

Hostage Song

The New Scottish Play

as imagined by Skippy

Based on the play by Clay McLeod Chapman
with music & lyrics by Kyle Jarrow.

Author's Note:

The play takes place on a mostly empty stage. A platform represents the black hole of theatre, that prison cell from which no person escapes and no intelligence can penetrate. This play might be a parody or it might not. One thing is certain. If you have ever done theatre you will recognize these people. Unless you completely lack self-awareness (and if you do theatre it's likely you do) you will also recognize yourself. And . . . all typos are intentional. So there! Gale! Now sush.

Light ups on the stage. The band has finally arrived and is on stage tuning up and drinking beer. They are on a platform upstage centre. Downstage centre is another platform with two chairs and a white board on wheels. A few props and costume pieces lay scattered on the stage along with an empty beer bottle. Noise is heard from backstage. Indistinct grumbling and the clatter of equipment. The Stage Manager enters from upstage left with a beer in his hand and a bad attitude.

The Stage Manger looks the situation over with disapproval. He walks over to the beer bottle and picks it up.

Beat.

Stage Manger:

Fuck it. Let the actors pick their own shit up. Bitches. *(He drops the beer bottle. When it hits the floor the band begins to play.)*

Song: **I Flew Across the Ocean**

Stage Manager:

I flew across the ocean
and boy are my arms tired.
Why am I doing theatre?
I thought I had retired.
I don't need this shit.
It's not worth it.
Theatre don't make me money
and it don't get me no pussy.

I thought it couldn't get worse

but I was wrong.
Turns out there is a curse
on Hostage Song.
Everything's going wrong.
Nobody knows why.
The only thing that's left
is for someone to die.

Why did I agree to do this show?
I miss my Friday nights so.
Why do I put up with this shit.
It's so not worth it.

Stage Manger and Actors:

Why did we agree to do this show?
We miss our Friday nights so.
The Gods should have given us some signs.

Stage Manger (*turning to actors*):

And learn your fucking lines.

Will you get your ass on stage
and do your blocking right
or else I am gonna
have to beat you with a stick.

Stage Manager and Actors:

If you are not going to be
at the theatre on time
call me or text me
or I'm gonna beat you with a stick.

If you can't stay awake while
running the light board then I am
gonna lick your face and then
beat you with a stick.

Don't tell me your problems.
I'm not your therapist and
I don't give a fuck but I
will beat you with a stick.

BO

Scene One

Jim and Jennifer are revealed. They each have script in their hands and are running lines.

Jennifer:
Your turn.

Jim:
No, it's your turn.

Jennifer:
No. It's your line.

Jim:
But I just said “no”.

Jennifer:
Yea but you have another “no”

Jim:
Another “no”.

Jennifer:
Yes.

Jim:
Yes? Or is it no?

Jennifer:
Yes, it's no.

Jim:
I don't know.

Jennifer:
No it is. Yes.

Jim:
Yes it's not?

Jennifer:
No. I mean yes. I mean your line is “no”.

Jim:
Where are we?

Jennifer:
Top of page two. I say “your blindfold” and you say “no” then I say “my blindfold” then you say “no” again.

Jim:

Oh. I was on page 35. Hard to tell the difference really considering this play is just random words arranged by a drunken woodchuck.

Jennifer:

Don't blame me. I didn't write it.

Jim:

Didn't say you did.

Beat

Okay. So what's our motivation in this scene?

Jennifer:

Teeth?

Jim:

No

Jennifer:

Clouds?

Jim:

No

Jennifer:

Fruit of the Looms?

Jim:

Getting into them or out of them?

Jennifer (*ignoring the attempt to shift the conversation to sex*):

Light bulbs?

Jim:

How can light bulbs be a motivation?

Jennifer:

I don't know. This is my first play. I have no idea what I'm doing. Maybe there isn't any motivation.

Jim:

Maybe there is. Maybe there isn't.

Jennifer:

Well I'm not going to just sit here and guess what my motivation is. I thought The Director was suppose to tell me these things. I'm not acting any more.

Jim:

You haven't acted so far. You've just been getting all gripey.

Jennifer:

Gripey? Am I an Artistic Director now?

Jim:

Hey I didn't cast you in this play. You auditioned.

Beat

Jennifer:

So say there is motivation . . .

Jim:

. . . which there is.

Jennifer:

Is it . . . being famous?

Jim:

No.

Jennifer:

Getting \$25 for 5 months of my life?

Jim:

No.

Jennifer:

Getting laid?

Jim:

Warmer.

Jennifer:

Getting screwed?

Jim:

Getting warmer.

Jennifer:

Making all sorts of sacrifices in my life to act in a play that reads like the bastard child of David Mamet and Samuel Beckett for audiences of blue haired old people who show up late to the theatre, are half-ass deaf and don't understand what's going on?

Jim:

Irrelevant.

Jennifer:
You're making this so unbelievably impossible.

Jim:
Wouldn't be community theatre if it were easy. Or paid.

Jennifer:
That's it. I'm asking.

Jennifer stands to walk off stage.

Jim:
Don't.

Jennifer:
Why?

Jim:
You can't ask The Director.

Jennifer:
Can if I want to.

Jim:
If you ask him he will talk for an hour about obscure character details no one cares about or understands.

Long beat.

Jennifer:
My motivation would be . . . nothing.

Jim:
Nothing?

Jennifer:
Nothing. My character doesn't really exist.

Jim:
You can't – you can't make your character not exist.

Jennifer:
I can do whatever I want to do with my character. My character is just a figment of your character's imagination. So there.

Jim:

But that's not fair.

Jennifer:
Oh – first I'm gripey and now I'm not playing fair.

Jim:
You can't just make your character imaginary.

Jennifer:
Who says I can't.

Jim:
Me!

Jennifer:
Well you aren't The Director.

Jim:
But . . .

Jennifer:
No. Rehearsal over.

Jim:
But . . .

Jennifer:
Done!

Beat

Jim:
Dead.

Jennifer:
What?

Jim:
My character is already dead when the play starts. And laying in a bed of melted marshmallows.

Jennifer:
Marshmallows?

Jim:
Put them in my soup.

Jennifer:
I love marshmallows.

Scene Two

Lights come up on The Director at stage left. At stage right various actors come on stage, deliver their lines, then exit.

The Director:

All I want is for people to show up and take the play seriously. Is that too much to ask?

Director:

Why is it so difficult to think about your character and find some motivation for what the character would do?

When you move across the stage the movement has to be motivated by something. Don't just wander around like a lost puppy. Have a reason to go there and if you don't have a reason to go there then don't go there. Stay where you are. Plant yourself.

Work on your cue pickup. Don't pause between the lines.

I want you to enter from stage right.

Don't rush the lines. Make sure the audience can hear what you are saying. Project out and be clear.

You should be entering from stage left.

We have to hear the vocals in the song. Tell a story with the words. Don't just sing them, communicate with them.

Something something something Jennifer something.

Why are you sitting on the file cabinet?

Oh. Then sit on the file cabinet.

Actor 1:

I was going to do the show but I got a paying gig. And I'm a diva. And kinda bitchy. You can tell from the way I keep my nose in the air.

Actor 2:

I was going to do the show but I found out my bother might get sick and if he gets sick then he might need me to take care of him. That and I didn't actually read the play before accepting the part and I don't really like the play or the role.

Actor 3:

I was going to do the show but my dog is having an existentialist crisis. And the cat ate my script.

Actor 4:

I was going to do the show but my grandmother has to have an operation.

Actor 5:

I was going to do the show but I'm insane and neurotic. Besides, I think I'm more cut out to be an Artistic Director than an actor.

Stage Manager (*from the booth*):

He's sitting on the file cabinet because you told him to sit on the file cabinet. See, I wrote it in my script and underlined it twice.

Lights shift for next song. Voice are heard from up in the control booth.

Stage Manager:
Who are you?

Light Board Operator:
I'm the new light board op.

Stage Manger:
Oh fuck me.

Sound of a beer bottle being opened and the cap hitting the floor.

Song: Beat You With A Stick

Frontman:

Don't be scared now Jenny baby.
Drama is easy though there maybe
hard times learning your lines
when the script makes no sense
and the SM wants to beat you with a stick.

Jennifer:

When I was confused
about all this theatrical shit
I'd ask the SM
and he would say "don't worry about it".
And he was never wrong.
Just make up lines
until I get to the next song.
Here I am and now it's time to sing.
I may have to phone it in. Ring, ring.
And I try desp'rat'ly to
remember the lyrics that I need.

Jennifer and Frontman:

Learn your fucking lines now Jenny
or I will beat you with a stick.
Here are your Nazi Line Notes. Read them
and try to learn your fucking lines.

Jennifer:

Whenever I forget

what my next line is I call for "line".
The SM makes a note.
I know I'm gonna hear about it later.
He is gonna give me shit.
But I don't care 'bout it.
'Cause he can totally kiss my white ass.
Every week I'm playing a new role.
This production is killing my soul.
Still I keep showing up 'cause
I have lost my sanity so . . .

Jennifer and Frontman:

Learn your fucking lines now Jenny
or I will beat you with a stick.
Here are your Nazi Line Notes. Read them
and try to learn your fucking lines.

Scene Three

Song ends. Voices are heard from the booth and behind the audience.

Follow Spot Operator:
So I was checking out this girl at the book store and handling her items . . .

Stage Manger:
Handling her items? Isn't that sexual harassment?

Light Board Operator:
(*To Follow Spot Operator*) Quiet! No talking!

Lights up on stage.

Jennifer:
Hey there . . .

Jim:
Hey. So is the Stage Manger on this show an asshole? They usually are.

Jennifer:
Yea, but I can kick his ass at arm wrestling so fuck 'im. Who are you?

Jim:
I'm the actor playing Jim.

Jennifer:
No you aren't.

Jim:

Yes I am. I'm the new actor playing Jim.

Jennifer:

Oh. What happened to the other guy?

Jim:

I don't know. Got sand in his pussy. Had to wax his back. Who knows.

Jennifer:

So you're the new Jim?

Jim:

Yup. Oh – before I forget I need your help with something.

Jennifer:

Sure thing.

Jim:

Could we go over the blocking notes together.

Jennifer:

I don't take blocking notes.

Jim:

You don't?

Jennifer:

I don't write anything down. I don't even bring a pencil to rehearsal with me. In fact I don't show up on time for rehearsal. Sometimes I don't even show up for rehearsal.

Jim:

Oh.

Jennifer:

Oh.

Jim:

Well that's funny 'cause -

Jim and Jennifer together:

I don't write anything down either.

Jim:

Yea. How'd you guess?

Jennifer:

Oh you know. Actors.

Jim:
Yea, actors.

Jennifer:
We've got all these people trying to help us. They will run lines with us and give directing and acting notes and do all this for free. Well, for \$25 which is more insulting than free depending on how you look at it. We have the theatre and the audience and the other actors counting on us to do our part and contribute to the play to make it a success. Yet we still just walk around with our heads up our asses. Isn't that horrible?

Jim:
No.

Jennifer:
But isn't that arrogant, condescending and self-centred?

Jim:
Not when you really are better than everyone else.

Song: Only Suggestions

Frontman:

I can see you there
but I'm unaware
of the notes you're giving me
because I don't need your advice.
I can act perfectly.

And I know what time
my call is at
but I show up
when I want to show up
and that's the way
it is forever going to be.

And I know my ego is huge.
I know you want to have sex with me.
I'm so fucking talented
you can suntan in my glory.
I am so damn good
that you know you should
stay out of my way
and let me do and say
what I want to do and say.

Jim:

You know the script
is nothing if
not a suggestion.
Especially when the script
really sucks ass like this one.

What the hell is going on?
Who the hell wrong this song?
The timing and melody
are incomprehensible.
And I'm sure it's not just me.
Whom ever is responsible

Jim and Frontman:

should be beaten with a fucking stick.

And I know you mean well
when you are trying to tell
me why the blocking don't work
and what I could do to
make the lines make sense.
But what I will do
is to ignore you
and do what I want to do.
I will just ignore you.
I will just ignore you.
I will just ignore you.
I will just ignore you.
Go ahead and talk to the hand.

Scene Four

Jim:

So. Come here often?

Jennifer:

What?

Jim:

Can I ask what a woman like is you doing in a dive like this?

Jennifer:

What a woman “like is you” . . . ?

Jim:

That's how it's written in the script. Here look. Page 20. Right there. "Like is you."

Jennifer:

Wow. Who wrote this crap?

Jim:

Some marshmallow.

Jennifer:

No one proof read it either.

Jim:

Well it's theatre. Most playwrights aren't really literate. Ever heard of Samuel Beckett?

Jennifer:

No. Should I?

Jim:

No. So. Ya wanna screw?

Jennifer:

What?

Jim:

I said, can I ask what a woman like is you doing in a dive like this?

Jennifer:

Had some time on my hands, so I auditioned and now I'm the actress playing Jessica.

Jim:

No you aren't. You aren't playing Jessica.

Jennifer:

I am now.

Jim:

What happened to the other actress playing Jessica?

Jennifer:

Oh I don't know. Theatre took her sanity. Her will to live. Her sunshiny outlook on life. Now she just sits in a corner and talks to herself.

Jim:

Same boat here. Theatre took my dignity, my free time, my life. I don't stay sober much any more.

Jennifer:

Likewise.

Jim:
So. What're you drinking. Jennifer.

Jennifer:
Water.

Jim:
Just water?

Jennifer:
For now. Stage Manger will have a hissy fit if I drink anything other than water when I'm in costume.

Jim:
Oh don't worry about him. He's out in the lobby hitting on girls anyway. So. You wanna run some lines together?

Jennifer:
Oh – Jim. Jim – you know you're like the fourth or fifth “actor” to try that one on me?

Jim:
Oh.

Jennifer:
“Wanna run some lines together.”

Jim:
So much for originality.

Jennifer:
At least the last one was gullible enough to take me out and spend money on me at the bar first.

Jim:
Forgot to be your tool, didn't I?

Jennifer:
Yeah . . .

Jim:
Always something.

Jennifer:
Where's your credit card Jim? You gotta spend money on me before I reject you.

Jim:
So how much money did the last guy spend?

Jennifer:

Couple of thousand.

Jim:
That much eh?

Jennifer:
He was my previous Director.

Jim:
Oh.

Jennifer:

I got the part by putting out. It was all suppose to be routine. Just show up for the audition. Belt out some half ass monologue to show them I can talk. Get a call back. Do a reading from the play. Glare at the other women at the call back and call them “bitch” under my breath. Let them all know they aren't important compared to me.

Showing up for the call back there was no one there but me and him. I wanted to ask “where are the other actors?” Not that I need them of course. I'm a diva. One woman show. Right here.

At first I thought he spat on me 'cause I'm into that kinky stuff. Felt this wet burst spray my face so I just opened my mouth and closed my eyes. I'm left with this warmth running down my chin. Dripping off my nose.

When I was a kid I thought I was gonna have to get an education. Get a real job. Actually do things. But then my parents told me that as long as I had one of these I could get as much money as I wanted. I could harden a man into an ATM just like that. Stiffens in seconds. Suddenly my rent is paid, I've got a new dress and I'm being taken out to dinner.

Me – I love leaving the crust just the way it is. Letting everyone else in the cast and crew know that I'm gonna get my way. Whatever I want. They don't matter at all compared to me.

It's been three days since I last had a bath. Smells like three days. Maybe more. I don't know . . . His cum has become brittle. Crackles across my cheeks, my forehead. Whenever I open my mouth, I can feel it crumbling along the lining of my lips and I catch it with my tongue.

Then I think about how am I going to get the upper hand in this production? How am I gonna establish my superiority over all the other bitches in this cast? How am I going to feed my never satiated ego? How am I going to get my kicks?

Jim takes a few steps back from Jennifer.

Jim:
Thanks for sharing. And here I thought you had a skin condition.

Jennifer:
No problem. So you married?

Jim:

Yes.

Jennifer:

Children?

Jim:

Three. One of each.

Jennifer:

I wouldn't mind kids one day. So long as I don't have to spend too much time with them. But hey, we're still having fun here. And you still owe me a drink.

Jim:

I do?

Jennifer:

Of course. I have one of these. Spend money on me you stupid tool.

Song: **Perfect One**

Jennifer:

Mother said "Don't worry
if some people call you slut
'cause they're just mad you've
got a huhu that let's you get your way.
You are perfect" she said.

Now I'm here in the real world
and my vagina don't always work
to get me what I want.
There are too many gay men in theatre
and my huhu has no effect on them.

But my mother's words
they warm my soul
and they boost my ego.

I am the perfect one.
I am a diva and
I'm the best actress and
when I'm on the stage I am all
the rage and no one
can take their eyes off of me.
I am a goddess and
you know you want me and

I'm gonna use my huhu and
I'm gonna get the lead you bitch.

Jim:

Sure they make fun of me
for hitting on every girl
I see but I really need
to get laid cause I've got lots
of frustration and way too much energy.
I don't even care if she looks good.

'Cause like my mother said
It's not over 'til the fat lady sings.
And I'd even hit that shit.

I am the perfect one.
I love my penis and
I want you to love it too.
When I get a hard-on I can't
remember my lines
and my blocking I forget.
Masturbation is
getting old and I really
need to get up in some hot and wet.
I need to get up in that.
I need to get up in that shit.

At the end of the song Jim and Jennifer go behind the whiteboard and start making out. Lights come up on one of the female ensemble performers as lights go down on the cell.

Actress:

The moment I remember most is agreeing to do the show before reading the script. They needed someone at the last moment. It was a week before opening. I figured how hard could it be? It's an ensemble part. Like Guard Number Three in a Shakespeare play. Walk on stage and say "A message my Lord." Hand over a piece of paper. Exit.

Then I got the script. And it's this long rambling monologue that doesn't make much sense in some parts and goes on forever. It's like the playwright was blindfolded, spun around three times and then wobbled off searching desperately for a donkey.

I'm just standing there on an empty stage trying to find motivation and bring life into these words that wrap around in circles and make noise without saying anything. Does this contribute something to the play? Does it further the audience's understanding? Does anything I say make sense to anyone? Do they even know who my character is? I have to wonder about these things. I'm just droning on and on and on . . .

This looks familiar to me. Is this a Beckett play?

The Stage Manager keeps telling me to “learn your fucking lines”. I'd like to see him learn these fucking lines. To hell with this shit. I'm just gonna phone it in.

I've spent the entire week before opening night stressing over this part. Trying to wrap my mind around this character, such as it is, and find a way to make this bucket of word vomit make sense. There is no one to play off. No props to use. No blocking to convey meaning. It's just me standing there all by myself with blah blah blah coming out of my mouth.

I got a mess of lines. I've got stage time. I've got the audience's attention. What I don't have is motivation. Must be time to phone it in.

No amount of analysis will explain to me why I agreed to do this.

Ring. Ring. Ring.

Jim comes out from behind the whiteboard.

Song: **I Had A Life Once**

Jim:

I had a life once.
At least I think I did.
I went out with friends
for a drink or ten.
I did not
spend all day learning lines.
I did not
have to go to rehearsal five nights a week.

Frontman and Jim:

I am so the shit.
At least I thought I was.
But I quickly learned
I was wrong because
The Director
wants my lines and blocking off book.
The Stage Manager
wants me to show up on time and stop fucking off.

So tell your children the truth isn't good.
Theatre is hell and nothing works out like it should.
Don't tell them they will get laid every show or they could
be a star.
Not a chance.

Unless
you kiss the right ass.

Scene Six

Jennifer:

Jim. Hey. Psst. Jim. What are ya doing?

Jim:

Working on my lines. Hey, what are you doing here?

Jennifer:

I'm playing Jennifer.

Jim:

No, the other girl is playing Jennifer.

Jennifer:

Now I'm playing Jennifer again.

Jim:

You're back?

Jennifer:

Yea. So is The Director here yet?

Jim:

Yea. We've all been here for an hour. So you are gonna stick it out?

Jennifer:

Oh yea. I'm totally committed to this production.

Jim:

You got your lines down?

Jennifer:

Nope.

Jim:

You got your blocking down?

Jennifer:

Nope.

Jim:

You got time to get together outside of rehearsal and work lines and blocking?

Jennifer:

Nope.

Jim:

You gonna show up for rehearsal tomorrow?

Jennifer:

Maybe.

Jim:

Are you sure you are committed?

Jennifer:

Fuck you.

Jim:

I'm just sayin' is all.

Jennifer:

You're a jerk.

Jim:

Can't help it if you can't tell the difference between commitment and flakiness.

Jennifer:

Asshole. I'm a diva.

Jim and Jennifer both laugh. They sit in silence.

Jennifer:

So can I ask you to do something for me?

Jim:

You name it.

Jennifer:

Can I get any changes that happened while I was gone from you.

Jim:

No.

Jennifer:

No? Why not?

Jim:

I don't write anything down. But I do remember that The Director said "something something something Jennifer something". And "do more of that" and "make that bigger" and "make that faster

but don't rush it.”

Lights up on the Stage Manager.

Stage Manager:

Sound carries differently when you are talking to actors. As the sound waves approach their heads they shift in the frequency spectrum. The density of the actor brain is such that it warps the sound waves. In some cases it even bends light. It's like being an adult in one of those Peanuts animated TV shows. I say “learn your fucking lines” and all the actors hear is “whomp whomp whomp whomp.”

Song: **Never Learn My Lines**

Jim:

I get so lonely
on nights I have only
my fantasies
and blow up doll.

I'm keepin' alive
for a role that gets
me laid and has
a plot that I can
understand.

Jim and Jennifer:

And if The Director begins to crack
and if the future is looking black.
Say no-ho.
No-ho
I ain't never learnin' lines.

As long as this here play is cursed
I won't do things the way we rehearsed.
Say no-ho.
No-ho

(Don't sing here Jim, there isn't a line here.)

Jennifer:

I had no idea
what I was in for.
I hope I can drink
enough to forget.

Jennifer and Jim:

We don't need to warm up
or get in character
to do the show.
We just fuck around
before the show.

And if I speed through my lines too fast
and I can't make the moment last.
Say no-ho.
No-ho.

I ain't never learnin' lines.

We don't have to sing in harmony.
We can be in a different key.
Say no-ho.
No-ho.
Despite the curse that is
on this production
we'll never learn lines.

Ahhhh.
Ahhhh.

Jim:

We are never learning lines.
We are never learning lines.
We are never never never never never never never . . .

Spoken word.

Jim:

What is this shit? How does this go? What, I don't repeat myself enough in this play? Now I have to say "never" seventy fucking times in a row?

Musical Director:

We are gonna change this part so it sucks less.

Jim:

Are you sure? Could we make it suck more? That would be great.

Musical Director:

The music is "in development".

Back to singing.

Jim and Jennifer:

The music is different every night
but everything will be all right.
Say no-ho.
No-ho.

I ain't never leanin' lines.

The Hostage Song Curse is closing in.
Some thing's about to go wrong again.
Say no-ho.
No-ho.
I do the chicken dance.
On the stage I prance.

And never learn no lines.

Scene Seven

Lights shift as Jim and Jennifer are joined on stage by ensemble performers playing Jennifer's mother and father.

Mom:
Who's ready for more mashed potatoes?

Jim:
I am. I never turn down free food. Thanks for asking. And could you get me another beer?

Mom:
Oh course Jim.

Jim:
And make sure it's open by the time it gets here this time.

Dad:
That's the attitude Jim-boy. Hey, do you know what a woman does after dinner?

Jim:
Sure don't.

Dad:
The dishes if the bitch knows what's good for her.

Jennifer:

Dad!

Dad:

Quite girly. So Jim, Jennifer here tells me you're an actor.

Jim:

That's correct sir.

Dad:

Actor. Bit of a broad business description, wouldn't you say? What is it that you do exactly?

Jim:

Well if I told you that, I'd have to kill you.

Uncomfortable beat.

Seriously though. Bas Bleu wants us to keep pretty tight-lipped about the play we are working on for them. And I wait tables. And work in a telemarketing centre. And I sell plasma.

Mom:

Bas Bleu! My . . .

Jim:

Definitely sounds more prestigious than it really is ma'am. I'm working for \$25, my director is senile, the stage manager is a jackass and none of the women in the play will have sex with me. Except Jennifer of course.

Jennifer:

That's not true!

Jim:

It is!

Jennifer:

Don't listen to him dad. I'm not putting out.

Mom:

Well, our Jennifer's always been so out-going . . .

Jim:

Yeah . . .

Dad:

So, you ever acted for any other company?

Jim:

I've done some shows at CSU.

Dad:
Hmph.

Jim:
You?

Dad:
Openstage.

Jennifer:
Don't start dad . . .

Dad:
Bit of ill-will between Openstage and Bas Bleu even back then if I'm remembering correctly.

Jim:
Usually is. Openstage sells tickets and fills houses but mostly does fluff. Oh yea, and they cast a 30 year old woman to play Juliet just because she is the daughter of the owners. Bas Bleu does intellectual plays that only make sense to the director.

Dad:
If the audience doesn't understand the play there is little point in performing it. And Bas Bleu has it's share of nepotism as well. I notice they have the same five directors every season.

Jennifer:
Bas Bleu is a much more progressive theatre dad.

Dad:
We don't do plays that have big words in them at Openstage.

Jennifer:
Well dad, times are a-changing.

Dad:
Christ almighty - -

Mom:
I think it's very daring of you Jim. Doing a play that makes people think.

Jim:
Well thank you ma'am.

Dad:
Did anybody ask your opinion woman? Go get me another beer. And make sure it's open when you get here with it.

Jim:

And I'll take another beer as well.

Jennifer:
You just agreed to do this play to get laid 'cause theatre girls are easy.

Mom:
Jennifer!

Dad:
That they are.

Jim:
You're just sore because you were my last choice out of all the women in the cast.

Jennifer:
Last choice? I was the only choice.

Mom:
Everybody ready for dessert?

Jim:
That other girl was cute though. If I put a bag over her head. *(as an aside)* And then there was the house manager. And the other house manager. And the light board op. And that girl in the audience. And that other girl in the audience. And those two girls that one night in the audience. And that one other girl in the audience. And the other girl who played Jennifer.

Jennifer:
What other girl who played Jennifer?

Mom:
I made a cobbler . . .

Jim:
That other girl who was playing Jennifer.

Jennifer:
That was me.

Jim:
No the other girl. The one who was there when you were having a breakdown.

Jennifer:
That was me!

Jim:
No it wasn't.

Dad:

That's enough. The sexual tension is building fast. The two of you can stay down here and talk dirty but don't stain my furniture. I'm taking your mother upstairs. Let's go woman.

Mom:

Jim, it was a pleasure to meet you. Be sure you use protection. Our Jennifer has been very outgoing you know.

Dad:

Honey – now. Hey Jim, how many women does it take to change a light bulb? None. Let the bitch do the dishes in the dark.

Light shift. Jennifer's parents exit. Beat.

Jennifer:

Hey Jim. Jim. Jim!

Jim:

Hey what?

Jennifer:

It's your line.

Jim:

Oh, sorry. I was thinking.

Jennifer:

Of course you were.

Jim:

Hey wait . . . who are you?

Jennifer:

I'm the actress playing Jennifer. Are you paying attention?

Jim:

No you aren't. The other girl is playing Jennifer. The first girl.

Jennifer:

No. She's gone again. I'm playing Jennifer now.

Confused beat.

Jim:

Wanna get a room?

Jennifer:

Sure.

Jim and Jennifer go behind the white board. Lights shift to male ensemble player.

Scene Eight

Frontman:

Really? I'm driving up from Denver for this shit?

I'm pretty sure this is the first play this guy's ever written. I mean it has to be. First off this script has not been proofread by anyone with a brain. Not only are there typos scattered around but the grammar. Really? You would think he could find someone to proofread the script for him. If this guy is a real playwright he could get an intern from a local college to do this stuff.

The songs. I don't know what was being smoked when these songs were written but I want some. They jump all over the place when it comes to tune, pitch and melody. "No-ho?" What the fuck is no-ho? Like "no ho, don't bite my penis" or "no ho, I'm not going to pay you"? Who says "no-ho" in a sentence?

Characters appear out of nowhere and sometimes you don't get a clue about who they are until halfway through some long rambling monologue.

A musical about hostages? Really? Okay, I'll give him credit. This could have been way more preachy and political. This could have been a rant about hating George Bush. Theatre is full of Captain Hindsight fuck-wad liberals who think the rest of the world cares about their head-up-the-ass, Obama's-cock-in-thir-mouth political beliefs. Hey, how's that "Change" working for you? So I'll give him credit for trying to write a love story instead of a political propaganda piece.

But that's all the credit he's getting.

I've got a two and a half page monologue and my character is suppose to be thirteen. I don't think the playwright has ever talked to a thirteen year old boy thought it's likely he has tried to have sex with one. "Cinch." "Clicking on." "Begging at me all over again." "Just a rift in his skin." "The only barrier between you and the beheading is your fingernail." "Convergence error in my monitor."

Not only do thirteen year old kids not talk like this, he is also way overestimating the intelligence of the Dumbest Generation. I can only suspend my disbelief so much.

Here's another one for you. Jim make six figures, tax free, and he takes his family to Applebees. Applebees? Really? Mr. Big Spender got it going on here. Maybe Applebees gave the playwright a gift card in return for product placement. It's all the rage in movies. Hell, did you see I Robot? That was nothing but a two hour commercial.

Jim and Jennifer. Really? Those are the names he came up with? Usually playwrights come up with these obscure names that have some reference to Greek mythology or the Bible which provide some insight to the nature of the character. Jim and Jennifer? That's the level of imagination this guy has?

And who sets their monitor resolution to 800x600? Who even knows what their monitor resolution is set at? This doesn't come up in conversation. No one even thinks about this sort of thing. It just is.

Jim says “You should've seen some of these guys. All haggard. Some of them hadn't shaved for days. Bad breath like you wouldn't believe” yet he's blindfolded when this is happening. How does he know they haven't shaved? Why is he sampling their breath? Is that a thing hostages do like when dogs sniff butts?

And the audience has to suffer through all of this . . . while right here in the theatre, during this play, behind the scenes, is the most drama I've seen on one theatre production in my life. If there was ever a production that was cursed this is it. Hostage Song may well be the new Scottish Play.

The Stage Manager's voice is heard from the booth as the Frontman looks up at the booth.

Stage Manager:
Who are you?

Sound Board Operator:
I'm the new sound board operator.

Stage Manager:
Fuck me.

Sound Board Operator:
You wish.

Sound of beer bottle being opened and cap hitting the floor from the booth. Lights shift on the Actor on stage.

Song: **Insane**

Jennifer:

I lived in a safe little bubble.
Then I auditioned and that lead to trouble.
I was cast in a play.
Now it's gone downhill every day.

And I remember having a life.
Then I was cast as the wife.
Then I was Jennifer.
Then I was the wife again. What the fuck?

Insane.
I am going
insane.
And how will I know
when I have arrived
and will I know my lines.

Frontman:

Now you are playing Jennifer again.
Don't think that you are done suffering.
There is no end
to the curse of Hostage Song.

And when you steal booze don't let no one
see you or they will get snippy up on you.
It's something to hide backstage.
It's something to keep you from going

Frontman and Jennifer:

Insane.
Are you going
insane?
And do you care?
In this frightening play.
Will you learn your lines?

'Cause I don't wanna be.
No I don't wanna be.
No I don't wanna be.
I don't wanna be
Jennifer.

Scene Nine

The Stage Manager enters and approaches the bandstand.

Stage Manager:
Hey. Got a minute to chat?

The band gives him blank looks. Silence.

I mean I know you guys are really fucking busy and shit showing up late and drinking beer.

Silence. Beat.

Okay. I'll just talk to myself. I'm use to that. I'm a stage manager. I'm usually talking to myself. You ever tried to talk to an actor? It like talking . . .

Never mind.

You think you guys could show up at or maybe even before call time?

Silence. Beat.

Five minutes after call maybe?

Silence. Beat.

You think you could show up sober?

Silence. Beat.

Sober enough that I don't get drunk off your fumes?

Silence. Beat.

The director wants you to come off the band stand and participate in the play as ensemble members. Think you could do that?

Silence. Beat

So we are going to have to add another cast member just to cover this.

Silence. Beat

You guys can all be here for each rehearsal during the last two weeks of rehearsal right?

Silence. Beat

Can you all read music?

Silence. Beat

Musical Director:
We are musicians. We are special.

Stage Manager:
Yes. Yes you are.

To the audience.

I hate musicians in the theatre. Just sayin' . . .

Lights shift as the Stage Manager exits. Jim is revealed.

Jim:

The audience sits in the house. Stunned into silence. They have no idea what is going on. The blue hair bobs as some of them struggle to stay awake. Others get up to leave early. Some come wondering in late. It's 8:10. The show starts at 7:30. What the hell is wrong with these people?

I've worked my ass off for this show. I've gotten advice on how to sing from seven different people, only one of whom actually knows anything about singing. I've put up with having a different cast every week. The fact that the blocking has changed 47 times would bother me but since I don't write down my blocking it doesn't matter.

That asshole Stage Manager keeps whining “learn your fucking lines” like some little bitch.

And the Artistic Director randomly shows up with opinions that no one, and I mean no one, cares about. And now it's closing night.

I've been released. I'm free.

This play looks so little to me now, so distant. And I like it that way.

The Director is still giving notes and still changing things. The music is different every night. The Stage Manager is crying, crying because no one knows their lines and I keep adding marshmallows to random entrees. Tears streaming down his face as he follows in the script saying “learn your fucking lines” under his breath.

But it won't be us. We don't care. It's closing night.

Song: **Reprise: Never Learn My Lines**

Jennifer:

Don't be scared now Jenny baby.
Drama is easy though there maybe
hard times learning your lines
when the script makes no sense
and the SM wants to beat you with a stick.

Jim:

I get so lonely
on nights I have only
my fantasies
and blow up doll.

But I am an actor.
I'm keepin' alive for
a role in
a play that gets me laid
and has a plot.

Jim and Jennifer:

And if The Director begins to crack
and if the stage is looking black

say no-ho
no-ho
I ain't never taking notes.

I know one day this play will end
and the next nightmare will begin
and no-ho
no-ho
I won't learn my lines for
that show either.

Jim:

I just want to get laid.

The band plays under Jim as he completes his monologue and climaxes. His lines, not sexually, just to clarify.

Jim:

I'm lifting up into the lights now. The audience is half asleep but I don't care. After the show they will come tell me how great I was and how much they enjoyed the show even though they don't know what happened or what it was about but I don't care. I'll shake their hands. I use two hands to shake their hands like politicians and lawyers do in order to fool the stupid people into thinking they care about them. I'm up in the lights now. I can see the stage beneath me, I can see the house. There's the control booth, there's the lobby – and now, now I'm soaring over the parking lot. Soaring so high, so far above the ground, you can't even see me anymore. No one catch me now. I never have to do this show ever again. Just try to make me.

Before the alcohol pisses out of me, before the blood drains from my penis and I wither off, before I audition for another play and fuck my life up all over again, before I have sex with some skanky theatre chyk who has a disease and it burns when I urinate – I'm going to try to have a life. I'm going to try to be normal.

Please be my friend.

The band climaxes (not sexually) as the ensemble actors come out on stage and take the scripts away from Jim and Jennifer making them even more helpless. Lights shift for the final scene.

Scene Ten

Jennifer:
Almost done with it . . .

Jim:
Yup. One more show and we are out.

Jennifer:

I can't believe it's over.

Jim:

It's not really over. Theatre never really ends. The drama keeps on coming.

Jennifer:

Is every theatre production this messed up.

Jim:

Yup.

Jennifer:

You're gonna scare me off . . .

Jim:

No way. Once you get into this shit it's like crack. You can't stop. Doing theatre is like being on a reality TV show. You know you look all trashy and stupid but you can't walk away from the attention.

Jennifer:

It's always like this?

Jim:

Pretty much. It's different but the same. Just different variations of politics, golden children and nepotism. Talking people down behind their backs while being nice to their face. Snotty people who are compensating for sexual inadequacy. You'll get use to it.

Jennifer:

You're totally making this up.

Jim:

I'm being serious here.

Jennifer:

Is it really okay to do curtain call in your street clothing and to walk around in the lobby before the show wearing your costume.

Jim:

Not in real theatre, no. But then directors make the worst actors. Never act with someone who is also a director.

Jennifer:

Every show I do will someone be trying to get into my pants?

Jim:

Yup.

Jennifer:

What if it's an all female cast and crew?

Jim:

No difference. In fact more so. My friend Robyn did an all female show once, with a female director. They showed up for a line-thru at the director's house and she had a keg of beer and three blue, silicone, double-sided, fourteen inch . . .

Jennifer:

What's that?

Jim:

What?

Jennifer:

There. Here it?

Jim:

There?

Jennifer:

What's that? Sounds like someone's crying. Sounds like babies.

Jim:

Those are techies.

Jennifer:

Techies?

Jim:

Sit in the booth. Make fun of actors. Jealous we have talent.

Jennifer:

Oh.

Beat.

What do I look like to you?

Jim:

Really yellow.

Jennifer:

Yellow?

Jim:

Yea. Yellow. The lighting for this scene is really yellow and I have no idea why.

Jennifer:

So this is it huh?

Jim:

Yup. Final show. Strike. Cast party. Then it's done.

Jennifer:

Seems kinda anti-climatic.

Jim:

Usually is.

Jennifer:

Why do you keep coming back? Why does anyone keep coming back?

Jim:

Seriously?

Jennifer:

Yea. Seriously.

Jim:

Because it's fun. It's challenging. And yea. It's hard. Anyone who tells you that acting is easy has no idea what they are talking about. Stage acting is what separates the real actors from the wanna-be actors. That's why we are allowed to be insane and neurotic and perverted. Because so few people can do what we do.

Acting in front of a live audience is the most . . .

. . . It's just the “most” that you will ever experience in your life. I don't really have words for it beyond that. You've felt it. I know you have.

Jennifer:

Yea, I have. I have.

Beat.

All this work, time, stress . . . and it just . . . ends?

Jim:

Yup. Usually with a black out.

Black Out.

To: The Playwright and The Stage Manager

From: The Director

Re: Alternate Ending "Hostage Song, The New Scottish Play"

I would like to suggest making a change to the play. The ending is too serious and too positive. Not only may some people interpret this as a favourable opinion of actors it might also give actors hope for their future.

Consequences of either or both of these conditions could spell disaster.

I suggest the following addition to the final scene.

Jim:

Yup. Usually with a black out.

Black Out. The theatre burns down. Everyone dies.

Let me know what you think.

The Director

To: The Director and The Stage Manager

From: The Playwright

Re: Alternate Ending "Hostage Song, The New Scottish Play"

You are so right. I must have been drunk when I allowed the idea of saying something nice about actors to slip into my mind.

You will notice I didn't make that mistake with musicians. Just sayin' . . .

Go ahead and make this change to your script.

Stage Manager, what will it take from a technical perspective to burn down the theatre and kill everyone at the end of each performance? Can we also kill the audience? We do already have their money.

Thanks, The Playwright

To: The Playwright and The Director

From: The Stage Manager

Re: Alternate Ending "Hostage Song, The New Scottish Play"

Gentlemen;

Fuck you. I am retiring. I don't get paid enough for this shit.

And fuck you.

The Stage Manger