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Blind Date

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Blind Date

AN HONORS THESIS

College of St. Benedict/St. John's University

In Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for Distinction

in the Department of Theater

by

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April, 2013

Project Title: *Blind Date*

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| | | |
|-------------|-------------------------------|--------|
| Part I: | Introduction | pg. 4 |
| Part II: | Script | pg. 12 |
| | “Blind Date” | pg. 13 |
| | “Cat-o-logue” | pg. 15 |
| | “She Belongs to Me” | pg. 18 |
| | “What If...” | pg. 19 |
| | “Breaking Up” | pg. 23 |
| | “Being a Kid” | pg. 25 |
| | “Cheating Man” | pg. 29 |
| | “It’s Okay I’m Jew-ish” | pg. 33 |
| | “Dream” | pg. 38 |
| Part III: | Performing and Touring a Show | pg. 41 |
| Appendix A: | Business Plan | pg. 52 |
| | Preface | pg. 53 |
| | Product | pg. 54 |
| | History | pg. 55 |
| | Industry/Market | pg. 57 |
| | Marketing | pg. 59 |
| | Management | pg. 62 |
| | Operations | pg. 64 |
| | Timeline | pg. 66 |
| | Financial Statement | pg. 67 |
| Appendix B: | Poster | pg. 69 |

Part One:
Introduction

Introduction

I want to write and perform for the rest of my life. We often think of that idea as a dream someone else is living and that most likely the person wanting it, i.e. me, will never achieve it and it will stay a dream forever. I do not want it the same way I want a dream, because a dream implies waking up. I just want someone to ask me what it is I do for a living someday and I can respond, "I am this..." not, "I want to be this..."

This project was to help me figure out exactly what steps are needed to successfully make your own career in the arts using an entrepreneurial mindset. I wanted to know that I could do a one-man show. I wanted to know I could book multiple venues. I wanted to know I could fill seats with an audience. And I wanted to know that I could leave an audience satisfied. I imagined, wrote, rehearsed, and performed *Blind Date* in three different venues in order to begin the rest of my life as a creative artist.

Creating A Story

When I was in the third grade I pooped my pants in front of a girl I liked. This is a true story. I can laugh at it now, but back then it wasn't funny. In some weird way I'm sure that event has a lot to do with the person I am today. (I'll leave that for my future psychologist to discover.)

The poop-my-pants story was one of the first stand-up bits I ever performed. It is the first monologue to *Blind Date* and the first monologue I wrote when I conceived the idea of the one-man show. I close this monologue with the phrase,

“from the very beginning, my love life has been shit.” I don’t honestly believe that, but for the sake of this story I do. This character will blame any problems he has in real-life-romances on what happened that infamous day in the third grade. He will never have to face the fact he might be the cause of his problems with intimacy because he convinces himself they are all the poop’s fault!

That is the foundation of this project (the convincing, not the poop). I took true events from my life and exaggerated them into stories. When I perform these stories, in front of friends, family, or strangers, they are no longer just *my* stories; I am no longer telling them as myself. I am myself, but pretending I am someone, someone that is still me. There is some truth in each monologue and each one sounds a lot like me, because I wrote them all. The fact is, however, that as soon as they are presented on the page and on the stage they become fictional. These are not true stories; I just pretend they are.

The stories of *Blind Date* center around relationships. Ever since I have been a kid I’ve always been in love. Always. Most children experience the “cooties-phase” and for some reason I skipped right past that. Most likely I watched too many movies or television and somewhere along the lines my brain became obsessed and now romance is all I ever think about. I found some way that everything I ever learned in a class (i.e. history, theater, nutrition) could be applied to relationships. I’ve realized, however, this obsession with love is not just my own, but an obsession of an entire society. Everyone wants true love. Ever since I was a teenager I have realized most people’s beliefs about love are flawed at every stage of their lives. Even now I have no idea what it is like to be married, to have a family, to lose

someone you love, but because of my awareness of my own naïveté it has been intriguing to write about different romantic relationships. *Blind Date* is not a life lesson on love; it is a rant about love from a twenty-one year old. That's probably why the monologues are funny.

Originally, I wanted *Blind Date* to be performed as a date between me, the performer, and the audience. We would meet in a coffee shop, get to know each other, head back to my apartment, talk more intimately, and then eventually make the decision whether or not to sleep with each other. This idea was hard to write because it would require me to create a sixty-minute conversation with someone who never says a word (which has the potential to be hilarious because that situation would probably be the worst date ever). Instead of dwelling on whether or not I could or couldn't write this conversation I adapted the idea.

Reading *Brief Interviews With Hideous Men* by David Foster Wallace inspired me; his dialogue and commentary on men presents examples of the worst kind of men. His book is a collection of short stories interrupted by men sharing their personal relationships with women and their sexual lives through monologues. This book led me to a version of my original idea for *Blind Date*. In Wallace's stories, the interviewer who is hearing these stories, named "Q", says something, however the question is never written down. The monologue responds to a question that the reader doesn't know. The monologues in *Blind Date* became just that; answers to a question the audience doesn't know it has asked.

I was also greatly influence by the works of Eric Bogosian; I wanted to emulate his style of monologue. I wanted to see his style of comedy in my work. By

studying three of his one-man shows I developed the concept of what I wanted to do in *Blind Date*. I wanted a show that was as funny as stand-up comedy, but with as much substance as a work of theater. I have performed stand-up comedy for four years and I've realized how pointless one-liners and musings on taboo subjects can be. Stand-up comedy is an incredible medium, but it rarely leaves the audience pondering any meaning between the lines. Bogosian's shows have you laughing, but also thinking through the content and as a result, his shows can be performed in just about any venue. I wanted to be able to perform in theaters, comedy clubs, coffee shops, poet circles, cabarets, anywhere. Therefore, my goal was to write a piece that would work with multiple venues and audiences.

While writing the monologues I kept my mind open for inspiration to spark an idea and then I would run with it. I'd sit down, pretend I had story to tell, write as fast as I could, and edit nothing. I'd live the story in my head, as I'd write it down. One example is the monologue, "Being a Kid". It was the first story I wrote when I knew what *Blind Date* was going to be. I was reading Will Eno's one-man show, *Thom Pain: Based On Nothing*, when the character in the book asked me to remember the day my childhood ended and I tried to think of a day my childhood might have ended. I couldn't remember. So I made up a story instead.

Through studying and performing comedy I have picked up three basic theories of humor. When writing monologues I don't use the theories as a road map, but they are useful to know so that my storytelling subconsciously integrates them into my work. When looking back at a story I can see why it is funny and which jokes are using which theory.

The first theory is the “superiority theory” and basically it is that we laugh when we see something we believe inferior to us. Slapstick is the perfect example. Someone runs into a door and we laugh because we share that experience. We know the victim of the door feels embarrassed. We laugh even harder if that person deserved to be embarrassed. They go from a position of power to inferiority and that drop in status is comical.

The second is the “incongruity theory” and this is a slight-of-hand, misdirection style of comedy. The story takes the audience members one way and they begin to predict which way the story is headed, but then the storyteller defies those expectations and flips the story in a new direction. That switch causes laughter. Just recently I gave a speech using this joke, “Being in the last stretch of my thesis project has been great. I’ve had time to do real things like clean my room, which, is nice because I haven’t done that in, like, four... years. It was amazing I was finding textbooks from my junior year. My FYS paper. My sophomore year roommate. I know what you’re thinking. No, he wasn’t dead. Just really skinny.” That joke is an example of the incongruity theory because the audience expects me to find more junk, not a human being.

And finally, there is the “relief of tension theory” where the story brings up certain subjects and situations that cause an increase of tension in the audience. These subjects are usually not talked about publicly and that is why the tension is raised. Talking about something taboo, however, is not enough to get a laugh. In the joke something is said or happens making the uncomfortable become comfortable and our stored tension is released through a laugh.

I write what I think is funny and these theories explain what makes my writing funny. Comedy is not a mathematical formula; you can't write something according to a theory and hope it will be funny. I just write honestly and hope my honesty connects to a theory.

As far as the actual writing, I find that writing on a computer makes the writing process difficult. If you [mispel](#) something there's a giant red line of distraction reminding you of your failure. To avoid this distraction I will often turn off my screen. People like to write in notebooks to avoid the distractions of the word processor. I can edit with a pen, but when I am writing out a story, my hand can't keep up with my thoughts. So, for most of this show I used a typewriter my Grandma gave me when I was sixteen. Not because it made me feel like an author, but it *totally* made me feel like an author. A typewriter gives you a sense of creation. The beat of metal against the ribbon pressing ink onto the page sounds like a hammer into the nail of foundation and structure. The constant reminder of the "ding" at the end of the line encourages you to keep going until every thought is pressed onto the page. Nothing is over-processed on a typewriter. You write what is in your mind, not how you think you should write.

My writing is simple. Sometimes I catch myself explaining too much and trying to sound like how I think an author *should* sound. I cannot be other people. If I try to sound like my favorite writers I'm going to sound like a bad Shakespearean actor trying to act. So I have to write like myself. And to do this I have to write as fast as I can as if I'm explaining a story or opinion to myself or as I would speak in a conversation. This requires that I don't get distracted by the actual process of

putting words onto a page but instead ride my train of thought like a surfer on a wave. (Oh, yes! I am convinced I would be the greatest surfer. I've never been surfing, but I use it as metaphor for just about every profound realization I've ever had in my life. I just need to buy a board.)

That line about surfing, should I have cut that from my thesis or is it a guide for me to continue that thought later? I have to be okay with cutting my writing even if it is something I really want to say, especially, if I think my writing is funny. Jokes are the hardest lines to cut, but it is often absolutely necessary to cut them. You can never really know what to cut or to save, especially in a script you intend on performing until you have actually performed it. I write quickly, just as if I'm talking with myself because I'm building a structure made of words. Some words are paint, some are brushes, nails, etc. When people built cathedrals they used to install giant supports when putting up the roof. Once the roof was in place, the supports were no longer necessary, so they would be removed. That is how I treat my writing. Some sentences are pews and stained glass windows. Some sentences are just scaffolding to help me construct.

The show took about six months, at least ten stories went into the garbage, and required eighteen hour-and-a-half speed-writes to finish. Even after the script was crafted I could not know for sure if it was a success or not. It would only be in front of an audience that I or anyone else could judge the value of my creation.

Part Two:
The Script

Blind Date

Want to hear a children's story?

It starts with the first girl I ever loved.

I was in third grade and she was perfect. Everything I wanted in a girl. She had dark hair, blue eyes. She was nine.

Sorry, that was inappropriate. It was a joke. You just met me.

I liked this girl a lot. A lot. I mean this was the first time I was "in like" with someone.

I liked her so much that I made sure every day when my class went to recess I had her as my buddy. Every day, always her.

Now there was this one-day I had just come back after being sick, and I was on this medicine, nasty liquid stuff. And I get this feeling, deep down in my stomach. Not butterflies of love. I have to poop. And what do I do? Go to the bathroom?

No. It's third grade! Freedom doesn't exist yet. I have to ask for permission to poop.

So I run from this girl looking around everywhere for my teacher, absolutely everywhere.

Finally I see her, she's standing as far away as possible, up this fucking hill. So, I waddle as fast as I can.

And running at nine years old is difficult enough already, because you don't have knees, now just imagine having to clench your ass. You look like a Dutch line dancer.

So I get to my teacher and frantically ask, "can I go to the bathroom?"

How does she respond?

"I don't know, can you?"

But I'm an idiot, and I don't understand what she's doing.

So I say, "I don't know can I?"

So we waste fifteen seconds on the shot clock and finally I say, "May I?"

"Where's your buddy?"

Where's my buddy?! Where's my buddy?! I am dying here.

So I waddle all the way back down the hill to my buddy, so I can yell at the girl of my third grade dreams, to run to the bathroom with me before I explode.

Now together, hand in hand, four legs, no knees, we waddle to the bathrooms.

I get to the door, put my hand on the knob...(beat) and it's too late.

It's just too late.

I missed my chance.

What are you supposed to do in that situation?

Really all you can do is cry... So I cried.

She asks what's wrong and all I can muster up is...

"I pooped." (beat)

So that was that.

Our relationship ended.

I know that's a weird way to start this date, but the truth is fucked.

We're going to spend the next hour really getting to really know each other and it's important you know that from the very beginning,

My love life has been shit.

Cat-o-logue

Hey lovely, I...

I have something to... I...

God, how do I put this.

You know your cat?

I took him for a walk today.

Apparently, you're not supposed to do that.

I didn't know you're not supposed to do that.

So that's why I took your cat... "Mr. Leonardo Fufi"... for a walk.

I thought animals like walks. Dogs like walks, horses like walks, even once I saw a guy take his monkey for a walk. No shit. It had a shirt on and everything.

But I know honey, a cat is not a dog, horse, monkey.

But that'd be a cool cat! A dog-horse-monkey-cat?

Sorry, I'm rambling.

I took your cat...our cat... Mr. Leonardo Fufi for a walk and I *thought* to make a leash!

I would have bought one, but it's not like they, you know, sell cat leashes at CVS and I wasn't going to take the train all the way uptown to Petco for something that might not exist in the first place.

So I tied a shoe-lace around his neck.

I actually had him in a laundry bag most of the walk because it was so damn difficult getting him out the door.

I let him out right when we got to the park in the shade next to this wonderful tree.

Then I see this girl playing fetch with her dog, and I start to freak out... you know... cause they're such enemies... you know... dogs and cats.

But no! Oh my God. No. This dog was amazing. Calm. Collected. Regal.

And did you know? Yeah you knew.

Right? I used to have a dog when I was a kid.

I had this beautiful dog.

We would play catch, go on walks, stay the fuck out of trees.

So I couldn't help but go and play catch with this dog for like ten...fifteen minutes probably, maybe. Twenty. Yeah, definitely. I went and played with the dog for thirty minutes.

And I was happy and the dog was happy and the little girl was happy. There was even a junkie sleeping on the picnic bench and he was happy. I mean everybody in that park was happy!

Then I look back at the tree and I see something that makes me really unhappy because I knew how much it would make you unhappy. And that is the absolute last thing I have ever wanted honey. Is to make you, my love, unhappy.

I noticed that Leo Fufi was gone.

Not far!

No not far at all...

Length wise.

Height wise....

He was all the way up the tree.

Who knew? Who knew, right? That that fat cat could climb so god damn well. I was amazed.

And if cats only knew they had nine lives they would know how easy they could get out of trees.

I was yelling to him to jump, that I could catch him.

You know...tch tch tch... come here boy. Come here Mr. Leo Fufi.

But, of course, it was no use. I just looked like an idiot.

So I started pulling on some braches trying to shake him out so he would fall like an apple and he would be fine.

But he started climbing higher and higher.

So I hoist myself up and I start climbing after him.

But he keeps going up! And up! And up.

Until, snap!

He falls!

Right at me!

I get balanced and hold out my arms!

Boom!

He falls right into my arms.

I got him!

But... he must have been still a bit shaken up from all the hits he took on the way down, so I totally understood when he starting clawing me.

I just wasn't able to hold on when he ripped out some skin from inside my elbow.

So I dropped him.

But I reacted quickly!

Reached back out!

And could see that my shoelace cat leash was trailing behind him!

I snatched just the last few inches and pulled back fast to handle the weight.

And there was a...*snap*.

Like a twig on the tree... but it wasn't.

It was, you know, the fall, the lace, his neck... his...

His neck... snapped.

Honey, I am so sorry I lynched your cat.

She Belongs To Me

She loves me.

She does.

She just doesn't know it yet.

She should know how much I love her, how much I care about her happiness.

I knew from the second I saw her. I knew it.

She belonged to me.

I told her how I felt. She said she didn't feel the same. But that's only cause she doesn't know me. To her I'm just the guy who shows her how to use the copier.

She doesn't know that I write love poems, or listen to music or that I can be funny.

I am funny. Last week I bought her balloon flowers to show her how I felt.

I asked her to dinner. She said no. But it was obvious she didn't mean it. You could tell. I mean it was obvious.

I should call her. Talk to her in person.

If she knew me personally.

If she knew my mother! They would get along so well. If she could just picture all of us together, a weekend away at the cabin. Wine by the water. Nuzzling each other in the hammock.

"You kids going to be out there forever?" Oh mother.

I just need to convince her. She has no choice but to be mine.

If only she knew how much I want her. How much I crave her. She belongs to me.

I'll tell her that. I'll invite her this weekend. She'll say yes.

She just has to.

What If...?

I should probably walk you to your door.

I know it is only four steps away

And you're perfectly capable in the twenty-first century to walk to your door by yourself. But...

I want to kiss you goodnight, and I think you want to kiss me goodnight too, I'm almost sure of it.

I can tell by the way you're looking at me right now, with your head softly back on the seat like you wish we would drive a couple more blocks.

If I walk you to the door it's going to be the perfect moment for that kiss.

I could kiss you right here in the car, but we're sitting down.

That's easy

There's a risk in a kiss standing up.

Also, right now I've got my foot on the brake.

I could kiss you, my foot would slip, and we'd run over some little old woman in the street. I don't want to do that!

I could put the car in park, but if I put the car in park, what does that suggest?

It makes me look like I know you're going to kiss me.

I don't know you're going to kiss me

I don't know anything

If I had known you were going to kiss me we would have never gone to dinner, we would have stayed at your place, kissing.

And if we do kiss, do we just kiss or do we... make out?

The car is - technically - a private space, but not too private.

There are windows and not just any windows,

Like, house windows are one thing, but it's socially acceptable to stare into car windows.

So we may feel private enough to make out for a minute, but there's still the awkward awareness that every car and every person can clearly see there are two people making out.

Which there's nothing wrong with.

But, this is our first date.

We don't know how either of us feels about public displays of affection.

So, it's totally possible that I could expect to kiss you for much longer and a car may pass and you'll pull back, because you're paranoid that when people see you engaged in PDA they hate you in envy of not having anyone in their life to display affection with publicly.

Which, I'm sorry, is a little narcissistic of you.

But you don't like to be hated by so you'll pull away and look at the car to make sure they're-not-hating you.

But... I might take this as you having a husband and you're checking the passing car to make sure it's not him.

So, the car passes, you go back to kiss, but I won't be able to give you my one-hundred-percent, because I'll be thinking that that was, in fact, your husband and he just returned home early from selling knives because he's been paranoid that you've been cheating on him while he's been on his business trips to Skokie so he's decided to come home, catch you with another man, and cut off his dick.

So how do you expect me to be all there while I'm expecting all of that?

Or what if you pull away for whatever reason. I might drive away thinking it's because I'm not a good kisser and I've been told I'm a damn good kisser, but it only takes one criticism.

So on my next date

Which may and hopefully be with you

I'll get another opportunity to kiss, but I'll be thinking of this the whole time

I'll worry that our teeth will hit
Or I'll open my mouth too wide
Use too much tongue
You know all the shit, you don't need to be thinking about, while you're kissing.

Or what if you're completely okay with public displays of affection.
So much so, that you get off on it.
And so when I go in for a kiss, you hit fast forward, and we go from first date
goodbye kiss to some exhibitionist fetish sex right here in my car.
And what if this is in the same universe where you are married and your husband
does come home, but you don't give a fuck.
You wanted this to happen
You wanted to shake things up.
And what if he's into it too! Instead of stabbing me with his stainless steel knives, he
hops in the car and joins us.
Now you're on top of me.
Your husband's rubbing one out.
You two start biting each other's faces off and all the while this crowd of people
gathers around outside.
And they're getting off on it too!
They all start fucking in the street!
Pretty soon a riot breaks out and everything around us is on fire and the news
stations arrive to catch footage of the end of world and the headline of the story is
"FIRST DATE IS APOCALYPSE!!!"

So... what I'm saying is
I'm going to believe that you're not married
Or a narcissist
Or an exhibitionist.
I'm going to walk you to your door
Kiss you goodnight

Head home

Maybe, send you a text saying

“I had a great time and I’d love to see you again.”

Then I’m going to go to sleep

Confident we had a nice time

Happy that I did in fact get a kiss

And eager to see you again

Because of all those possibilities that lie ahead of us.

Breaking Up

I'm not breaking up with you.

Is that what you thought?

No. God no! How could I break up with you? You're terrific. You're everything I want in a girlfriend.

Just not right now.

You see we were rash. We jumped to quickly. We landed. I just think we might have missed the bus, if you get my metaphor.

There was this coat and it fit, I just bought it too quickly. That sounds dickish. I'm not trying to be dickish.

What I'm trying to say and I hope you'll understand is that you're a very special girl. One of the finest. And I love you for it.

There's just something you need to know and I want to be honest. I don't want to mislead you on and I find that honesty is, in fact, the best policy.

You're my honeybear, my peach. I'm just afraid I'll hurt you darling and I don't want to hurt you. How could I? You're so precious. No, I love you too much to hurt you. That's why I want to take a break, but not a "break." It's not breaking up and its not pre-break up.

It's a pause, a short hiccup where we can breathe, where we can feel single and decide if going standing on rocks in the river was the best choice for our Sunday, get what I'm saying?

I just want to make sure we're ready before we begin, even though we've already begun.

I just want to hit the space bar and hop over the hurdle with the bunny in my left pocket and your shoes still tied.

You ever hear that saying before?

What doesn't taste like butter probably never was?

Is that a saying?

What I'm trying to say. I love you lots. Let's just be clear on what is we want and how we feel about each other.

I'm so glad you understand.

Oh you might want to get going or you'll miss the train.

Not a metaphor, literally, it's five ten if you don't hurry you'll miss the last red line express home.

I'm not trying to rush you.

I'm just looking out for your best interests.

Being A Kid

I remember the day my childhood ended.

I woke up early.

Really early.

Which is unusual because I don't wake up early.

Unless, there's an alarm clock

But there wasn't an alarm clock because I wouldn't have had to get up for anything because it was Saturday and I was a kid and that's the day when you get to sleep in.

It was a rainy morning so maybe I woke up because of thunder, but I don't remember that.

Here's what I remember.

When you're a kid you start mornings like a robot for years of your life, the same way everyday.

Until one day you don't because you think to yourself

I actually don't feel like doing this.

But before that moment you do it because you've always done it and routines are nice when you're a kid. (*Stick tongue out and make farting noise.*)

So my normal "wake up" was to get out of bed, go to the kitchen, pour cereal, eat cereal, drink juice, go to the basement, take a shower, go upstairs, put on clothes, and then brush my teeth and hair or vice versa, Because that part wasn't set in stone.

What can I say, a kid needs variety. (*Stick tongue out and make farting noise.*)

I did this forever or what seemed like forever because I was kid.

So, to get to my kitchen you had to pass by our den, which had wooden walls and these nice pictures of strangers.

I thought someone in our house knew these strangers—

long lost friends of my parents, or grandparents, or maybe they were my sisters real parents—

(I used to think she was adopted, because I don't really like her, but I asked about it one day and she's really my sister) and the strangers on the wall, we've never known them.

It's amazing what you can find out if you just ask.

So, I'm walking past the den and our strangers, on my way to the cereal, out of the corner of my eye, I see my Grandpa.

He was living with us because my Grandma died a few months before this and he didn't know how cook—

Or that's what I thought—

But Mom said he just wanted to be with family, but I didn't think we were that close with my grandparents. We didn't have pictures of them in our den.

Anyway, I see my Grandpa so I stop to say good morning to him.

But I turn before I talk.

And before I talk, I see what he's doing.

He was looking at naked girls on the computer.

Porn.

But I didn't know the word porn so I just remember he was looking at naked girls.

I didn't... want to stop him... so I didn't say good morning.

And I definitely didn't want cereal, because... I had never seen a naked girl before

Well, except for my sister once, but that didn't count because she didn't have boobs yet. So this was really the first time I had seen boobs in my life, so all in all, cereal didn't seem like the thing to do after seeing boobs.

So I... just... walked back up to my room and went back to bed, with no cereal.

My Grandpa was looking at naked girls.

I didn't know you could do that with a computer

Nobody told me, but then again I never asked.

I guess, it makes sense that he was, its not like... he got to see naked girls in real life anymore. So I could understand.

But then it made me think

If Grandpa is looking at naked girls on the computer, then everyone must be looking at naked girls on the computer.

My dad, my mom, my teachers, the postman, the kids down the street, the kid with the lip ring who carries our groceries to the car, and his parents and his grandparents.

Even my sister uses the computer—

Why is everyone looking at naked girls?

How does anything get done?

So, Monday at school I asked a friend of mine in my sister's grade if he looked at naked girls on the computer and he told me he did.

There was my proof.

Everyone looks at naked girls on the computer.

That day I went home and turned on the computer.

I didn't know where to look for naked girls though, but then I remembered in library class a month earlier, the teacher telling us if we wanted to find anything we just had to type it into the search bar.

I typed in "naked girls."

And poof!

There they were. Bunches of nice photos of naked girls. All these strangers like the people on the wall in our den.

Who were these people? Why were they naked?

Some might have been parents, sisters, kids.

And as I went through, picture after picture, I started to feel... embarrassed. Like, I did something wrong. Like, I hurt someone's feelings. Like, God was in the room shaking his head.

God. I started thinking about God. And it made me wonder if he looked at pictures of naked girls on the Internet too?

And that's when I remembered in religion class teacher telling us that God created us to look exactly like him.

So not only is he like everyone else and looks at naked girls, but... he *is* a naked girl on the computer.

Why is God naked? Why is God looking?

What came first the looking or being naked?

Does God have boobs?

All these questions that really didn't make sense confused me so much that I started laughing.

And it just became easier to stop thinking and look.

So I did.

And then I felt it. Something I had never felt before.

I thought it was sign of growing up because I felt myself becoming bigger.

But, I asked about it later, and it's just called a boner.

And that was the day I realized what naked really was.

So, I stopped having cereal. Took my showers at night. Didn't brush my hair because it looked better that way.

And that was the day I stopped being a kid. (*Sticks tongue out and makes farting noise*).

Cheating Man

I am a Cheater. In relationships, arguments, self-goals, taxes, and monopoly. There are rules in a society and I break them because rules only hold you back. I was married once and I say once and married past tense. I'm sure you can already predict why so there is no need for us to examine the depressing details. But this story occurs while I was married. So mentioning that I was married is necessary information as to why I was having a drink one night, well... drinks one night... every night. We're already being honest. I might as well give you the courtesy of full disclosure.

I was drinking like I always do, in a fine black suit and a polka dot tie. And some women approached me or I approached some women, I can't be too sure, I talked with a lot of women while I was married, so the details of who approached who really don't matter. Maybe I was introduced by Chet the bartender? We were quality pals by this time. These women were having a discussion about men of course, like women typically do in these situations. You know, "I don't know if he loves me. They're all liars. I don't like it when they have a mustache." Typical womanly talk. And they turned to me and asked for my opinion or I just gave it to them, saying, I sometimes do find a mustache appropriate... on PEDOPHILES! HA!

They had a good laugh at that one, but they wanted a serious answer, which is complicated when I'm surrounded by a group of terribly beautiful women. And I mean beautiful. The kind of beautiful you will only find while wearing a polka dot tie. Remember that gentlemen. They asked me, is it true, that all men are liars?

I gave this one my best shot.

“Ladies if all men were in fact liars, it would be the most outrageous sin for me to give you my opinion since God did say, DO NOT LIE! Especially, to beautiful ladies in cocktail dresses! HA!

This was the moment in the conversation I knew they were all in love with me. My wife did always tell me I could be quite the charmer, and also that I’m a lying son of a bitch, but what does she know?

She didn’t get any of my money! HA!

The women had their laugh but they wanted an answer.

You see, the poor girl, the youngest, a niece of the eldest of the four, she had a simple face, but stunning arms.

I am always surprised as to what flawed features I am able to look past when another is so emphasized before my eyes.

So the poor girl was having a cry because little husband Johnny had come clean about having had sex with a woman a month before they had married Multiple times too he included.

Which, to me, only seems like bragging.

But he told her the guilt was too much and he needed to come clean and tell her the truth.

My only question was why? Why? When you have a beautiful, young, vibrant, perky wife, why? Why the hell would you tell her?

But they wanted to know if men would always be liars.

Or could they ever develop into honest, decent husbands.

And so, in that moment, after I made another clever remark that had all of them wanting to fornicate with me,

I had a realization.

Not all men cheat.

There do exist some that are decent, usually feminine, but they do exist.

So the question is not the nature of men. The question is the nature of the affair.

Men do not cheat because they are men.

Men cheat because they can. Because it is expected.

You see this man, this boy, little husband Johnny, went and cheated on his wife, or fiancé.

Really doesn't fucking matter.

Had sex with another woman multiple times, it could have been multiple women multiple times, that's neither here nor there.

But, he did this and then confessed his sins to his wife as a very peculiar demonstration of matrimonial honesty. And, what is her reaction?

To go out and fuck little husband Johnny's best friend, little bachelor Jimmy?

No.

It is instead to get dressed up, go to a bar with auntie and auntie's friends and talk about little husband Johnny as if he was the representation of all men.

And when the time comes for some outside perspective on the matter whom do they ask?

A man.

And not just any man, but a man who wanted nothing more than to sleep with each and every one of them, even the niece, and I am not a pervert, I know I'm fifty she's no more than twenty three,
I just like them tight! HA!

So I asked the poor darling.

Where is little husband Johnny?

With his friends.

And what are they doing? I'll tell you what they are doing.

They are cheating on their wives.

Maybe not in the biblical sense, but where they are, what they are doing, who they are with.

THERE!

Their wives are not present.

What I mean is they're wives do not exist.

A man is not a composition of his lies or his truths or his insignificant little prick.

A man is made up of his secrets.

So I asked the girl a question of my own.

Would you like to have sex with me?

“It’s Okay. I’m Jew-ish.”

Truth be told

I never thought I’d come clean about this story.

It’s even a surprise that I’m telling it to you now. But what’s the point of acting like it never happened, because it happened and now that it’s over, it’s not really over, so it’s nowhere near gone from my memory, or the memories of those involved.

I could cover it up, but what would that prevent other than you being involved.

My fiancé and her family were very much there.

It really wasn’t my fault and I stand by that. It was the fault of my Mother and Father.

When I was a kid my family belonged to the Jewish Recreation Center, or as everybody called it, the JRC. This is where we used to exercise and swim and go after school, just like any other recreation center, but this one was for Jews.

Not strictly, but it was pretty much 99 percent Jews, and then my family and the Johnsons

Since we belonged to the JRC we took part in a lot of things Jewish: Passover, Yom Kippur, Bar Mitzvahs, and Christmas, which I thought was both Christian and Jewish. Which is exactly the reason I don’t know any Christmas Carols.

Because we belonged there I was convinced that my whole family were Jews, it made sense! My mother, she was always worried, my father raved about our spending habits. I had curly hair, a big nose, and I wanted to be a comedian.

They even gave me this photo ID where the RC faded off and all that was left next to my ten year old mugshot, was the word Jewish! So naturally, you can’t blame me, I thought I was Jewish, so what?

(I thought to be Jewish all you had to do was be funny.)

In high school I got the lead role in a play about this dysfunctional Jewish family in Brooklyn and I played the youngest son. Naturally, I assumed it was about my family.

I started telling stories at lunch about my aunt who won't go to the hospital cause she doesn't want to trouble anybody, my kippah, my Grandpa who survived the holocaust, which isn't completely a lie, because he was living in Jersey during the war. I became so Jewish that everyone at my high school, a Catholic institution, started referring to me as Neil the Jewish kid.

Once, I was stopped by outside my comparative theologies class by my teacher who asked me to spend a class period talking about what is like growing up Jewish. She asked me to bring in some Jew things from my house.

Jew things. Her words not mine, I swear.

So, what could I do?

I accepted.

I cut the top off my Yankees hat, wore it to class, and talked about Hannukah and how God told the chosen people it's okay to wear socks with sandals.

I was Jewish, not because I was Jewish, but because everyone thought I was Jewish.

For years this stuck and I kept making Jew jokes and saying, "It's okay I'm Jewish."

I got to have the best jokes. I was the Jew who went to Catholic school. If only I would have been named Muhammad, I would have been untouchable.

Years later I met this beautiful girl.

Her name was Sarah.

One night I took her out for dinner.

It was our first date and of course I'm nervous, I have no idea what to say, so I crack a joke.

"What's the difference between a Jew and a canoe?"

A canoe tips!"

She looks at me shocked.

I say, "No, it's okay I'm Jewish." Her face lights up.

"You're Jewish?" She tells me she's a Jew. Loves the fact that I'm a Jew. We make a few jokes, date ends. Never think twice.

Well, fast-forward seven months we're in love. We get engaged.

She takes me home to meet her parents. Real Jews! They're ecstatic, their daughter's marrying a Jew, and handsome one they say. We start planning the wedding. We meet with Rabbi Weimman to set up the date.

We pick out the Torah reading I'm going to do at the ceremony. In all my years I claimed to be Jewish I never once thought to learn Hebrew. Jesus Christ.

It shouldn't have taken as long as it did, but pretty soon the realization kicked in that I was fucked.

Her whole family thought I was Jewish!

What was going to happen when they met my parents? Sure, for a second, they would think they might be Jews, until they notice the huge crucifix hanging from my mother's neck.

Imagine what would happen at the wedding?

With the hoisting of the chairs and the L'chaim!!

I couldn't go through with it.

I know. I should have realized what the honest, forthright thing would have been.

But in the moment I was plotting to fake my death and move to Alaska.

It was a terrible idea. No one would have known where to hold the funeral.

I didn't do that.

And while I was trying to come up with something, I grew distant.

I stopped coming home at night. Our conversations turned mundane. I started crying after sex.

She started to think I was getting cold feet. She confronted me one night, asked what was wrong. Gave me an ultimatum.

Either I tell her what's come between us or she was going to call off the wedding.

I was going to tell her the truth.

But

Then I thought of her family, her mom and dad and her babushka hearing this and thinking I was some kind of perverted liar, some evil man who corrupted the mind of their beautiful daughter.

So I panicked.

Told her I was having an affair.

With a man.

I don't know! I improvised. I couldn't help what was said.

She broke down in tears.

I told her I could just leave.

She said no, she wasn't going to give up on me that easy, she loved me too much.

She told me about this retreat with Rabbi Weimman for Jewish men struggling with their sexuality. I said I'd go and we postponed the wedding.

So it's the night before I'm supposed to leave for this retreat.

I'm thinking what the hell am I doing?

I'm letting the women of my dreams think I'm a sexually confused Jew.

Just tell her the truth!

Tell her you're not Jewish!

But I can't.

I run away in the middle of night to my friend Larry's house and pack a bag.

In a few hours I'm going to go start a new life. Somewhere far. Where there's no Jews. Like Utah!

Where I don't have to pretend, where I don't have to be any religion at all.

I can just be me, whoever that is.

All of a sudden there's a knock at the door. Larry answers.

It's my fiancé, she's crying her eyes out, yelling, "So this is him, this is your little slut."

I say, "No, it's just Larry!"

Too late. Her dad steps out of nowhere, grabs Larry by his hair and drags him into the front yard and starts hitting him with his belt.

Larry's screaming "What the fuck?!" And her father swings harder and harder.

I yell out, "Stop!"

"Stop!"

"I'm not gay!"

"I'm not cheating on you!"

"I'm not Jewish!!"

Her father stops cold, because now he starts having a heart attack.

Probably from hitting Larry, but I'm still pretty sure it was because I wasn't Jewish. In the ambulance, I tried explaining myself. But no one seemed to understand, especially the paramedics.

When we got to the hospital she asked me leave.

So I left.

Two days later Rabbi Weimman called.

Her father had died.

He asked me not to attend the funeral.

I tried calling Sarah, but she changed her number. I went to her place and she moved, got a restraining order. I don't know why?

I hear she's living in the village now and dating a nice Jewish girl from Queens.

Maybe someday we'll laugh this whole thing off.

I learned something from this.

When you dig yourself into a hole, it's a hole for a reason. There's no way out, it's not a tunnel.

And that hole become a grave for you or your father in law.

Ladies and Gentleman please believe when I say,

I'm not a liar. I'm just an idiot.

Dream

I had this dream one night.

How are you with dreams? Are you any good?

I mean, I understand, dreams, they can come out of nowhere.

I just don't want to tell you about this and have you tell me it's some Freudian sign that I want to have sex with my Mom.

Because I don't want to have sex with my mom.

I don't care what you or any guy with a Ph.D has to say about it. Okay?

This dream I had, I was in a relationship at the time, so I was sleeping at my girlfriend's.

I always have the weirdest fucking dreams in other people's beds.

If I'm at my place, my dreams are always standard, you know, sex with people that look like girls I went to high school with. Sometimes I'm flying. Eating fucking ice cream. They're the best; they're amazing.

Now, the only time I ever dream of things, like, this one time the little dancing candies they show before movies were in leather bike jackets and they kidnapped my Aztec children, while a bear in a World War I German helmet stuck a fist up my ass.

And the only time shit like that ever happened was in my girlfriend's bed. And you know I can't tell her that. Every morning we woke up, she wanted to know, "What'd you dream about? What you dream about? Did you dream about me? Was it about me? Did we get married and grow old? Did you dream about me?"

I don't want her to think I'm a psycho, so yeah, sure, I dreamt about you. About our wedding! There was cake and a gnome who pissed champagne and you're dead grandma was singing 50's classics.

So yeah, this one specific night, this dream.

My favorite cars in the world are those 90's BMWs, the European-boxy-looking ones. I love that car. I've never driven it, know nothing about it, except that I see it parked on the street outside my building every once in awhile and every time, I think out loud, "that is a beautiful car."

I want that car.

I need that car.

And in this dream I had that car.

It felt like a sex dream, but with a car, seriously, I could have come at any moment. I was speeding down Route 66 out of the mountains and into the desert and everything is glorious and my hair is blowing in the wind and I'm wearing these sunglasses.

Basically it's the coolest fucking moment I've ever experienced in my entire life, in a dream.

I take the car off road into the sand pulling donuts, launching off dunes.

And then out of nowhere the engine shuts down and the car stalls.

And all that excitement, noise, it fades away into this... silence... I go to fix the engine and the hood's already open and there isn't even an engine.

The whole car is hollow.

So I start walking through this desert and the sun just sits at its highest point.

It's fucking hot, like hot, hot, dry heat, straight from above, there's no shade and no water and I'm thirsty and the sun, it just never fucking sets.

And I want to lie down but I have to keep walking, because my legs, they won't stop.

I can't give up so my body is just unwillingly walking me deeper and deeper into this shithole trying to convince me: Just keep walking, don't stop. Pull through!

And I want to yell out, I want to blame someone, but these are my legs, that was my car, this is my fucking dream.

Finally, I see this oasis. My legs led me to some peace.

I try to run over, but now my legs decide to fuck me. So running to this oasis becomes the most difficult fight of my life.

I use every last little bit of strength I can muster up and finally make it.
But guess what? It's already been sucked dry.
Every last bit of life is gone.
And then poking out of the ground is this box.
I open it and there's a gun inside.
It's clear.
If I want to escape the desert it's my only option.
I can't wake up.
I can't walk anymore.
I can't escape.
I'm surrounded by death on every side.
There. Is. *No life here.*
So I raise the gun to my head. BANG!
My eyes shoot open. My girlfriend she's already awake staring at me.

"What did you dream about? Did you dream about me?"

Part Three:
Performing and Touring a Show

Performing A Show

After the show was written I began looking for places to perform. At the beginning of this project I believed the best areas to focus my attention on booking *Blind Date* were going to be colleges and universities. Knowing the number of performers brought to CSB/SJU, I thought other campuses would be interested in booking this style of show. I have opened for five touring comedians booked by the Joint Events Council at CSB/SJU and I knew that similar organizations are usually looking for quality entertainment. I contacted Jared Sherlock who, for the past two years, has been touring his act to corporate and college shows.

He informed me how agency representation can simplify the booking process. Currently, he is represented by the Minnesota entertainment agency G.L. Berg. They have provided him with work at corporate shows, colleges & universities, fairs & festivals, and theaters. He suggested I consider marketing the show towards lessons on healthy relationships and that having a niche could separate me from other comedians who are backed by agencies and who have a prior history with colleges.

I contacted nine universities through an email similar to this:

My name is Joey Hamburger. I am a professional actor, writer, comedian out of Saint Paul, MN, and a senior at Saint John's University. The reason I am reaching out to you is I am currently setting up bookings for my tour next semester of my one-man comedy show, *Blind Date with Joey Hamburger*. It's a one-hour performance of comedic monologues having to do with romance, relationships, and ignorance. Each monologue is a different character providing their misinterpreted view of what makes a healthy relationship with yourself and with your partner. Along with the show I also teach improv and would be willing to hold a two hour improv workshop if

there was anyone interested in attending. I am hoping to perform at your school and wanted to know if you were interested in booking the show for sometime next February, March, or April. I am subsidizing the tour with help from sponsors, so I am asking for only twenty-five percent of a normal touring rate, which is five hundred dollars to cover marketing and travel. If you have any questions about the show or myself please feel free to contact me by email or phone at (612) 859 2281. I hope to hear from you soon.

I wasn't sure what to charge. If I said I would perform for free I was afraid they would not take my show seriously; perhaps they would never respond to the email. If I told them I wanted the standard pay, which is anywhere from fifteen hundred dollars to three thousand dollars, I was pretty sure they would tell the college student, with no agency and prior college performances, "no." Unfortunately, my bargain price minimized my serious, professional endeavor. And with no agency and minimal experience, I heard radio silence for months. The only school that did respond was St. Thomas University, and they only responded to tell me they don't book comedy acts. So, I decided to redirect my efforts toward booking actual theater venues.

I performed my past three original plays at the Bryant Lake Bowl Theater in Minneapolis so I contacted them first. After a back and forth discussion through email I booked a show for March 8th, 2013. Then, looking into venues closer to the University of Minnesota campus, someone recommended I contact Open Book. They have a performance loft that seats two hundred people. I contacted them and they gave me April 11th for a price of three hundred dollars. I agreed to the offer, but later cancelled the show due to conflicts with graduation, banquets, and my other sketch group's plans for that month.

When starting this project I wanted to take the show some place farther away than the Twin Cities area. Having experienced the wonderful comedy scene in Chicago I wanted to perform there. I contacted a friend of mine at the Columbia theater program and he suggested I check out Stage 773. This theater has been open for thirty years, but was recently bought and remodeled by Brian Posehn, the improv instructor at Second City. My friend told me this theater was easy to book and was used primarily for sketch, improv, and comedic shows. I contacted them and was given the date of March 1st in their cabaret theater for a fee of \$350. I signed a contract and booked my show in Chicago.

I realized the difficulty in getting paid bookings with no agency stamp of approval or name recognition. The unfortunate thing was that my web site was not completed when I attempted to book the universities. If it had been, I would have online content where they could see some of my work, posters, and reviews from prior shows. I hope having this material in the future will help me book more shows. The best option now, as a beginning performer, is to find theaters in areas where a network of supporters exists. I will then rent those spaces, market the shows myself, and sell tickets to make a profit.

Marketing is my weakest area in business practices. I usually find myself so wrapped up in the creation and performance aspects of the production that I tend to forget to notify people until it's almost too late. Luckily, my support network of family, friends, and fans has generally been large enough to create a warm audience at the last minute, although, with better marketing in the future I hope to find myself with both friends and strangers wanting to see my show.

For the February 7th premiere at CSB/SJU I created a poster. Posters on college campuses however, are so often overlooked that they usually aren't effective; that is why I created an eye-catching image for my marketing collateral. In my opinion, posters are too wordy, come across as too uninteresting, and unprofessional, so I only used information that was absolutely essential (title, date, time, and space). A great photographer created a striking image that gave the show a feeling of mystery. Then, editing the photo myself, I used provocative use of negative space to separate the poster from other advertisements on the wall. After hanging the poster all around campus I was told how eye-catching it really was. It was even used at the *Associated Twin Cities College Housing Administrators Student Staff Conference 2013* as an example of effective ways to advertise on campus. (See Appendix B)

The second difficulty in using posters is overcoming the barriers mandated by the CSB/SJU campus activities committee. Each poster has to be individually stamped to be placed on campus otherwise employees are trained to tear them down. Although I disagree with this concept, I had to have each poster stamped. When I failed to get the poster authorized, it barely stayed up one day.

Posters would have been useless in Chicago considering I would not be there to hang them up. I could have had someone drop off materials around the theater, but since I was only attempting to fill a space with a capacity of sixty-nine people, I decided the best effort for any publicity could be made online. I contacted my personal network in Chicago and asked each of them to invite their friends. Using

Facebook and a text message were really the only ways I advertised for both the Minneapolis and Chicago performances.

If my future shows have multiple performances, I will look into doing more publicity. Word of mouth is effective, but only as effective as the size of your support network. I have rarely gotten complete strangers to attend a performance. To do this, taking ads out in events magazines and creating press releases for newspapers will prove more effective in creating outside interest.

The most difficult part in my entire process of creating and performing *Blind Date* was my extreme nervousness before the performance. Not even just before I walked on stage, but for days before. People always ask if I still get nervous before performances. Of course I always do, but that's part of the fun. What I don't experience is fear. Fear is a debilitating emotion that holds you into a corner; excitement is an emotion that motivates. Nervousness is the emotion that sits in the middle and can be confused with both. *I'm always nervous*. I embrace it as excitement. I hope I never get to a point where I'm not nervous.

Stress is the emotion I dislike the most. I call stress, "the committee". Before performing every show I have ever been in, I find myself convinced this is going to be the one where "they" find me out. They are going to realize I have no talent, I can't write, I can't act, and I'm not funny. I'm waiting for "the committee" to cast its vote and let me know my performing life is over and I'm not to be allowed to perform anymore. Thankfully there is no such thing as this committee, but... wouldn't it be a terrible possibility!

Nevertheless, the “committee” didn’t attend, and the show was a success. People saw it, they liked it, they laughed, it felt great, and I made a little money. I performed first at the SBH and I filled the theater with two hundred and thirty people. Having spent the past four years on campus building a community around my performances it was great to have a mixture of continual supporters and newcomers who had heard so much about the show. I had decided I didn’t want to take a curtain call because I have always hated curtain calls. So, after my last line I walked off stage and didn’t return. I received a standing ovation and I never would have known had my friends not told me after the show. I was told by Glenda Burgeson, Director of Editorial services at CSB/SJU, in a letter sent to me after the performance, “You said you questioned whether it was funny. It was funny in a sophisticated way, because it required that we pay attention, so as not to miss any morsel.”

I always have a rush after performing on stage that is better than just about anything. All of the energy I have been sending and receiving throughout the show is released in an inexplicable way. After this first performance I had a rush stronger than with any other performance in my life. I laid down back stage and felt my body convulse. It had felt like a gigantic risk performing this work. The nervousness of the weeks leading up to it and the mindfulness of performing something that made me completely vulnerable led to an emotion I’ll never be able to describe. I just know that night was one of the best of my life.

Touring A Show

I travelled to Chicago at the beginning of March. With less than desirable Facebook advertising and word of mouth, I was still able to put thirty-seven people in a theater that sat sixty-nine in a town where I could name about eight or nine people. This performance was a pay-what-it's-worth event. Granted, the audience paid before the performance (not after), so I'll never know how they felt about the economic value of the entire experience. However, I made a total of \$238. That was an average ticket of six dollars and fifty cents per person, which wasn't bad considering it was the first time most of these people had ever seen my work. The show was terrific, but in a different way than at CSB/SJU. On campus, with the large crowd and professional look of the theater, the show was accepted both as comedy and theater, but in Chicago it seemed to be received as pure comedy. I'm sure the monologues had an impact, but the small size of the theater and its style had the audience members laughing like they were at a night of stand up or sketch comedy.

The audience in Chicago was made up of recent graduates of college and a few students my age. There was no one over the age of twenty-six. Having rewritten and reworked my monologues so many times I can perform them in a few different ways. The younger crowd appreciated more insanity. The more energy I gave them the more they laughed at almost everything. If my face twitched after a joke one person would laugh and the rest of the theater would join in. Most people said the performance was "hysterical." In the city of comedy I felt like I belonged.

The Minneapolis performance felt the worst of the three. It wasn't bad by any means, but I just don't think I was "on" in the way I had been for the other two. Moreover, I think the audience expected a different show than the one I presented. On campus the audience was a mix of a large number of people who knew me and people who didn't so the expectations were mixed. In Chicago, really no one knew what to expect. The audience in Minneapolis was mixed with people who each knew me for different reasons and had different expectations of what the show was going to be. I remember during the first monologue, when I got to the first comical bit, the audience laughed, but the laughter felt heavy. The best way I can describe it is that it felt similar to performing a comedy to a matinee audience. The audience members laughed, but it took a great deal of effort to get them to do so. They wanted a straightforward punch line and cue to laugh so the more subtle humor felt lost at points (aside from "It's Okay. I'm Jew-ish" which had them dying).

Also, this audience was a lot older than those of my previous shows. The audience members laughed more at the intricacies of the stories and the characters rather than the subject matter. I can do very well with an audience of an older demographic (50-80 years of age). I just need to work the material into the style they prefer for comedy. Having learned so much about writing comedy over the past four years I have seen that my ability to write jokes for different demographics has improved greatly. Younger generations like shocking punch lines and older ones prefer clever endings. Neither is better, I just need to cater to the greatest preference. I realize what would be helpful in the future is to get to familiar with my audience before the show begins or even to anticipate its expectations by noticing

the venue and the time of show. Being prepared for various senses of humor will help me emphasize the parts of my show that the audience will enjoy the most.

Conclusion

Overall, I am extremely happy with the result of all three performances. Producing *Blind Date* was a risk. It was something I had never attempted before in writing, comedy, and theater. I had at least three hundred and twenty five people see this production and I don't think anyone disliked what they saw. Of the possible seats in all three theaters, I filled sixty percent of them. I made \$818.00 in ticket sales and ended up with \$213.00 in profit after all expenses were paid.

I only hope that what I did can show others how one person goes about creating art and maintaining that process financially. People are doing it. They have problems and then they turn those problems into art. They have areas for improvement and they improve and find more areas to improve. It can be done; you just have to do it. Don't do it for a grade, don't do it for applause, do it because you can.

Now that I am graduating and dealing with the universal question of "what am I doing with my life?" this project has influenced my ideas about what I'm going to do next. Touring the show made me realize my ineffectiveness in building a network of fans in different locations. I know it was not a large tour, but just performing one show in Chicago and one in Minneapolis provided me with examples of an audience that is there because people already know me or know someone who does. Having seen how my name could become well-known in a community like

CSB/SJU I have realized the best option for my future is to choose a location and build my career from there. I will create an audience base in that area and by performing frequently there will always be an event for my fans and for newcomers. I also know I can reach a broader audience online. Already I have made two short episodes of a web series and that reached over two thousand people. I will continue to perform stand up and even market that online. This year I found myself with not only a new play, but I also increased from ten minutes worth of material to an hour of stand up comedy. I plan to do a show this summer, record the set, and sell it online. This tour also taught me the importance of having an agent. A performer can market their own name, but when a company with a longer history backs him early on, his chance of finding performances greatly increases. Using the material I've already generated I am going to focus on getting an agent to help me find more work.

Most importantly I learned what it is about me that makes me love performing and excel at it. I would have done this entire project even if it hadn't have been for an Honors Thesis or an Entrepreneur Scholar Venture because I love this work. I can make up, edit, or just plainly state pieces of history and have people laughing with and at me. I can manage multiple projects at once, keep track of them all, and accept if one doesn't meet my expectations because I can make sure the others exceed. I can handle nervousness and critics and the worst enemy of all, myself. This project is not one that has ends, but rather it's a learner's permit that says I am a performer and can continue to be one for the rest of my life.

Appendix A:
Blind Date
Business Plan

Preface

The most difficult and critical aspect of art is to have the work received by an audience. For this to be done successfully it must be prepared within a business mindset. Measures of success must adapt to the fiscally limited state of art for the beginning artist. *Blind Date* is an hour-long comedy show I have created and will perform with not only the intention of earning revenue, but building a larger network for future performances and new material. This will be successful by focusing on creating a rewarding product and marketing it with the intention of filling seats for every show with current supporters, their networks, and even strangers lured by the prospect of a good night of laughs. By trying different pricing methods for each show I will be able to provide insight into what should be done for future shows. I will tour the show to three different locations bringing in old and new audience members. With a quality show I will create new networks of supporters for upcoming shows who are willing to pay for a ticket when my model of work changes with future tours and new material. Entertainment is not a one-time buy. It's a subscription to a body of work that will make you laugh and cry, cry like you are laughing, laughing like you are crying, again and again.

Product

Blind Date with Joey Hamburger is a comedic storytelling show on love, loneliness, and relationships. It is a compilation of monologues from characters such as a fifty-year-old misogynist to and eleven year old kid who walked in on his grandfather looking at porn. The show runs around sixty minutes. The first monologue I wrote for this production was created in 2010, but the rest were devised over the summer of 2012. The show is not only funny, but has the power to provoke discussion and thought. It looks like stand-up comedy, but hooks your attention like a night of theater. This show is versatile and can be performed easily with little technical set up.

The risk in the product is that it is unlike anything I have produced before. It's not stand up, sketch, or improv. It's not like any of theater I have produced before. It is the first one-person show I have ever written. Since the purpose of this production is too bring in large audiences and gain their continual support the show must have a lasting effect on them. Also, to earn back any revenue from this production I need a product that causes audiences to support my process out of their own will. If the product is lack luster both of these possibilities could fall flat.

I believe, however, that this show is a wonderful piece of comedy and theater. It will be something like my audience will have never seen before. It's original, dedicated, and clever. As in all business there is risk and this show is a risk I am happy to take.

History

In fourth grade I started performing comedy. By perform, I really mean I stole a routine of Bill Cosby's and a microphone during a karaoke day at my grade school. It was during detention that I realized creating laughter was just about everything I liked to do.

For the past four years I have been writing and performing standup, theater, improv, and sketch comedy professionally. In 2009 I was designated a scholar of distinction in theater by the Minnesota Department of Education. I originally started performing stand-up comedy in the black comedy circuit in Minneapolis/Saint Paul. In 2010, Acme Comedy Co named me one of the twenty-five funniest people in the Twin Cities. At the beginning of 2011 I started landing paid gigs in different areas inside and outside the metro area.

In the summer of 2011, I wrote, directed, and performed my first two professional productions at the Bryant Lake Bowl Theater in Minneapolis. The first production, *The Beautiful Mind*, had an overall attendance of over 120 people during three Thursday night performances. Tickets were sold for ten dollars. The next production, *American Dreamers*, had a shorter run of a Friday and Saturday night. Again, we only sold tickets for ten dollars, but this time our audience size doubled.

In 2012, *The Beautiful Mind* was selected as one of five plays for "Emerging" a festival for emerging playwrights at the Blank Slate Theater in Saint Paul. In June of 2012, I partnered with Jared Sherlock (professional magician and entertainer) to create a sketch comedy show that ran for three performances entitled *Sherlock*

Hamburger. The overall attendance was once again around 120 people and this time tickets were sold at thirteen dollars.

A series of shorts called *Joey Hamburger...* are currently in production. The first installment appeared on October 3rd, 2012 and received 1,500 views in the first week.

Currently, I am preparing a four-performance tour in Spring 2013. The show, *Blind Date with Joey Hamburger*, will play at the Stephen B. Humphrey Theater on the Saint John's University campus, the Local Blend coffee shop in Saint Joe, the Open Book: Target Performance Hall in Minneapolis, and Stage 773 in Chicago.

This tour is a combination of a senior project in theater and an Honor's Thesis on the nature of performing comedy from creation to business. The cost of all the shows will be "pay-what-you-think-it's-worth." This way I will be able to have continual support from my network of audience goers and newcomers won't be discouraged to take a look at new work from a performer with whom they are unfamiliar.

Blind Date is my current production and will be the emphasis of this business plan.

Industry/Market

Having performed three shows professionally in Minneapolis and a number of free comedy shows on the CSB/SJU campus I have a reasonably accurate set of data off of which to base my market assumptions.

Fireplace Puppies is a sketch comedy group that performs a free show at CSB/SJU one night every year. I joined during its third year in 2010. The first performance I was a part of had an attendance of over 400 people. The next year had very similar attendance numbers. Last year we changed venues to the Stephen B. Humphrey auditorium and this time had an audience of 340 people. This was a huge success considering we had only ten members of the senior class attend due to another senior commitment that evening. I have also performed three stand-up performances on campus. These three shows averaged an attendance of 280 people. From these numbers I can assume that a similar number will attend *Blind Date* this February.

In Minneapolis I have performed three different shows. *The Beautiful Mind* sold tickets for ten dollars. The theater fit an audience of 84 people. With three performances I averaged an audience of 35 people a night. The second show, *American Dreamers*, was performed in August of 2011 for two performances. These tickets were sold again for ten dollars. This time the size of my audience just about doubled and I averaged an audience of sixty people each night. A number of people that attended *American Dreamers* were returning audience members from June. This past June I performed *Sherlock Hamburger* a sketch comedy show at the same venue for thirteen dollars a ticket. This show ran for three nights. The show

brought in an average audience of forty people a night and brought in around fifteen hundred dollars of ticket revenue. The revenue, however, is split fifty-fifty with the venue.

The audiences of these shows in Minneapolis and on campus are frequent appreciators of my work and will be target market for the performances in these areas. With their support will come the support of their network they encourage to attend. Like most theater, people are more likely to attend if someone they know plants the suggestion.

The target market for the shows in Chicago will be close supporters and their friends with whom we can spread the word. These are primarily students who will be less inclined to spend money on a show produced by someone from whom they know little. In making the show pay-what-it's-worth they will be more inclined to take a chance on a show they know little about. If the material is solid hopefully they will become willing to share a few dollars to help support me as an artist.

Marketing Plan

Marketing for the tour will be specific to the site of each performance. Certain things will work in different areas and certain things in others. For instance posters might work on the campus of CSB/SJU and go completely unnoticed on the streets of Chicago. So the objective of this marketing plan is to come up with specific solutions.

The first show will take place at the Stephen B. Humphrey auditorium at Saint John's University. To advertise for this show we will create buzz. Word of mouth is one of those over confident marketing strategies that tend to never produce positive results. In the performing business this sometimes is one of the best options to create buzz for a show, to get people talking about it. There need to be specific actions taken, however, to ignite student's interest in spreading the word or even remembering what the word is. To spark this buzz I will first do a simple and effortless act, I will hang promotional posters in public spaces around campus. Next I will start by spreading word through the theater department. This should hopefully gain a starting audience and possible evangelizers: people who have seen my work, know its quality, and will encourage their friends and peers to attend the show. The show will be advertised in both dining halls on the "WOW" promotional cards that sit at every table. CSB/SJU magazine will be featuring me in an article around the time of the performance, hopefully encouraging alums to attend and also other faculty. Next, I will use what I am deeming the "Fireplace Puppies" approach to advertising. This is strictly bus stop promotion. I will have promotional materials and fellow evangelizers alerting the public of the performance the day of

the show. Since the show costs a student nothing this type of promotion will gain the attendance of students who have no connection to the performance, but feel up for a comedy performance.

The second show will take place in Chicago, which will make marketing more difficult. My first contact will be a fellow performer who helped me in booking the theater there. This contact is a theater student in Chicago and will help by spreading promotional materials to fellow students and friends in Chicago. Again, since the show is essentially free, they will feel less inhibited to take a chance on a friend's suggestion. I will then concentrate my friends and supporters in Chicago into a network to create buzz with friends and peers of theirs interested in attending.

My final show will take place in Minneapolis at the Bryant Lake Bowl Theater in uptown. My main focus in marketing this show is my network of friends and supporters in the Minneapolis area. This is everyone who has been to shows of mine before or expressed prior interest to attending my work. Specific supporters will be invited personally through postcards in the same way the show at the Local Blend worked. Then I will look into advertising to students in the arts in the surrounding schools (i.e. MCAD, the U of M, St. Thomas, MCTC, Normandale, Hamline, etc.) This show will have a larger success in targeting continual attendees and their networks. This show also has the potential in gaining the most revenue from the pay what you can model.

Finally, my website will contain all of the show's information. Then anyone who watches my web videos can be linked to that information on my website.

Post Cards: Include the date, time, location, and promotional photo. Different runs for different venues. Will be used as general informational handouts and sent in the mail as individual invitations.

Poster: Larger version of the post cards. Will be placed in common areas near the target market for each venue.

Bus Stop: Handing out postcards, personally telling strangers, and creating buzz.

Evangelists: Local residents in the areas of the performances who have seen my work and can promote the show to their network.

Online: Using Facebook and other social networking sites to contact groups out of immediate location.

Management

I will run the artistic and business operations of the tour. This includes handling relations with the theaters in booking, promoting, and financial details. I will also handle all the artistic elements of the tour in writing, rehearsing and performing.

I have the help of an organizer intern. This person helps me in keeping detailed records of the entire process. This organization helps move the entire tour smoothly and create a guide so that any future attempts will cruise over barriers.

My production team is Peter Capecci. Peter has filmed and edited two shorts of the *Joey Hamburger* series for me. His skill in production is incredible and his ability will help with the creation of promotional videos and future shorts that will be able to gain an online audience that will be encouraged to attend one of these productions. He will also shoot the photos for promotional materials and postcards.

My web designer is Dennis Nelson. Dennis founded his own skate apparel company when he was fifteen. Through this process he grew as a graphic designer and web designer. He has now started his own design company, Organic Web Farmers. He has designed the beginning template of my website, joeyhamburger.com, which will be improved through future edits and additional materials.

I will need help in the marketing areas of this production. Specifically, I will be looking for evangelizers on campus, in Minneapolis, and Chicago. These evangelizers will help promote the show with postcards and by spreading buzz within their close networks. This could be social network advertising, personal

invites to friends, or possible inserts into campus newspapers and event data.

Evangelizers on the CSB/SJU campus will focus on bus stop advertising and wear T

Shirts that makes students ask the question, "Why are you wearing a Joey

Hamburger?"

Operations

The general operations of the tour are split into three categories.

- (1) **Artistic:** This category is everything that surrounds the show itself. The creation process is the writing of the script. This process consists of research, analysis, and creative writing. The show is a collection of comedic monologues that have strong themes surrounding relationships, love, and loneliness. The next step in the artistic process is rehearsal of the material, which will occur using performance facilities on the CSB/SJU campus. The rehearsal process will require time spent on memorization, development, and performance techniques. This should take around forty-five hours to complete total memorization and preparation. There are four performances in four different locations, which will take different times in set up, take down, and travel.
- (2) **Business:** This side involves the booking of venues, which has been completed as of the beginning of November 2012. This process involved making connections with theaters and renting spaces on desired nights next Spring. It also involves the financial. The different pricing methods will mean I need to plan accordingly and find sponsors to either make a profit or break even.
- (3) **Marketing:** Explained with more detail previously. These operations are all things marketing for the four shows: including posters,

postcards, video, web, word of mouth, and personal invitations. These can be conducted from the CSB/SJU campus, but I will need assistance from associates in Minneapolis and Chicago

Timeline

| | |
|----------|---|
| October | |
| 31st | Theater bookings complete. |
| | |
| November | |
| 12th | Get sponsorship from SJU Senate. |
| 24th | Promotional material photoshoot. |
| 30th | Sponsors for Chicago and Minneapolis settled. |
| 30th | Fundraiser comedy show. |
| | |
| December | |
| 1st | Working draft complete and submitted. |
| 14th | Promotional materials printed. |
| 14th | Staff positions filled. |
| 21st | Final draft complete. |
| | |
| January | |
| 16th | Begin rehearsal process |
| | |
| | |
| February | |
| 3rd | Final revisions made. |
| 4th-6th | Campus wide promotions. |
| 4th-6th | Dress rehearsals. |
| 7th | Bus stop promotion. |
| 7th | Performance SBH 8:00pm |
| 14th | Promotional materials due in Chicago. |
| 20th | Social network outreach for Chicago. |
| | |
| March | |
| 1st | Performance Stage 773 8:00pm Chicago. |
| 8th | Performance Bryant Lake Bowl Theater 7:00pm |
| | |

2012-2013 Financial Statement

| <u>Sales Forecast</u> | Dec | 7-Feb | 1-Mar | 8-Mar | Total Phase 1 |
|------------------------------|--------|--------|----------|----------|---------------|
| Number of seats | 0 | 400 | 69 | 84 | 553 |
| % Attendance | 0% | 58% | 52.80% | | 59% |
| Attending | 0 | 230 | 37 | 58 | 325 |
| % Paid | 0% | 0% | 100% | 100% | 29% |
| # of Tickets | 0 | 0 | 37 | 58 | 95 |
| Avg. Pay | \$0.00 | \$0.00 | \$6.43 | \$10.00 | \$2.52 |
| Total Revenue | \$0.00 | \$0.00 | \$238.00 | \$580.00 | \$818.00 |

| <u>Income Statement</u> | Dec | 7-Feb | 1-Mar | 8-Mar | Total Phase 1 |
|--------------------------------|-----|--------|---------|-------|---------------|
| Rev. from Show | \$0 | \$0.00 | \$238 | \$580 | \$818.00 |
| Rev. from Sponsors | \$0 | \$100 | \$100 | \$0 | \$200 |
| Gross Profit | \$0 | \$100 | \$338 | \$580 | \$1,018 |
| Expenses | | | | | |
| Theater Cost | \$0 | \$45 | \$350 | \$290 | \$685 |
| Marketing | \$0 | \$0 | \$0 | \$0 | \$0 |
| Travel | \$0 | \$0 | \$100 | \$20 | \$120 |
| Labor | \$0 | \$0 | \$0 | \$0 | \$0 |
| Total Expenses | \$0 | \$45 | \$450 | \$310 | \$805 |
| Net Profit | \$0 | \$55 | (\$112) | \$270 | \$213 |

| Cash Flow | Dec | 7-Feb | 1-Mar | 8-Mar | Total Phase 1 |
|----------------------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------------|
| Beginning Cash | \$0 | \$1,000 | \$1,055 | \$943 | |
| Receipts | | | | | |
| Sales | \$0 | \$0 | \$238 | \$580 | |
| Sponsors | \$0 | \$100 | \$100 | \$0 | |
| Owners | \$1,000 | \$0 | \$0 | \$0 | |
| Total Receipts | \$1,000 | \$100 | \$338 | \$580 | \$2,018 |
| Disbursements | | | | | |
| Assets | \$0 | \$0 | \$0 | \$0 | |
| Goods | \$0 | \$0 | \$0 | \$0 | |
| Expenses | \$0 | \$45 | \$450 | \$310 | |
| Total | \$0 | \$45 | \$450 | \$310 | \$805 |
| Ending Cash | \$1,000 | \$1,055 | \$943 | \$1,213 | \$1,213 |

| Balance Sheet | Dec | | | Mar |
|---------------------------|---------|--|--|---------|
| Assets | | | | |
| Cash | \$1,000 | | | \$1,213 |
| Total Assets | \$1,000 | | | \$1,213 |
| Liabilities and OE | | | | |
| Current | \$0 | | | \$0 |
| Long term | | | | |
| Total Liabilities | \$0 | | | \$0 |
| Owners Equity | | | | |
| Owners Equity | \$1,000 | | | \$1,000 |
| Retained Earnings | \$0 | | | \$213 |
| Total Liab and OE | \$1,000 | | | \$1,213 |

Appendix B: Poster



BLIND DATE

THURSDAY FEBRUARY SEVENTH
EIGHT PM
STEPHEN B. HUMPRHEY THEATER