

Blackboards and Black Boxes: Explorations of an Actor and Educator

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## **Abstract**

This thesis, submitted in partial fulfillment for the Master of Fine Arts Degree in Drama, details explorations and experiences studying, performing, and teaching over the course of the three-year Professional Actor Training Program at the University of Virginia. It includes a filmed portfolio of select final monologues and scenes along with a personal artistic statement, teaching philosophy, and a journal documenting the creative process.

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## Chapter 1

### Transcription of Filmed Introduction

Hi, my name is Brian Willis. I am an actor, educator, and I am currently pursuing my MFA in Drama at the University of Virginia. If someone were to ask me why theater and education are so integral to my life and who I am as a person, my first answer would probably be my father. My father was an actor and an educator, as well. And he came to this country in the 1980s. He essentially fled what was at the time communist-controlled Czechoslovakia. And he left because he could no longer make the theater that he wanted to make. And, he was being asked – or quite frankly mandated – to teach young kids things that were beyond his moral compass. Essentially propaganda. And when he got to this country, he found this sense of freedom and this beautiful sense of optimism that he passed on to me. He said, “Brian.” OR, well, he said “Bobo, there’s no ceiling. There’s no ceiling.” And for me those few words have stuck with me because for him, I knew that they meant that you can’t let anyone stifle your dreams, you can’t let anyone stifle your – what you can achieve if you put in the work and the passion. And that is something I try to embody on stage, in the rehearsal room, and in my classroom. And it is also something I try to pass on to my students specifically. Students, specifically if they’re not involved in theater, they put up these phantom rules. They put up their own ceilings. And so, every – every first day of class, I say, “No matter what you are, where you come from, or what your discipline is – in this my classroom, you’re an actor and you can do whatever you want. There is no ceiling.” So, with that, I’ll pass.

## Artistic Statement

During an episode of *Inside the Actors Studio*, Dustin Hoffman shared that he once asked Sir Laurence Olivier why actors and artists do what they do. To which Olivier responded, “Look at me, look at me, look at me, look at me!”(Hoffman) As I kid, I needed to be seen and heard. Anytime my family or friends would indulge my antics, I felt this remarkable sense of validation. I learned and could recite every line of *Forrest Gump* (Zemeckis 1994). I studied Johnny Carson’s mannerisms and brought them to the dinner table. I played King Lear in middle school. I gave sermons in vacant cemeteries. At ten years old, I flirted with a clerk at a grocery store by telling her I was Captain Hook. Everything seemed rooted in seeking attention, but I was ultimately seeking connection with others.

Looking back, I now realize that my early approach to being an artist or performer was about cultivating conversations and bringing people together. For example, my recitation of *Forrest Grump* was not exclusively about impressing anyone with my memorization or mimicking skills. Instead, it was rooted in witnessing my maternal grandfather (a WWII veteran) and my father (a Czech immigrant) connect over a story or a character. These two men had little in common. But when I quoted a line from the film, they found this bond over some type of shared identity or understanding. The film includes a scene that depicts the Watergate break-in. I remember impersonating President Nixon for my grandfather and dad and then hearing them exchange their personal experiences of that historical ordeal. Despite their different politics, philosophies, and backgrounds, they began to engage with one another. It was one of the earliest moments I

recognized that storytelling was something much bigger than myself and could be a powerful tool for artists (even those under ten) to generate dialogues.

Fast-forward many years. There is no doubt that I still have young Brian's need to be seen and heard, but that is not why I am an artist. I am artist because I believe the theater is a gathering place that offers everyone the opportunity to be seen and heard through shared storytelling. The theater is an entry point to understanding perspectives different from our own. My most profound theater experiences are based in Collective Creation, a process that allows artists to work together to create pieces without requiring traditional elements, like a playwright, director, or an existing text. Working with Collective Creation has helped me hone my skills as a communicator and collaborator. It has also led me on a sometimes chaotic and challenging journey, but one that has been incredibly rewarding.

When I began my final year in the Department of Theater at Swarthmore College in 2010, my fellow seniors and I were tasked with generating our capstone production through the method of Collective Creation. This was daunting at first. There were eight members of our group, all with different ideas about theater and process. I found our initial rehearsals to be unproductive, frustrating, and volatile. We all wanted to be seen and heard, especially me. With no official director, everyone in the group can become the director. As time went on, it became clear that if we were to create something together from the ground up, we had to communicate more effectively and connect with one another as equal partners. I started to listen rather than share my opinion and ask questions rather than give answers. The dialogues in rehearsal became more collaborative

and constructive. Ultimately, our final production felt like a story told by a collective ensemble, rather than one told by eight individuals. The overall experience impacted my approach to the artistic process in ways I am still discovering.

Since then, I have been fortunate enough to study devised theater at the University of Virginia as part of the MFA Acting Program and explore Moment Work during a residency with Tectonic Theater Project. Both experiences reaffirmed the importance of collaboration, humility, and community for me as a theater maker. I hope to continue to surround myself with artists who would answer the question of why they do what they do with the words, “Look at us, look at us, look at us, look at us!”

## Teaching Statement

There was a stone in my middle school's courtyard with the engraving: "There is one way. Then, there is always another way." I asked my teachers which of them had spoken those words and why that quote was commemorated on a rock. My mentor, Joe Hellrung, shared that this maxim was from the janitor of our school. This had a profound impact on me and my approach to teaching. I began to understand that there were infinite paths to success and fulfillment. I learned that wisdom could come from anyone and anywhere. Ultimately, I discovered that building community and trust was the foundation for learning and growth. I have tried to incorporate those three take-aways in my teaching for more than a decade and a half. At the beginning of my career, I created a set of objectives that I would strive to embody. My list has not changed much over the years, but it remains a living document that will continue to evolve as I grow as an educator. This is the most current draft. I strive to:

**Build strong relationships/learning partnerships with students.** Educators must know their students and vice versa. To connect with ideas, questions, and the process of learning, students and teachers must first connect with each other. These relationships are built on mutual respect, trust, compassion, and empathy. In my acting class, I spend my introductory two weeks getting to know my students before beginning any scene work. I often use entrance surveys, personal reflections, games, and paired interviews to allow them the opportunity to share who they are outside my class. They begin to explore the confidence in their own voice, presence in front of others, and active listening.



**Convey intense passion for learning and students.** If educators are not passionate about what they are teaching, it would be difficult to expect their students to be. Passion begets passion. Each class, I strive to share my enthusiasm for learning, theater, and my students through daily check-ins.

**Teach to the whole student.** Students must discover and develop the narrative of their life – where they have been, where they are, and where they are going. This necessitates that teachers meet students at their current position by identifying their existing and evolving talents, interests, knowledge, abilities, situations, etc. At the same time, teachers must keep an eye on the future and help students continuously build on their existing qualities, toward a fuller self and better tomorrow.

**Practice makes perfect.** Students need a great deal of practice to accomplish any foreign or complex task. For students to acquire and develop new skills, we as educators must offer them ample opportunity to explore, practice, and rehearse in a supportive and secure environment – therefore, I understand that...

**There is no perfect.** Students are going to make errors. Thus, it is important for educators to help students feel safe to make mistakes and then learn from them. I try to disrupt students' perfectionist tendencies using games like "Zip-Zop-Boing." This activity offers students three options for dealing with a screw up: they can allow the mistake to stop the energy of the game, they can pretend it did not happen and keep the energy moving, or they can enthusiastically take ownership of the error and reactivate the energy for the entire room.

**“Going higher and higher.”** By setting high but reachable standards, I hope to convey to my students a sense of realistic idealism and hope that anything is possible through hard work. In essence, there is always room for improvement. This does not mean that milestones and achievements should not be celebrated, but rather we should always encourage ourselves and our students to strive for the next level. Successful learning requires students and teachers to stretch beyond their comfort zones and seek out the frontier of possibilities. One simple example from class is that I begin each session with a game. The objective is for the group to keep a foam ball in the air for as long as possible. Each class, students and I set a new goal for how long we can keep it in the air.

**Talk the talk, but walk the walk.** I remember a pastor in my hometown telling me, “You may be the only Bible that people are reading – what message are you sending?” The same metaphor applies to educators. It is vital that teachers model and demonstrate the same practices and character traits that they ask of their students. In my experience, students pay closer attention than you would think. I have noted times when I thought my students were not engaged or listening, only to hear them quote something I said verbatim three weeks earlier. While teaching my first class at UVA, I discovered the disparity between asking my students to share so much of themselves without also sharing myself or my work. Now, I often share a monologue, ask them to see a performance I am in, and always join in improvisational exercises.

Finally, **help students see outside of themselves by exploring other perspectives.** John Dewey once said that “Democracy begins with conversation” (Fleischer, 2). In essence, this means that successful and equitable societies (and, by

extension, classrooms) require individuals to engage in the exchange of ideas and worldviews. We must provide students with the tools to explore, evaluate, interpret, and understand their own and others' perspectives. In my class, I include the study of works by BIPOC and LGBTQ playwrights. I also frequently use the video-based tool Flip (formerly Flipgrid). Students are required to record weekly video reflections and then respond to one another. I have been floored by how much using Flip has increased the level of student participation and willing interaction in my physical classroom. I have also witnessed an improved critical thinking during in-class discussions.

## Chapter Two

### Biography

**Brian Willis**, originally from Richmond, IN, received his B.A. in Theater Studies at Swarthmore College, with concentrations in acting and directing. After attending the Master of Arts in Teaching program at Earlham College, Brian worked in the educational field as a teacher, speech and debate coach, and grant writer. In May of 2023, Brian will complete the three-year Professional Actor Training Program and earn his Master of Fine Arts in Drama from the University of Virginia, where he has appeared as Orsino in the musical adaptation of *Twelfth Night*, Colonel Brandon in *Sense and Sensibility*, Rick and Robert in *How to Live on Earth*, J. Trumbull Sykes in *Death of the Author*, and Gabriel York in *When the Rain Stops Falling*. Other credits include six years as a company member with the Richmond Shakespeare Festival, where he performed as Leontes in *The Winter's Tale*, Horatio in *Hamlet*, Edmund in *King Lear*, and Demetrius in *Titus Andronicus*. He also has spent several summers in the Czech Republic as an ESL lecturer, director, and guest musician.

## Resume

### Brian G. Willis

### Actor. Director. Educator.



**Brian Gregory Willis – (He/Him/His)**

**Phone:** (530).521.9549

**Email:** [b.g.willis100@gmail.com](mailto:b.g.willis100@gmail.com)

**Height:** 5'9"

**Weight:** 180 lbs.

**Hair:** Light Brown/Dark Blonde

**Eyes:** Hazel

**Singing Voice:** Tenor

#### Professional Theatre & Summer Stock

<i>Romeo and Juliet</i>	Tybalt	Jesenfk Players Theatre (CZ)	Brian Willis
<i>Hamlet</i>	Horatio	Richmond Shakespeare Festival	Susan Felder
<i>The Tempest</i>	Antonio	Richmond Shakespeare Festival	Patrick Flick
<i>The Winter's Tale</i>	Leontes	Richmond Shakespeare Festival	Safron Henke
<i>Macbeth</i>	MacDuff	Richmond Shakespeare Festival	Susan Felder
<i>The Merry Wives of Windsor</i>	Simple, Robert, etc.	Richmond Shakespeare Festival	Kristin Clippard
<i>Cymbeline</i>	Iachimo	Richmond Shakespeare Festival	Patrick Flick
<i>King Lear</i>	Edmund	Richmond Shakespeare Festival	Patrick Flick
<i>Titus Andronicus</i>	Demetrius	Richmond Shakespeare Festival	Joshua Robinson
<i>The Runner Stumbles</i>	Monsignor	Zeitgeist Theatre Company	Graham Cooper
<i>Private Lives</i>	Elyot	Zeitgeist Theatre Company	Graham Cooper

#### Educational Theatre

<i>Twelfth Night</i> (Taub)	Orsino	University of Virginia	David Dalton
<i>Sense and Sensibility</i> (Hamill)	Colonel Brandon	University of Virginia	Marianne Kubik
<i>How to Live on Earth</i>	Rick/Robert	University of Virginia	Matthew Davies
<i>A Midsummer Night's Dream</i>	Puck, Philostrate	University of Virginia	Colleen Kelly
<i>When the Rain Stops Falling</i>	Gabriel York	University of Virginia	Marianne Kubik
<i>Death of the Author</i>	J. Trumbull Sykes	University of Virginia	Colleen Kelly, Denise Stewart
<i>The Great Gatsby</i>	Jay Gatsby	Richmond Civic Theatre	T.J. Rivard
<i>Metamorphoses</i> (Zimmerman)	Midas, Apollo, etc.	Swarthmore College	Erin B. Mee
<i>Pericles</i>	Cleon, etc.	Swarthmore College	Eleanor Holdridge
<i>Twelfth Night</i>	Malvolio	Earlham College	Lynne Perkins-Sochey

#### Education & Training

**M.F.A.** – University of Virginia, Drama, Professional Actor Training Program

**M.A.T.** – Earlham College, Teaching course work completed in teaching English, Journalism, and Humanities

**B.A.** – Swarthmore College, Concentrations in Acting and Directing

**Voice:** Kate Burke, Tovah Close • **Movement:** Marianne Kubik, G. Quinn Bauriedel • **Directing:** K. Elizabeth Stevens

**Acting/Shakespeare:** Colleen Kelly, Tovah Close, Eleanor Holdridge, Patrick Flick • **Lighting Design:** James P. Murphy

**Collective Creation:** Erin B. Mee, Allen Kuharski, Pig Iron • **Stage Combat:** Marianne Kubik, Jeremy West

**Masterclasses & Residencies:** Acting Masterclass (UVA): Kathleen Turner • Casting and Film Acting Residency (UVA): Erica

Arvold & Richard Warner • Moment Work Residency (UVA): Tectonic Theater Project, Jeffrey LaHoste, Jeffrey LaHoste &

Dimitri Joseph Moise (feedback and Q&A with Moisés Kaufman) • Meisner Masterclass (Swarthmore): Dito van Reigersberg •

Clowning and Mask Masterclass (Swarthmore): Pig Iron

#### Special Skills and Interests

Devised Theatre & Collective Creation • Intermediate Piano • Stage Combat Training in: Rapier and Dagger, Unarmed, and Broadsword • Dialects: RP, Australian, French, German, Standard Midwest • Standup Comedy & Sketch Writing • Collective Creation & Ensemble Building • Improvisation • Forensic & Speech Coach • ESL Instructor (Czech Republic) • Grant Writing • Advanced Barista & Home Cook

**Headshot**



## Chapter 3

### Journal of Portfolio Creation

Before coming to grad school, I worked as an actor and educator for almost a decade. I knew that my natural instincts on stage were strong. I was confident in my ability to tell a story, hold an audience's attention, and be present. However, I was also hyperaware of the fact that I was simply relying on my own gut-instinct, not technique. That meant that if a performance went well or poorly from one night to the next, I was unable to articulate *why* that was the case. I was either "good" or "bad" that night. The audience was either "with me" or "dead." That is not a dependable or healthy approach to creating work and measuring its success. So, I came to the MFA Program in Drama at the University of Virginia with the desire to cultivate a toolkit that would allow me to root my performances in technique and authentic embodiment of a character, as well as assess my own work with autonomy, agency, and confidence. This journal and the materials presented within the digital portfolio serve as a representation of the growth and learning I have experienced over the last three years.

#### **Monologue: Leontes from William Shakespeare's *The Winter's Tale***

The first monologue I have included in this digital portfolio is from Shakespeare's *The Winter's Tale*. I chose this piece because I had previously performed the role of Leontes as part of a fully produced production and I wanted to evaluate how my training at UVA might influence, improve, or alter material with which I was well acquainted. The key objective was to take a piece that I understood intellectually and truly embody the

character vocally and physically, utilizing any number of the skillsets I have acquired in this program. Also, I wanted to see if I could connect my left-brain and right-brain thinking in performance. My coaching sessions with UVA professor and mentor Colleen Kelly were particularly useful in more deeply understanding Leontes' journey throughout the monologue and my embodiment of his character. After three years at UVA, I realized that even having played the role before, I understood the story of the play, character, and text on a predominantly academic level. I did not want to be actor giving a TED talk, I wanted to find a living, thinking character. Professor Kelly helped me move past my scholastic portrayal of this character by improvising the "moment before" and finding the build of his discoveries. Previously, I was playing one attitude without working through each new idea that Leontes has throughout the monologue.

My work helped me discover that this monologue is rooted in a build of betrayal after betrayal or realization after realization. *First, his wife has left the room. Second, she has left with his best friend. Third, her smile means something has happened between his wife and his best friend. Fourth, his wife is carrying a baby, but is it actually his?* From there, the story develops even more. Previously, I was playing Leontes as a guy who knows the whole story before it unfolds. Professor Kelly's work with the "moment before" and her focus on how a character makes discoveries helped me generate lightbulb moments for the character that were incredible to experience.

I also found myself subconsciously utilizing my study of the International Phonetic Alphabet. Leontes speaks the line, "Be it Concluded/No barricado for a belly" (Shakespeare, 13). There is /b/ alliteration there. My vocal work –



specifically, my understanding of the power of a bilabial plosive and verbal action, gave me the freedom to demonstrate vocally how Leontes is feeling. I was able to connect the vitriol on a psychological and physical level as the character. Ultimately, I was proud of my ability to blend technique and artistic execution in this piece.

**Monologue: Johnny from Mark Aloysius Kenneally's *Moose Tracks***

The monologue from *Moose Tracks* is also included in this portfolio because I wanted a piece that would contrast the gravity, themes, and classical nature of my Shakespeare piece. At present, my audition repertoire does not contain many comedic or contemporary monologues. I would argue that all actors should be able to convey a certain level of versatility in material and performance. This monologue is not well-known, and I think it offers a casting director the opportunity to see something fresh and new. It also provides the actor a great deal of freedom to shape the story they would like to tell.

Another reason I chose this piece was that it allowed me to showcase my sense of humor on stage and thereby, share a little more of my authentic self through a character. Humor is integral to who I am as a person. I am a standup comedian. I am an improv comic. I come from a family who uses humor to find the light in the darkness of life. Those identities are vital to my work. Even when working on serious or more dramatic plays such as, *When the Rain Stops Falling* (University of Virginia Drama) or *Hamlet* (Richmond Shakespeare Festival), I always sought to find in my character some element of humor or lightness. That said, my MFA training has helped me avoid the pitfall of

always going for the joke as an actor. The comedy must come from living in the character, understanding the given circumstances, and seeing where expectations are met, not met, or superseded.

Working on *Moose Tracks* involved a lot of improvisation, knowing the “moment before,” and utilization of Rudolf Laban’s vocabulary for movement. (Laban 2016). Initially, I started working on this monologue from a place of tension and anger. Soon, I discovered that it was the story of a man navigating how to love two of the most important things in his life at the time same time. Other than anger, this character also experienced moments of pleading, fear, and pride. My work with Laban’s Efforts became the key to finding the flow of this character’s journey. To use Laban’s terminology, my first reading had too much direct, heavy, and tense energy. As the monologue evolved, however, I discovered a lightness in the character’s verbal descriptions of his love and reverence for his aunt and the moose. Exploring the spectrums of light vs. heavy and direct vs. indirect, really helped me find the balance of the comedy and the authenticity of the character and the story they would like to tell because they are not bound by preconceived notions or performers as actors.

**Scene: Jaxton from Larissa FastHorse’s *The Thanksgiving Play***

Finally, I have included a scene from *The Thanksgiving Play*. This was a collaboration with my colleague, Christine Jacobs. I gravitated toward this piece because of its potential for humor, and the fact that it is a work of art talking about making art. It has this inside baseball or behind the scenes way of examining educational theater like

*Seinfeld* did with standup comedy or *30 Rock* did with sketch comedy. The two characters in this scene are involved in devising a production of a high school play, while the audience eavesdrops on conversations that are not meant to be heard by the other characters in the play. The characters in the play have an established relationship that is both professional and romantic. They also share a shorthand that can cut or mend, which I was excited to explore.

Of the three pieces in my portfolio, this one is where I felt I made the most progress. When Christine and I began working on the scene, I found myself making too many judgements and generalizations about my character, Jaxton. He says things like, “Sending you nothing but light,” and, “I just do my best and hope to Buddha that my karma makes up for the rest of it” (FastHorse, 12, 13). I started by playing those lines with sarcasm, which did not work for the scene or give nuance to his thought process and how he views his relationship to Christine’s character. At the suggestion of Tovah Close, another UVA instructor and mentor, along with Colleen Kelly, I began to see Jaxton as much more earnest and someone who believes what he says. This led to more discoveries of how he might intentionally and unintentionally hurt the one he loves. Tovah and Colleen also helped us dissect the beat changes by stopping and starting the scene, which allowed me find a balance of subtle and more broad comedy that was more truthful to my character and his journey.

### Portfolio Materials

The following theatrical excerpts comprise the monologues and scenes that I prepared and performed as evidence of my acting journey at The University of Virginia. Two monologues and one scene have been individually videotaped and archived, along with a filmed personal introduction as part of this thesis document.

**Monologue: *The Winter's Tale* by William Shakespeare (Shakespeare, 12-13).**

Gone already!

Inch-thick, knee-deep, o'er head and  
ears a fork'd one!

Go, play, boy, play: thy mother plays, and I

Play too, but so disgraced a part, whose issue

Will hiss me to my grave: contempt and clamour

Will be my knell. Go, play, boy, play.

There have been,

Or I am much deceived, cuckolds ere now;

And many a man there is, even at this present,

Now while I speak this, holds his wife by the arm,

That little thinks she has been sluiced in's absence

And his pond fish'd by his next neighbour, by

Sir Smile, his neighbour: nay, there's comfort in't

Whiles other men have gates and those gates open'd,  
 As mine, against their will. Should all despair  
 That have revolted wives, the tenth of mankind  
 Would hang themselves. Physic for't there is none;  
 It is a bawdy planet, that will strike  
 Where 'tis predominant; and 'tis powerful, think it,  
 From east, west, north and south: be it concluded,  
 No barricado for a belly; know't;  
 It will let in and out the enemy  
 With bag and baggage: many thousand on's  
 Have the disease, and feel't not. How now, boy?

**Monologue: *Moose Tracks* by Mark Aloysius Kenneally (Kenneally, 25).**

I love you, babe. You are most important thing in my life. But I swear to god, if you throw out my moose head, I will leave you right here. Right now. That moose was killed by my great aunt Beatrice in the cold frozen forest of Wisconsin... with her station wagon.

It is the legacy of my family. Its stoic horns, its matted fur, its cold beady glass eyes... full of remorse and to some degree a little vengeance. My aunt survived a head on collision with a moose! She stuffed that moose as a testament to the iron will of our family. I have that moose head tattooed on my back. The neighbors are watching so I can't show you now, but you know it's there!

My ancestors hit moose with cars, taxidermized those moose, and then hung those moose in the entryways of their studio apartments. I will not change that tradition!

I love you, but this moose is my identity in the world, and I say this moose stays... please!

**Scene: *The Thanksgiving Play* by Larissa FastHorse (FastHorse, 12-14).**

LOGAN. What is that?

JAXTON. What's what?

LOGAN. Is that soy cheese or coagulated cheese squeezed from a cow?

JAXTON. Coagulated. You know I've a vegan ally, but I've come to realize that I like cheese on my crackers.

LOGAN. I already struggle with the holiday of death.

JAXTON. If you're planning on "The Holiday of Death" as the title of our Thanksgiving play you'll lose your job for sure.

LOGAN. This is far more than a Thanksgiving play now. I got the Gender Equity in History Grant, the Excellence in Educational Theater Fellowship, a municipal arts grant and the Go! Girls! Scholastic Leadership Mentorship.

JAXTON. I know parents, to get them back on your side, you need to kill a turkey.

LOGAN. I'm a vegan.

JAXTON. You're a teaching artist with a three hundred parent petition to fire you.

LOGAN. I am staying in the positive. This kind of talk isn't helping.

JAXTON. OK. Sending you nothing but light.

LOGAN. Thank you. I have a surprise too. I also got that Native American Heritage Month Awareness Through Art Grant.

JAXTON. Really?

LOGAN. They gave me funding so I could hire a professional actor.

JAXTON. Finally! Thank y—

LOGAN. And I was able to bring the perfect one to town. She elevates the whole project.

JAXTON. Professional actor right here.

LOGAN. Technically, you volunteer for these school plays.

JAXTON. I get paid for that show at the farmers market.

LOGAN. Yeah but you do it on a street corner and are paid in a coffee can.

JAXTON. That is my official performance spot given to me by farmers market security because they understand the importance of teaching about composting.

LOGAN. Jaxton, I value your work, but this woman is from Los Angeles.

JAXTON. Here we go with Los Angeles again. It's not the center of the acting world.

LOGAN. It kind of is.

JAXTON. The commercial acting world. Be grateful you didn't make it there. It shows what kind of person you are.

LOGAN. The kind of person who wasn't beautiful enough or sexy enough to compete?

JAXTON. Don't let your head go there, Logan.

LOGAN. Well, wait until you see this actor. She's so beautiful. So L.A.

JAXTON. What is beauty?

LOGAN. A social construct.

JAXTON. That we don't believe in. We value talent and art, not looks. You are a talented actress.

LOGAN. Even better, I'm a director now. But I still let my past in L.A. color my present, don't I? Thank you for that self-awareness.

JAXTON. You are one of the most self-aware people I know.

LOGAN. Since knowing you.

JAXTON. I just do my best and hope to Buddha that my karma makes up for the rest of it.

LOGAN. It's almost time for rehearsal, we should decouple.

*(They separate and perform a decoupling ritual moving from affection to neutral.)*

JAXTON. I'll get rid of the cheese.

LOGAN. No, I can handle it.



## Chapter Four

### Filmed Supplements

As a supplement to this written thesis, a filmed personal introduction as well as the following filmed monologues and scene are available for review.

#### Personal Information

Brian Willis

#### Monologue

Leontes, *The Winter's Tale* by William Shakespeare

#### Monologue

Johnny, *Moose Tracks* by Mark Aloysius Kenneally

#### Scene

Jaxton, *The Thanksgiving Play* by Larissa FastHorse

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