY

And he gets a car. And she gets a
car. And you get a car... It's like
you're Oprah.

DEBBIE

Danny.

Debbie shakes her head. Other kids snicker.

DANNY

Love. You get love.

BRYSON, the popular boy, tickles Monica. Bryson's buddies, DANTE
and DRE pick at Danny's hair, make noises and laugh.

Monica's BFF, Bailey makes faces at the boys.

BAILEY

O-M-G. Stop. I'm serious.

DRE

(imitating her)

O-M-G. You're serious.

BAILEY

Yeah.

DRE

Yeah?

BAILEY

Yeah.

HEAVY T

Guys, come on. Who here can tell me
why it's important to try to follow

the Bible? Danny.

DANNY

Because God wrote it?

Debbie smiles and nods.

HEAVY T

Ehh. Who here thinks they're doing a pretty good job of following the word of God? Come on, I'm not talking about being perfect. I'm talking about doing our best to follow the teachings of the Lord.

All hands raise, Danny is last.

HEAVY T (CONT'D)

Ehh. You all just lied up in God's house. Wow. Okay, I know what we're gonna do here.

Heavy T reaches for his Bible and walks it over to Monica, flips through a few pages, then hands it over.

HEAVY T (CONT'D)

Sweet. Read this.

MONICA

What? Right there? The chapter-

HEAVY T

It's chapter... Nineteen. Verse nineteen but just read that part right there.

MONICA

Nineteen. It's really small.

HEAVY T

I know. Nineteen, nineteen.

MONICA

Oh. Okay, got it.

Heavy T makes a "why was that so hard to find?" face.

MONICA (CONT'D)

Leviticus nineteen nineteen. Do not wear clothing woven of two kinds of material.

HEAVY T

Hmmm. Nice tank top. Sinner. Next.

Heavy T hands the Bible to Bryson and points where to read.

BRYSON

Ummm... Do not cut your hair or shave.

Danny eyes the Bryson's hair then looks down his own shirt.

HEAVY T

You look like you're on the cusp of

becoming a very handsome, very hairy man. You weren't thinking about shaving anything off, were you? Next.

Heavy T hands the Bible to Bailey.

BAILEY

Take the blasphemer outside the camp. All those who heard him are to lay their hands on his head, and the entire assembly is to stone him.

Heavy T bends down to the girl.

HEAVY T

O-M-G. I've heard you say it about, I don't know, infinity times tonight. Should we lay our hands on you and kill you to death? Okay,

last one.

Heavy T hands his bible to Danny.

DANNY

If anyone curses his father or
mother, he must be put to death.

Debbie seems to agree with this one. Heavy T shuts the book.

HEAVY T

If anyone curses his father or
mother, we should totally murder
you. That verse comes right before
some stuff about killing men who
have sex with other men or their
daughter's mother, or their
mother's goat. It's all in there...

Heavy T wildly shakes the Bible.

HEAVY T (CONT'D)

Listen, I'm not trying to scare you
guys. I just wanted you to know
that... According to the good book,
we're all kind of f'd up.

Some giggles.

HEAVY T (CONT'D)

And this is the only place where
you can say anything and nobody's
gonna judge you. I promise.

A hand raises.

MONICA

Okay. I'll go.

HEAVY T

Oh. All right, Monica. Awesome.
Here's the hat. There you go.

Heavy T passes Monica the hat and she puts it on.

MONICA

Hi. I'm Monica.

EVERYBODY

Hi Monica.

Monica shakes out the jitters. This takes a while.

HEAVY T

Hey... Everything gets better after
you come clean. Okay?

MONICA

Okay. I'm...I'm not... I'm not a
virgin.

Monica smiles in relief. Debbie is shocked.

HEAVY T

How awesome was that? Now can we
all show Monica that we still love

her? Can we do that?

The boys rush to Monica to hug her. Danny gets trampled.

BAILEY

I'll go next.

Kids fight over the Honesty Hat and to confess all at once. Danny moves away from the group.

Heavy T motions for Debbie to hit play on a nearby CD player.

Begrudgingly, she does and EARLY 90s DJ MUSIC plays.

INT. SANCTUARY - NIGHT

Debbie presses play on another CD player and Heavy T puts on the Honesty Hat. "BEEN SAVED" plays; it is a song set to the tune of Culture Beat's "Mr. Vain."

BEGIN MONTAGE:

1) Sanctuary. Heavy T leads some unenthusiastic swaying and

clapping to his music.

Debbie sets up a single strobe light and Danny helps Mom.

HEAVY T

Now I want to see you put the freak
in Jesus Freak. Let's dance it out.

2) Confessions intercut between a kid confessing directly to camera
and dancing directly to camera.

BAILEY

Hi, I'm Bailey. I'm Monica's best
friend.

(whispering)

She's such a slut. That's what I
think, for real. I'm sorry. She's
still my best friend and I really
do love her... I really do... But
she acts like she's perfect and
obviously she's not... I hate her.

BRYSON

Hi, I'm Bryson. I guess I... smoke drugs. Not as bad as the ones Heavy T used to do, but... I kinda relate to him more because we've both kind of been there, you know. And I think I'm ready to quit, too. It's just. Girls don't really like it, so... What's the point?

DANTE

Hi, I'm Dante. I'm sorry, where does it say in the Bible: "Thou shalt not do whatever you need to do to be happy?" Because, I think that's what I'm doing. And I think God wants me to be happy. Right?

DRE

(laughing uncontrollably)

Hi, I'm Dre. Uhhh... I'm really

high right, now, too. I'm sorry. I mean I'm just playing. I'm high on life, I mean I'm high on Jesus. What? I'm sorry. I'm playing. You know who I think had a good sense of humor, though? Jesus.

MARK

Hi, I'm Mark. I sold Bryson and them weed like nine hours ago. I think they're just faking being high and stuff. They're so fake, dude. You know who ain't fake? Me, Heavy T, Marilyn Manson, Barack Obama, my Global Studies teacher Chad, my mom, not my dad, NOT my dad, and... Jesus. That's it.

LILY

Hi, I'm Lily. Okay, so, like, I try

really hard to be nice to everybody
because Jesus was nice to
everybody... Does that mean I'm I
going to start hanging out with
prostitutes and poor people and
freaks just to be more like Jesus?
I don't know. Maybe I should be
nicer to Monica. And Danny...

Danny stands silently; he mocks the camera.

CASEY-MARIE

Hi, I'm Casey-Marie. I'm not sure
if this counts as sins or whatever,
but... Here's the stuff I don't
believe in: Heaven, hell, a
promised land, a man who lived in a
giant fish, the rapture is coming,
crippled people and people with
flat noses have to stay away from
altars, it's okay to own and sell

slaves, shellfish is an
abomination, everyone on Project
Runway is an abomination, people
who work on the Sabbath should be
put to death... Oh, and women
should be quiet and weak. But other
than that, I'd say I'm pretty much
down with Jesus.

BRIANNA

Hi, I'm Brianna. I'm not really a
nice girl. I just play one at
church. I'm making a list of what
everybody says here tonight and if
somebody is mean to me or pisses me
off... Yeah, just don't be mean to
me.

NAOMIE

Hi, I'm Naomie. There are so many

nice people at this church. I like everybody a whole lot. But I don't trust anybody.

JULIA

Hi, I'm Julia. I kind of have a crush on Heavy T. Please Don't tell. Please don't tell. Please don't tell.

ABBY

Hi, I'm Abby. If I could trade places with anyone in the world for just one day, it would be Monica. Not the Dali Lama... Despite what might be written in a certain Global Studies paper.

LYDIA

Hi, I'm Lydia. My parents made me come to this lock in. It's not that

I don't believe in God, I just don't care. I feel the same way about politics and Dancing with the Stars.

NICK

Hi, I'm Nick. It's not like I disrespect my parents, but I get really embarrassed when I go out in public with my dad. Not because he's not cool. Because he is. He's just really, really fat.

DUSTIN

Hi, I'm Dustin. I'm really glad I came here tonight. This is so much better than being home. I guess if I have to confess something, it's just that... that I really, really hate being at home.

3) Sanctuary. The boys try to flirt with Monica as the group forms a dance circle. Other girls watch with envy. So does Danny.

HEAVY T (V.O.)

Everything gets better after you
come clean.

Danny helps Debbie release some phony fog onto the stage.
Heavy T places his hat on Debbie's head playfully. She takes it off and wipes it, then sets it on the floor where Danny sits alone. Monica smiles at Danny.

4) Youth Room. Debbie watches nervously as the kids play the "Trust Lean" game.

HEAVY T (CONT'D)

Can we really be honest with each
other if we can't trust each other?

Danny raises his hand.

HEAVY T (CONT'D)

No we can't. Now fall. Fall. Fall.

Last, they catch Danny- but he slips and falls anyway. Debbie rushes to help him. She looks up accusingly at Heavy T.

END MONTAGE.

INT. SANCTUARY - NIGHT

Kids hug one another, crying and comforting each other as they confess all sins. All the kids are getting a lot of love except for Danny. Heavy T approaches him to the side.

HEAVY T

You know, there's nothing you can do to make God stop loving you. Or me- I mean, I love you-

DANNY

Really? You love me? My mom would

be really happy to hear that.

HEAVY T

What?

DANNY

She doesn't like you.

Heavy T tries to think of a response but comes up short.

DANNY (CONT'D)

You don't have to, like, worry
about it. Her little notes or
whatever don't really mean
anything. But she is right about
you.

HEAVY T

What do you mean?

DANNY

Your three step program is
ridiculous. Just because you're
honest doesn't mean people are
going to fall in love with you.

HEAVY T

I never said fall in love-

DANNY

And what if you confess something
but you're not really sorry?

HEAVY T

Okay. What's the sin that you would
not be sorry for?

DANNY

Like killing someone. That was mean
to you. Like if voices told you you
had to do it...

HEAVY T

Oh. Danny. We should really go
somewhere and talk-

DANNY

(laughing)

Wow. You really are ridiculous.

HEAVY T

You know it doesn't matter if your
mom doesn't like me. I don't even
care if you don't like me. I like
you and I'll tell it right to your
face. Because at least I'm putting
it all out there. That's all I can
do.

Heavy T reaches out to Danny, but he pulls away.

DANNY

Don't.

Debbie pulls off some boys who are getting too close to Monica until she notices Heavy T and Danny. Heavy T walks away from Danny and out of the room. Danny turns back to him but he is already gone.

Debbie goes after Heavy T, passing Danny on her way out.

DEBBIE

I'll be right back. You tell me if
somebody does something stupid.

INT. HALLWAY - NIGHT

Someone trails Debbie.

INT. SANCTUARY - LATER

Kids dance again. Danny watches. He wants to be a part of it.

INT. YOUTH ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Debbie searches through Heavy T's sleeping bag and belongings. She

pulls out some CDs, devotional books, and, finally, at the bottom of the bag, she pulls out a plastic bag of pills. A NOISE. She turns around but no one is there.

INT. SANCTUARY - LATER

Monica tries to pull Danny into the circle.

BRYSON

Go Danny. Go Danny. Go Danny.

Bryson joins in on pulling at Danny. Danny resists playfully at first, then with force. He has to muster up more courage to join the group.

INT. HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

Debbie looks for Heavy T.

INT. KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

Debbie approaches Heavy T quietly. His back is turned to her as he sits on the floor in the dark.

She reaches out to touch him.

Heavy T turns around and reveals crumbs all over his face.

HEAVY T

I'm still addicted. To the chips.

Debbie pulls out the bag of pills. Heavy T takes it.

DEBBIE

Here. What's this?

HEAVY T

Well...It's not mine. This is
Bryson's. He gave it to me tonight,
but he says he's done with it.
Yeah, we'll see how that goes. I
think Bryson has some issues with
trusting people...

DEBBIE

Hmmm.

HEAVY T

Hmmm. Yeah. I gotta tell you, you and Danny are so closed off it's, it's really getting to me. Maybe you all don't like me being at this church, but some of these kids-

Debbie sits down next to Heavy T.

DEBBIE

I think my son might be gay.

HEAVY T

Ohh-

Heavy T starts to choke. Debbie pats his back.

Heavy T collects himself.

HEAVY T (CONT'D)

So he's gay...

DEBBIE

I didn't say he was gay. I said I think he might be gay. And I don't think it's your job as his youth pastor to push him over the edge.

HEAVY T

Why would I push him over the edge?

Debbie takes back the pill bag and stares at it.

DEBBIE

I'm sorry I looked through your stuff. But I'm tired and I don't want to talk about this anymore.

Heavy T nods in agreement. He can tell she's getting upset.

HEAVY T

Things just got a little too heavy?

Or... I'm sorry. I'm corny. That's
why I'm good with kids. Most of the
kids.

DEBBIE

Yeah. Okay, okay.

HEAVY T

All right. I'd say we've had enough
drama for one night.

Debbie nods. He helps her up.

INT. SANCTUARY - NIGHT

Danny makes his way through the group of dancing kids and heads for
Monica and Bryson. Their backs are to him.

Danny reaches Monica and Bryson. He taps Bryson's back.

DANNY

Hey Bryson.

Danny smiles. Bryson smiles at first.

BRYSON

What?

BRYSON (CONT'D)

Hey. Why are you looking at me like
that?

DANNY

Because I like you.

Kids start to quiet and whisper.

DANNY (CONT'D)

Listen- I know this is weird. I'm
all- ahhh... But as long as we're

all coming out clean and stuff...

Danny punches Bryson's arm playfully.

BRYSON

Don't touch me.

Bryson shoves Danny.

DANNY

What? No, that wasn't like a "hey"
touch. They was like a "hey" touch.
I confessed so I thought we could
just, like, hug this thing out and
move on...

Danny touches him again and Bryson shoves harder. Danny shoves
back- hard.

INT. SANCTUARY - LATER

Debbie strolls in, Heavy T behind her. They see the fight.

HEAVY T

Bryson. Danny.

The CD player and projector monitor get knocked over in the scuffle. MUSIC and projector cut out.

Bryson has tears streaming down his bewildered face. Both boys are covered bits of blood and bruising.

BRYSON

He tried to- I mean he said-

Bryson kicks the top hat and storms off stage. Bryson's friend follows him. He walks past Debbie on his way out.

Debbie slowly comes forward.

HEAVY T

Bryson. Bryson... Danny.

DANNY

You said come out with the truth.

So I did.

Danny sees his mom approach the lights of the stage and becomes fearful.

DANNY (CONT'D)

I'm sorry. Mom, I'm sorry. I'm
sorry. I'm sorry.

Everyone backs away from Danny. Not much love in the air. Debbie looks at the crowd and at Heavy T, then back at her son.

DEBBIE

Danny, look at me. I love you.

Okay?

She holds him tight. Monica approaches.

MONICA

Hey Danny. Will you dance with me?

I mean, like, as a friend or

whatever...

She takes his hand and helps him up to his feet.

INT. SANCTUARY - LATER

Danny dances centerstage. Monica stays mostly to the side- he doesn't need her.

Debbie and Heavy T watch from their pew. Heavy T hands her a chip. She accepts and they munch.

Other kids join in on stage, excluding Bryson and Bryson's Friend.

DEBBIE

So what's the thing you kept saying tonight? After confession... You

come clean and... Everything gets
better from here... Everything gets
better from here, right?

HEAVY T

Honestly... No.

They stare straight ahead, eating chips. CRUNCH.

FADE TO BLACK.

Appendix B: "Truth In" The Play

SCENE ONE

The stage is dark. Spotlight on HEAVY T sitting on a lone chair, he concentrates mostly on his feet.

HEAVY T

Hi. My name is Tim. But I go by my street name, my name when I was a DJ in the early nineties, Heavy T.

VOICES FROM DARKNESS

Hi, Heavy T.

HEAVY T

I can't tell you how happy I am to be here tonight with all you guys, man. I mean, I've been homeless, friendless, and loveless. See, the old Heavy T rapped about what he knew. And he knew the streets. He

knew "the game." He would steal the lollipop right out of the mouth of a thirsty rave junkie on X and not say excuse me. No manners at all. The old Heavy T sold drugs, sold his body... Sometimes he sold his body for drugs. I once sold my body for bag of tortilla chips and some ranch dip. Kidding. I am kidding. But, seriously, side note: I love tortilla chips. I'm four years clean, two months sober, but I still can't pop just one chip. But who can, right?

All lights up. An adolescent youth group: DANNY, MONICA, BRYSON, THE GIRLS and THE BOYS sit around Heavy T in a circle and blankly stare. Lines and actions given simply to a BOY and GIRL may be distributed among an any-size cast of young actors.

Some windows let in the light of moon in the background. The space

of the stage also becomes more clear. In the center is a simple large space, a YOUTH ROOM, decorated with posters promoting a very hip Jesus, bulletin boards promoting mission trips and the ongoing "Lock In" or "Truth In," and photos of the youth group kids everywhere. A large, ominous cross stands in upstage and center.

A white projection board hangs stage left, but nothing is being projected at the moment.

Extreme stage right is an Exit sign, but on the way is an open area where anything can happen.

DEBBIE (chaperone, DANNY's mother, and pastor's wife) folds her arms in disapproval. She loudly clears her throat. JUDY (BRYSON'S mother, Debbie's right arm) does the same.

TAMMY (MONICA's mother, dressed more suitably for a night on the town than a night with a middle school youth group) stands quietly near a CD player deck.

HEAVY T (CONT'D)

Debbie. Judy. Tammy. Did you ladies

want to add something? Oh, did you have a story from your past that you wanted to share? I'm being very rude.

DEBBIE

No. No. I'm sorry. Please continue.

DANNY

Thank God.

JUDY

I'm also sorry. Please continue.

BRYSON

Thank God.

TAMMY

Maybe...

MONICA

Mom. No.

TAMMY

Maybe later. No, not right now.

HEAVY T

That's fine. It would be nice for our chaperones to set an example of how good it feels to confess.

All chaperones look down at their feet.

HEAVY T (CONT'D)

But I can take a "maybe later."

I'll take a "maybe later."

So how about you kids? Who wants to go next? Come on, y'all are making me look bad in front of the senior pastor's wife here.

Debbie smiles and waves at the audience.

HEAVY T (CONT'D)

Y'all don't want Heavy T back on
the streets do you?

Heavy T notices the audience for the first time. He stands and walks forward, centerstage.

HEAVY T (CONT'D)

(to the audience)

Oh, whoa. Hey, y'all. I didn't even
see you guys come in, for realsies.
Don't worry, ain't no such thing as
being late to an all-night Church
of the People for the Christ Lock
In. Totally cool, totally cool.
Wow, that's kind of a weird outfit
for a middle school lock in, sir.

Heavy T continues to improvise and interact with the audience while

pacing about the stage.

HEAVY T (CONT'D)

Anyway, I just want to make sure
y'all know Heavy T's three step
program. That's three steps to
keeping it real with the Lord.
What's step number one?

KIDES

Confess, confess, confess.

HEAVY T

Step number two?

KIDES

Accept, accept, accept.

HEAVY T

And step number three?

KIDES

Repent.

HEAVY T

Awesome, guys. You guys are so tight.

(to audience)

And I want to hear from y'all, too. I want everyone to feel like they can say anything. But for that to be possible, I think we're gonna have to get real dirty and real honest up in here. It can't be any worse than that stuff I just confessed, right? So, kids, I need your help. We're gonna be passing around some Freak Hats. I want everyone to get a chance to use that paper and pencil under your seat and write down a confession of

your own. No names unless you feel
extra awesome, okay? Did all you
guys already get your confessions
in one of the freak hats?

All the kids nod.

HEAVY T (CONT'D)

All right then go. Go forth playas.

The kids march into the audience armed with various eccentric hats:
top hats, furry Russian hats Chekov himself might have once worn, big
blue bonnets only worn in American folklore and the like. Kids ask
each row to pass and send along their written confessions.

HEAVY T (CONT'D)

Tammy, could you?

TAMMY

Yes I could.

Tammy hits play on a CD player and the melody of Bell Biv DeVoe's

"POISON" plays. Only this is something Heavy T has mixed himself.

Tammy places a handless microphone around Heavy T's ears. A projector lights up and displays lyrics.

Spotlight on Heavy T.

HEAVY T

Now I'm gonna be reading these
confessions throughout this here
Lock In. Wait. No. This ain't no
Lock In anymore. This is a Truth
In. Aww, yeah. But don't nobody
worry.

I got a little song I want to kick
it to about all the little
temptations we've all succumbed to
in our lives. And, let's face it...
There's a lot of poison out there.

(singing)

YO, I MUST WARN YOU...

A LOT OF VICES COMING TO MY MIND.
SITUATION IS PERILOUS...
ON THE ROAD FORWARD YOU STILL HAVE
TO PRESS REWIND.
YET EVERYTHING IS SO POSSIBLE...
EVEN A RELATIONSHIP WITH HIM UP
ABOVE. IT MIGHT BE LOVE. YEAH...
SO MANY THINGS I SHOULDN'T THINK
ARE ON MY MIND.
THAT'S WHY IT'S HARD FOR ME TO FIND
A THOUGHT THAT'S PURE ENOUGH TO
SHARE IN MY HEAD-
WEIRD THINGS, SEX THINGS, DRUG
THINGS- THAT STUFF IS POISON!

(rapping)

PUH-PUH-PUH-POISONS. PUH-PUH-PUH
POISONS.
COCAINE, LIDOCAINE, PROCAINE, AND
X. ROHYMPNOL, KETAMINE USED TO BE
WHAT I LOVED BEST. I WAS FREAK.

I'M STILL A FREAK BUT NOW I REP IT
CLEAN FOR J-C.

I'M THE CLEANEST DUDE UP IN THE
STREET, G.

SO IF YOU SEE ME ON THIS DAY, IN
THE PIT OR ON A STAGE, WHILE I
BREAK, OR WHILE I PRAISE
TAKING MY SOUL TO THE NEXT PHASE
YOU MIGHT NOTICE,
THAT, YES, I STILL HAVE FEW TICKS

(dancing with ticks)

A LITTLE THAT, A LITTLE THIS

I MIGHT HIT, I MIGHT MISS

BUT NO...

WHEN I GET THE SHAKES A LITTLE BIT.

I DON'T REACH FOR THE HARD STUFF.

YO...I JUST EAT A CHIP.

Tammy rushes to Heavy T's side with a bag of chips. He reaches in
and takes a bite. CRUNCH.

Heavy T nods to her and she retreats. He dances full blast.

HEAVY T (CONT'D)

PUH-PUH-PUH-POISONS.

PUH PUH-PUH-POISONS.

NO MORE PUH-PUH-POISONS.

NO MORE PUH-PUH-POISONS.

NO MORE PUH-PUH-POISONS.

Music continues, Heavy T breaks it down more and more. The running man. The robot. The pop and lock. It all comes rushing back to him.

Kids filter back onto the stage and stare. MUSIC STOPS. Lights normalize.

SCENE TWO

HEAVY T (CONT'D)

What- y'all too shy to break it
down with me like that?

Danny raises his hand.

DANNY

Hi, thanks. Oh- my name is Danny.

HEAVY T

Yeah, I know that little man.

Danny... Go ahead. Preach it how
you feel it. Anything. Everything.

DANNY

Yes. I'm not really a freak per se.
I'm actually a fairly well-rounded,
well-developed teenager. And I have
to admit I'm uncomfortable with the
format of this lock in.

Boys and girls giggle a bit at Danny's speech.

DANNY (CONT'D)

So I was just wondering... Would it

be all right if I just took a back
seat to this "Truth In" and did a
little less confessing and sharing
and more... reading, like, to
myself? I brought a book.

He holds up his book.

HEAVY T

Okay. We're sitting. Let's
everybody sit. Let's everybody...
Whoo.

Heavy T, out of breath, takes his seat in the circle once again.

HEAVY T (CONT'D)

No one in this church should ever
have to do anything they don't want
to do. But the answer is no.

Heavy T reaches for and tosses aside Danny's book.

HEAVY T (CONT'D)

Everyone should really participate
in step one. It's by far the most
important step. Everybody agree?

Other kids nod and mumble in agreement.

Debbie races to rescue the book. Judy follows.

HEAVY T (CONT'D)

We're only gonna be reading out of
one book here tonight. And it ain't
Harry Potter.

DANNY

Yeah, that's not what I was
reading.

DEBBIE

Please do not throw around my son's

books. His books are his only
friends.

Kids giggle.

DANNY

Mom.

DEBBIE

What? I mean sorry, honey.

BRYSON

It's okay, Danny. We already know
your mom still lays out all your
clothes for you before school every
day. There's not really anything
left for you to confess here.

DANNY

Mom.

DEBBIE

I didn't tell them.

DANNY

Oh.

BRYSON

Dude. We just assumed.

MONICA

Bryson. Stop.

Bryson hugs her waist flirtatiously. He tickles her. Other kids stare.

One of Monica's GIRLS rolls her eyes.

GIRL

OMG. Guys stop it.

DEBBIE

Bailey's right. Tammy. Do you want
to tell your daughter to...you
know...stop it.

TAMMY

She's not doing anything wrong.

MONICA

Hey Danny, I think your khakis look
really... Nicely ironed. I think it
looks cute.

DANNY

Thank you, Monica.

DEBBIE

Thank you, Monica.

DEBBIE

Oh. Sorry, babe.

HEAVY T

You know what, you guys, I think we're getting a little off message. We're still only on step one here. What's step one?

KIDS

Confess, confess, confess.

HEAVY T

You guys are good. But not that good. Every single one of us here is sinner. Now who is ready to confess next and take that first step to owning up to being the freak that God made us all to be?

Danny raises his hand.

HEAVY T (CONT'D)

Yes. Danny, my main man. You need to let go of something and share it with the world.

DANNY

May I please visit the rest room?

HEAVY T

OK. Go. Go forth. Go pee.

Danny gets up. On his way out, Bryson trips him. Kids giggle.

HEAVY T (CONT'D)

Okay. Not cool. Not cool. This is supposed to be a safe place, you guys. Not cool.

Debbie rushes to Danny. Judy follows.

DEBBIE

Are you okay?

JUDY

That was a clean swoop.

HEAVY T

How are we gonna feel free and open
to confess if we stick our legs out
in front of each other instead of
sticking out our hearts?

DEBBIE

Are you hurt?

JUDY

I have band-aids.

DEBBIE

Who did this?

JUDY

Who did this?

HEAVY T

Who did this?

DEBBIE

Heavy T. Calm down.

HEAVY T

That's a good point. Everybody just calm down. Now Danny, just tell us who tripped you up buddy and we'll all talk about it. You can confess this!

Bryson shakes his head at Danny.

DANNY

No one did it. Just let me go forth and pee. GOD!

Kids and all chaperones but Tammy gasp. Danny storms off.

DEBBIE

You know taking the Lord's name in
vain doesn't make you seem any more
serious.

JUDY

I'm so sorry. I am so embarrassed
for you.

Judy lays her head on Debbie's shoulder and tries to hug her
hand.

HEAVY T

Okay, you guys? Who wants to
confess next? Come on.

Lights down.

SCENE THREE

Danny wanders aimlessly toward the Exit sign. The red light from the sign glows more intensely and suddenly he stands in his own crimson spotlight. He starts to twirl.

POISON plays again. He starts to dance a bit. Moving his feet, then his hips... Then lights out. Danny screams.

Lights up. Debbie stands with her finger on the switch.

DEBBIE

I didn't know anyone was in here.

DANNY

I was just going to use the rest room. Not here. Not right now. But later when I reached a... toilet.

Danny walks off stage. Lights out on Debbie alone.

SCENE FOUR

Colorful lights dance around Heavy T. He enters a spotlight and talks into his microphone, to the audience. The sounds of a DJ mixing beats and scratching creep in.

HEAVY T

Okay. I'm getting this feeling that everybody is feeling just a little bit shy. A little bit anxious about step one. But that's okay. Step one is always the hardest step. When I was using drugs back in the day, back in the 90s when I was DJ and selling my body for drugs-

DEBBIE

And tortilla chips.

JUDY

And dip.

HEAVY T

-you have no idea how hard I fought
step one. Do you know the first
step to getting off drugs is?

Danny returns to the room.

DANNY

Become literate.

HEAVY T

No. That's step thirteen. Heyyooo.

Good one, Danny. Take a seat.

Danny sits away from the group, alone.

HEAVY T (CONT'D)

Step one to stop using drugs is to
stop using drugs. It's really that
hard and really that simple. But

you know what? That's enough about my struggle. I bet there's one of you here who's been through something just as difficult and painful and come out on the other side. Tammy?

TAMMY

Yes, Heavy T.

HEAVY T

I know you've told me some stories about your past. Back when you first had Monica here and you were, well, sort of on your own.

Although, you know who was really always there.

Heavy T points up to God.

HEAVY T (CONT'D)

I bet you have something you'd like
to share with us, to encourage us,
that this is a safe place to come
clean.

TAMMY

Yes. I think I know what you mean.

HEAVY T

Tell us about what you've been
through, what you've done.

TAMMY

Well, I had pre-marital sex, Heavy
T.

MONICA

Mom.

TAMMY

And praise God I did it because
Monica is the most beautiful thing
in my life now. But just because
this mistake turned into a
miracle... It doesn't mean... It
doesn't mean I didn't need a light
to turn on.

More lights turn on.

TAMMY (CONT'D)

It didn't mean I didn't still need
to see the Son. And praise God. I
did. I saw Him.

The music changes to the tune of Ace of Base's "The Sign" and lyrics
for "The Son" appear on the projection. Heavy T dances, gets into it,
"air-scratching" his pretend turn tables.

HEAVY T

The Son? Oh you're talking about J

C? AKA Jesus Christ?

TAMMY

Exactly, Heavy T.

(singing)

I NEEDED A NEW LIFE

AFTER HAD MY NEW LIFE WITH MONICA

HAD JUST BEGUN

Monica and the Girls stand.

MONICA AND GIRLS

(singing)

OOOOHHHHH... OH OH.

TAMMY

I KNEW I REALLY COULDN'T BE THERE

I KNEW I COULDN'T BE A MOM

IF ALL I WANTED

EVERY SECOND, EVERY DAY

TO BE WAS TRULY ALONE

Monica and the Girls come forward.

MONICA AND GIRLS
POSTPARTUM DE-PRESS-ION...

TAMMY
AND THEN I LOOKED AT YOUR FACE
AND WHEN I LOOKED IN YOUR EYES
I SUDDENLY REALIZED
I DIDN'T A MAN, A DAD,
OR A SOCIAL LIFE
WHEN WE ALREADY HAD A FAMILY IN
CHRIST
(THAT'S RIGHT)

TAMMY/MONICA AND GIRLS
I SAW THE SON
AND HE OPENED UP MY EYES I SAW THE
SON

LIFE WOULD BE TRAGIC WITHOUT THE
IDEA OF HIS MAGIC
I SAW THE SON
AND HE OPENED UP MY EYES I SAW THE
SON
SO DON'T LET ANYBODY DRAG YOU DOWN
WHEN YOU'RE ON WAY TO WHERE YOU
BELONG
AND I PROMISE, YOU BELONG

MONICA AND GIRLS

OH OH OH OH...

The girls keep singing their "OHs" and fade back into their seats.
Lights normalize.

TAMMY

I confess. I wasn't ready to be a
mother. I wasn't even a good mom,
not right out of the gate. But I
can honestly say... There's no

place I'd rather be right now.

MONICA

Thanks Mom.

HEAVY T

Thanks Tammy.

HEAVY T

Now... Who's next?

The kids look all around them. The girls nudge Monica. She shakes her head no. The boys nudge Bryson—no.

HEAVY T (CONT'D)

I think I know what you guys need.

Heavy T strolls over to the cross. He looks at the cross. Ten at the audience. Back to the cross. Back to audience...

HEAVY T (CONT'D)

Someone get me some hammers and
nails. Debbie. Judy. Tammy. I need
you.

Lights out.

SCENE FIVE

Lights up. All three lady chaperones raise through separate aisles
carrying hammers and nails to Heavy T. The boys and girls are divided
by gender on the stage.

DANNY

What are you doing?

BRYSON

What are you doing? You're on the
wrong team, dude.

DANNY

Oh. I get it. You're trying to
emasculate me. How cute.

BOY

Aww, he thinks you're cute.

Bryson punches his friend.

BRYSON

What? Shut up.

(to Danny)

What are you staring at?

MONICA

Bryson, stop it.

Danny turns away.

MONICA (CONT'D)

Danny, it's okay. You can stare if

you want to.

HEAVY T

What you guys are staring at here is a representation of the cross where J-C went out like a true player and gave his life so that our sins could be forgiven.

DANNY

It's a representation of the cross.

HEAVY T

Yes.

DANNY

So it's not the actual cross?

HEAVY T

It is not the authentic cross upon

which Jesus Christ was murdered...

That I know of.

MONICA

Why did you have to split us up?

BRYSON

Aww, you miss me.

MONICA

Aww. No.

HEAVY T

We're going to play a game. It's
called: "The Worst Sin in the
World!"

MONICA

Oh.

TAMMY

What's wrong, dollface?

MONICA

Nothing. What- what's the game?

HEAVY T

I have sins written on poster boards all over this room. And you guys have to find them and put them on the cross in order from the least sin in the world to the worst sin in the world!

MONICA

How do we keep track of both teams rating the sins?

HEAVY T

Green poster boards for girls.

Orange for boys.

DEBBIE

Because pink and blue would have
just been too normal.

HEAVY T

Exactly.

DANNY

Shouldn't it be the best to worst
sin? Or lease to...greatest sin?

DEBBIE

Danny, don't be difficult.

JUDY

Please can everyone just try not to
be difficult here?

DANNY

Okay. Sorry. JESUS H. CHRIST.

Gasps across the room.

HEAVY T

Okay. Okay. You guys ready?

Heavy T wildly claps his hands and bounces in his place.

DEBBIE

Heavy T. Something wrong?

JUDY

I have water and band aids.

TAMMY

Are you okay?

HEAVY T

Yes. Fine. Good. On your marks, get
set, find your sin!

The kids race out into the audience looking for sins. As they find one
they hand it off to Tammy and then to Judy and then to Debbie.

DEBBIE

What am I supposed to do with this?

HEAVY T

Just nail it on in there.

DEBBIE

No. I'm out.

JUDY

Me too.

They go and sit at the edge of the stage.´

Tammy takes over the nailing from here on out.

MONICA

(to the audience)

I'm sorry. Do you think y'all could help us out? Come on ladies. Is murder the number one sin or is it worshipping false idols?

BRYSON

Come on, brahs. Is the dumbest sin taking the Lord's name in vain... Or... eating the flesh of unclean beasts?

MONICA

Wait. Women refusing to remain in silence? That's going straight to the bottom.

GIRL

Word.

The kids continue encouraging help from the audience. This game can last as long as this director, company, and particular performance night mandates.

HEAVY T

Time runs out in five, four, three,
two. Ehhh.

Buzzer sound effect plays. Heavy T looks at Debbie at her CD player.

HEAVY T (CONT'D)

Nice sound effects. All right. Let
me look at this list. For the least
of our sins girls have...

MONICA

Uhh, can we read it ourselves?

HEAVY T

Yeah. Totally.

MONICA

Thanks, T. Number ten: Women's menstruation makes everything unclean. Number nine: the women speaking or teaching thing. Number eight: Not destroying the seed of the Amalek. I don't even know what a Amalek is, but I'm over it.

Number seven: Craving what belongs to others.

Number six worst sin is: Not obeying your masters with respect, fear, and sincerity of heart.

DANNY

Actually, Heavy T, we had a question about this. In this

scenario, are we-

HEAVY T

Slaves.

DANNY

Precisely as I thought.

HEAVY T

Yes, not obeying your master was a serious sin for actual slaves back in the day.

MONICA

That's, like, ridiculous.

HEAVY T

Yes. Yes it is like ridiculous.

DANNY

But I thought the Bible was

absolute? We can't distance
ourselves from some parts of the
Bible and not others.

Heavy T points to Tammy and she presses a wrong answer button on
their CD player. EHHH.

HEAVY T

It's not that complicated. The
truth is people say it's a sin to
pick and choose what they believe
about the Bible. But here's the
thing... Everybody does it anyway.

MONICA

Okay. Our number five sin was:
eating the flesh of unclean beasts.

BRYSON

How do you become a man if you

never eat bacon?

MONICA

And our number four sin was: being
a homo.

HEAVY T

That's not what is written on that
card. It's being a homosexual
offender. And that's how it's
written in Corinthians.

MONICA

Oh right. Being a homo offender is
something we put in the middle
because, like, personally, I love
the homo community because they're
always on my favorite TV shows.

BOY

But it's, like, the one thing I

thought most Christians agreed on.
I think it's kind of cool that we
can all come together, unified, at
peace on this one thing. We don't
like homogays.

MONICA

Bryson.

BRYSON

What? I didn't say it. I'm cool
with them, who cares. They're
people, right? Let's fix this one.
Danny, will you help me?

Bryson helps Danny rearrange their sins.

DANNY

Yeah.

BRYSON

Thanks, dude.

MONICA

Okay. Number three worst sin:
blasphemy. I mean, we're pretty
much taught that that's, like, the
worst of the worst but-

GIRL

We weren't sure if saying "Gah,
you're stupid," or "G-D that f-ing
hurt," or "O-M-G that's so sad"- we
weren't sure if all that really
counted.

DEBBIE

Let me jump in for a moment. Girls,
don't you think God knows what G-D
stands for? Or do you think you're
really just too slick for the

creator of the universe and all the
life it contains within?

JUDY

It's not likely that you're smarter
than G-D.

BRYSON

Mom. Stop repeating everything
Debbie says. It's getting so
annoying.

BRYSON (CONT'D)

Don't speak to your mother that
way.

JUDY

Don't speak to me that way.

BRYSON

Gahhh!

HEAVY T

No. No. Debbie's actually totally right. God knows, ladies. God knows.

GIRL

I know He knows. I just wasn't sure if He cared.

DEBBIE

Of course He cares!

HEAVY T

I'm not sure either.

DEBBIE

What did you say?

HEAVY T

I'm not sure God really gives a flying hoot if you accidentally say his name when you stub your toe and it f-ing hurts. I ain't speaking for the Big Guy, but I would venture to bet that calling someone stupid and using words to hurt people and degrade yourself- that's the real blasphemy.

TAMMY

I totally get it.

DEBBIE

Oh. So you just changed the definition of blasphemy. Just changing the rules of the Bible, that's a great thing to teach our children. You know what? From now

on, when you hear the word kill I
want it to really mean...

DANNY

Froot Loop.

DEBBIE

Thank you, Danny. I would really be
surprised if, before the end of the
night, I didn't froot loop Heavy T.

HEAVY T

You totally just crossed a line.

DEBBIE

I hope you're joking.

JUDY

Oh he's definitely joking.

HEAVY T

Always joking, Deb. Let's move on.
We're almost to the number one
worst sin.

MONICA

Okay, okay. Our number two was
stealing.

BRYSON

That was our number one, brah. Some
a-hole stole my i-pod at the last
game. I could have seriously fruit
looped somebody I was so heated.

MONICA

Yeah you were. Everybody hates
stealing. Plus, I figure it sort of
covered like coveting stuff and
adultery. So- bonus!

MONICA (CONT'D)

And our worst worst number one sin
was: Murder. Duh.

Debbie presses a button and a DING! DING! DING! plays.

MONICA (CONT'D)

Was that right? Did we win?

BRYSON

Wait. I wanna talk about our list,
too.

Heavy T paces between the boy's cross and the girl's cross.

HEAVY T

I have reached a decision.

They crowd in closer.

HEAVY T (CONT'D)

There is no winner.

ALL

What?

HEAVY T

Really? You didn't see this coming?

I want y'all to go to your crosses

and tear out those sins you just

nailed in. Throw them away.

Kids digs in and noisily tear up the cross and the sins into pieces and toss them around the stage. Debbie rushes toward them; Judy follows.

DEBBIE

No. Wait. Heavy T. We need a time

out. Time out.

Heavy T pushes past the ladies and joins in tearing up the crosses.

Then returns to the circle.

HEAVY T

Whoo. That was fun. So do you guys get it? When Jesus died on the cross, he took down all those sins for us. And he became the gateway into eternal life. There's nothing you can do to take away his love. Jesus and the Father are crazy in love with you- like Beyonce crazy in love with you- and there's nothing you can do to stop it. That's why there's no reason not to confess, confess, confess. You all have already been forgiven. Just accept it.

TAMMY

Accept, accept, accept.

HEAVY T

Exactly. Now accept it and accept
each other. Someone hand me the
freak hat.

Lights out.

SCENE SIX

Total darkness. The projector turns on and displays lyrics. It scares the
girl at first. And then a CD player button makes her jump. And then
comes the music. "Groove is in the Heart" becomes Heavy T's "TRUTH
IS IN THE HEART."

HEAVY T (CONT'D)

Okay, I'm gonna read the first one.
And just because it's anonymous
doesn't mean that this confession
doesn't come from the heart.

He unwraps a piece of paper from the freak hat. Lights slowly dim up

on Heavy T.

HEAVY T (CONT'D)

Again. Don't sweat. No one ever has
to know who wrote this.

Spotlight up on Monica. She nervously stands stiffly, then begins to
sway to the music as she speaks to the audience.

MONICA

Dear God... I have a confession.
There's no easy way to say this but
here it is. I have body issues.
Duh, I'm a girl.

Tammy and Heavy T alternate singing and rapping out the song. They
dance side by side.

TAMMY

(singing)

WE ARE GOING TO DANCE

WE ARE GOING TO DANCE
WE ARE GOING DANCE
AND MAKE THE DEVIL RUN!

MONICA

Well, actually, the thing is
everyone wants me to stay a little
girl but I know that people look at
me like a woman. When you wear 34
Ds at age eleven, you don't really
have a choice anymore. You're gonna
get asked to the dance. And
sometimes you're gonna get asked to
corporate get away weekend for two.
I guess I don't know what I see
when I stare in the mirror anymore.
Girl. Woman. Girl. Woman. Girl.
Woman. Girl. I don't know. Anyway,
the thing is. I get confused about
it myself sometimes. And... Here it

is, I guess I really just have to
say it. But I'm not a virgin. There
I said it! I am not a virgin.

Everyone on stage loudly gasps and breaks into wild chatter.

MONICA (CONT'D)

You know what? Just accept it.

Monica dances freely.

Heavy T takes out the next name from the hat.

HEAVY T

All right. Pretty heavy stuff.

Next... It's another one with no
name. It says...

Monica dances off to the side as another GIRL enters the spotlight.
Each time a girl leaves the spotlight she forms a line with the other
girls and continues dancing in her place stage left.

GIRL

Dear God... I'm not sure if this
counts as sins or whatever, but...
Here's the stuff I don't believe
in: Heaven, hell, a promised land,
a man who lived in a giant fish,
the rapture is coming...

TAMMY

THE CHILLS OF THE GHOST UP AND DOWN
MY SPINE...

HEAVY T

SOME SAY HE'S A DOVE.

TAMMY

AS LONG AS HE AIN'T NO SWINE...

GIRL

...crippled people and people with

flat noses have to stay away from
altars, it's okay to own and sell
slaves, shellfish is an
abomination, everyone on Project
Runway is an abomination, people
who work on the Sabbath should be
put to death... Oh, and women
should be quiet and weak. But other
than that, I'd say I'm pretty much
down with Jesus.

The Girl dances freely.

TAMMY

HE MAKES ME FEEL LIKE I CAN SPEAK
HE MAKES ME FEEL LIKE I AM NOT WEAK
AND I'M GLAD THAT HE LIKES TO CALL
ME MOTHER

HEAVY T

I-I-I-I-I-I-I

TAMMY

YES I'M GLAD THAT I CAN CALL HIM
BROTHER

HEAVY T

I-I-I-I-I-I-I

Another Girl moves into the spotlight.

GIRL

Dear God... I think I might have an
addiction. Shopping. I'm talking
like I totally use lunch money for
shopping because: A) Daddy doesn't
make enough money to keep his baby
in new shoes and B) I look way
hotter in the dressing room if I
skip that public school sponsored
frito pie. Help me. I know now that

I need help.

Girl breaks it down.

HEAVY T

(rapping)

THE TRUTH IS SOMETHING THAT I CRAVE
LIKE A LOLLIPOP AFTER A RAVE
IT'S THE ONLY WAY THAT WE CAN SAVE

TAMMY

AND MAKE HIM CALL ME MOTHER

HEAVY T

UH-UH-UH-UH-HUH

TAMMY

AND LET ME CALL HIM A BROTHER

HEAVY T

I-I-I-I-I-I

A new girl enters the spotlight.

GIRL

Dear God... Okay, so, like, I try really hard to be nice to everybody because Jesus was nice to everybody... Does that mean I'm I going to start hanging out with prostitutes and poor people and freaks just to be more like Jesus? I don't know. Maybe I should be nicer to Danny because he's just a big weirdo. And Monica. And her mom Tammy because she seems really slutty too..

The girl dances and Tammy sings again, this time, feeling noticeably bit self-conscious about herself.

TAMMY

TRUTH IS IN THE HEART

AH-AH-AH-AH

TRUTH IS IN THE HEART

AH-AH-AH-AH

HEAVY T

How about one more?

The last girl enters the spotlight.

GIRL

Dear God... I am here for one reason. Heavy T. I have such a crush on him. It's like he has a past and he's dangerous but he still loves Jesus. So hot.

The girl twirls about and dances closer and closer to Heavy T. The spotlight follows her as Heavy T inches away and Tammy inserts

herself between child and youth pastor.

TAMMY/HEAVY T

TRUTH IS IN THE HEART

AH-AH-AH-AH

TRUTH IS IN THE HEART

AH-AH-AH-AH

TRUTH IS IN THE HEART!

MUSIC STOPS.

Heavy T looks up from his freak hat.

HEAVY T

Okay... Just hearing these
confessions out loud, we feel
better don't we?

Danny stands up.

DANNY

No. We don't.

HEAVY T

Okay. Let's take a time-out.

Lights out.

During this time, the audience may take intermission if wanted or needed. Maybe just give the kids a chance to breathe because they've been breaking it down.

SCENE SEVEN

Lights up.

Kids circle around Heavy T. Debbie and Judy stand on either side of the cross.

Tammy sits on the floor next to her daughter, Monica.

Everyone but Debbie snacks on junk food. Heavy T is nowhere in sight.

DEBBIE

Maybe we should just start to clean up after ourselves and call it night, guys.

KIDS

Aww, Miss Debbie.

JUDY

(mouth full)

Miss Debbie. Come on!

DEBBIE

Get it together, Judy.

TAMMY

Let's just wait for Heavy T to come back.

DEBBIE

I'd like to know where he's been
for seventeen minutes straight. I
wonder how long it takes light up a
crack pipe.

TAMMY

Debbie. Don't even joke.

DEBBIE

Or roll of a doobie.

BRYSON

Three minutes if you know what
you're doing.

Heavy T enters- even more bouncy than before.

TAMMY

You okay, T?

HEAVY T

Yeah. Yeah. Of course I'm okay. I'm kicking it with you guys all night long. I'm psyched.

TAMMY

Okay.

HEAVY T

And it was really great hearing your guys' confessions but I sense that everyone's not totally down with step one OR step two just yet.

All look at Danny.

DEBBIE

Oh he's not the only one.

Heavy T whips out a Bible.

HEAVY T

Who here can tell me why it's important to try to follow the Bible? Umm... Danny.

DANNY

Because God wrote it.

Heavy T directs Tammy to hit the CD player. She realizes she is not in places and races to the stereo to hit the wrong answer button. EHHH.

HEAVY T

Who here thinks they're doing a pretty good job of following the word of God? Come on, I'm not talking about being perfect. I'm talking about doing our best to follow the teachings of the Lord.

All hands raise, Danny is last.

HEAVY T (CONT'D)

Ehh. You all just lied up in God's
house. Wow.

Heavy T approaches Monica with the Bible as he flips through its
pages. He crouches down, gets in her face.

MONICA

Did I do something wrong?

HEAVY T

Read this.

MONICA

What? Right there? The chapter-

HEAVY T

It's chapter... Nineteen. Verse
nineteen but just read that part
right there.

MONICA

Nineteen. It's really small.

HEAVY T

I know. Nineteen, nineteen.

MONICA

Oh. Okay, got it. Leviticus
nineteen nineteen. Do not wear
clothing woven of two kinds of
material.

HEAVY T

Hmmm. Nice tank top. Sinner. Next.

Heavy T hands the Bible to Bryson and points where to read.

BRYSON

Ummm... Do not cut your hair or
shave.

Danny eyes the Bryson's hair then looks down his own shirt.

HEAVY T

You look like you're on the cusp of becoming a very handsome, very hairy man. You weren't thinking about shaving anything off, were you? Next.

Heavy T hands off the good book to one of the Girls.

GIRL

Take the blasphemer outside the camp. All those who heard him are to lay their hands on his head, and the entire assembly is to stone him.

Heavy T bends down to the girl.

HEAVY T

O-M-G. I've heard you say it about,
I don't know, infinity times
tonight. Should we lay our hands on
you and kill you to death? Okay,
last one.

Heavy T hands his bible to Danny.

DANNY

If anyone curses his father or
mother, he must be put to death.

HEAVY T

If anyone curses his father or
mother, we should totally murder
you. That verse comes right before
some stuff about killing men who
have sex with other men or their
daughter's mother, or their

mother's goat. It's all in there...

Heavy T wildly shakes the Bible.

HEAVY T (CONT'D)

Listen, I'm not trying to scare you guys. I just wanted you to know that... According to the good book, we're all kind of f'd up.

Some giggles.

HEAVY T (CONT'D)

And this is the only place where you can say anything and nobody's gonna judge you. I promise.

Bryson raises his hand.

BRYSON

Let's keep reading some of those confession things from the hat. You

didn't get to mine yet but... I'm
ready for it.

HEAVY T

Cool. Thanks Bryson.

JUDY

(mouth full)

It's still anonymous, right?

Lights down.

SCENE EIGHT

Music from C+C Music Factory's Everybody Dance Now has become
Heavy T's "EVERYBODY PRAISE NOW." Projector and lyrics turn on.

Spotlight up on Bryson swaying to the beat.

Lights fade up on Tammy and Heavy T in the corner of the stage.

TAMMY

(singing)

EVERYBODY PRAISE NOW!

EVERYBODY PRAISE NOW!

BRYSON

Dear God...I'm gonna be straight up about this. I smoke drugs. They're not as bad as the kind Heavy T used to do, but still. They're not legal-not yet. In fact, I'm high right now. I always get high before I go to church or school or the dentist or Wal-Mart. It's pretty much the only way I can make it through with a smile. I don't know if it's because I'm confessing and breaking down the walls with Jesus or if I'm just still really baked. But, either way, dude, it feels good.

Bryson breakdances. He's got serious skills.

TAMMY

GIVE ME THE MUSIC

GIVE ME THE MUSIC

HEAVY T

YEAH, YEAH, YEAH

Bryson exits the spotlight and Danny enters. He stands like a deer in headlights.

BRYSON

Come on Danny!

Danny stares at Bryson, then looks back at his mother, then up at the cross. He exits the spotlight and another Boy immediately enters already dancing like a madman. Each time a boy leaves the spotlight she forms a line with the other boys and continues dancing in her place stage left.

BOY

Dear God... I like to send bomb
threats to people who bother me.
It's not because I want to but it's
these voices telling me to get back
at them before they destroy me like
Thor destroyed the Nannibals.

Boy keeps dancing.

TAMMY

EVERYBODY PRAISE NOW.

Tammy starts clapping and the rest follow.

HEAVY T

You know what? Actually... I think
I recognize the handwriting on that
one and we will talk later. Yes. No
one here is judging you but we are

scared of you. Next.

Another Boy enters the spotlight.

TAMMY

YEAH YEAH YEAH

EVERYBODY!

BOY

Dear God... I sold Bryson and them
weed like nine hours ago. I think
they're just faking being high and
stuff. They're so fake, dude. You
know who ain't fake? Me, Heavy T,
Marilyn Manson, Barack Obama, my
Global Studies teacher Chad, my
mom, not my dad, NOT my dad, and...
Jesus. That's it.

Boy dances.

HEAVY T

YEAH YEAH YEAH

TAMMY

EVERYBODY!

COME ON LET'S SWEAT, BABY.

LET THE SPIRIT TAKE CONTROL

LET THE HOLY SPIRIT MOVE YOU.

LET'S SWEAT. SWEAT!

LET THE MUSIC TAKE YOUR SOUL

DON'T BE AFRAID TO LET IT MOVE YOU!

HEAVY T

Last one for now... Oh,

interesting...

The last BOY enters.

BOY

I like to curse. I probably drop

the F bomb at least seventy times a day and it always feels cleansing. But when I come to church, I feel like I have to change the way I talk. It's almost like changing who I am. If I were listening to me during this Lock In, I probably wouldn't even recognize my own fucking voice. I'm cool with not taking the Lord's name in vain, but shoot. This stinks. I sound like I'm eight. Wait, no, I cursed like a boy scout with a drinking problem when I was eight. My mom thought it was hilarious. So did I... So did I...

All continue clapping, and the boys dance as Heavy T walks into the spotlight, pushes the last boy out of the way to rap solo.

HEAVY T

(rapping)

HE IS MAN WITHOUT A FACE

HE LIKES TO GET UP IN YOU AND HE

DON'T LIKE TO WASTE- NO TIME

DON'T MATTER IF YOU'RE YOUNG OR IN

YOUR PRIME

HE WANTS TO GET YOU IN THE RHYTHM

JUMP JUMP WITH THE SPIRIT JUMP LIVE

AND I AM HERE TO TAKE YOUR HAND

WHETHER YOU'VE BEEN A SLUT, A

WEIRDO, OR A DRUG MAN

THIS IS THE PLACE TO TAKE A CHANCE

SO GRAB A GIRL AND MAKE HER TWIRL

IT'S YOUR WORLD, I'M JUST A

SQUIRREL

More spotlights about the stage.

Boys grab girls from the background and dance with them. Danny remains center stage and moves forward through the chaos, not

dancing.

HEAVY T (CONT'D)

LET'S MOVE WITH THE SPIRIT, I WANNA

HEAR IT, I WANNA SEE IT

HEAVY T (CONT'D)

NOW-

TAMMY

NOW-

TAMMY

- DANCE, BABY

Bryson suddenly takes Danny by the hand. Monica and Bryson pass Danny back and forth between them, having a good time.

TAMMY (CONT'D)

LET THE SPIRIT TAKE CONTROL

LET THE HOLY SPIRIT MOVE YOU.
LET'S DANCE. DANCE!
LET THE MUSIC TAKE YOUR SOUL
DON'T BE AFRAID TO LET IT MOVE YOU!

HEAVY T

AWW YEAH NOW

TAMMY

BADDUP BOP BUH BOP BOP BOP

BADDUP BOP BOP

BADDUP BOP BOP.

MUSIC OUT. All freeze in their places mid-dance except for Danny who continues walking forward alone.

Lights down. Spotlight up on Danny.

DANNY

Okay... I think I'm ready to come
clean.

DEBBIE

Stop. No. This is enough. It's one thing to confess that you're a freak, but freak dancing in the sanctuary of God's house. Give me a break. This is blasphemous as hell.

JUDY

(gasping)

You cursed in God's house.

DEBBIE

Oh, well, accept it. We're accepting everything else here aren't we. Drugs. Premarital sex. What's next? Danny? What's next?

DANNY

Nothing. I wasn't going to say

anything. I'm perfect. Just like
you.

Danny runs through the aisle and out of the room completely.

Debbie marches to the CD player. She looks around the room, not sure
what to do next. Something inspires her to take it into the air and
bring it down smashing in pieces.

DEBBIE

FUCK. Accept that.

Music and lights out.

SCENE NINE

Lights back up and everyone is back in the circle but Tammy is
working to repair the CD player.

HEAVY T

Debbie and that last confession we read touched on something I want to talk to all of you about. Who here has ever said a curse word? Especially when they got really, really, insanely and irrationally mad.

All hands raise. Debbie raises hers last.

HEAVY T (CONT'D)

Good. And who here has never ever said a bad word or watched a movie with a bad word or laughed at a joke with a bad word in it outside of these walls here?

Reluctantly, all hands go down.

HEAVY T (CONT'D)

Well, what's the fucking
difference?

Everyone gasps.

DEBBIE

Heavy T. Just because I made a
mistake.

HEAVY T

It's okay. It's okay Debbie. You
made a mistake. And I'm going to
take what you just said as a
confession. Now do we all still
accept Debbie?

ALL

Yes.

HEAVY T

Debbie. Are you sorry you cursed
and brought down your wrath upon
our CD player?

DEBBIE

Yes.

HEAVY T

Well, then you are officially the
first person here tonight to go
through all steps of Heavy T's
program. Confess, accept, repent.
Amen.

ALL

Amen.

HEAVY T

Now can we all go and show Debbie

that we still love her? Can we all
do that?

All kids go to hug Debbie. Judy joins in.

JUDY

Oh, this is so beautiful.

DEBBIE

Okay, okay. Let me go.

Kids return to their seats.

HEAVY T

Now here's the funny thing about
this situation. I don't think every
sin has to be repented.

DANNY

Really?

HEAVY T

Chh-yeah, little man. Who hear
thinks that God hears us really
extra good in here and then not so
much outside?

No hands.

HEAVY T (CONT'D)

No hands. Right answer.

Heavy T motions to Debbie, but she is no longer with them. He
motions to Tammy.

TAMMY

Let's see if this thing still
works.

She presses a button. DING!

TAMMY (CONT'D)

It's a miracle.

HEAVY T

There is nothing that you should feel comfortable saying out there that you can't say in here. We have to accept the fact that we might not like how someone else talks. Whether it's their potty mouth, ignorant grammar, regional accents, or overly articulate stuck up way of communicating.

DANNY

There is not wrong with enunciating.

HEAVY T

Exactly. Good, Danny.

BRYSON

So you're saying we can curse?

Here?

HEAVY T

Why not?

(to audience)

Everybody think of your favorite
curse word. We all have one right?
Now on the count of three. Shout it
out. Just get it out of your
system. One... Two... Three...

Everyone shouts out their favorite curse word.

HEAVY T (CONT'D)

Poop! I know it's not a swear word
exactly. But when used correctly...
It can be pretty effective. Okay.
keep saying your word. Let's hear
it.

Everyone continues to say their words over and over.

Debbie covers her ears, then faints. Judy helps her back to her feet.

HEAVY T (CONT'D)

Poop, poop, poop, poop, poop. All right, all right. I think we're good here.

DEBBIE

What happened? I blacked out. Excuse me, I suddenly have to go the bathroom.

Debbie exits in a hurry.

HEAVY T

That's probably for the best. Now I want each of you to think about the word you just said over and over again. When you say that word, are you usually happy? Do you use that

word to make someone else happy or to make them feel like poop? If you think that using these words affects no one, makes you feel good about yourself, and makes others feel good being around you... Then, by all means, don't censor yourself for the church.

But if you think that your words are bringing people down, just think about it and really think whether there isn't a better way to say what you wanna say. Everybody cool with that?

BOY

Fucking H!

The boy gives a proud thumbs up sign.

Lights out.

SCENE TEN

Heavy T enters the space near the Exit sign and sees Debbie sitting by herself. He sits down next to her.

DEBBIE

I really don't get you.

HEAVY T

I know.

DEBBIE

The idea of there being sins that you don't have to be sorry for- I don't like that.

HEAVY T

It's tricky. And maybe I'm wrong.

DEBBIE

What?

HEAVY T

I don't know. I might be wrong. I'm just doing my best with what I get out of my rap sessions with G-D.

DEBBIE

Prayer?

HEAVY T

Yeah. Prayer. And I'm just letting him guide me and speak through me, but... Sometimes I might get it wrong.

DEBBIE

I don't think cursing is the worst sin out there. I don't think it's

even my worst sin.

HEAVY T

Really.

DEBBIE

You don't sound surprised.

HEAVY T

I think your worst sin is judgment.
Judging everybody but yourself. You
went through the steps but I don't
know if I see you coming out on the
other side. You might just be one
of those people who never changes.
Never really changes.

DEBBIE

So you're giving up on me?

No answer. Debbie stands.

Lights dim. Projector lights up with lyrics as music from "U DON'T KNOW ME" originally by Armand Van Helden and Duane Harden is now performed by Debbie.

DEBBIE (CONT'D)

(singing)

WHAT IS MY PROBLEM WITH YOU, IS
WHAT YOU ASK?
BUT I KNOW YOU'RE ASKING WHAT IS
WRONG WITH ME?
YOU DON'T EVEN KNOW ME
YOU SAY I CAN'T BE RIGHT
YOU DON'T TRY TO UNDERSTAND ME
YOU ARE THE ONE JUDGING MY LIFE
YOU DON'T EVEN KNOW ME
YOU NEVER THINK I CAN BE RIGHT
DON'T TRY TO UNDERSTAND ME
I'M ONLY LETTING ONE MAN GET INTO
MY HEART INSIDE

Heavy T walks to her, singing. Lights start flashing colors.

HEAVY T

(singing)

I SEE THE WAY YOU LOOK AT ME

I KNOW THINK I'M WRONG

I KNOW MY PAST IS SOMETHING YOU

CAN'T GET PASSED

AND I'M NEVER GONNA LET YOU SHAME

WHAT I'VE BECOME

YOU DON'T EVEN KNOW ME

YOU DON'T REALIZE WHEN I'M RIGHT

YOU DON'T TRY TO UNDERSTAND ME

YOU ARE THE ONE JUDGING MY LIFE

DEBBIE/ HEAVY T

I WANT YOU TO KNOW ME

JUST CONSIDER THAT I'M RIGHT

TRY TO UNDERSTAND ME

LOOK INTO MY HEART AND DECIDE.

They both stand looking at each other intensely, trying to see each other's hearts. They are drawn closer and closer until...

Tammy enters. Lights normalize. Music stops. Debbie and Heavy T turn and look at her. She backs away, then exits.

SCENE ELEVEN

Debbie re-enters the room with Heavy T.

HEAVY T

Where'd Tammy go?

MONICA

She went looking for you. Duh.

BRYSON

She didn't find you?

HEAVY T

No.

DEBBIE

Yes.

JUDY

What?

DEBBIE

Nothing.

Debbie takes her place by Judy and the cross.

HEAVY T

All right, okay. Listen, I want to thank you guys for keeping it so real thus far.

I know it hasn't been easy. But you know, we've got a pretty awesome example to follow. You know who I'm talking about. Come on, tell me who

is the realest player of all
players of all time? Tell me.

Heavy T puts his ear out to the group and gets nothing until Monica
raises her hand.

HEAVY T (CONT'D)

Yes. Monica.

MONICA

Kanye West.

HEAVY T

No wrong answers, but not really...
Kanye West was not the player I was
going for. I was hoping for a more
biblical player. Someone obvious.
Yeah, brahhh.

DANNY

Ebed-Melech.

Heavy T seems stumped.

HEAVY T

I have no idea who that is...
Kidding! I'm joshuaing with you
guys. We all probably know that
Ebed-Melech was a Bad-A Cushite who
totally helped out Jeremiah who was
totally brave. But, again, I was
going for someone even more obvious
than Ebed-Melech.

A few more hands come up.

DEBBIE

Barak.

HEAVY T

Barak?

DEBBIE

Barak was a great warrior who
slained a lot of people in Canon,
in the name of the Israelite people-
oh- and God.

HEAVY T

Jesus... Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ
was the realest player of all time.

DEBBIE

Well, when it's that easy it might
as well be a trick... Sorry.
Continue.

HEAVY T

Thank you. The answer is Jesus
Christ because J-C wasn't afraid to
live with the freaks, party with
the freaks, and live like a freak.

Most people back in his day thought he was crizz-azy because he didn't take all the rules from the Old Testament, all the rules of the Jewish faith, all that, like, soooo "for serious." Did I say that right?

Debbie shrugs.

HEAVY T (CONT'D)

Anyway, you know what I mean. J-C said, if y'all need to work on the Sabbath, get your work on. If y'all need to take that day to heal from a circumcision that day, get your healing on. Don't let this Old Testament interfere with all that cutting stuff y'all need to do down there. And then, then Jesus had the nerve to hang out with a bunch of

non-Jews- AKA, the "unpopular"
people. Who here sometimes feel
pressure to not hang out with
unpopular people?

All hands up.

BOY

Hey, Danny. Put your hand down.

Danny does, slowly and painfully.

HEAVY T

Well guess what? Jesus preaches
love and acceptance and waving your
freak flag as high as it can go.

Wouldn't it be awesome if we could
be more like Jesus for realsies?

Monica stands.

MONICA

I want to confess something for
realsies, Heavy T. No hiding behind
the freak hat. No anonymity.

JUDY

(to Debbie only)

She has a lovely vocabulary for a
tramp.

DEBBIE

Shut up Judy.

MONICA

I'm the tramp. The slut. The one
who's not a virgin. Like you didn't
know who had the 34-Ds anyway.

BOY

Yeah we do.

Tammy enters.

BOY (CONT'D)

Sorry, Miss Tammy.

MONICA

I'm sorry, Mom. Do you forgive me?

TAMMY

Yes. Baby. Of course, I do.

Monica races into her mother's arms.

TAMMY (CONT'D)

I know exactly what it feels like
to be confused and lose your way.
Because of men.

Tammy eyes Heavy T.

Bryson stands next.

BRYSON

And I'm high right now. But I don't
think it's because of this guy this
time.

Bryson points to the Boy who confessed to selling the drugs.

BRYSON (CONT'D)

Or even this guy.

He points to Heavy T.

BRYSON (CONT'D)

Yup. It's the big guy. Sorry big
guy! I'm gonna do better, I
promise.

He points to heaven.

JUDY

(to God)

I'm addicted to television! Lord
please forgive me.

DEBBIE

What? That's not a real addiction.

GIRL

(to God)

I have doubts about the Bible,
please be with me Lord.

BOY

(to God)

And I'm a psycho. Your call G-D.

All the kids stand and begin spilling out their confessions and
repenting at the same time. Only Danny remains seated. Debbie also
stays out of the mix.

HEAVY T

Wow, you guys. Hallelujjah.

ALL

Hallelujjjah!

Danny finally stands.

HEAVY T

Well, hallelujjjah.

Silence.

ALL

Hallelujjjah!

DANNY

And I'm- I'm-

Suddenly Debbie bursts forward clapping hysterically.

DEBBIE

Heavy T? Heavy T?

HEAVY T

Yeah, Debbie? You got something to say homegirl?

DEBBIE

I think now would be a wonderful time to read confessions from all of these beautiful, dirty, disgusting, repenting sinners. Maybe, I don't know...

HEAVY T

Debbie. I'm gonna tell you something I've never ever said to another woman. Keep talking.

DEBBIE

Okay. I'm- I'm done.

HEAVY T

Even better. Tammy- No- Debbie...

Bring me that freak hat.

Lights out.

SCENE TWELVE

Projector lights on. Music plays PUMP UP THE VOLUME, PUMP UP THE GRACE. This is pure DJ music: no song, only dance.

Debbie now reads confessions or invites people on the stage to read their own or other confessions. It depends on the crowd.

In the mean time, Heavy T slips away. Tammy waits a bit, then goes after him.

Confessions continue and kids dance in a choreographed fashion throughout the aisles and on the stage.

Lights down.

SCENE THIRTEEN

Lights up on the space near the exit sign. Heavy T is just slipping out the back door. MUSIC can still be heard from the other room.

Tammy goes to the door but doesn't go out. She leans up against it.

TAMMY

Where is he going?

Lights down.

SCENE FOURTEEN

Again, it is circle time. Everyone in their usual place.

HEAVY T

Hi, guys. So far it's been really
great seeing all of you guys- well
most of you guys-

All turn to Danny.

HEAVY T (CONT'D)

-break down some walls and come clean. I got another game for you guys, now that we've gone through the three steps. We're going to play a game that's sure to make everyone feel even closer to each other and make the last person in this room-

All turn to Danny again.

HEAVY T (CONT'D)

- feel like it's safe for them to complete Heavy T's three step program too. Danny, why don't you come in a little closer buddy?

Danny comes closer into the circle.

HEAVY T (CONT'D)

Now everybody stand up. Up, up, up.

This is a TRUST game. I think you
guys are gonna like it, it's pretty
frawesome.

BRYSON

Frawesome?

HEAVY T

Oh. That's a combination of
freaking and awesome. You guys
don't know about that? Hmmm.

BOY

Frawesome.

A few boys say it over and over and high five. Girls giggle.

DANNY

Frawesome.

The fun stops. They are still not totally letting Danny be a part of the group.

HEAVY T

Let's move on, shall we gangsters?
Stand up. Now these friends of ours
are going to count on you to lead
them throughout this room. They're
going to have to trust you.

Heavy T combs through the kids, splitting the groups into two sides:
Monica, Boy, Girl, and Boy versus Bryson, Boy, Girl and Danny.

Debbie blindfolds Monica and Judy blindfolds Danny. Tammy mans the
CD deck.

GIRL

Aww, Monica. I'm not on your team.

MONICA

What? I can't see you.

GIRL

I'm right here.

MONICA

Why would that be helpful? Aww, but
I'm sorry you're not my team.

GIRL

I know, right?

DEBBIE

Girls. Calm down.

MONICA

Oh. Sorry, Missus Smothermon.

HEAVY T

All right, ladies. And boyees. Now what y'all might now have known is that Debbie and myself have placed traps and "mines," if you will, all over this room. That's why the game is called mine field.

DANNY

What?

DEBBIE

Danny. We didn't put explosives in the church. He's speaking in metaphor.

DANNY

I know. I don't care. I'm scared.

BOY

(mockingly)

He's scared.

All the boys bus Bryson laugh. All stare at them like they are the silly ones and they stop.

BOYS

Sorry. I can't be changed
overnight.

DANNY

It's okay. I mean, I'm sorry.

HEAVY T

You don't have to be sorry, Danny.
It's okay to be scared. I would be
if I were putting my life on the
line.

DANNY

What?

HEAVY T

Danny, lighten up. These mines are metaphors for things that sometimes stop us in our tracks and scare us or tempt us or lead us further away from Jesus's message of love and acceptance.

DANNY

But you said you don't get stopped in your tracks.

HEAVY T

Well, I don't. Not anymore. My heart has literally stopped four times- all separate nights, different drugs. I don't really get stopped in my tracks these days.

DEBBIE

Oh, dear Lord.

HEAVY T

But I know there are still things
that do tempt me. And I have to
charge right past them or right
through them.

MONICA

How will we know we stepped into a
mine or temptation or whatever?

HEAVY T

Good question. Tammy?

TAMMY

Oh. Are all the sound effects for
each mine that gets hit on this CD
here?

DANNY

But if it's a tape, shouldn't it be
continuous? How would you know
which mine we were going to step on
next-

DEBBIE

Danny, baby. Don't overthink it.

JUDY

Don't think.

DANNY

Sorry.

HEAVY T

Yes, Tammy. Are the sound effects
are all in place?

TAMMY

Sure. Fine. Good to go.

HEAVY T

The mines are just junk all around
the room.

But the sound effects are what I
really want you to pay attention to
and think about. I want you to
think about what traps are easy to
fall into. And, hopefully, with
your friends guiding your way- it
will be easy for you to come out on
the other side not all burnt up and
deformed- metaphorically speaking.
Are we ready?

DEBBIE

Ready.

HEAVY T

First team to get their friend to

the other side of that wall over
there wins. Go!

Both teams guide each of their leaders throughout the room. Monica's team shouts enthusiastically and do a good job of getting their leader, slowly but surely to the other side. The girls giggle as Team B misleads Danny into every trap possible.

GIRL

Left. Just a little more, buddy.

Danny runs into a table- right in the gut. He lets out a noise. Tammy hits the tape player and the loud sound of sirens wail.

HEAVY T

These sirens represent the temptation that some of you might have to do things that are not only against God's law, but man's law. Not to downplay hell, but juvy is no joke. You think a toothbrush

can't be turned into a knife-
you're wrong.

BOY

Okay, sorry dude. Haha. Go right.
Right. Right. Right.

Danny trips over a random beach ball. It goes bouncing off and the tape plays the sound of heavy breathing and sexual moaning.

DEBBIE

T. Really. This is too much. Danny
are you okay, sweetheart?

She rushes to her son's side.

DANNY

Mom. Stop. I'm not supposed to take
off the blindfold.

She backs off.

HEAVY T

The heavy moaning you hear
represents sex. Sex is everywhere.
Not just on the internet or in that
back room at the video store- not
Blockbuster- but the good, cheap
local one. Sex is on TV, in every
type of commercial, and video game.
It's what boys your age talk about
and think about 24/7. Maybe girls,
too. I'm not sure.

Monica speaks out without missing a slow step or bumping into
anything.

MONICA

It's true.

HEAVY T

All righty then. It's true. And I'm
not even gonna tell you guys to

stop seeing it everywhere you go,
or to stop talking about it, or to
stop thinking about it.

TAMMY

What's that?

HEAVY T

I just want you all to stop doing
it.

TAMMY

Oh.

HEAVY T

You all have the rest of your lives
to do it. And after you find the
right person-

DEBBIE

Husband-

BRYSON

Or wife-

DANNY

Or partner-

Everyone turns and stares at Danny.

DANNY (CONT'D)

What?

HEAVY T

After you find that right person,
sex will be something that is
special. Something you share with
someone that knows how precious it
truly is. Take it from someone who

used to give it away on a regular
basis- it won't make you feel any
more worth loving.

BOY

Go straight. Stay straight, Danny.
Keep going straight.

MONICA

Okay, stop it. He's going to get
hurt. Danny- no. Turn right.

It's too late. Danny steps onto a skateboard and goes flying forward.

GIRL

Was that skateboard always there?

The tape player plays sounds of Muslim worship.

BRYSON

What the H is this shit?

BOY

Sounds like terrorists yo.

Danny skates right past Monica and hits the wall.

HEAVY T

Danny's team wins!

Monica takes off her blindfold and helps Danny up, helps him take off his blindfold.

MONICA

Congrats, Danny.

DANNY

Thanks.

MONICA

Well, go. Go celebrate!

DANNY

Okay. Thanks.

He races into the arms of his team. The girls hug. A boy nods coolly and offers a low five.

HEAVY T

This is the sound of another culture. Another religion at worship.

JUDY

Is this the Islams?

HEAVY T

Yes.

DEBBIE

This is worse than the porn.

HEAVY T

But it represents the sounds of all

other cultures and religions that are different from ours. Now this is not a bad temptation. Or something to even avoid. I just through this onto the minefield to show y'all that some things that might seem like mines or dangerous things really aren't. I want you guys to be open to listening to this stuff. I know a lot of people preach that people with different religions don't go to heaven.

DEBBIE

But not people like...my husband, for example.

HEAVY T

No just people.

DEBBIE

Very good.

HEAVY T

But not only do I not believe that people- people who have never heard the word of God or live in a completely different culture than our own- automatically go into a fiery pit below us for not conforming to our belief system and culture... Not only do I believe that these folks do not go to hell- I don't even believe in hell.

TAMMY

Of course you don't.

All turn and look at Tammy. They sense the tension.

HEAVY T

The gospel of Matthew probably talks about hell in a way that is the furthest away from how Jesus talks in all the other books.

Matthew's the one talking about everlasting fire and darkness. Luke hardly talks about it, and everywhere else you look Jesus is basically all like: Chill out.

Focus on life here, maybe, and don't so much worry about the next life. There's already a lot of bad firey stuff going on right here on Earth. Maybe deal with that.

BRYSON

I don't think Jesus talked like that.

HEAVY T

Well, he didn't. I do. But you get my point. Hell can't be no worse than West Baltimore on a cold night in January with no protection and no money. Trust me. I ain't even mentioning the Congo, the Iraq... France.

MONICA

Why France?

HEAVY T

They're just really dirty there. I still love them like I love everybody, you know what I'm saying. But they're just really dirty there.

MONICA

Oh. We should go there sometime. Like a a mission trip. All of us.

We could visit the Louvre and pass
out bread and cheese to the
peasants outside...

BOY

Hate to interrupt you, but, uhh...
What did we win yo?

HEAVY T

The trust of your friend Danny. You
won the trust of your friend Danny.

BOY

What? We don't win anything again?

GIRL

Oh. Usually, we get, like, candy.
Or money.

BOY

Or pizza.

HEAVY T

Well, today it looks like y'all
really won for the first time. You
all won the gift of trust.

BRYSON

I'm really hungry, dude.

HEAVY T

Really? You ate all that... Chili
dip... Okay. Monica, can I trust
you to go call in a couple of
pizzas?

MONICA

Oh, of course you can.

Monica exits.

HEAVY T

Ughhh. This is getting exhausting.
Right? Does anyone... I don't
know... I'm feeling a little
restless. I don't suppose any of
y'all wanna get our dance-off on?

All stand. Debbie presses play and MUSIC builds slowly.

HEAVY T (CONT'D)

Now, since we're all- almost all
out in the open here- I don't want
noooo inhibitions. Trust that we're
all friends here, we're not judging
each other or condemning each other
here. We're just trying to rock
out. I want you to get down like no
one is watching, because
technically, someone is always

watching anyway. God has seen your worst dance moves and it's only fair that your good friends here tonight see them too. Come on, it'll be fun. Tammy, can you hit it, please my lady? I'm gonna go take five.

Heavy T races out.

MONICA

Where is he going?

BRYSON

What's his deal?

JUDY

Why does he keep doing that?

DEBBIE

I'm sure it's nothing. What? I

trust him.

TAMMY

Then you take over the music. I'm
out.

Tammy races out.

Lights out.

SCENE FIFTEEN

Kids stand in lines facing one another.

Projector lights up. A broad flooded light covers the stage. This time
the disco lights are added to the mix.

SET YOU FREE plays. Kids take turns singing the chorus as they dance
one at a time in a fierce dance off.

Monica dances first.

MONICA

(singing)

COME INTO MY HEART AND SOUL

COME INTO MY-

COME INTO MY-

COME INTO MY HEART AND SOUL

Bryson goes next.

BRYSON

(singing)

SET ME FREE

SET ME FREE

ALL KIDS

(singing)

COME INTO MY HEART AND SOUL...

This continues at one part of the stage, but the sounds slowly quiets.

Tammy enters the space near the exit and the red light pouring from the sign intensifies around Heavy T, whose back is turned to Tammy. He sits, rocking back and forth. She slowly approaches.

Finally she reaches him. Music is still faintly heard from the other room as kids continue to dance off.

Tammy reaches out to touch him. Heavy T jumps and turns around. He holds onto a bag of chips. Crumbs everywhere.

HEAVY T

I'm still addicted. To the chips.

Tammy sits down next to him. She takes a chip. They munch together. He puts his arm around her. He puts her head on his shoulder.

TAMMY

Who am I to judge you?

Music crescendos again.

She lifts her head and stares at Heavy T. They kiss.

Music, dancing, and kissing continues for a while.

Then Danny takes center stage.

DANNY

Bryson. This is for you.

(singing)

TAKE MY HAND, DON'T LET GO
HEAR MY SECRETS THAT NO ONE SHOULD
KNOW.
IF YOU'RE A FREAK, THAT'S WHAT I
NEED.
EVERYDAY CAN BE A CLEAN SLATE WITH
ME.

BRYSON

NEIGHBOR, SHARE IT WITH ME, I
PROMISE I WON'T SCREAM.
AND IF I DO, I DIDN'T MEAN IT TO BE
MEAN.
JUST TRY NOT TO FREAK ME OUT...

DANNY

THEN COME INTO MY-

COME INTO MY HEART-

COME INTO MY HEART AND SOUL

AND SET ME FREE... SET ME FREE...

COME INTO MY HEART AND SOUL.

Danny starts to dance dramatically. Bryson takes the challenge and dances back. Eventually both boys are dancing very closely to each other at the same time.

DANNY (CONT'D)

(shouting over the music)

Bryson. I have a confession to

make. I'm in love with you.

BRYSON

What?

DANNY

I'm in love with you!

BRYSON

What?

DANNY

I'm in love with you!

BRYSON

No. Shut up!

Bryson shoves Danny.

Debbie stops the music. All lights up.

Heavy T and Tammy stop kissing, cuddling, and eye-gazing.

DEBBIE

Bryson, that's not very nice.

JUDY

Not very nice. Tell your son to
stop coming on to my Bryson and we
can all be very nice again. Tell
him.

Debbie hesitates, unsure of what to do.

DANNY

Wait. No. I know this is weird...

Danny picks himself up again.

DANNY (CONT'D)

I'm all- ahhh... But I've liked you
ever since I can remember. Since
like the seventh grade. And I
thought, as long as we're all
coming out clean and stuff...

Danny punches Bryson's arm playfully.

BRYSON

What? Stop it. Don't touch me.

He shoves Danny harder.

Judy approaches- Debbie stops her.

DEBBIE

No. Let Danny deal with this. He's gonna have to deal with this.

DANNY

What? No, that wasn't like a "hey" touch. They was like a "hey" touch. I confessed so I thought we could just, like, hug this thing out and move on...

Danny reaches out for a hug and Bryson pushes him to the floor.

DANNY (CONT'D)

Umm... Just so you know. My
feelings for you are rapidly
receding.

Danny jumps off the ground and onto Bryson's back. They tumble and
begin to wrestle.

KIDS

Fight! Fight! Fight! Fight!

Heavy T stands in a hurry, but takes the time to help up Tammy and
lead her by the hand into the other room.

Danny and Bryson roll around on the ground.

DANNY

If you don't like me so much,
straddling me is a funny way of
showing it.

HEAVY T

Bryson! Danny!

Heavy T breaks it up. He pulls Danny off first.

HEAVY T (CONT'D)

Bryson. What is your problem?

ALL KIDS

Oooohhhh.

BRYSON

He tried to- I mean he said- Forget
it.

Bryson runs into Judy's arms and cries.

Debbie goes over to her son.

DANNY

Mom. I'm sorry, I'm so sorry. I
don't know what's wrong with me.

I'm sorry, I'm sorry, I'm sorry,
I'm sorry.

Debbie goes to her knees and sits facing her son. She holds his chin in her hand.

DEBBIE

Danny. You don't have to be sorry.
To anybody.

DANNY

But step three is repent, repent,
repent.

Debbie looks at Heavy T.

DEBBIE

Sometimes the steps don't make
sense. Sometimes you have to just
figure things out for yourself.
Right T?

HEAVY T

Right answer.

TAMMY

Ding.

Debbie holds onto her son and rocks him back and forth.

DANNY

Okay. Mom. This is a nice moment.

But I can't breathe.

DEBBIE

Yeah, I don't care. You're always
gonna be my little baby.

DANNY

Okay.

Lights out.

SCENE SIXTEEN

Projector lights up. Disco and colorful lights up. Culture Beat's "Mr. Vain"- now BEEN SAVED- plays. Each person takes turns forming a line centertage.

DEBBIE

(singing)

CALL HIM MR. SAVIOR,

CALL HIM MR. STRONG

DON'T TAKE HIS NAME IN VAIN

JUDY

(echoing)

IN VAIN, IN VAIN, IN VAIN

TAMMY

CALL HIM MR. SAVIOR, DON'T MATTER

WHEN WE'RE WRONG-

MONICA
OUR SINS ARE NOT IN VAIN

BRYSON
IN VAIN, IN VAIN, IN VAIN

HEAVY T
HERE WE GO NOW!

All come forward and move together in rhythmic synchrony.

ALL ON STAGE
I KNOW WHAT I WANT
AND I WANT IT NOW
I WANT YOU
I'M READY TO BE SAVED.

Kids spill out into the audience clapping, singing, trying to get everyone to join in.

ALL

YES I KNOW WHAT I WANT
AND I WANT IT NOW
I WANT YOU
I KNOW I CAN BE BEEN SAVED.

DANNY

NO ONE IS BORN PERFECT
NO ONE IS BORN WRONG
OUR SINS CAN MAKE US STRONG

HEAVY T

NO ONE WILL DIE PERFECT
NO ONE WILL DIE A SAINT
BUT WE CAN ALL BE SAVED

ALL

YES I KNOW WHAT I WANT
AND I WANT IT NOW
I WANT YOU
I KNOW I CAN BE SAVED

I KNOW WHAT I WANT AND I WANT IT
NOW
CAUSE I HAVE JUST BEEN SAVED.

Lights down.

CURTAIN CALL

The final song, House of Pain's "Jump Around" is now Heavy T's HUG AROUND. Actors enter a single spotlight one at a time; each actor performs their own little freak dance and the audience is encouraged to clap and even dance along.

THE END.

Appendix C: Final Lyrics for "Poisons"

A Christian remix by Sean Dunn;

Lyrics by Alexandra Thomas

Heavy T:

Heavy T is back. Scratching just for you. You ready for the rapture?

Yeah, me too.

Vocalist:

Yo, I must warn you.

A lot of vices coming to my mind. Situation is perilous...

When finding God,

it's hard to just chillwind.

Everything is so possible...

This relationship with Elah up above. Yeah...

But it's oh so difficult, the fear that you'll mess it all up.

So many things I shouldn't think are on my mind.

That's why it's hard for me to find.

A thought that's pure enough to share in my head.

Weird things, sex things, drug things. Those sins are poisons!

You gotta look past the bling and the smiles, those sins are poisons!

Heavy T (rapping):

Puh-puh-puh poisons. Puh-puh-poisons.
Cocaine, lidocaine, procaine, and X.
Rohypmnol, ketamine used to the best - for me.
But see, that was the old Heavy T.
He was a freak.
Still am, but I now rep for JC.
So if you see me today,
In the streets or on a stage,
While I break, or while I praise
Taking it to the next phase
You might notice
That I still have few little ticks
A little that, a little this
I might hit it, I might miss
But yo...
When I get the shakes
just a bit...
I don't reach for the hard stuff,
Yo... I just eat a chip.

(Break)

Puh-puh-puh poisons. Puh-puh-poisons. No more puh-puh-puh
poisons.
No more puh-puh-puh poisons.
No more puh-puh-puh poisons.

References

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- ³ *Downfall*, Dir. Oliver Hirschbiegel. (2004; Sony Pictures Home Entertainment, 2005 DVD).
- ⁴ *Do the Right Thing*, Dir. Spike Lee. (1989; The Criterion Collection, 2001 DVD).
- ⁵ *Life is Beautiful*, Dir. Roberto Benigni. (1997; Universum Film (UFA), 2003 DVD).
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VITA

Alexandra Thomas was born and raised in Frankfort, Kentucky. She found her passions for film and creative writing at Western Hills High School, and graduated with a Bachelor of Arts after studying Film Studies and English at the University of Kentucky in 2007.

Immediately thereafter, she headed deeper south to see what it would mean to hold a camera in her hands at the University of Texas at Austin. She dropped a lot of cameras, but continues to make movies anyway.

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This report was typed by the author.