

T.I.C.
trenchcoat in common
a blog turned into a play

by
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DRAFT 10/2009 (6.0)
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CHARACTERS

KID – More like a Senior in high school.

DAD – KID's father. 40s

CLAUDIA – Upstairs neighbor, 50s-60s - Female

TERRENCE – Another upstairs neighbor, 30s-40s - Male

SHYE – Downstairs neighbor, 20s – Male

SABRA – Downstairs neighbor, 30s – Female

The characters are of unspecified but diverse cultural backgrounds.

SETTING

The play is an adaptation of KID's blog, a theatrical representation of her writings, recordings and links to other materials she has found.

The "stage version" of these digital transmissions should use as much traditional, "organic" stagecraft as possible.

In the world premiere version, we were thinking Vaudeville for those early posts.

TIME

A summer between junior and senior year. Some archival information linked in posts may be from longer ago.

MUSIC/SOUND

Yes. LOTS!

MOOD

Lively transmissions beaming through the vacuum of space.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Commissioned, Developed and Originally Produced by Encore Theatre Company, Lisa Steindler, Artistic Director through a generous grant from the Wallace Gerbode Foundation, San Francisco, CA

Supported by the New Works Fund, a grants program of Theatre Bay Area

Thanks to Lisa Steindler for the years of support, feedback and spirit; Ken Prestinizi for essential dramaturgy and direction and mindmelding; James Faerron, Arwen Anderson, Anne Darragh, Lance Garnder, Michael Shipley, Liam Vincent, Rebecca White; The Playwright's Foundation and the Resident Playwrights, The Z Space Studio, Marin Theatre Company, the Hewlett Foundation, The Tournesol Project, Theatre Bay Area, Tracy Ward, Kimberly Richards, Phoebe Moyer, Marissa Keltie, Eric Kerr; Mark Orsini and Bruce Ostler at Bret Adams Ltd., The Nachtrieb Family, and Mark Marino

The birds are in the trees,
the toast is in the toaster,
and the poets are at their windows.

- from *Monday* by Billy Collins

Every man is surrounded
by a neighborhood of
voluntary spies.

- Jane Austen

(found googling "neighbor quotes")

(Darkness.

The hum of a streetlight.

The sound of an oscillating fan.

The sound of a man, TERRENCE, breathing heavily. The kind of breath you wouldn't want to hear when answering the phone alone at night.

The sound of a woman, SABRA, crying.

The sound of a man, DAD, making quiet noises of pleasure.

The sound of a man, SHYE, lightly beating a drum in a heartbeat.

CLAUDIA lights a match, puts it to the end of a joint. Embers.

The growing sound of a keyboard clacking. Urgent clicking.

The sound of whispers of evil plots and deepest fears. Perhaps in a weird repetitive chorus that gets louder and louder.

Four phones ring loudly. Clicks.
In darkness:)

CLAUDIA

The green apples at Trader Joes are always rotten.

SABRA

The duck has made its migration.

SHYE

There will be no second encore.

TERRENCE

Pancakes.

DAD

Oh.

Yes?	CLAUDIA
Yes?	TERRENCE
Yes?	SHYE
Yes?	SABRA
Yes.	DAD

First Post: Sunday, 3AM

(A loud lick of music.

A light clicks on KID. She looking at us.)

KID

Something isn't right.

(A sign illuminates: "*First Post: Sunday, 3AM*")

KID

And I'm not talking about the general, universal incorrectness of everything. Something deeply deeply isn't right *here*. Like on this property.

Like this bed.

(lights click on bed, or a picture of a very soft bed)

KID

It feels like I'm being swallowed in a swamp made of Charmin. Seriously, nineteen pillows of varying size? It's a little too soft, a little too fancy, a little too gay IMHO.

As is the floor treatment.

(lights click on nicely designed rug layout)

And the dresser.

(lights click on a nice dresser or picture of one)

My "Dad" has "good taste."

(A shift. DAD, smiling at KID)

DAD

Is this going to be all right for you?

KID

It's fine.

DAD

Good. Good good.

This was going to be my bedroom. But...

KID

Yeah.

DAD

I'll take the couch for now. It's a comfy couch, so don't feel bad.

KID

Thanks.

DAD

This used to be my bed.

KID

Mmm.

DAD

In my old place. I slept in it.

KID

That makes sense.

DAD

A lot of good memories in that bed.

KID

Great.

DAD

The sheets are new.

KID

Pink.

DAD

And Egyptian!

I want you to enjoy sleeping in it.

KID

I'll try.

DAD

This is your home now. I want you to feel like you're home. And that this is your bed.

(beat)

Would you like a glass of wine?

KID

You know how old I am?

DAD

Of course.

KID

I don't drink wine.

DAD

OK. Well that's responsible.

KID

Only shots.

DAD

Oh.

KID

Whiskey. Absinthe. Jaeger bombs.

DAD

I only have Chardonnay.

KID

No thanks.

DAD

Well, if you change your mind...

KID

OK.

(DAD almost exits)

DAD

You know why they invented wine? To remind you of your greater ambitions. That at any moment you can jump out of that box they keep you in and change the world. Never forget you can do great things.

(beat)

KID

I won't.

(DAD nods, almost exits, turns back)

DAD

And the oak reminds me of fields I used to sleep in. So...

(They stare at each other.
DAD walks away.)

A shift, KID turns back to us)

KID

I recorded that on my laptop. That is my "parent,"
technically speaking.

According to the government there is proof of this fact.
I'm sure it was on my Mom's to do list to tell me she
actually knew the seed source. I guess it was three bullet
points down from "Suddenly Perish."

I ate beef today.

(a picture of beef)

I'm currently listening to Tegan and Sara.

(music)

I'm supposed to be working at Coldstone this summer but I
think the smell of a waffle bowl would make me vomit and
lose hope.

As does this building. A single house split into four
units, plus our cottage in the back.

(beat)

This is stupid. Is this stupid? I have nothing else to
write.

(ABRUPT BLACKOUT)

SILENCE. City noises from above)

**Second Post:
Monday, 3AM**

(MUSIC

Motion in the darkness, as though
people are hurriedly trying to do
something under cover.

The song stops abruptly, people freeze.
KID has headphones in.

MUSIC stops. Night)

KID

Isn't this song awesome? I am loving *loving* this song
right now. Well, as much as I can. Like when I say I
"love" a song, or that I "love" Google, what do I mean? I
don't want to start a family with it. I'm not going to
cuddle and spoon with a fucking song. Maybe the lead
singer of the song but lead singers are assholes and that's
more like lust. Like I'd be happy to blow a lead singer but
not, like open a joint checking. And really, what is love?
Is it even real? Isn't it just some intangible feeling
meant to keep us hoping and ignoring the fact that we are
trapped in a shitstorm of failures and grief? I'm quoting
my English teacher. She asked us that once. Like right at
the end of the period.

Anyway, I have neighbors. And they have windows. And I have
discovered that they all eat food.

(The four neighbors rush into these
positions. Tableaus/soft freezes.

SABRA sipping smoothie through a straw.
SHYE with a baguette
CLAUDIA, eats lettuce with chopsticks
TERRENCE eats honey off a banana)

KID

They all read.

(SHYE reads a small dark book.
CLAUDIA reads a schematic
SABRA reads the Pottery Barn Catalog
TERRENCE reads the Enquirer)

KID

And from time to time they all stand and look at something semi-vacantly.

(The four stand and look at something semi-vacantly)

KID

I was almost going to put the last one in sepia to make them seem more sad. I took those all from my window.

(Tableau: the neighbors trying to look normal while hiding something)

KID

"Love Thy Neighbor Yet Pull Not Down Thy Hedge"
British Proverb and/or Benjamin Franklin and/or Benjamin Franklin quoting a British Proverb.

I just Googled "neighbor quotes." Most seem to be about the maintenance of fences, walls, hedges...various clever 'n cute ways to promote mistrust.

I bet they cry a lot.

(SABRA is crying)

KID

This is a pic of one of them crying earlier.

(SHYE plays chest or tunes something, singing "fuck" in tune)

KID

I guess he's going to be "House Bandleader." I saw him unpack maybe 200 instruments and recording equipment. Oh and a rainstick.

(SHYE turns a rainstick)

KID

I don't want to prejudge, but I hate rainsticks and people who use them.

(CLAUDIA lights a joint in the window, pensive, calm, assessing)

KID

I think she's going to be Marijuana Chief. Averages a joint every four hours.

She doesn't giggle, though. All the stoners in my high school giggled. But not, like, life affirming giggles. Giggles like shrugs. Like they're giving up. She doesn't do that. Her Kimono makes me nervous.

(TERRENCE stands, smiles and breathes)

KID

As does his general aura.

He was standing there for like three hours.

(TERRENCE drinks a glass of water)

KID

Occasionally he disappears from his window.

(TERRENCE steps out of view slowly, smiling, gliding)

KID

And then returns.

(TERRENCE returns with a new glass of water. The other neighbors re-enter, SABRA crying, SHYE tuning, CLAUDIA smoking)

KID

I wonder what their names are.

The "seed source" tried to cook for me today.

(DAD runs across with a tray and something dark and charred on it)

DAD

Ay yay yay. Ay yay yay.

KID

I am still attempting to ascertain whether he has skills. I spent a good chunk of the day camera-phoning him when he didn't know.

Like this.

(In mirror, DAD tries to style his hair in a pleasing way and never succeeds.)

KID

And this

(In mirror, DAD lifts his shirt up in the mirror, looks at belly. Sighs.)

KID

And this.

(DAD makes his belly talk)

DAD

"The greatest pain in life is to be invisible. What I've learned is that we all just want to be heard."

KID

I just googled that quote. He's pretending that his belly is Oprah Winfrey.

I'm not impressed by the video quality of my phone. Not enough pixels. I don't think it sufficiently captures the true essence of the beasts that surround me in the full splendor of their normality. But are they normal, really? *Italically really?* If I were to slice into their skin, what mysteries would I discover? Deep, dark, bloody regrets and fetishes and anomalies exploded, grotesqued, calcifying like spurs of weirdness on their spine?

If there's anything I've learned from my mom it's that all adults hide things.

Maybe this shall be my mission. I will be the Diane Arbus of this building. These neighbors:

(Tableau: The four neighbors, in a varying just slightly off from neutral poses)

KID

My retards.

This is what "the source" does with Listerine.

(DAD stands holding a bottle of Listerine. He pours a capful at some point.

The sensation in DAD's mouth is intensifying, almost getting unbearable. He braces himself, maybe screams internally. He's testing his limits.

He finally spits Listerine out of his mouth into the sink. Panting, exhausted, sweating, relief, pleasure.

BLACKOUT MUSIC)

Third Post – 2AM Tuesday

(music stops abruptly

Lights up on KID in her room holding legal documents and on the four neighbors in soft poses as though they were caught:

CLAUDIA half turned to us, on the phone, scratching her boob through a kimono.

SABRA holds an Allen wrench. She seems at wits end.

SHYE holds an orange pill bottle, one pill in his fingers almost in his mouth.

TERRENCE wears a trenchcoat, bare legs, baseball cap, sneakers, and a warm smile. Perhaps he holds a misting bottle which he occasionally sprays.

When they speak, their heads turn out and talk with mystery and then return to their poses, except for TERRENCE who remains forward.)

Claudia Borealis. CLAUDIA

Sabra Jones SABRA

Shye Macarthur Pleasanton Jr. SHYE

Terrence no last name. TERRENCE

(A sign says: *Third Post: Tuesday, 2AM*)

KID
"Tenancy In Common." That's what this living setup thing is called, according to documents that the source left on the microwave after dinner.

(DAD searches for documents in the background)

KID

(looking at documents)

Apparently, in this city, there are rules against directly turning property into condos so instead people buy the whole property collectively because oh my god I am boring myself while typing this sentence.

Behold their financial vaginas.

CLAUDIA

281-31-2111

SABRA

033-65-1998

SHYE

759-72-4916

TERRENCE

123-45-6789

KID

Anyone need a speedboat? I've also learned their annual incomes

CLAUDIA

Thirty two thousand.

SABRA

Two hundred fifty three thousand.

SHYE

Six hundred dollars, plus trust fund.

TERRENCE

Decline to state.

KID

Mother's maiden names:

CLAUDIA

Gosling.

Prissington. SABRA

Macarthur. SHYE

Decline to state. TERRENCE

And their level of decay: KID

March 22, 1951 CLAUDIA

February 12, 1972 SABRA

October 21, 1984 SHYE

TERRENCE
Decline to state, but I will tell you I'm in Libra
territory.

(TERRENCE makes scale gestures)

KID
Seriously, who the fuck is that guy?

(new TERRENCE poses, captured stills)

TERRENCE
Area code 415-555-1212

KID
That's not a real number.

TERRENCE
Single, but professionally I suppose I'm polyamorous,
hahahaha!

KID
He wears that every day, looking like someone who is
legally obligated to tell you why he can't live near a
school.

TERRENCE

Self employed in more ways than one, if you know what I mean. Wink wink! Wink! Semicolon close parentheses.

KID

What shoddy bank approved this loan?

EVERYONE

Washington Mutual.

KID

He's still standing there as I type this.

TERRENCE

Terrence no last name.

(TERRENCE slowly backs up, each utterance getting quieter)

KID

Yeah we know but just exactly who the fuck are you Mr.-

TERRENCE

Terrence no last name.

(SHYE takes the pill.
CLAUDIA licks her upper lip.
TERRENCE turns upstage, puts a leg up on something, revealing hair
They float back.

SABRA remains, cries, holding glass jar of sugar, and a duffelbag)

KID

Five feet from deviance, neighbor two,

SABRA

Sabra Jones.

KID

-Continues her sobfest.

(SABRA, tears, takes a glass jar of sugar, dips finger in it and sucks it)

KID

She's always carrying that duffelbag and apparently loves empty calories in times of stress.

(DAD in garden drinks chardonnay.
SABRA, sucking finger, stares at DAD)

KID

This is her looking at a homosexual with false hope. "False hope" should be her middle name. I found her Facebook page.

(shift)

SABRA

"Sabra is now in San Francisco!"

KID

Her profile is totally public.

SABRA

"Sabra is unpacking boxes and assembling!
Sabra is loving some weird flavored ice cream on a hot day!
Sabra is starts her new job tomorrow!"

KID

Sabra has four friends.

SABRA

"Hi Guys! Looking to meet fun new people that I don't previously know for friendship and dates!"

KID

Why would you date that?

SABRA

"I'm fit, friendly, childless, love people, giving gifts, getting rubdowns, and trying to live a life that is positive and non-violent!"

KID

Desperate.

SABRA

I really enjoy being physically or mentally challenged! Challenges, obstacles, mortal mistakes are what make life, life! Meet me with an open mind. Soulmates welcome!"

KID

She's too old for Facebook.

(TERRENCE floats by)

TERRENCE

Terrence no last name.

KID

Still at his window. Can he see me?

(CLAUDIA steps forward talking on a phone. She smokes a joint)

CLAUDIA

I want to see you.

KID

Claudia has a "lover."

CLAUDIA

When do I get to see you, mi guapo?

KID

From a Spanish speaking nation.

CLAUDIA

Te quiero, Arturo.

KID

I transcribed this as she talked.

CLAUDIA

I want your body. Inside my home. Press your weight against my floor. Rub my walls. Tread on my land. I'm landowner now. Officially middle class. The bougie guilt is making me so horny.

KID

I'm not comfortable with that.

CLAUDIA

I think I may be turned on by real estate.

KID

Less comfortable with that.

CLAUDIA

It's like I walk upon my floors and they're an erogenous extension of myself. Or maybe I'm just hippie-ing up my materialism. How about I get a blanket, lay it in the middle of the hardwood floor and we hump ourselves into a new state of consciousness.

KID

I almost stopped listening after she said "hump."

CLAUDIA

Maybe I'll keep that blanket there and never wash it. Right in the middle of the room. I'll put a rug over it so I'm the only one who knows it's there. Except for you, Arturo, you'll know.

KID

And I'll know. Thank you for saying dirty old lady things through an open window. Maybe it's the pot.

CLAUDIA

Just a joint.

KID

Five times a day.

CLAUDIA

I am being careful. Jesus, it's tense right now and this is the only shit that makes me forget my knees. This is harder than I expected.

KID

What is? Being horny? Alone! Life? Is Arturo in prison? With what tragic "curve ball" must Claudia reckon?

I googled "Claudia Borealis Tragedy Curve Ball Pot Smoking Sadness" and found a few videos.

(CLAUDIA beats a loaf of bread to a pulp with an axe.)

CLAUDIA

YAAAAAH! YAAHH! YAH YAH YAH YAH YAH!

(she keeps beating it until the bread is flat)

KID
That was a protest against wheat.

CLAUDIA
TAKE THAT, GLUTEN!

KID
Claudia has been part of many protests.

CLAUDIA
(with intense anger)
WHAT DO YOU WE WANT?

OTHERS
(inaudibly and with less enthusiasm)
Mrhha dlahdha.

CLAUDIA
WHEN DO WE WANT IT?

OTHERS
Now.

CLAUDIA
WHAT DO WE WANT?

OTHERS
Mraah dlahalh

CLAUDIA
WHEN DO WE WANT IT?

OTHERS
Now.

KID
What *does* Claudia want?

CLAUDIA
"I've laid down before bulldozers, I've put my face against
a cop in riot gear, I lived in a tree for a god damn year.
This is just the beginning. I warn the evil powers of the
world that your days are nearing an-"

KID
It's a long quote.

DAD

Curve ball.

KID

Meanwhile, the "source" keeps trying to infiltrate.

DAD

(to KID, smiling)

We've been thrown a curve ball. And we have to adjust our swing.

KID

Lots of lame attempts to find some common experience.
Like-

DAD

Aren't the days getting so lengthy?

KID

Or-

DAD

I can't believe it's a new month already.

KID

Or-

DAD

Kelly Clarkson.

KID

I don't trust him. He left his Credit Card statement on the microwave.

DAD

(pouring Chardonnay)

BuddyTalk International. \$34.95

Chock Morgan Media. \$19.99

Discretion Mail Order Boutique \$79.95

(TERRENCE breathes heavily)

KID

I don't like it here.

(SHYE speaks into a microphone or mp3 recorder)