

Spring 2022

This is the sky that I see

Gavin T. McKenzie
Bard College

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This is the sky that I see

Senior Project Submitted to
The Division of the Arts
Of Bard College

by
Gavin McKenzie

Annandale-On-Hudson, New York
May 2022

THANK YOU

Riley Cerabona, for signing up to not only be my collaborator this year but one of my closest friends. I'm so grateful to have met you, and to have the opportunity to be in your life. Thank you for taking in this world with me, and for taking care of Keegan and Reef with me. We are family now, and always will be. I cannot wait to see everything you create and become next year and beyond, and am so proud of the person I've gotten to know.

Clayton Webb, for introducing me to the entirety of Keegan: Written so flawed, but in your body, a collection of beautiful things. While you are a gifted comedian, I did not ask you to join this project because you are a funny performer. I asked you because of the care you possess as a storyteller and artist. Thank you for showing me all of the parts of Keegan, for singing Avril Lavigne with me, and for giving me that chicken finger.

Levi "Kota" Lowe, for running into me in October, and that we are friends six months later. I knew then that you were Reef, without actually knowing you. You showed me a new capacity for honesty. You energize the truth. You make it urgent. Thank you for bringing every part of yourself into this project, and for not only expanding the character of Reef, but giving them more power in this world.

Nilaja Sun, for teaching me about stars, and the limitlessness of the theater. You closed your eyes and dreamt with me, and for that, I am forever grateful.

Chiori Miyagawa, for teaching and reminding me that the words we say on these pages can be enough.

Jack Ferver, for teaching me to trust the body to say what my words cannot right now.

Audrey Salgado, for reading through my script maybe 200 times because I didn't like how the word "yea" felt on page 11. You have such an incredible heart, and I am so lucky to have met you.

Laila Perlman, for sticking by my side from the beginning! We really saw this whole thing through!

Dad, for teaching me to preserve my peace.

Mom, for being everything to me since forever.

Jake Stiel, for giving me the space to figure out how to love correctly.

Also, thank you to all my friends from Bard. Whether I'm drinking dumpster tequila with Avis, rear-ending a RAM pickup truck with Taty, watching Faith's ear bleed out, or waiting for Jake's colonoscopy to finish up with Ella, these last four years have been super fun and different!!

Lastly, thank you **Alex**, for being the greatest joy I have ever known.

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THIS IS THE SKY THAT I SEE
by Gavin McKenzie
August, 2021-Today

CHARACTERS

REEF

19 ½, Somewhat calm, somewhat clever. Very sweet.

KEEGAN

19, so fun, brutal at times. They think they have it figured out.

SETTING

Everywhere, between their memories of the last four years, and right now.

ORIGINAL CAST

REEF..... KOTA LOWE

KEEGAN.....CLAY WEBB

PRODUCTION

DIRECTOR..... GAVIN MCKENZIE

ASSISTANT DIRECTOR..... RILEY CERABONA

NOTES

This is the sky that I see sits in liminal space, between coming-of-age, comedy, and tragedy. It is awkward and private and so close. This is voyeurism, so you can try to make the audience feel guilt, on everyone's behalf.

There should be no set and no props. The world of this play twists, creases, holds them tight, and lets them go. Lean into that. Use every part of the theater to expand and shrink the world. Whatever feels fun.

This is the sky that I see does not have scenes. Transitions are simply indicated by numbers, 1-16. The performers should use their bodies to lift, sink, crawl, and rise into the next moment, in the most honest way.

Parts of *This is the sky that I see* are performance, and parts are not. You will know.

I don't know how or where I found Reef and Keegan, but they've really grown on me, and I think that had mostly to do with the original performers who are helping me find them. This is a story about figuring out how to love correctly. Find the Reef and Keegan that feel good. They are both so good.

There is no anger here. These cannot be angry people.

“And you fall, and you crawl, and you break
And you take what you get, and you turn it into” -
Avril Lavigne, *Complicated*

March 2022

KEEGAN

In a spotlight may be sitting with legs turned under. Adjusting herself.

3 weeks ago I went to a yard sale on 72nd street, and the young couple who ran it gave me a free massage with their massage vibrator. It was pretty shit but I was loving the intimacy so I kept it up for 30 minutes. I started to sense the connection. He said \$60. I didn't buy it. I felt used. And

so did they. Neither of them wore a wedding ring. This friend of mine has a fear of lack of marriage. He looks like a Nate. She looks like a Julia. He loves her. They will split probably and he will be crushed and she will too probably. Inconvenience is crushing.

I felt bad for Nate. Not because of his relationship, but because he had a very irritating voice. Like he never figured out the inside voice. I knew I shouldn't bring that up with him when I met him. He might never know. It's weird because with that sort of thing I feel stuck. I can't tell someone their voice sucks when I meet them because that could be a little much but if I wait too long they will be like "oh my god I've known them for this long and they've always hated my voice" which is so shitty. There is no right time. they will never fix their issues. I felt the guilt on everyone's behalf so I bought silly putty. It was a double pack of yellow and purple but I only bought it for the yellow because it's the color of the walls of my first bedroom. My walls were like butter yellow, but cooler. Yellow like May, but paler?. *Another spotlight appears, surrounding REEF as they make a phone call*

Like the autonomy of light.

But, well, the silly putty was more like a home depot color swatch labeled "Harvest" or "Tuscan Sun" but kinda also just looked like a school bus. And so I went home with the silly *Their phone rings in their pocket, they pick it up and look at it until the phone stops ringing.*

Give this a while. The phone goes to voicemail, and REEF records their voicemail

1

REEF

Hey. It's Reef. I was just- I was just checking in to say hi! It's been a while, so I just wanted to make sure you're okay or whatever.

Reef awkwardly laughs, trying to come up with more to say. Keegan is pacing around the stage, traveling from darkness to light.

Also, I was thinking. Yknow those commercials that are about the army or military dads coming home to their kids and wife and their dogs or whatever. I just watched the Amazon one and I was like "are these really your children or wife or dogs?" Like what if they hire people who don't know each other and so it is this really dramatic moment of this stranger just picking up a child and crying. I don't know. Yea I don't know. Also good luck at your show- or break a leg haha. I think that's this weekend right? Whenever it is, I hope it goes well! *Trying to find things to say again.*

And ALSO like what if the family *is* real but they hire the dog to just lather it on. Like in the commercial. I don't know.

KEEGAN walks into REEF's spotlight.

2

REEF and KEEGAN are at an intersection. KEEGAN looks both ways very quickly and sprints down the crosswalk even though the light never said he could. KEEGAN stays.

KEEGAN

Calling to REEF

Come on!

Reef nods head no

KEEGAN

There aren't any cars coming! Just sprint!

REEF

No!

KEEGAN

Okay now! There aren't any cars coming.

A car does drive right between them, indicated by headlights. They both follow the lights with their heads.

if you ducked you would have been fine.

REEF

???

They both awkwardly wait until the sign says REEF can go. Once it does, they look both ways and walk to the other side.

3

KEEGAN's heart is beating in their forehead, while Reef's is beating in their ribs. They are sitting on a bench. The bench could go forever, or they could be squished. KEEGAN'S arms are gripping the edge of the seat, and REEF's arms are crossed. They wait a while. REEF is over it. KEEGAN is antsy.

KEEGAN

Hi

REEF

Hi

Beat

KEEGAN

I know you're mad at me because you think-

REEF

I'm not mad. I never said I was mad.

KEEGAN

Okay well you *are*
Reef looks forward, turning head in discomfort

KEEGAN

Reef.

4

Keegan has to do a self-tape for an audition. They are setting the camera up.

KEEGAN

Thanks again for helping.

REEF

No prob

KEEGAN

Okay so after my first line you just say “but I love you” and then after my second line you just have to say “stop”.

REEF

What’s the play about?

KEEGAN

I don’t actually know- the description just said it’s about a forbidden romance, and that they are looking for actors ages 25-35

REEF

But you’re 19.

KEEGAN

Do I look like I’m 19?

REEF

You are 19.

KEEGAN

But do you think I look my age?

REEF

Yes.

KEEGAN

Well it's just that my mom said I look mature for my age.

Frustrated, finished setting up, getting in position to start.

REEF

You do, but also you look 19 because you are

KEEGAN

Have you acted before?

REEF

Yes. I did Beauty and The Beast.

KEEGAN

Who were you?

REEF

I was napkin 4 in the "be our guest" number. A lot of moving parts but

KEEGAN

You ready?

REEF

Mhm

KEEGAN

Okay give me the thumbs up when you start.

Reef nods instead of giving thumbs up

Give me a thumbs up when you start.

Reef does thumbs up

5

KEEGAN *Ordering food, while REEF is getting ready for a job interview, changing.*

KEEGAN

You have a great neck stop pretending you don't.

REEF

Thanks

KEEGAN

I'm ordering. What do you want?

REEF

I'll just get whatever you get

KEEGAN

To the person on the phone

Hi yea I'll get two orders of sweet and sour chicken combos

REEF

Okay no actually get me Lo mein.

KEEGAN

Actually only one order of Sweet and Sour Chicken. And can I add an order of chicken lo mein?

REEF

Shrimp

KEEGAN

Shrimp Lo Mein.

Beat

And 2 egg rolls

REEF

1

KEEGAN

1 egg roll. That's it. Thank you, see you soon.

REEF comes out of the closet in business casual clothing, navy.

Why blue?

REEF

Well I looked online and they said blue was the best color for job interviews because it is pretty much a neutral color but also it *is* a color. And it is very clean. I was debating between this and grey but grey is kind of boring.

KEEGAN

I like when you wear orange.

REEF

The website said orange is too "abrasive"

KEEGAN

You'll look different!

REEF

Thanks

KEEGAN fixes tie but probably just actually messes it up more oops

KEEGAN

Looks great

REEF

It does?

KEEGAN

I think it does.

REEF

And you think the blue looks okay?

KEEGAN

I think it looks great!

REEF

I feel like I look like if the governor of Connecticut had a kid with the guy from Gossip Girl.

KEEGAN

No you look good!

REEF

I look like a protractor.

Walking back in the closet

Do you ever feel like because you are nervous you have to poop.

KEEGAN

Yea.

REEF

Yea.

KEEGAN

Have you tried to poop?

REEF

No that'd be useless I don't have to poop it's more of an abstract thing.
It doesn't even matter if I get the job honestly.

KEEGAN

What?

REEF

I already have a job

KEEGAN

You hate your job.

REEF

That's a little dramatic

KEEGAN

You told me you hate your job.

REEF

It's gotten better.

KEEGAN

Your boss is horrible.
You told me you hated her.

REEF

I don't hate her.

KEEGAN

You don't?

REEF

High pitched lie

No. It's more of a I don't know. Like I wouldn't let her in my car on a normal day But if she was going to get struck by lightning I would let her in my car.

6

REEF is driving, KEEGAN is in the passenger seat. Singing Complicated by Avril Levine. It doesn't have to be this but I like it so I put it in. Reef singing quietly, while Keegan is screaming the wrong words.

KEEGAN

Uh huh, life's like this
Uh huh, uh huh, that's the way it is
'Cause life's like this
Uh huh, uh huh, that's the way it is
Chill out, what ya yellin' for?

And if, you could only let it be, you will see

When we're driving in your car
And you're talking to me one on one, but you
become

'Round everyone else

Like you can't relax

You look like a fool to me
Tell me
Why'd you have to go and make things so
complicated?
I see the way you're acting like you're
somebody else
Gets me frustrated
Life's like this, you
And you fall, and you crawl, and you break
And you take what you get, and you turn it
into
Honesty and promise me I'm never gonna find

REEF

Uh huh, life's like this
Uh huh, uh huh, that's the way it is
'Cause life's like this
Uh huh, uh huh, that's the way it is

Lay back, it's all been done before
you will see
I like you the way you are

And you're talking to me one on one, but you
become
Somebody else

You're watching your back

You try to be cool

Tell me
Why'd you have to go and make things so
complicated?
I see the way you're acting like you're
somebody else
Gets me frustrated
Life's like this, you
And you fall, and you crawl, and you break
And you take what you get, and you turn it
into
Honesty and promise me I'm never gonna find

youre baby

you faking

No, no, no

No, no, no

7

REEF is stepping on KEEGAN'S back. KEEGAN is clearly in pain but doesn't want to admit they are wrong.

KEEGAN

Okay I feel limber. Step on me.

REEF

Am I doing this right?

KEEGAN

Oh no yea it feels wonderful.

REEF

Okay!

Moves foot around. KEEGAN groans.

Oh wow, yea This muscle

Pressed and rotates foot

Feels really tight.

KEEGAN

Pretty sure that's bone.

REEF

I feel like I'm hurting you...

KEEGAN

My dad's ex-wife told me this helps loosen you up and deal with anxiety.

REEF

You have anxiety?

KEEGAN

No I don't get anxiety but like figuratively if I had anxiety it'd go away.

REEF

Neat!

KEEGAN

What do you do for anxiety?

REEF

Depends. Sometimes I like to pray. But my therapist told me to cry when I feel like I need to cry or want to or it'll all build up and I'll explode.

KEEGAN

That sounds horrible.

REEF

Which one?

KEEGAN

Yes.

REEF

Does that feel okay?

Keegan groans

You've never like prayed *ever*?

KEEGAN

No?

REEF

Okay. Yea I guess I just consider you spiritual. I just thought everyone prays to a certain degree. Is this a better spot?

8

KEEGAN

Okay

Silence

How are you?

REEF

I'm okay.

KEEGAN

That's good.

I feel like you are mad at me and I just want to talk to you about it so we can figure it out.

REEF

What would I be mad about. Oh, **that**.

9

The two are laying in bed. It's 2am. REEF is fast asleep. KEEGAN is trying to go to sleep but REEF is kicking in their sleep and slapping a little and sleep talking and rolling over KEEGAN.

REEF

Hey *whispering* hey I really like your band.

KEEGAN is looking up at the ceiling, tired. REEF is drooling a little.

They told me.

Reef takes a while to finish speaking here, and KEEGAN is interested in how the sentence will end.

Pineapple eats you from the inside.

KEEGAN puts hand on face. Pokes REEF till they wake up. REEF is barely awake

KEEGAN

Hush tone

I can't sleep

REEF

So groggy

Why?

KEEGAN

Less hush

You are snoring

REEF

Smiley

try harder goodnight.

Goes back to sleep. Keegan shakes them awake. Reef is more awake now but like half out of it.

KEEGAN

What do you think about before you go to sleep?

REEF

Before I go to bed to make sure I sleep soundly I look up pictures of poisonous spiders near me as well as your exes.

Goes back to sleep, Keegan looks up again.

10

REEF is laying on the ground, looking up at the sky, and KEEGAN is laying perpendicular to them, head on REEF'S lap, looking at the sky. They are also eating sandwiches.

REEF

Putting their hand up to their mouth to let the smell of his breath rebound into their nose. I hate when my breath smells like salami.

KEEGAN

Looking over at them.
Me too

REEF

I feel like my mouth holds scent more than a normal mouth?

KEEGAN

Does my mouth hold scent?

REEF

I don't know. Probably less than mine.

KEEGAN

Holds their hand up to their mouth.
I mean it doesn't smell *good*, but it smells more like mayo.

REEF

I wish I had a car sometimes.

KEEGAN

They smell good

REEF

What

KEEGAN

Like when you turn them on and you sit behind them and you get that good whiff of all the gas and stuff that shoots out the back.

REEF

Keegan, that is so bad for you.

KEEGAN

It's worth it, honestly. I don't actively run behind cars to smell it. That would be really odd I think. I only go for it if the car is super close or whatever.

REEF

You sniff car exhaust.

KEEGAN

My brother owns a four-wheeler which, in my opinion, has a more

REEF

A four-wheeler? Why?

KEEGAN

I don't know. Our yard is like ½ an acre so he kinda just does circles.

REEF

Oh.

KEEGAN

Yea anyways it just for some reason lets out a nice smell but it tends to give me heartburn?

REEF

I hate heartburn.

KEEGAN

Don't we all.

REEF

Yea.

A long period of silence. Things feel very awkward right now. Both of them are very still and overwhelmed. After around 7 seconds, REEF calms down, and KEEGAN stays tense.
Yea I don't know.

KEEGAN

Yeah me either.

REEF

The sky is really pretty right now.

KEEGAN

It is?

REEF

I think so.

KEEGAN

Hmph.

REEF

You don't?

Energy gets tense and the conversation picks up speed gradually.

KEEGAN

I mean no. Like it's just blue there aren't any clouds or like anything.

REEF

I think that can be nice.

KEEGAN

I mean Like I just think that it's boring because there is no emotion attached to an empty sky ya know? Like it's just very plain. It's just lacking.

REEF

I think that's a little harsh. Just because things aren't visible to you right now doesn't mean they aren't there.

KEEGAN

Well I'm just saying that it can be kind of. Like I get- The clouds aren't in *this* sky. They are in *a* sky but the sky we are looking at right now is empty.

REEF

The sky doesn't just end because you can't see it.

KEEGAN

Okay well I don't know anything about the part of the sky that I can't see so I'm just telling you about the sky that I can see which is the sky we are under right now.

The argument gets tenser, at least for KEEGAN. Reef Looks confused.

I took a summer class on/cloud watching in Manhattan when I was a senior in high school.

REEF

No I get that but clouds don't just stop existing. They are- they move and change but they are still somewhere. And also if there are no clouds, that means that the air is moving down. Clouds can only happen if air is moving upwards. So even though you don't see any clouds, the particles that makeup clouds are moving towards us.

KEEGAN

I told you I like looking at the clouds not for them to be falling literally

REEF

I'm just trying to say that empty skies can be nice.

KEEGAN

immediately

Why do you think I'm spiritual?

REEF

What?

KEEGAN

I don't know. You told me I was spiritual once.

They change to sitting side to side. To start, REEF has knees tucked in arms, KEEGAN is criss-cross.

REEF

I did?

KEEGAN

Yes you did.

REEF

I mean I could have. I just don't remember.

KEEGAN

You did. I don't really care you said it like forever ago but it just popped into my mind randomly.

REEF

Is that bad?

KEEGAN

No- I don't know. It's just interesting

beat

and I was just thinking about it.

REEF

Okay

KEEGAN

Sorry

Beat

I think I gave myself diabetes over the summer and I just haven't gone to the doctor.

REEF

That's horrible.

KEEGAN

Boy do I know it.

REEF

What did you mean *interesting*?

KEEGAN

Just interesting y'know?

REEF

Actually I don't know? Like interesting in a good way or interesting in a bad way?

KEEGAN

Just like interesting, not good or bad.

REEF

I'm not sure you're telling the truth. Interesting isn't ever actually neutral.

KEEGAN

I don't know.

REEF

Do you feel like it's bad?

KEEGAN

No.

Beat

REEF

Then why are you so offended by it?

KEEGAN

I don't know. I'm not.

REEF

You're not?

KEEGAN

No.

Beat

REEF

Colder now

Okay.

KEEGAN

I'm really not offended.

REEF

Okay.

Beat

KEEGAN

And I don't want you to think I think that it is bad in any way.

REEF

Okay.

Long silence

12

The movie theater! REEF is scared. KEEGAN looks brave.

REEF

We could see Wreck It Ralph 2.

KEEGAN

What no

REEF

I don't like horror movies.

KEEGAN

No no no no this isn't a horror movie.

REEF

What's it about?

KEEGAN

It's about like this force or thing that makes people pass away. It um takes on the form of your worst fears and puts you in a trance so you end up killing yourself.

REEF

What genre would you consider that?

KEEGAN

Thriller

REEF

Oh

REEF's head is like tucked in shirt. KEEGAN is chillin. Then KEEGAN starts screaming like a little baby. KEEGAN might run out of the theater.

13

KEEGAN is painting REEF's nails. REEF wants pink but KEEGAN wants orange so they settle on blue. This is on the tip of the stage in the middle.

KEEGAN

I think I'm going to ask out the guy from Panera Bread.

REEF

Oh hot Paul?

KEEGAN

Yea I think so do you know him?

REEF

Awkward silence, Reef definitely got with hot Paul
Yea.

KEEGAN

He's hot.

KEEGAN

He'll never be into me.
Do you think he's too pretty for me?

REEF

No you're fun and-

KEEGAN

You're right I'm perfect for him

REEF

Yea.

KEEGAN

RIGHT

REEF

You remind me of a small rodent. A very sweet little rodent. One that might have lived in a gutter, but is now living with a family. Like maybe you're mother rodent was hit by a car, and you were the runt so you couldn't take care of yourself, and so a family found you and took care of you, and now you are a nice small house rodent.

KEEGAN

I'm not sure what to make of that.

REEF

That maybe if you switched up and went with something classier it might show you are trying. I just think you sometimes look like an orphan can be super cute but maybe

KEEGAN

I would really appreciate it if you just supported me I get very insecure about the way my legs look in pants and also shorts so I go for a baggier-

KEEGAN

Wow I love them
Holding up REEFS hand

REEF

They look so good

KEEGAN

Yea tonight I'm asking him out so when you see us alone there just know that I mean business so do not interrupt.

REEF

I'm not going.

KEEGAN

What?

REEF

dumb
What?

KEEGAN

You're actually not coming?

REEF

No

KEEGAN

Okay.
Dead silence

REEF

But I can still hang with you before!

KEEGAN

You don't need to. I'm just going to probably take a piss and shower.

REEF

Turned away from Keegan
Okay.

KEEGAN

I don't really like going to things alone.

Everything until the next "beat" is faster
Come on.

REEF
No. I'm tired.

KEEGAN
Come on.

REEF
No.

KEEGAN
Why don't you want to go?

REEF
Because I'm tired and I'm busy.

KEEGAN
So you just want to go to sleep?

REEF
Yes like you *want* to go the party.
Beat

KEEGAN
I guess I get what you mean.

REEF
You guess?

KEEGAN
Yea I mean more than anything I just want you to do whatever you want to do of course, I just think- I don't know, you just have a tendency- I don't know. Just I want you to have fun.

REEF
Yea.

KEEGAN
And I also want to hang out with you.

REEF
Yea

KEEGAN

But I guess- I don't want to pry so tell me if I'm prying

Reef is like "what?" maybe even look at the audience.

But just maybe it'd be a good chance for you to just relax because you're always doing things.

REEF

I relax.

KEEGAN

I'm just saying it could be fun is all.

REEF

I just want to not go to bed at 2am.

KEEGAN

Hmph. Why can't you stay up?

Reef doesn't answer

Yea I mean you could also leave earlier if you had to. I'm not just like using you for a ride I can get back a different way or just stay over.

REEF

I'm not going, Keegan.

KEEGAN

Do you have to wake up for something?

REEF

Dumb

Yes I do but not until 10am

Beat

KEEGAN

Shrugging it off

Okay I'll just go by myself.

REEF

Okay.

KEEGAN

You can go.

REEF

I mean I don't have

KEEGAN

Well I'm going to get ready.

REEF

Okay

KEEGAN

Like right now I'm going to get ready
So I can't hang out.

REEF

Okay.

Gets up and leaves. Walk back in.

Why are you so mean?

KEEGAN

What?

...
You're kidding, right?

...
Reef.

...
You can't *actually* be mad. You can't be mad.

REEF

I'm not mad. I never said I was mad.

KEEGAN

I just wanted to go to a party

REEF

That's not the point, Keegan.

KEEGAN

I just thought it;d be fun and you're being all weird-

REEF

I didn't say it wouldn't be fun and I'm being *weird*-

KEEGAN

What?

REEF

Because-

KEEGAN

I literally have no clue what I did. You can't-

REEF

You know what you do.

KEEGAN

I literally have no clue what I did. You can't actually be mad. Like how can you be mad at me when you don't communicate what I did wrong? At least communicate. I don't- I can't even remember what I said. Sorry if I hurt your feelings, but it's crazy to just get upset at someone for some-

REEF

You know what you do.

So i'm crazy?

REEF

Just stop.

14

REEF

Okay, well would you want to maybe hang out? It's been a while.

KEEGAN

Yea maybe!

REEF

Yea?

KEEGAN

I don't know. Sure.

REEF

Okay. Maybe we could get Chinese food or something?

REEF gets off the stage and walks down into the audience.

REEF

You left your sneakers at my house. I have these blisters on my feet. I've been wearing your shoes because they're easy to slip on but they are too wide on my feet so I have a blister on each heel. And they sting a little. They'd probably go away in a day but I keep picking at them so they bleed and I feel stupid because sometimes I track blood in the house or my socks get bloody and there's even a little blood in the back of your left shoe which I'm sorry about. You can come get them if you want them.

REEF

Hi!

KEEGAN

It's so nice to see you.

REEF

Same- yes

Gulp

yea it's nice to see you too.

KEEGAN

Thank you for coming.

REEF

Yea of course yea I just, yea I just remembered it was today and actually a few other people I know were in it... but yea. You were great.

KEEGAN

Thank you.

Pause

I still think you read those lines better when I auditioned then he did.

REEF

Haha thanks.

beat

Okay well yea I'll see you around. Congrats!

KEEGAN

Thank you.

REEF begins to leave out the back. KEEGAN freezes and then follows.

We should- would you want to maybe get food or something sometime or just talk?

REEF

Yea I'm just super busy right now.

KEEGAN

For sure maybe we don't like even need to get food. Can we just talk?

REEF

Yea I'll let you know.

REEF and KEEGAN both circle around the outside of the audience, and make their way to either side of the stage.

16

The road again. KEEGAN has already run to the side. REEF is still.

KEEGAN

Come on!

Reef nods their head no.

We see a car pass.

We see another.

We see some more.

They both just watch for a long while.

Until it is Reefs time to walk away.

*And Keegan stays there,
and watches a few more cars*

End of play.

CHAPTER 1 PLAYWRIGHTS NOTES

Playwrights Notes

This is the sky that I see sits in liminal space, between coming-of-age, comedy, and tragedy. It is awkward and private and so close. This might feel like voyeurism, but it's up to you. If there is guilt, it's on everyone's behalf.

There should be no set and no props. The world of this play twists, creases, holds them tight, and lets them go. Use every part of the theater to expand and shrink the world. Whatever feels fun.

This is the sky that I see does not have scenes. Transitions are simply indicated by numbers, 1-16. The performers should use their bodies to lift, sink, crawl, and rise into the next moment, in the most honest way.

Parts of *This is the sky that I see* are performance, and parts are not. You will know.

I don't know how or where I found Reef and Keegan, but they've really grown on me, and I think that had mostly to do with the original performers who are helping me find them. This is a story about figuring out how to love correctly. Find the Reef and Keegan that feel good. They are both so good.

Finally,

there is no anger here. These cannot be angry people.

“Right there. You’re in the middle of the world.”¹

This text was written by Tarell Alvin McCraney and Barry Jenkins, in the film *Moonlight*, released in 2016. I watched *Moonlight*, adapted from the play “In Moonlight Black Boys Look Blue” also by Tarell Alvin McCraney, and wept like I lost someone I loved. I was not sure who I was crying for. Was it for the man who never got to feel love again? For the mother who failed her son? Was it for the guy who is still hiding who he is, and sacrificing part of himself for safety? It could have been all those things, but the first person I cried for was the boy, young Chiron, floating in the water. I was crying for who he was when he was lying there. I do not believe *Moonlight* belonged to a Queer world. It was still a gay person in a straight world. However, at that moment, Chiron was in a Queer world, because it was just him and the water when he closed his eyes. The water gave him a place to rest and leave the violence he was facing everywhere else, even for just ten seconds.

This is the sky that I see is a reflection of my time at Bard College, inspired by moments like this one from *Moonlight*. My undergraduate career has introduced me to wonderful people but has also exposed me to some harmful and shameful spaces. While Bard prides itself on being very gay, I think it would be inaccurate to classify this as a school *for* Queer people. However, I wanted the experience of creating my senior project to feel good, and echo back the joy that I have created with other people here.

Before the process started, I tasked this piece with a question: How do I construct completely Queer worlds, and how can they exist inside of the theater? From writing in September to watching the final performance in February, I encountered this question in a new way each time that I interacted with the show. As I got to know the characters, they poured into

¹ Jenkins, Barry, director. *Moonlight*. A24, 2016.

the universe of the piece, until the show put forward a world that was an extension of their bodies.

This is the sky that I see expresses how we live and inform physical places when all we actually know about them revolve around history and science. These spaces take on a different meaning when they hold people and memory. By acknowledging the power we hold in defining and redefining space, these characters are able to shape and decide their worlds, centering on that shared experience. These places are more human than anything else.

Queer relationships are limitless and continue to open up; when they have power on the stage, they can touch people that do not feel connected to straight and cis stories. Sexuality and gender are spatially formed, and in opening up the way people relate to each other in theater, we are inspiring growth and safety.

CHAPTER 2 REPURPOSING THE WORLD

Spiritual and liminal space

Spirituality means something entirely different to many people. To some, it is synonymous with religion, while others think of it as a broad idea not pertaining to the material world. Patrick S. Cheng, the author of “Reclaiming Our Traditions, Rituals, and Space: Spirituality and the Queer Asian Pacific American Experience” constructs an idea of spirituality, defined as “any practice—whether public or private, formal or informal, praxis-oriented or theoretical—that brings an individual closer to an ultimate reality.”² Cheng produces a definition that is inclusive of activities like prayer, but also practices that can be considered mundane or carnal, like dancing, showering, sex, or cooking. In reclaiming the word spirituality, which has been altered by the Eurocentric model of Christianity, there is a recognition of purpose in other actions, and therefore in other spaces. Cheng goes on to say that by just existing in a way that matters, people can give a space meaning. He refers to the Gay Asian and Pacific Islander Men of New York, who produced an evolutionary physical workshop on sexuality and spirituality, where they transformed the LGBT Community Center into something spiritual. In this case, the building houses a community, which centers discussions and exercises on their experiences. The LGBT Community Center is a sacred space because of the life that it held and continues to hold. This does not mean that the physical place is not significant, but it does denote an aliveness, as their power comes from human bodies, and therefore, people will continue to have power in deciding the intention of location.

² Cheng, Patrick S. “Reclaiming Our Traditions, Rituals, and Spaces: Spirituality and the Queer Asian Pacific American Experience.” *Spiritus: A Journal of Christian Spirituality* 6, no. 2 (2006): 234–40. <https://doi.org/10.1353/scs.2006.0051>.

Kiara Moore, author of “Living Liminal: Reflexive epistemological positioning at the intersection of marginalized identities,” details her experience in navigating the room between constructed and natural identities. As a biracial woman, who has lived in shifting economic situations and household environments, she can balance different identities in different situations, largely depending on how she handles her identity.³ For Moore, there is a sense of comfort in the liminality. When someone is othered, that area becomes safe and recognizable, as that is all they know. In this, there is some interrogation of anything non-liminal, as being in that space does feel natural for her. Can anything be truthful if it has been named, and can discourse ever fully articulate truth? While Moore's identity is between many polar definitions, the feeling of being ‘not quite anything’ is universal. Dr. Alex FitzPatrick, in her talk ‘Spring into Science: Queer Representation in Research’, frames her experience of intersection as something similar to the entrance of the Cove Sea Cave. One side of the cave “plunges you into darkness,” but when you look the other way, you are greeted by “the bright sun, the clear blue clouds.” Moreover, as a researcher, she was not able to classify the cave.⁴ The space itself has changed how it serves people over time, as it has been a funerary site, a place for ritual, and even, dating back to prehistory, a domestic place. She identified with the cave, as she connects with this malleable, betweenness allows them both to transform for different situations, needs, and relationships. This liminal space, through the many purposes it has encountered, is a spiritual space.

Queer Spiritual Spaces

The idea of the spiritual, in connection with society, is seen by many as a one-way transaction. Many people are under the impression that spirituality affects society, while it does

³ Moore, Kiara. “Living Liminal: Reflexive Epistemological Positioning at the Intersection of Marginalized Identities.” *Qualitative Social Work* 15, no. 5-6 (2016): 715–26. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1473325016652681>.

⁴ Fitzpatrick, Dr. Alex. “On Liminality: Space, Time, and Identities.” *On Liminality: Space, Time, and Identities*, May 22, 2021. <https://animalarchaeology.com/2021/05/17/on-liminality-space-time-and-identities/>.

not work the other way around. However, the sacred challenges and reproduces civilization. Kath Browne, author of “Queer Spiritual Spaces,” emphasizes this sentiment, stating, “...religion does not only influence society and space... society and space reconstitutes religion/spirituality... This renders spiritualities and religions, along with the gender/sexuality, fluid and performed.”⁵ This excerpt is central to the theme of fragility, which exists in all things. While it is natural for people to believe that we are the only changing things in a world, the discourse between spirituality, Queerness, and space continues to change, and in turn, so do each of these ideas.

While all of this fancy research was super helpful in constructing the show, just experiencing other work that centers Queer people was equally as important in the process. There were so many movies, plays, and television shows that inspired my play in some way. This year, I watched *Pose* for the first time, and got to see so much uninterrupted queer love and family in New York. The show does not shy away from talking about queerphobia and illness, but there is so much care and love between the people in it. *Pose* is beautiful. I also watched *Young Royals*, another show, but this was one is about two boys falling in love in Sweden. While the TV shows are very different, they actually inspired me in similar ways. Even when things are horrible and these characters are being mistreated, there is still joy when they are with each other. Because they exist together, they can reimagine any space as spiritual. I brought that essence into every part of the process. It needed to be the heart of this work.

⁵ Browne, Kath. “Queer Spiritual Spaces: Conclusion.” *Queer Spiritual Spaces*, 2016, 231–45. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315603247-9>.

Talking about Experience

For the final part of the research, I set up nearly fifty interviews with Queer people. The following is a chunk from my interview with my friend named Morgan.

- When you think of love, where does that sit in your body?
 - lungs
- What is a story/memory of Spring?
 - June. Ej and I got invited Ej and I got invited to Kayley's grad party, we didn't have grad parties, Kayley's mom saw them and was so excited, but also so disconnected.
- Not accepting you are wrong?
 - Every moment of my life, I used to read "Am I lesbian" master doc and get mad at it for making me look like a lesbian.
- Walking with someone you love?
 - Hmmm. Us in tiv bays, and we saw those kids in those costumes. Do you remember that?

These interviews inspired my writing, as I could find and talk about shared experiences with other Queer people, and create moments in the performance for us to share. This part of the process was incredibly fun and affected my work as a director, too. When I returned to the moments I wrote, I would also be returning to those people.

CHAPTER 3 WRITING AND CASTING

Discovering and Devising Moments

I don't know when I started writing this play, because I did not write some of these memories with the intention of talking about them here, in my senior project. Several of these scenes were collected from tiny documents scattered around. There were monologues from written journals, sentences in my "Notes App," and words already in my Google Drive. I spent the summer returning to these fragments, filling in the spaces around them. When new words, feelings, or dialogue came up, I would make room for them too. I also produced some of the remaining scenes through the interviews. These interviews informed the show, as many of the shared experiences became the framework for the scenes. For instance, many people talked about their memories of watching movies and playing dress-up with friends. However, none of the moments I had written pointed me in any direction. It was not until Chiori Miyagawa taught a class, "Writing with Ghosts and Demon," in the fall of 2021. For one of our first assignments, Chiori let us write any scene we wanted, as long as it dealt, in some way, with a ghost. I wrote a scene where two best friends eat sandwiches on a hill and talk about the sky. This became moment ten, which is the heart of this piece. Planted in the middle of the play, it was the first chunk of dialogue that I was certain belonged to Reef and Keegan. Every moment that came after I wrote that conversation was born from the characters that came out of those words.

Much of this story came from free association. I don't think I was, or am, in a place where I am writing answers. This play, and everything I write, are just opening up questions. The only thing I was sure of was that I wanted this play to be happy, and for these to be happy people. I do not know what is meant right now, or how I should be writing, but I cannot afford to write from any place other than joy right now. It became an exercise in locating and collecting

Queer joy. As more of these moments came into my imagination, I made room for them. Once I had all of the pieces, I returned to them and found Reef and Keegan's story. This process produced moments like Reef's first phone call to Keegan, the scenes across the road, and the appearance of Avril Lavigne's "Complicated."

I was setting myself up to write a type of show I had never created before. After seeing *This is the sky that I see*, Jack Ferver said, "the work I've seen of yours was nothing like this. Your work usually feels like the bottom of the ocean. This feels like hopping from island to island." I am trying to find my identity as a writer, and see what feels right. This piece stretches the form of performance I write, as it is energized with a lightness and freeness. Creating a show that gives characters this much power was challenging, but it also felt so good. I finished my draft of *This is the sky that I see* in early November of 2021. I found their story, by piecing together the spirit of these different moments. These scenes illustrated their journey away from each other, as they grow up and find out who they are. I was not sure how I felt about this. I wanted a "happy ending" for them. Part of me still does. But I do not think that the ending I wrote was an unhappy ending. I think that I got a window into their experiences. This show is not pure joy, and they do hurt. That's okay. I think, by the time I wrote that last moment, I wanted things to end well for them, but they might be better off with this ending.

I had to delete large chunks of the show to meet the 25-minute limit for the LUMA Festival (with help from Chiori and Nilaja). The hardest part of playwriting, since I started a few years ago, has been cutting out what does not need to be said. I am still experiencing theatre as a newcomer, in so many ways. I think I might always feel that way about it. When I write these characters, I just want to see more of them. Eventually, I made the necessary cuts to meet the time limit, without sacrificing the story. This is the final piece I wrote for the show:

REEF

You left your sneakers at my house. I have these blisters on my feet. I've been wearing your shoes because they're easy to slip on but they are too wide on my feet so I have a blister on each heel. And they sting a little. They'd probably go away in a day but I keep picking at them so they bleed and I feel stupid because sometimes I track blood in the house or my socks get bloody and there's even a little blood in the back of your left shoe which I'm sorry about. You can come back to get them if you want.

This is the sky that I see is inside of this line. There is that person that, no matter how much time goes by, you feel every day. You cannot shake them, and the pain is still there. In this case, it is located in the bone of your heel. However, even after all this time, and all of the therapy sessions, and the future friendships, and the accomplishments, you hold on to the hurt that they gave to you, and you wear it with you because that is the only thing bringing you back to them.

Riley, Clay, and Kota

Once I finished the draft of my script, the first thing I needed to do was find an assistant director. The role of Assistant Director for this project was unlike the role of AD in other shows I have worked on. I did not need a logistical assistant director. Only four people were working on this show, so I knew those things would not be difficult to schedule and organize. I needed a creative partner, who would help realize this play onstage. The assistant director would need to be an idea leader, who could offer care and empathy in the room. When I talked about this role with my peers, it kept coming back to Riley, a sophomore theater and performance major, and a director. I knew, after our first conversation, that she would be an amazing collaborator. I soon realized that Riley is essentially magic. They have the ability, by just being in the space, to lift it. Riley came to every rehearsal, and we developed a relationship where we just filled in each other's gaps. If I was juggling several things, she would lead physical and verbal warmups. When I was indecisive, they would offer opinions, and perspectives, as she is gifted in understanding scenes as both human interaction and theatrical bodies.

The first character we meet in this play is Keegan, who you have seen through Clayton Webb. I wrote Keegan as “19, so fun, brutal at times. They think they have it figured out.” The Keegan we see in these pages is trying trying to work through their past, I think. I believe he loves Reef, but does not know what to do with a relationship like this. This show tracks Keegan’s journey of figuring out how to do the right thing with their feelings, and how it affects their best friend. Keegan has an infectious personality, and continues to draw Reef back. He is funny, loud, passionate, fashionable, and, yes, brutal at times. The casting process for this piece was the most stressful part. I knew what I wanted Keegan to be, but I had no idea how to cast. However, Nilaja told me that I could not settle for anything less than excellence. I was really happy with my script and my new assistant director, and it would be a waste to put bodies on stage that didn’t truthfully tell the story. Riley, quite actually only being hired one day prior, recommended Clayton Webb. I had only seen Clay in passing, but texted him, asking if he would be willing to read for Keegan for my midway showing. I had no expectations. Clay, since that first rehearsal, sincerely amazed me. Just in reading the first monologue, he brought presence, depth, and amazing physicality. From there on in, he made specific and brilliant decisions as an actor. Clay was not just essential to this show, but central to it. As said towards the beginning of this essay, gender and sexuality are spacially created. Clay used space and silence to enliven Keegan in a way that feels entirely complete, through gesture, voice, and control. I think that, somewhere during the five months we worked on the show, we discovered a quietness to Keegan. Clay let Keegan be silent for Reef, when there were no more words to be said. Keegan might be loud and fun, but they are also a kid and they just as confused as anyone else. Because Clay had the courage to meet silence, we could experience a Keegan that I did not even know was on those pages.

Reef is the second character we meet, described as “19 ½, Somewhat calm, somewhat clever. Very sweet.” They are innocent and romantic. They love nail polish and napping; they have a horrible taste in fashion; they are trying to learn all the words to “Complicated” by Avril Lavigne so that they can sing backup vocals for Keegan; they are just so happy to be here. I had no idea where to start looking for an actor to play Reef. Around the same time as I cast Clay, I was in *The Rocky Horror Picture Show*. After the show, this kid named Kota, who I had never met, came up to me, and we just talked for a minute or two. To this day, I don’t know what it was, but I knew that Kota had to play Reef. I hopped on a zoom with Nilaja that next week and told her. I knew nothing about Kota except their name, but Nilaja knew that I had to see this through. I met with Riley and told them about Kota. Riley found their email that same day. Come to find out, Kota was already an accomplished actor, taking a semester off to pursue performance. When Kota and Clay started reading together, I knew this was it. Kota understood something, from that first reading, about Reef. They approached this text with honesty. Everything Reef did and said, because Kota was playing them, was rooted in honesty. While they are still trying to figure out themselves and the world, Reef is looking for the truth from Keegan and from the space. Inside of the sensitivity they brought to their performance, Kota belonged to immense power. The sincerity of their movement directly evolved this piece into something more than what was on the pages I wrote in the fall.

CHAPTER 4 REHEARSALS

Beginning

Our first rehearsal for *This is the sky that I see* was in November, in Resnick studio. In that first rehearsal, we just talked about where we are all at. When I came to Bard, I got involved with theater through performance, and have acted in several shows over the last four years. My best work, and the work that has given me the most joy, has come from working with teams that prioritize well-being and preservation. It is so hard to come to rehearsal when you feel like shit, or to “push through.” We were there to explore this piece together, in whatever capacity we feel comfortable doing so. We set a precedent in that rehearsal, to continue checking in with each other in whatever way we need to, whether that be verbal, in the body, or just laying down on the floor of Resnick. I had already written a piece I am proud of and found the team that this performance deserves. I was already happy, and whatever we made from that point forward was enough.

Our rehearsal process started away from the script. The nearly twenty “moments” of the piece are divided by scooching, stretching, sprinting, falling, eating, and painting. It is an indisputably physical show. I believe that is where we needed to start. It felt the most natural, and it would be the most truthful way to introduce this text. First, we explored stillness, and just being in the space. Almost two years ago, I took a class titled “Black Experience in American Theater” with Nilaja. In this class, Nilaja spent some time directing us, bringing up this element of performance that I was never introduced to. When directing us, she acknowledged our intuitions, so we are aware of how our bodies have been conditioned to perform, which means directly addressing how that intersects with our privilege. That experience was the entrance into the rehearsal process, but something we returned to through tech week. We explored these actors

and characters' neutrals, their posture, their breath, where their balance is, and what part of their foot they intuitively stand on. We then walked through what feelings push them on their feet or heels, what causes them to fall forward, what causes them to fall backward, what allows them to rise, and what situates them closer to earth. In this, we recognized where those intuitions and reflexes come from, so we can acknowledge them, honor them, and talk about exploring performance in a way that uplifts every performer.

In the next several rehearsals, we also spent time exploring movement- considering how they jump, walk, sleep, dance, and sing. We also investigated what stops them, what pushes them to move, what slows them down, what speeds them up or makes them rise, or what brings them closer to the ground. What do sadness, anger, care, nostalgia, love, jealousy, and happiness look like? What do they feel like? I also gave them words such as “family, memory, sandwich, water, home, and Queer.” Together, we found out what those words bring up, and where that is located in their bodies.

Towards the end of the semester, I reintroduced the text, starting with the Avril Lavigne scene. For our final rehearsal, we drove around Bard, blasting Avril Lavigne, so they could feel what it’s like to sing “Complicated” together in a car. This transitioned us into the text work we did over winter break, where we built this world together.

Playing make-believe

When winter break started, we dove into the text, the world around each moment. In developing context for each of these memories, we filled in these characters as something that made sense to us. We also talked about how Reef and Keegan related to the spaces in the show, including Keegans' very private bedroom, a hilltop, and a public intersection in a city. What are their relationships to these places, alone and with each other? In what ways do they exist in these

spaces that give them the most joy? In this part of the process, Reef and Keegan felt more closely tied to Kota and Clay than they ever had before.

For the final rehearsal of winter break, I integrated some of my research into the process. I wanted to talk to them about what I was doing before they joined. I decided the best way to introduce them to my work was by handing them the interview questions from the fall, so they could become part of that shared experience. I gave them time to spend with these questions, and eventually, we talked through just some of our memories of the past many years, and how dozens of other Queer people were interviewed with at least some of the questions. The process of talking through the interview not only revealed the ways we relate, but it showed how we reached for that shared experience, and therefore reached toward each other.

Returning

When we came back from break, we shifted towards blocking the show. However, we continued doing character work through the process, as that work *was* blocking those scenes. While I did want to have more “theatrical” moments with spotlights and choreography, I also knew it was important to preserve moments that were organic and real. The longer scenes gave us the chance to explore Kota and Clay's intuitions. For instance, in scene 10, I just asked them to lay down, Clay's head in Kotas's lap. We played with the scene many times, and the performers experimented with smaller gestures and framing, shifting the very still moment into something alive.

Tech week felt very different from the rest of the process. *This is the sky that I see* was, in some ways, simple to tech, as there were no set or external sound elements during the show. However, there were over forty lighting cues. I spent months preparing for tech week so that when it did inevitably come up, I would not be too stressed. I kept the tech side of my senior

project separate from the performance side so that Riley, Kota, and Clay could stay centered on the amazing work they have done, rather than stressing out about other factors. During tech week, hanging out with them, outside of LUMA Theater, was so much fun. We did ground warmups, karaoke, and photoshoots backstage. By the time Kota and Clay were performing, all of the tech issues had been resolved, and I could see the story framed on the stage.

CHAPTER 5 TECH

Lighting

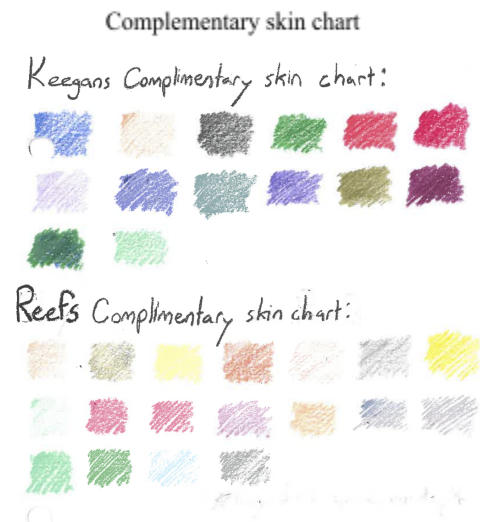
This show is as much a movement piece and light show as it is a play. I wanted the performance space to shrink and expand for their bodies, and because there were no props or set, the lights were responsible for responding to the characters. When I started writing this, I knew it would require extensive work with lighting plots before going into tech week. In the fall, I developed a lighting plot that featured thirty-eight lighting transitions, covering all large transitions.

Three weeks before the show, I modified this plan, including tonal transitions to separate distinct moments according to their spirit. Lastly, Nilaja and I met two weeks before the show, and she brought up how slow, gradual lighting transitions served her work, which helped me think about adding subtle transitions in larger scenes. By tech week, I produced my final lighting draft, which included nearly fifty distinct bodies of light. During tech, the lights were not syncing up to the actors, making the piece very slow. Because of my experience in theater, I have often relied on lighting cues to guide my movement, but because of the form of this show, that was not possible. Instead, the lighting had to respond to the actors, and catch up with their movements. Once I flipped that relationship, we were experiencing a more energized show. The stage was transformed with spotlights, expansive light, headlights moving past everyone, the shine of a movie screen, and at times, almost nothing.

Costuming

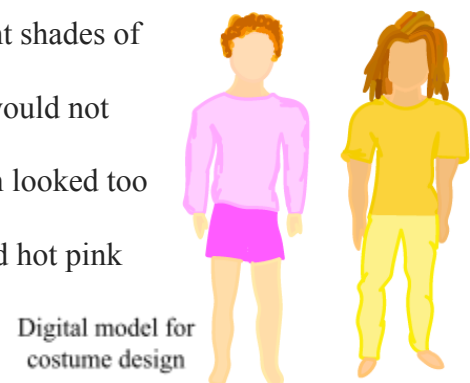
As soon as I cast the show, I was coming up with ideas for the costumes. Since the beginning, I wanted the costumes to be connected through color or texture. Firstly, I dove into the characters' personalities. Keegan can be cold, sharp, fun, fruity, and passionate. Reef is warm,

romantic, joyful, playful, and confident. I took into account their complexions too, which are very different from one another. From here, I created a chart of complementary pigments for their outfits:



From this chart, I bought swatches from Home Depot, and placed them against the actors. Kota looked great against corals, yellows, gold, and earthy greens, while Clay's complexion worked for jewel tones, like purples, colder reds, and emerald green. When navigating the style of the costumes, I looked into modern Queer fashion designers.

Two of these designers were Christopher John Rogers, who uses bright colors and bold patterns, and A. Potts, who creates gender-fluid clothing that articulates spirit through texture. Eventually, I knew I wanted to explore monochromatic outfits, and focus on fabric. Originally, I wanted silk costumes, but my budget was only \$150. I decided to order linen two-piece, ivory outfits, that I would dye different shades of green. When I saw them, I realized that some of these fabrics would not reflect the youngness of *This is the sky that I see*. Silk and linen looked too mature. I decided to go with bright cotton: Yellow for Kota, and hot pink for Clay.



Choreography

When I decided that I would be directing and writing my project, I promised myself that I would let those two roles live separately from one another. By leaving my playwriting mindset, I would be less tied to the words on the pages, and more open to exploration. I did not plan to choreograph this piece in the capacity that I did. However, Kota and Clay are beautiful movers.

When I watched them inhabit the world, I could feel it becoming effortlessly physical. When I experienced their control and creativity, I knew it would be a missed opportunity to not explore choreography in the show. Also, after hearing the scenes spoken aloud, I believed that there were so many words unsaid. Some of those spaces, of things unspoken, needed to be met with physical and verbal silence, while others felt like they were meant to be paired with movement. Their bodies might be able to say something their voices could not. The bench scenes, moments 2, 8, and 14, held so much silence but did not feel still to me. They felt scary and confusing and erratic. Those scenes are dynamic and different from the others. I had seen Kota move and knew that they were gifted physically, but also had an emotional presence in their body. Because I had the opportunity to work with Kota, I was able to choreograph a movement pattern that could work against the worlds in these scenes. With the help of Audrey Salgado, I choreographed the scenes in a new way, where they faced away from each other, and Reef's body was sliding through the space, towards Keegan.

The choreography during these scenes belonged to several different feelings and worlds, all at once. Reef was finding Keegan in this scary, endless space between and around them. They are young and trying to understand parts of themselves that they were never taught about. In that sense, they are looking for Keegan to stay with them, because they are all each other knows in this space. However, there is some resistance. This space is also within Reef, as they are being pulled towards Keegan, tumbling towards him but trying to reground themselves. *The choreography took place between Reef's body and Keegan's voice.* Certain words and inflections in the way Keegan spoke would send Reef closer to the ground, and sometimes, slipping towards him. Reef could find their footing in silence, or silence would come once they grounded themselves. This reluctance to return to Keegan, coming from a place of repeated disappointment

and resentment, creates tension in Reef's body, but also a tension between the intensity of the movement, and the calmness of the dialogue.

CHAPTER 6 TO MYSELF



Reef and Keegan, played by Kota and Clay, looking up at the sky together

There are a lot of things I would tell you if I could do these last four years over again. Bad things will happen, and that is okay. You won't know what's happening and you will blame yourself and that might be okay too. Things can get really confusing and scary, and sometimes you might forget about all the really good things, but joy will find you in small places scattered everywhere. You and Laila will drive two hours to drop a boy off to break up with his girlfriend. You will play the ice cream game with Taty every night until two in the morning, in a vacant

computer lab. You will perform in Rocky Horror with some of your closest friends, in the Old Gym, where you met them four years ago. You will even have done a senior project that you miss working on so badly. When this project was over, I was in so much pain. I had not been in a rehearsal room like that in so long. Working on this piece gave me that warm feeling that you only get when making live art, and getting to know these characters with Riley, Kota, and Clay reminded me why I love writing plays and creating stuff with people.

Producing this piece has taught me so much about the theater that I am here to make, and the way I want to make it. Every part of the process, from the words on that page to the final performance, needs to return to care. Reef, in the tenth moment, says, “Just because things aren’t visible to you right now doesn’t mean they aren’t there.” This line is at the core of my experience with *This is the sky that I see*, and who I have become as a creator and person. I do not know what that sky symbolizes. It might mean life, or performance. For me, it feels like things might not be perfect right now, but there is joy somewhere. The sky is moving forever, and the parts of the clouds and the stars that make you happy will come back to you somewhere, sometime. I guess that is a large part of why I started writing *This is the sky that I see*. When it comes down it, theater can be whatever you want it to be, and can be anything you need. I needed this piece to be about love, friendship, and Queerness. That is the sky that I want to be under right now. I have learned to do and make what feels good, and find people I love and care for to share those moments with me.

APPENDIX

Advertisement



Interview Questions

- When you think of Queerness, what is the first memory that comes to mind?
- When you think of spirituality, what is the first memory that comes to mind?
- When you think of Queerness, what sense becomes the most alive of the 5?
- When you think of spirituality, which of the 5 sense comes the most alive to you?
- Where are you when you are the most Queer?
- Where are you when you are the most spiritual?
- How do you feel about spirituality, and how does it play a role in your life/does it?
- When I say the word “spirituality,” what does it evoke in you?
- Think of a person whose spirituality has affected your relationship with them. Tell me about that person.
- When you think of romantic love, where does that sit in your body?
- What is a story/memory of:
 - Spring?
 - Being wrong?
 - Being right?
 - Admitting you are wrong?
 - Not accepting you are wrong?
 - Losing someone over something stupid?
 - Of crying over something that doesn’t make sense to cry over?
 - Of waiting for someone?
 - A car ride?
 - Waking up?
 - Walking with someone you love?
 - Watching someone leave a room?
 - Something vague?
 - Getting something you wanted?

Performance Pictures





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Also, like everyone I have ever met.