

A Production of the One-Act Play
"July 7, 1994" by Donald Margulies

An Honors Creative Project (HONRS 499)

By

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Thesis Advisor
Dr. Rodger Smith

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Rodger Smith", written over a horizontal line.

Ball State University
Muncie, Indiana

December 2000

Expected Date of Graduation
December 2000

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“July 7, 1994”

By Donald Margulies

A Creative Project by Roya M. Kousari

Abstract

“July 7, 1994” by Donald Margulies was presented under the direction of Roya M. Kousari at Ball State University in the Cave (AC 007) February 17-20, 2000. “Final Placement” by Ara Watson was also presented under the direction of Erika Harrell. The following pages contain two textual analyses of the script as well as a reactionary essay about the directing process. Finally, there are selected documents from the actual production, including a program, poster, and production stills.

Acknowledgements

I would like to extend a sincere thank you to Dr. Rodger Smith, my thesis advisor, for his patience and guidance throughout this project. His critical evaluations and constructive criticism during the rehearsal process undoubtedly contributed to the success of the performances. He also exposed me to dimension of directing and techniques for analysis that have proven invaluable.

I would also like to thank Dr. Don LaCasse for his support of this project and Dr. Mark Hillenbrand for helping coordinate the rehearsal schedule, scripts, royalties, and other essential technicalities. Additionally, a special thanks to Erika Harrell for all her cooperation during this creative collaboration, to Cory Pippin for the production photos, Ehsan Kousari for the prints, and all of my family and friends for their support.

Last but not least, I could not go without thanking my phenomenal cast and crew and everyone else who assisted with this production. Their dedication and commitment to this project is what made it happen. Without them, there would just be words on a page. Thank you for bringing my concept for this show to life.

Scene Breakdown

- Scene 1: "Kate Starts to Feel the Pain" (Kate and Mark)
Scene 2: "Sorry for the Pain" (Kate and Senora)
Scene 3: "Ms. Pike Trying to Justify the Pain" (Kate and Ms. Pike)
Scene 4: "No Time for Respect" (Kate and Mr. Caridi)
Scene 5: "Don't forget you're a Mother" (Kate and Paula)
Scene 6: "A Mother's Pain" (Kate and Senora)
Scene 7: "Goodnight to a New Kate" (Kate and Mark)

Word Groupings

Family:

kids, children, mother, mom, father, mommy, grandchildren, daddy, baby

Violence:

blood, hit, smack, punch, drown, kill, sharp, pain, hurt, abuse, dead, mad, jealous, pushed, fight, rage, yelling, screaming, painful, burning, poison, die, death, mean-spirited, cruel

Power:

control, powerless, out of control, controllable

Fear:

Afraid, worried, scare, terrible

Memory:

Forget, remember, dream, think, understand

Destruction:

Broken, broke, break

Pleading:

Sorry, please, help

Reasoning Forces:

heart, time, truth

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Play Analysis

A. Important Terms and Statements

1. Given Circumstances

- a. **Geographical Location:** The play is set in a small northeastern city, close to New York City.
- b. **Date:** The action of the play takes place on July 7, 1994. Each scene is a progression through the day beginning at 6:42 a.m. and finally ending a short time after 10:06 p.m.
- c. **Economic Environment:** Kate and her husband Mark are middle to upper-middle class. Kate is a doctor, but works at a community health clinic that has minimal funding and is often short staffed. As Mark is working on his dissertation and the couple has a new baby with whom Mark stays home, money is clearly an issue for them. At the community health clinic where Kate works, the majority of her patients, who are the other characters in the play, are lower to lower-middle class families. Kate's entire relationship with any given patient is the result of the patient's inability to afford health care anywhere else.
- d. **Political Environment:** The current issue addressed in the play is the OJ Simpson trial. As such, the key political issues discussed throughout the play are justice, racism, and violence.
- e. **Social Environment:** The social environment is one of pure discouragement. Each patient Kate sees is like a second chance for her. Each scenario, however, ends with a negative tone. She is constantly trying to offer support and help her patients, but for one reason or another, she cannot reach them. Each time she gets knocked down, she picks herself back up. With each blow, however, it becomes even more difficult to go on to the next patient with hope and encouragement.
- f. **Religious Environment:** No references are made to religion.

2. **Atmosphere:** Tense. Kate is constantly put in challenging, uncomfortable situations.

3. **Subject:** Fear.

Through her relationships with her patients, Kate is forced to confront her own fears. Her patients illustrate the world she wants to protect her son from, a world separate from her own reality. Through interacting with them, however, she realizes that their reality is not unlike her own, and her patients share the same

fears and concerns. They are all struggling to survive in the same world of violence, pain, and turmoil.

4. **Theme:** It is impossible to hide yourself away from the dangers of the world. As Mark tells Kate in the first scene, “There’s nothing you can do. It’s out there. It’s not gonna go away.” Inevitably, we all reach the moment when we are forced to confront our fears.

B. Structural Terms

1. Plot

Mark wakes Kate up from a terrible nightmare in which she envisions their son drowning in a pool of blood. Kate feels helpless, as she is unable to save him. Mark calms her nerves but reassuring her that it’s not just her, he has bad dreams about their son too. Kate suggests getting rid of the television as the remedy. Mark, however, protests that getting rid of the television does not eliminate what is out there in the real world.

Kate goes on to work to have challenging visits with four patients: an Hispanic woman who speaks no English and is separated from her, a pregnant woman in an abusive relationship, a middle-aged manic depressive, and a young mother with AIDS. In each situation, Kate is forced to deal with issues that seem foreign and disconnected from her own life. In her second meeting with the Hispanic mother, however, she discovers that Senora Soto has had the same dream about her children that she had about her son. This discovery shows Kate that she is not so unlike her patients.

In the last scene, Kate returns home to her husband after an incredibly long day at the clinic. She jealously inquires about the day Mark had with their son. The “typical day” at the clinic has gotten to her. Kate breaks down, crying in the comfort of her husband’s embrace.

2. Root Conflict: Kate vs. Her Patients

Kate would prefer to go about her life as she always has, believing that her patients’ lives are in no way similar to her own. Realizing that she is not unlike them is admitting that the things she fears the most, pain, violence, and disease, are closer to home than she ever realized. Facing her patients is facing her fears.

3. Root Action Statement

- a. **protagonist:** Kate
- b. **protagonist’s objective:** to protect her son
- c. **protagonist’s action:** attempts to make the world a better place through healing
- d. **antagonist:** Patients
- e. **antagonist objective:** to show Kate that she is not unlike them
- f. **antagonist action:** the patients disclose personal information
- g. **resolution:** when Senora Soto reveals that she had the same dream that Kate had, Kate realizes her own fears and that she is more connected to her patients than she thought

4. Significant Structural Moments

- a. **Inciting Incident:** Scene 1 – Kate reveals how panic-stricken and powerless her nightmare about Matthew made her feel.
- b. **Crisis:** Scene 5 - Paula asserts, “you don’t know shit. You don’t know nothing.” Kate is forced to question herself and her bond with her patients.
- c. **Catastrophe:** Scene 6 - Senora Soto’s urgent entrance and ensuing description of her pain and vision establish that a resolution must come soon.
- d. **Climax:** Scene 6 – “The pain is fear.” Upon hearing Senora Soto’s pleas, Kate realizes that not only is Senora’s pain fear, but her own pains are from the fear of losing her child as well.
- e. **Denouement:** Scene 7 – Kate’s breakdown to tears and Mark comforting her by telling her the story “Goodnight Moon.”

C. Character Analysis

1. Kate

- a. **Function:** norm
- b. **Motive:** to achieve self actualization

2. Mark

- a. **Function:** confidant, raisonneur, norm
- b. **Motive:** to support Kate and provide encouragement

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The Arc of the Play

Through analyzing the text, specific word patterns begin to emerge in the play “July 7, 1994”. The two images that are most prominent are those of violence and children. These are clearly the opposing forces. In an abstract fashion, he creates images that depict children lost to violence.

With the beginning scene, Margulies established the tone of the entire show. Kate, the protagonist, is awakened from a terrifying dream about losing her son as the house becomes a pool of blood. The images of flooding, blood, and drowning are recalled several times throughout the show. Specifically, the image of the flood of red blood is seen again in scene 6 when Senora Soto reveals that she has had the same dream. The violent connotation is clear.

Most apparent, however, is Margulies examination of domestic violence. As July 7, 1994 was a critical moment in the OJ Simpson trial, it is a dominant theme throughout the play. Most notable is scene three. Ms. Pike is a black woman with strong views about the trial. She does not say Simpson is innocent, but insists that it is an issue of race and the cops had no right to obtain evidence in the way that they did. Coincidentally, Pike happens to be in an abusive relationship herself. While she worries about the well being of her children, Pike asserts that things are simply the way they have to be.

Through discussion of the OJ Simpson trial and the specific situations that each patient is in, Margulies addresses not only domestic violence, but also the violence that is so dominant in all aspects of our society. A perfect illustration of this is scene five. As the

scene begins, Paula, a mother with AIDS, is telling Kate about taking her daughter to see the movie Lion King. Paula is dumbfounded by how emotional she reacts to the death of Simba's father. Paula recalls that she held her daughter close as she cried. Violence is often viewed in conjunction with death. Watching the violent death of a cartoon father drew Paula's attention to her own death and upon disclosing her emotions, Kate forces Paula to question what will happen to her children when she dies.

Not only are these themes well illustrated, but Kate's progression and development throughout the play is well defined. Kate clearly goes through an emotional journey that changes her forever. In scene one, she's just a mother who wants to protect her child. Through her interaction with her patients, she discovers not only who they are, but also who she is. It is only through the dissection of patients who are virtually strangers that Kate is able to discover her own fears and pain, the emotions that she was previously blind too.

When each scene Kate shares with a patient comes to an end, it seems to bring temporary closure to the play. With each of these visits, she has a small piece of her shell shredded away, revealing her honest emotions and leaving her a little more vulnerable. It is not until the second scene with Senora Soto, however, that she is completely exposed. It is at this point that Kate truly sees her self and her fears staring back through the eyes of her patient. Upon her arrival home, it is in this unveiled state that Kate finally loses her composure and breaks down in the arms of her husband.

Kate explains in the last scene that it was just the typical day, but for some reason it got to her. To the audience, it is clear that today was not just "another day". Kate connected with her patients in a way she had never done before. For the first time, she

was able to see that her life is not unlike that of the patients she sees on a daily basis. The pains she feels and fears she holds are universal.

This is clearly the message Margulies wants to communicate to his audience. Our most fundamental fears and hopes are universal. No one is immune to them, regardless of who you are. Violence is a fear that binds us all, just as the hope for a better future for our children binds us together.

Through the characters in this play, Margulies illustrates the myriad of troubles that plague our society. Through the commonalties of the situations, however, he demonstrates that as different as every situation is, common ground can still be found. It is impossible to stay immune to the societal issues that surround us on a daily basis. Through the search for common ground, however, we can discover the bonds that can save us from drowning alone.

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Reactionary Essay

At the completion of the rehearsal period and performances, my initial reaction was relief that it was finally over. Now, I look back at the experience somewhat regretfully. I have no doubt that we, as a company, produced a fine show. There is still, however, the discomfort of knowing now that there are things that could have been done differently to create an even better final product.

The most valuable knowledge I take with me from this project is the realization that a detailed, explicit analysis of the text is a crucial factor in determining the quality of the final product. It is impossible to create a truly solid production without making very specific choices. These choices are the result of thorough analysis and research. These choices, and consequently all research and analysis, need to be completed before ever walking into the theatre.

The directing process is one that starts long before the auditions are held. This is especially true in a small venue with minimal technical support. Being responsible for not only the standard directing elements, but also technical elements such as props, costumes and so on, became somewhat overwhelming. If I had planned things more carefully prior to auditions and rehearsals, however, these jobs would have been far more manageable and less of a burden.

Additionally, I found myself falling into very cliché beginning director traps. For instance, initially, I was reading the text too literally. With a dramatic play, it is important

to find humor. This is a significant element in keeping the audience interested and engaged. This is especially true during the opening scenes of a show.

Finally, this project has taught me more about working with others. Everyone has different styles of communication and understanding. I now have a better understanding of how I communicate and realize that it takes a lot of patience to work with people who are not necessarily on the same level as you.

Similarly, you can only push so hard. Actors have their limits too. As a director, you do what you can to get your actors to your certain desired level. You have to be tuned in and aware of these limitations, however. If they are not capable of reaching the level you are striving for, you simply have to count your loses and commend them for the work that they are able to accomplish.

Directing this show has certainly proven beneficial for me. The experience has taught me valuable lessons that will certainly play large roles in my next directing project. I am certainly more aware of the types of choices I'm most likely to make as well as the mistakes I most need to guard myself against. This project has unquestionably brought me a step closer to truly developing my own directing style.

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"July 7, 1994"
Synopsis of Spanish Scenes

Scene Two

Senora Soto, highly distressed, comes to see Kate to inform her of a pain in her heart. Language barriers prevent Kate from understanding this pain. Senora rants about the poor condition of her neighborhood and discloses that her mother dies of a broken heart after losing a child. She then adds that she misses her children, who live in Puerto Rico with her grandmother. She thinks that her children have better opportunities in Puerto Rico and financially supports them through cleaning offices in the U.S. since she cannot afford to live with them in Puerto Rico. Kate suggests that depression may be the source of the pain and offers to prescribe anti-depressants, which infuriates Senora. Senora refuses to go to the hospital for a stress test, insisting that she is not crazy. She then explains she does not need a psychiatrist to understand that her life is hard. She leaves feeling unfulfilled and angry.

Scene Six

Senora rushes into Kate's office, terribly upset, informing Kate that the pain has returned. She explains that while resting she had a terrible vision. Her heart started pounding in her chest, blood flowed from every orifice and the room filled with blood. The furniture floated out of the window and she could hear her children crying, but she could not find them. The waves of blood were so strong that she drowned in her own blood. She is terrified that she is going to die, thinking that this vision is a foreshadowing of what will happen to her. She begs Kate not to take her children away from her. She then explains that she can't sleep because she has conversations in her head with her children. Her pain is overwhelming as she asks Kate what she can do. Kate, taken by the parallel to her own dream, explains that the pain is fear. Senora pleads for help.

"Final Placement"
by Ara Watson

and

"July 7, 1994"
by Donald Marguiles

February 17-20, 2000

Produced by special arrangement with Dramatist's
Play Service, Inc.

Ball State University • College of Fine Arts
Department of Theatre and Dance

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"Final Placement"
by Ara Watson

PRODUCTION STAFF

Director.....Erika L. Harrell
Stage Manager.....Holly Carr
Assistant Stage ManagerMegan Goodier

CAST

Mary Hanson.....Heidi L. Nees
Luellen James.....Taylor Burris

SETTING

Mary Hanson's social work office on a warm, late
September afternoon.

The directors, cast and crew of both shows would like to
thank the following individuals for their help and
contributions to the success of these productions:
Dr. LaCasse, Mark Hillenbrand, Roger Smith, Judy
Yordon, Doug Noble, Kathy Biesinger, Kristen Gillon,
Pam Harrell, Nathan Erdel, Wade Alberty, Cory
Pippin and the members of *Reflex*.

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"July 7, 1994"
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PRODUCTION STAFF

Director.....Roya M. Kousari
Stage Manager.....Holly Carr
Assistant Stage Manager.....Megan Goodier

CAST

Kate.....Kathy Burns
Mark.....R. Kyle Kellam
Senora Soto.....Carrie Lydon
Ms. Pike.....LaTina McGhee
Mr. Caridi.....Nathan Erdel
Paula.....Cheryl Anderson

SETTING

Scene 1	6:42 a.m.	Kate & Mark's bedroom
Scene 2	9:25 a.m.	the examination room
Scene 3	12:08 p.m.	the examination room
Scene 4	3:53 p.m.	the examination room
Scene 5	6:10 p.m.	the examination room
Scene 6	9:12 p.m.	the examination room
Scene 7	10:05 p.m.	Kate & Mark's living room

This production serves as Roya M. Kousari's Honor's Thesis



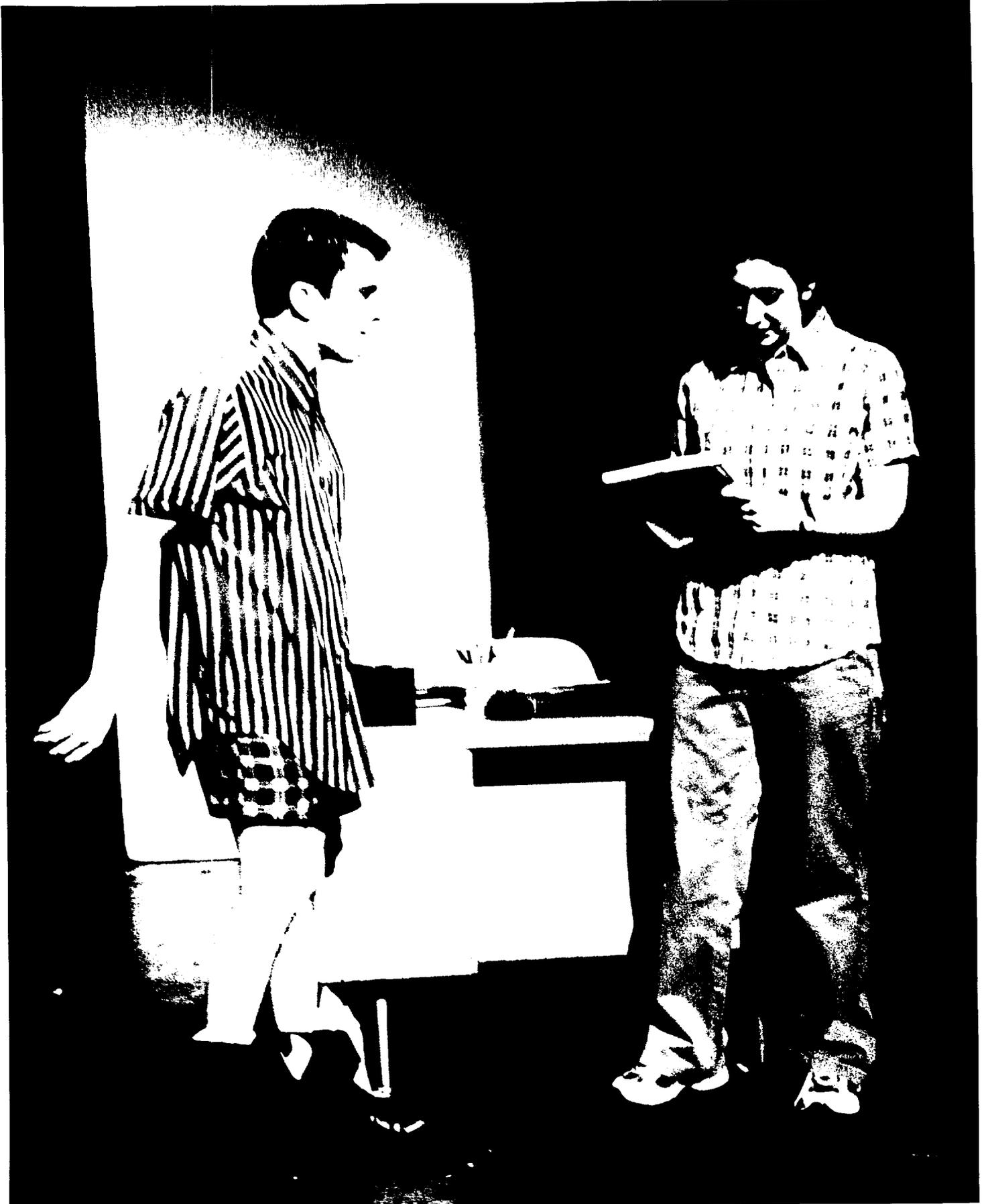
Scene 1: Kate, played by Kathy Burns, attempts to pursue Mark, played by Kyle Kellam, to get rid of the television set because she thinks it's the key to ending their nightmares.



Scene 2: Kate, played by Kathy Burns, tries to explain “outside” to Senora Soto, played by Carrie Lydon, by pointing out the window. Lydon’s dialogue was almost entirely in Spanish.



Scene 3: LaTina McGhee, in the role of Ms. Pike tells Kate, played by Kathy Burns, the inside real story behind the OJ Simpson trial as she heard it waiting in line at the Stop 'n Shop.



Scene 4: In a fit of rage, Nathan Erdel, as Mr. Caridi, accuses Kate, played by Kathy Burns, of having no compassion when she refuses to examine him after his inappropriate gesture of dropping his pants.



Scene 5: Kathy Burns, in the role of Kate, confronts Paula, played by Cheryl Anderson, stressing the seriousness of her condition. Paula is a mother living with AIDS who must make a plan explaining what to do with her children when she dies.