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Another Summer

Laura Townsend

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ANOTHER SUMMER

by

Laura Townsend

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for graduation with Honors in the English

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Thesis Mentor

Spring 2017

All requirements for graduation with Honors in the
English have been completed.

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Another Summer

A Musical

Book and Lyrics by Laura Townsend

Music by Tom and Laura Townsend

The University of Iowa
May 2017

Jennifer Buckley
Project Advisor from the Department of English

Escapism is a common defense mechanism, especially for people who are coming of age. Humans run when they feel they cannot handle the weight of their struggle, when the sting of their internalized emotions builds dangerously high and they are left to choose fight or to choose flight. Non-confrontational people will almost always choose the latter. The consequences of facing a problem directly may feel enormous, even world ending, to a young mind with little to no experience navigating adulthood.

Through the lens of young adults who flee to summer camp to hide from their strenuous home lives this creative thesis aims to assess what happens after a person chooses flight over fight. These characters must learn that escape is not really possible. Memory will haunt. Internalized emotions will push at the mind and heart mercilessly, painfully, until the person loses control over them. Other conflicts, some bigger than they have ever had to face before, will arise and threaten their hopes and dreams. While these camp counselors may find solace and comfort at their home away from home, it cannot provide the total diversion they seek.

I chose to tell this story in the form of a rock musical because it is the only world in which these characters can exist. These young adults leave for camp in order to flee from pain that boils inside of them, pain that they can never truly get away from. In need of an outlet for emotions that are impossible to understand, they are able only to express themselves through song. Music only is capable of building to the same burning intensity as their feelings. Music is able to punch, to kick, to hug, and to kiss, at the intensity that these characters need it to. Music is their release. Additionally, music is used in this show to unite characters through repetition of melody and lyrics, proving that even those who feel like outcasts are not as alone as they may think. Music is also used to carry the plot in a unique and captivating way, so that the importance of certain moments or feelings is obvious and unforgettable. *Another Summer* is a rock musical that tells the story of lost teenagers who want more than anything to gain a sense of control.

To my girls at Brown Ledge Camp on Mallets Bay.

"All is well with the camp you love."

Table of Contents

Another Summer

Act One

Prologue.....	Page 1
Scene One.....	Page 6
Scene Two.....	Page 18
Scene Three.....	Page 24
Scene Four.....	Page 30
Scene Five.....	Page 37
Scene Six.....	Page 41
Scene Seven.....	Page 43
Scene Eight.....	Page 47

Act Two

Scene One.....	Page 49
Scene Two.....	Page 51
Scene Three.....	Page 58
Scene Four.....	Page 66
Scene Five.....	Page 71
Scene Six.....	Page 73
Scene Seven.....	Page 77
Scene Eight.....	Page 84
Scene Nine.....	Page 85
Scene Ten.....	Page 87

Scene Eleven.....Page 88
Critical Essay.....Page 90
Annotated Bibliography.....Page 102

Synopsis

Another Summer is a coming-of-age musical that tells the story of Johnny Dunn, a grief-stricken young man sent to summer camp for behavioral problems, and Nat Hubert, a young woman who hopes summer camp will provide her with independence from a toxic family environment. As Johnny and Nat face unexpected turmoil, they discover that they cannot flee from every difficulty they face. Set in a small summer camp in Maine, this musical explores human response to adversity in the confines of a small community and the question of whether escape is ever truly possible.

ACT I

PROLOGUE

GULF OF MAINE. PRESENT DAY.

GREG and YOUNG JOHNNY DUNN, father and son, sit before the grey/blue water. Young Johnny, twelve, holds a small wooden box in his hands. He opens it with the gentleness of a quiet, watchful little boy and scoops out a handful of ashes.

JOHNNY DUNN, in the present, stands watching. Remembering. He is nineteen years old, tall and slender. Messy hair, unsmiling.

YOUNG JOHNNY

"STREAM SONG"

INTO THE WATER YOU GO, INTO THE WATER NOW. SLOWLY, SLOWLY,
LET THE CURRENT TAKE YOU, MOM.

GREG

HEAR YOUR FATHER NOW, SON. HEAR MY VOICE, JOHNNY. WE CAN GET
THROUGH THIS JOHNNY.

YOUNG JOHNNY

THERE THEY GO, DAD, LOOK AT 'EM GO DAD.

Young Johnny looks up thoughtfully
at his father.

YOUNG JOHNNY (CONT'D)

Mom is dust.

JOHNNY

I didn't know people could turn into dust back
then.

Greg puts his arm around Young
Johnny's shoulder. Holds him.

GREG

DON'T YOU SEE? UP THE STREAM AND SHE'S FREE, HER SPIRIT IS
FREE.

YOUNG JOHNNY

I miss you, Mom. Why aren't you alive?

YOUNG JOHNNY (CONT'D)

HOW WILL I SURVIVE?

Young Johnny and Greg fade. For they are only a memory. Johnny is still on stage. He is staring vacantly.

A hospital bed is rolled onto the stage and Johnny turns his head to watch it.

A WOMAN is in the bed. Sleeping. Young Johnny re-enters the stage. Leans against the bed. The woman in bed is his mother, EMILY. A heart monitor beeps beside her.

JOHNNY

I was alone with you. All alone in that hospital room.

YOUNG JOHNNY

Are you coming back home soon, Momma?

EMILY

HOW WILL I SURVIVE?

YOUNG JOHNNY

YOU'RE STILL ALIVE.

EMILY

HONEY, DO YOU HEAR THAT SOUND?

YOUNG JOHNNY

What sound?

EMILY

DO YOU HEAR MY HEART POUND?

YOUNG JOHNNY

It's working hard for you, Momma.

Young Johnny holds his mother's hand. Kisses it. Emily closes her eyes. After a moment, the beeping slows then stops altogether.

Young Johnny steps back. Panics. Runs from the room.

JOHNNY

Left alone to watch you disappear.

The bed is rolled off stage. Another memory fading.

Music fades, a new melody begins
with a faster pace.

JOHNNY (CONT'D)

And then *she* entered my life.

LIZZIE, an over-eager, chipmunkish
woman who lives for triple shots
of espresso and her mega
collection of cargo pants, enters
the stage linking arms with GREG.

LIZZIE

Good morning, Johnny. I'm gonna make some
coffee, would you like any?

JOHNNY

(cooly)

No, Dr. Foster, but thank you.

GREG

Johnny.

JOHNNY

That's what I was told to call her when I met
her.

GREG

The circumstances were different then. She's
Lizzie to you. You will call her by her first
name.

LIZZIE

Johnny, we've talked about this.

JOHNNY

(to the audience)

My grief counselor turned...you guessed it,
step mother. She was forced to give up her job
as a therapist after marrying my father.

JOHNNY (CONT'D)

(to Lizzie)

Pretty sure a good therapist doesn't call her
patient a lost cause, but thanks.

GREG

You're not her patient.

JOHNNY

I was her patient before you were her husband.

GREG

Really? You have to start this shit today?

JOHNNY

I wouldn't ever have to start this shit if you didn't marry my fucking therapist! I mean do you have any idea how screwed up that is?

LIZZIE

I would appreciate it if you two would stop talking about me like I'm not in the room!

GREG

Lizzie deserves your respect.

JOHNNY

(to the audience)

Dad here doesn't understand why we all can't just get along.

GREG

I don't know why you think you can talk to your step mother-

JOHNNY

Therapist.

GREG

Your *STEP MOTHER* like that, but you can't! You've been nothing but ungrateful and bratty since our wedding. You just finished your sophomore year of college, one would think you'd have matured by now. But no, every morning you complain. Every morning you whine. Every chance you get you try to tear her down. Tear our marriage down. I'm not taking it anymore.

LIZZIE

Greg, we've talked about this. Be patient with him. Johnny I'm sorry you feel that way.

GREG

You're going to camp this summer. With Lizzie. You'll be a counselor at Camp Blue Jay. You're going to learn to respect her.

JOHNNY

What? You can't do that!

JOHNNY (CONT'D)

(to the audience)

Forgot to mention, after Dr. Fost-my step mother-stepped down from therapy she accepted a new job. The camp director of a summer camp just a few hours north of here. She leaves for eight weeks every summer. And I couldn't be more thrilled to see her go.

LIZZIE

Greg, he really...I mean, I go to camp to get away...

JOHNNY

You can't make me go with her!

GREG

You'll live in a cabin at Camp Blue Jay this summer or you'll be homeless. Choice is yours.

Lizzie considers for a moment.

LIZZIE

It could be a way for us to get to know each other better, Johnny.

GREG

It's the perfect opportunity for Johnny to spend time with you. To learn to be agreeable. Who knows, maybe you'll bond. That happens at camp, right? Bonding? You might even find you have things in common.

LIZZIE

What do you say, Johnny?

JOHNNY

I'm not going to camp with her!

GREG

Johnny, let me make this clear. You're going with Lizzie this summer. You will learn to get along with her. You will learn respect. And if at the end of the summer you're still acting like a spoiled five year old, you're not returning to college in the fall.

JOHNNY

What?!

GREG

You heard me.

JOHNNY

Dad-

GREG

I pay your tuition, Johnny. You don't have control over this. You will return home and attend university in town. Period.

JOHNNY

You would ruin my life!

GREG

Learn to tolerate her, son, just learn to tolerate her and you have nothing to worry about.

JOHNNY

(to the audience)

And this, my friends, is where the story really starts.

LIGHTS DIM.

SCENE 1

CAMP BLUE JAY, MAINE.

It's the first day of pre-camp. Counselors are arriving carrying trunks and suitcases. They embrace when they see each other, reunited after a year away. NAT, MARTA, KYLE, AUBURN, and JAKE are all on stage, as well as a CHORUS of other counselors.

Johnny sits on his suitcase, watching from the sidelines.

The following song is upbeat rock music.

ALL

"ANOTHER SUMMER AT CAMP BLUE JAY"

IT'S ANOTHER SUMMER AT CAMP BLUE JAY.
A TWO MONTH ESCAPE FROM OUR SHITTY LITTLE LIVES.
WE NEED THIS PLACE FOR OUR MENTAL HEALTH'S SAKE,
THIS SUMMER AWAY THE ONLY WAY WE SURVIVE.

IT'S ANOTHER SUMMER AT CAMP BLUE JAY.
TWO BLESSED MONTHS TO FORGET WHO WE ARE.
HERE AT OUR CAMP RIGHT BY THE LAKE,
JUST FOR THIS ESCAPE, WE TRAVEL SO FAR.

JOHNNY

Annnd camp is exactly like I thought it'd be.
Stupid.

Marta and Kyle are holding hands rather dramatically.

MARTA

I SPEND THE WHOLE YEAR COUNTING THE DAYS.
CAMP ON MY MIND FROM SEPTEMBER TO MAY.
IT'S ALL THAT GETS ME THROUGH. OH KYLE,
KNOWING I'LL BE HERE, FAR FROM THEM AND CLOSE TO YOU.

KYLE

OH MARTA, MY PEACH, TO HAVE YOU BACK IN MY ARMS.
CAN YOU FEEL MY HEART BEAT? RIGHT ON TRACK, HERE WE ARE.
FAR FROM YOUR PARENTS, FROM THEIR SCOLDING AND FUSS,
HERE AT CAMP BLUE JAY, IT'S FINALLY JUST US. JUST US.

MARTA

Just us.

JOHNNY

Oh you have got to be kidding.

ALL

IT'S ANOTHER SUMMER AT CAMP BLUE JAY.
A TWO MONTH ESCAPE FROM OUR SHITTY LIVES.
WE NEED THIS PLACE FOR OUR MENTAL HEALTH'S SAKE.
THESE EIGHT WEEKS AWAY THE ONLY WAY WE SURVIVE.

ANOTHER SUMMER SPENT IN MAINE.
IT'S SO PEACEFUL HERE IN NEW ENGLAND.
WE THINK OUR FAMILIES ARE A PAIN
AND THEY THINK WE'RE DELINQUENTS.
SO FROM A YOUNG AGE THEY SEND US AWAY,
NEEDING A CHANCE TO FREE THEIR MINDS.
AND SO HERE WE ARE AT CAMP BLUE JAY,
WHERE WE'RE LEARNING TO SURVIVE.

JAKE

OVER THERE, THAT'S OUR CABINS.
SMALL AND SQUARE AND MADE OUT OF WOOD.
PRETTY SIMPLE, A SHELF AND A COUPLE BUNKS.
OUR QUAIN'T FOREST NEIGHBORHOOD.

AUBURN

THERE MIGHT BE MICE RUNNING RAMPANT.
LAST YEAR ONE NESTED IN MY TRUNK.

JOHNNY

What??

AUBURN

BUT THAT'S EXPECTED WHEN YOU'RE CAMPIN'
AND HONESTLY,

ALL

WHO GIVES A FUCK?
THE VERMIN'S A SMALL PRICE TO PAY
FOR THE PEACE THIS PLACE ALLOWS.

UP HERE IN MAINE WE CAN BE INSANE,
WE'RE THE ONLY ONES AROUND!

JOHNNY

Vermin??? What vermin?

AUBURN

CAMP'S WHERE FRIENDS MATTER THE MOST.
MY FAMILY IS HERE, THIS PLACE IS MY HOME.
OUTSIDE HERE FRIENDS COME AND GO,
CAUGHT UP IN LIFE'S PUSH AND PULL,
BUT AT CAMP WE STAY THE SAME.
WE'RE TOGETHER FOREVER AT CAMP BLUE JAY.

ALL

IT'S ANOTHER SUMMER AT CAMP BLUE JAY,
AND LET'S BE REAL THIS PLACE IS LIT.
BUT THIS YEAR WE ARE COUNSELORS
SO NOW WE HAVE TO GIVE A SHIT.

NAT

ANOTHER SUMMER AT CAMP BLUE JAY.
BEEN COMING SINCE I WAS NINE.
SINCE THEN THIS CAMP'S (BEEN) MINE.
AS SOON AS THAT FIRST SUMMER CAME,
MY MOM SENT ME AWAY,
TO THIS FAIRY-TALE CAMP IN MAINE,
I'VE FELT...JUST...FINE...YES, FINE.
THAT'S TEN WHOLE SUMMERS SPENT HERE IN THE PINES.

I DREAM TO LEAD THIS CAMP ONE DAY,
AS DIRECTOR OF CAMP BLUE JAY.

THIS PLACE GOT ME THROUGH MY PARENTS' DIVORCE
AND ALL THE SHIT THAT CAME AFTER.
LEARNED HERE I CAN SURVIVE ON MY OWN
EVEN WHEN HOME'S A DISASTER.

MADE FRIENDSHIPS HERE THAT HAVE CHANGED MY PATH,
EMBRACED MY TEARS AND LEARNED TO LAUGH.
CAMP BLUE JAY GRANTED ME A FRESH START.
WHERE MY MOTHER, AND HER LOVER, MY FATHER'S BROTHER,
COULDN'T HURT MY FRAGILE HEART.

Johnny watches Nat closely.
Surprised. Curious. Surprisingly
empathetic.

JOHNNY

(to himself)

Who is she?
WHO IS THIS GIRL, WITH A DISASTROUS LIFE?
IS IT WEIRD THAT I'M TURNED ON BY STRIFE?
BUT I THINK SHE'D UNDERSTAND ME.
I GOTTA KNOW, WHO THE HELL IS SHE?

ALL

IT'S ANOTHER SUMMER AT CAMP BLUE JAY,
A TWO MONTH ESCAPE FROM OUR SHITTY LIVES.
WE'RE COUNSELORS AT CAMP BLUE JAY,
AND TOGETHER WE'LL HELP OUR NEW CAMPERS SURVIVE.

AUBURN

CUS AS COUNSELORS HERE OUR ROLES HAVE CHANGED.
AS CAMPERS WE COULD RUN AND COULD PLAY,
BUT NOW WE'RE ROLE MODELS AT CAMP BLUE JAY.

JAKE

(looking at NAT)
AT CAMP THIS YEAR I'LL GET LAID.
NOW I'M A COUNSELOR AND THAT'S LEGAL.

Well, I mean, as long as it's with another
counselor, then it's legal.

YEAH, I THINK IT'S ONE OF THOSE THINGS,
LIKE THE DIRECTOR WILL TURN THE OTHER WAY,
IT'S NOT TECHNICALLY ALLOWED, BUT HEY, IT'S OKAY.

AND RIGHT NOW IT'S TREMENDOUSLY NEEDED.
EX-GIRLFRIEND, WELL SHE SORTA CHEATED.
I CAN'T LET MYSELF GET DEFEATED.
SO FOR THESE NEXT TWO MONTHS,
THESE TWO SHORT MONTHS,
CAN SHOW HER THAT I'M NOT HUNG UP.
DOESN'T HURT ME THAT SHE STRAYED,
CUS AT CAMP I CAN GET LAID.
YES, I CAN GET LAID.
AND HEY,

It'd be cool to have sex in a cabin.

ALL

IT'S ANOTHER SUMMER AT CAMP BLUE JAY.
ANOTHER CHANCE TO MISBEHAVE.
TWO MONTHS WHERE WE DON'T HAVE TO BE BRAVE.
WE'LL BE OKAY. BECAUSE WE HAVE THIS PLACE.
CAMP BLUE JAY. OH CAMP BLUE JAY.

WE KNOW WHAT IT'S LIKE TO NEED ESCAPE,
WE KNOW HOW IT FEELS WHEN NOTHING'S OKAY,
WE KNOW WHERE TO GO WHEN THERE'S TOO MUCH PAIN,
CAMP BLUE JAY, OH CAMP BLUE JAY.
WE JUST KEEP COMING TO CAMP BLUE JAY.
WHERE THE HURT FEELS FAR AWAY.

KYLE/MARTA
COMING HERE JUST FOR YOU.
WITHOUT OUR PARENTS IN OUR WAY,
THERE'S NOTHING WE CAN'T DO!

NAT
FAR FROM MY SO CALLED FAMILY,
AND THE SHIT THEY PUT ME THROUGH.

JAKE
FAR FROM MY EX-GIRLFRIEND
AND THAT ASSHOLE THAT SHE BLEW.

AUBURN
CLOSER TO THE BEST OF FRIENDS
WHO ARE ALWAYS THERE FOR YOU.

KYLE/MARTA
THERE'S NOTHING WE CAN'T DO.

NAT
FAR FROM THE PAIN THEY PUT ME THROUGH.

JAKE
FAR FROM MY EX AND THAT ASSHOLE SHE BLEW.

AUBURN
TO THE ONLY PLACE WE CAN GET THROUGH.

ALL
YES WE CAN GET THROUGH.
'CUS IT'S ANOTHER SUMMER AT CAMP BLUE JAY.
A TWO MONTH ESCAPE FROM OUR SHITTY LIVES-

Johnny stands, walks closer to the group. Immediate silence as the counselors notice him for the first time.

NAT
Who are you?

ALL
Yeah, who are you?

JOHNNY
WILL I SURVIVE?

NAT
YES, YOU'LL SURVIVE.

ALL
'CUS IT'S ANOTHER SUMMER AT CAMP BLUE JAY
AND WE'RE HERE, OH WE'RE ALL HERE,
JUST TO SURVIVE.

As the song comes to an end,
counselors continue to reunite.

AUBURN

Nat! We gotta get bunks together. If I'm not sleeping next to you this year I may as well go home now.

NAT

I know, I know! We won't have a repeat of last year.

AUBURN

You mean sleeping in different cabins altogether? That was a disaster. That's just not what best friends do.

NAT

Do we even have our cabin assignments yet?

AUBURN

Not that I know of but just stay close okay? Lizzie'll put us together this year but we gotta make a run for it as soon as we find out which cabin she placed us in. Make sure we get first pick of beds.

NAT

Course.

AUBURN

And Nat?

NAT

Yeah?

JOHNNY is watching NAT a little too closely.

AUBURN

That new guy keeps staring at you. Want me to punch him?

NAT

Huh?

Nat glares over at Johnny.

NAT (CONT'D)

No, I can handle it. Thanks though.

Nat walks over to Johnny, arms folded.

NAT (CONT'D)

Did you need something?

JOHNNY

What?

NAT

You're staring at me.

JOHNNY

Oh, uh, no. No, sorry.

A swarm of other counselors surround Nat excitedly. They are headed by a zealous Kyle.

KYLE

Nat, we're having a party for all the first years tonight! Boathouse. You comin'?

JOHNNY

First years?

KYLE

First time counselors. You should come too, man! Name's Kyle.

JOHNNY

Yeah, I'm good but thanks for the invite.

KYLE

Uh, all right, well suit yourself. But as older, and more experienced counselors, Marta and I can assure you that Blue Jay throws the sickest parties in the East Coast. Cabin style. But if you wanna miss out that's on you.

JOHNNY

I'll think about it.

MARTA

We just gotta celebrate being together again, making it to camp summer after summer.

Kyle grabs Marta in his arms. Dips her.

KYLE

That we do m'lady, that we do.

They giggle into each other's faces. The other counselors roll their eyes.

JOHNNY

Does Lizzie come to these things?

KYLE

No way, man.

NAT

It's kind of a don't ask, don't tell sort of situation. She lets it happen as long as she's kept at a good distance.

JOHNNY

Great. So she won't be there then?

MARTA

No way.

JOHNNY

Cool. I'll be there.

JAKE

Sweet man, it'll be a good time. Newcomers gotta do a Choking Blue Jay shot, though.

JOHNNY

What's that?

MARTA

Everclear and moonshine.

JOHNNY

Why not just inject me with poison?

KYLE

This year my brother made the moonshine before I left. I brought like four jars of it.

AUBURN

Shit, here she comes. Everyone shut up about the party.

Lizzie enters the stage. She stares at Johnny as she approaches the clump of counselors.

LIZZIE

Hey there, Johnny.

Lizzie smiles warmly at Johnny, patting him on the shoulder.

LIZZIE (CONT'D)

Did you meet some of the other counselors?

JOHNNY

No, Dr. Foster.

JAKE

Dr. Who?

JOHNNY

Don't worry about it.

LIZZIE

Don't worry about it.

JAKE

Woah, what's up your guys' butts?

LIZZIE

Johnny, I would appreciate it if you would address me as Lizzie here. I don't want to have to call your father and tell him -

JOHNNY

Oh, yeah, tell on me. Go ahead.

LIZZIE

And I know you don't wanna go to school at home.

Johnny is quiet. He stares coolly at Lizzie, but is intimidated nonetheless.

JOHNNY

Fine. Lizzie.

The melody for "Camp Rules" begins.

LIZZIE

All right then. Now, welcome, all of you to another summer at Camp Blue Jay! It's great to see you all again. For those of you newcomers, listen up! We've got ground rules to establish.

"Camp Rules" is upbeat, jazzy rock.

LIZZIE (CONT'D)

"CAMP RULES"

HERE AT CAMP BLUE JAY,
THERE'S RULES WE MUST OBEY.
THIS IS TRUE AT ANY PLACE
WHERE CHILDREN COME TO STAY.

YOU'RE ALL THAT THESE KIDS HAVE
SO FAR FROM MOM AND DAD
SO CONSOLE 'EM WHEN THEY'RE SAD,
MAKE 'EM SMILE, MAKE 'EM GLAD.

FIX THEIR BROKEN MATTRESS PADS,
WARN 'EM WHEN THEIR FOOD'S GONE BAD.

AND NEVER, NEVER, NEVER, NEVER, NEVER MAKE ME MAD.

YOU CAN BRIGHTEN A CHILD'S DAY,
HELP THEM LAUGH AND HELP THEM PLAY,
BUT THERE ARE RULES YOU MUST OBEY
SO THE CAMPERS CAN ENJOY THEIR STAY.

KYLE and MARTA are not paying any
attention, whispering to each
other and snickering, looking at
their phones. LIZZIE takes notice.
Grabs their phones.

YOU'LL HAVE TO BREAK THAT HABIT.
YOU KIDS MIGHT THINK IT'S "RATCHET,"
IF I SEE A PHONE OR TABLET
YOU CAN BET THAT I WILL GRAB IT.

LET'S KEEP OUR CAMPERS IN THEIR BUBBLE
AWAY FROM ALL THAT OUTSIDE TROUBLE.

AND IF YOU EVER PISS ME OFF I'LL BE ON YOU ON THE DOUBLE.

THIS JOB'S GREAT RESPONSIBILITY,
REQUIRES STRENGTH AND AGILITY.

IF I FIND YOU WITH TECHNOLOGY
YOU'LL OWE ME AN APOLOGY,
IT'S BASIC CAMP PSYCHOLOGY,
DON'T GO AGAINST MY POLICY.

YES, HERE AT CAMP BLUE JAY
THERE'S RULES WE MUST OBEY.
THIS IS TRUE AT ANY PLACE
WHERE CHILDREN COME TO STAY.

THERE'S A TREND THAT SEEMS TO HAPPEN
COUNSELORS DRIVEN BY THEIR PASSION,
OBSESSED WITH FEELING SATISFACTION,
DRIVEN BY HOLLOW ATTRACTION.

NOW I WON'T SEND YOU PACKIN,
IF YOU KEEP THAT IN YOUR CABIN.
DON'T LET YOUR LIP SMACKIN
BE TOO MUCH OF A DISTRACTION.

I KNOW YOU ALL ARE YOUNG
YOU LIVE FOR HAVING FUN
BUT IF I SPOT A DRINK, JUST ONE,
YOUR TIME AT THIS CAMP IS DONE.

DON'T SMOKE, INJECT, SNORT UP, OR CHEW.
NO PILLS OR POT OR SNIFFING GLUE.
I'LL CALL THE COPS AND YOU'LL BE THROUGH,
SO SORRY KIDS, NO DRUGS FOR YOU.

EACH CHILD'S SAFETY WILL COME FIRST.
NO KID WILL LEAVE HERE IN A HEARSE.
IF YOU DECIDE TO QUENCH YOUR THIRST,
YOU'RE GONE FOR BETTER OR FOR WORSE.

The "hearse" comment is a little
much for the counselors to handle.

IF A KID WAKES UP AT NIGHT,
FRIGHTENED BY SOME FRIGHT,
AND THERE'S NO ONE THERE TO CALM HIM DOWN,
IT'S WORSE WHEN COUNSELORS AREN'T AROUND.

OR A FIRE STARTS AND YOU ARE DRUNKEN FOOLS.
THE CABIN LIGHTS WHILE YOU JUST DROOL.
CAMP BLUE JAY GOES UP IN FLAMES.
YOU'RE THE ONLY ONES I'LL BLAME.

CAMPERS ARE YOUR FIRST PRIORITY.
YOU'RE MEMBERS OF AUTHORITY.
SO PLEASE BEHAVE FORMALLY,
AND NOT HOW YOU MIGHT NORMALLY,
OR YOU'LL GET ALONG QUITE HORRIBLY.

I KNOW THESE RULES ARE STRICT,
WE JUST CAN'T AFFORD THE RISK.

LIZZIE notices the counselors'
worried glances. She softens.

LIZZIE (CONT'D)

Parents are trusting us with their children.
That is no light matter.

JOHNNY

Just like my Dad trusted me with you, huh?

LIZZIE

Johnny-

JOHNNY

These rules are insane. Dead children? Drugs?
What kinda place is this?

MARTA

Summer camp.

NAT

It's really not so bad. You'll see.

Beat.

JOHNNY

Fine. I'll stay for precamp. And at the end of the week, I'll tell my Dad we get along great and his magical camp bonding idea worked so I can come home early. But I'm not putting up with this hell hole all summer.

LIZZIE

Great! Thank you Johnny. Now, I've got cabin assignments here for you all!

Lizzie pulls out a few sheets of paper and begins handing them out. Counselors chat enthusiastically as they read along the list.

AUBURN

Yes! We're together!

NAT

You ready to run for it?

AUBURN

Oh yeah!

LIZZIE

You may go to your cabins!

Auburn and Nat run off stage laughing, their suitcases flying behind.

Johnny marches off stage sluggishly, the last to leave.

Lizzie stands on stage alone.

Young Johnny enters the stage in a therapists chair. Lizzie walks to him, reliving one of their earlier sessions.

YOUNG JOHNNY

Why does everything have to change so much? My Dad acts so different now. He's not as nice as he used to be, he's impatient, he gets mad so fast from the littlest things. We don't do anything we used to, like Sunday night dinners or family movies on Fridays. Why did that have to stop? I can't stand all these changes. Everything is changing! Everything!

Young Johnny and the chair fade.

Lizzie sings a much slower version
of Another Summer.

LIZZIE

"ANOTHER SUMMER ANOTHER CHANCE"

IT'S ANOTHER SUMMER AT CAMP BLUE JAY.
BUT THIS TIME SOMETHING'S BOUND TO CHANGE.
HE'S HERE, SO RUDE, SO DIFFICULT.
AND I KNOW HE MIGHT DRIVE ME INSANE.

WHEN HIS MOTHER DIED HE TURNED TO ME,
I WAS THERE TO HELP HIM THROUGH.
I NEVER MEANT TO DISAPPOINT HIM SO.
I FELL IN LOVE. WHAT WAS I TO DO?

HIS FATHER SHOWED ME LOVE I'D NEVER KNOWN.
I WAS SINGLE AND AFRAID I'D DIE ALONE.
I LOST MY JOB WHEN I GAVE HIM A CHANCE,
BUT I COULDN'T HELP THE CIRCUMSTANCE.

NOW THIS SUMMER I NEED TO GET THROUGH
TO THIS BOY SO LOST AND SO AFRAID.
I KNOW I BROKE HIS GRIEVING HEART
WHEN HE NEEDED MOST TO BE SAVED.
BUT THIS SUMMER WILL BE MY OPPORTUNITY,
TO HEAL OUR WOUNDS AND FIND SOME UNITY.

AS LONG AS HE GIVES ME THAT CHANCE.
I WILL FIGHT, I WILL CARE, I WILL GIVE US THAT CHANCE.

Lights fade.

SCENE 2

Lights rise on the boathouse
party, in full swing. Counselors
dance and hang out. Marta, Kyle,
Auburn, Nat, and Jake are all
present.

Auburn and Nat are standing near
to Marta and Kyle, who are
sloppily making out.

NAT

God, are they really so sex deprived?

AUBURN

Or just that drunk.

NAT

I'm just glad I have you to hang out with so I don't have to watch this alone.

AUBURN

Yeah and I'm glad Marta's bed isn't next to mine this year.

NAT

That sucked.

AUBURN

I had to avoid my cabin at all costs. They were always there. Always.

NAT

Yeah, well, we all know what they come to camp for.

AUBURN

Gross.

NAT

Do you think they can even hear us right now?

AUBURN

Probably not.

NAT

(mockingly)

They're blind to everything but each other.

Auburn pretends to gag.

Jake approaches Nat and Auburn, laying a hand on Nat's shoulder. Auburn immediately blushes.

JAKE

So, come here often?

NAT

You're hilarious.

JAKE

What's the big deal? A little flirting never hurt anyone.

NAT

Your terrible flirting is hurting my ability to enjoy this party.

AUBURN

Jake, she doesn't like you.

JAKE
How do you know?

AUBURN
Seriously?

JAKE
Oh, come on Natasha, I'm just playing around.

NAT
It's Nat.

JAKE
Sorry. Nat.

NAT
Thank you.

JAKE
I don't mean to be flirting so hard. This party sucks.

NAT
Yeah, it does.

Auburn glances knowingly at Nat.
Some sort of secret code telepathy passes between them.

NAT (CONT'D)
Well, I think I'm gonna get some air. See you guys.

Nat walks away, heading for outside, leaving the party (and Jake) behind.

She steps outside of the boathouse breathing in the quiet.

She doesn't notice Johnny, who is sitting alone and drinking from a bottle of wine. Johnny, however, notices Nat right away.

JOHNNY
Hey, there.

NAT
Woah, I didn't realize anyone was out here.

JOHNNY
It was kinda loud in there. And crowded. I just stepped outside for a second.

NAT

Right. Me too.

JOHNNY

Want a drink?

NAT

Yeah, yeah I'd love one.

Johnny hands Nat the bottle.

Back inside, Marta and Kyle are still making out. Auburn and Jake can't help but laugh at them, but it might be out of discomfort more than hilarity.

JAKE

At least they're having fun.

AUBURN

I don't know how much longer I can watch it.

JAKE

Me neither. Why do they even bother to come to these things? They have their cabin to themselves and they're not even taking advantage of it.

AUBURN

Because then they wouldn't be able to show off how horny they are for each other.

JAKE

Oh well in that case I'm glad they came because I didn't already know that shit.

AUBURN

My bed was next to Marta's last year.

JAKE

OH, no shit.

AUBURN

Yep.

JAKE

Damn that's rough. I was actually in the same room as Kyle but he was never home.

AUBURN

Yeah, cus he was always at my place!

JAKE

Hey, my drink's almost out.

AUBURN

That's fine, I could use another one too. And we can get away from those two.

Jake and Auburn head to a different section of the party, leaving Marta and Kyle behind.

Outside, Nat and Johnny are sitting beside each other, enjoying the wine.

NAT

So, do you like camp so far?

JOHNNY

Haven't seen much of it yet.

NAT

Oh, yeah, right. First night. What department are you working in?

JOHNNY

I'll be in arts and crafts. Probably just making friendship bracelets, but I like to sketch. I figured if my Dad was gonna make me come to this place, I may as well work in a department I like.

NAT

Why do you hate it here so much?

JOHNNY

Lizzie's my stepmother. I'm not thrilled about it.

NAT

Oh.

JOHNNY

Yeah.

NAT

Well, you might find you like it here more than you think.

JOHNNY

Yeah, it's starting to look up.

NAT

Although, I will warn you that all the homesick campers spend the day at arts and crafts. So I heard it can be kinda depressing in there.

JOHNNY

Art generally does that.

NAT

Does what?

JOHNNY

Attracts the sad kids. The loners.

NAT

Yeah, I guess it does.

Beat.

JOHNNY

What department do you work in?

NAT

Sailing.

JOHNNY

Sailing? That's so random.

NAT

Not really. We're in Maine.

JOHNNY

I didn't think people really went out on boats anymore. Except for tourists and cruise ship singers.

NAT

And girls who grew up at a summer camp in Maine.

JOHNNY

Apparently so.

JOHNNY takes a swig of his wine.

An unnamed counselor comes running out of the cabin. He pukes behind a cluster of trees.

JOHNNY (CONT'D)

That's disgusting.

NAT

Wanna get outta here?

JOHNNY

Yeah, yeah I really do.

NAT

Follow me. We can take cover in the arts and crafts building. It's quiet over there. Isolated. Plus, you can see your summer office.

JOHNNY follows NAT without hesitation, the nearly empty bottle of wine held tightly in his hand.

SCENE 3

The boathouse transforms into the arts and crafts building. Brightly colored. Thousands of signatures mark the walls in every color ink and paint. A mosaic of names. NAT leads JOHNNY inside.

NAT (CONT'D)

Here we are. Good 'ol arts and crafts.

JOHNNY

Wow. There are a lotta names in here.

NAT

Yeah, it's a right of passage as a camper or counselor to sign the arts and crafts building. There are names in here dating back eighty years.

JOHNNY

Eighty?

NAT

Yeah, this building is one of the only buildings left from when Blue Jay first opened.

JOHNNY

That's incredible.

JOHNNY scans the walls curiously. Something draws him to them like a magnet.

NAT

Wow, you're surprisingly intrigued by signatures.

JOHNNY

They're part of the history of this place. They're cool.

NAT

Do you wanna sign it?

JOHNNY

Nah, not on the first day. This camp doesn't feel like mine yet, it doesn't feel right. I mean look at these signatures. All the color, the character, the feeling. This place was signed by people who really loved it here.

NAT

My signature's here someplace, but I can't even remember where. It'd be impossible to find now, I guess.

JOHNNY

How long have you been coming to Blue Jay?

NAT

This is summer number nine for me.

JOHNNY

Nine summers? In a row?

NAT

Yep. Camp's my favorite place in the world.

JOHNNY

I could've never left home for that long as a kid.

NAT

I lived for it.

JOHNNY

It's kinda cool. To have something like that. A tradition.

NAT

It's more than a tradition. For the kids who come here, year after year, it's home.

JOHNNY

Like, a home away from home?

NAT

No, our real home.

JOHNNY

Do you ever miss your family, though?

NAT

I don't like my family.

JOHNNY

Oh.

NAT

It's not a big deal. Not everyone has to like their family.

JOHNNY

I guess not. I liked mine, as a kid at least. I like them less now.

NAT

Since Lizzie married your dad?

JOHNNY

She was my therapist before she was my stepmother.

NAT

Woah. That's fucked up.

JOHNNY

Yeah. And not only that, she was my therapist during puberty. She knows all about that awkward phase of my life, y'know? And now she's my step mother? I mean what the hell.

NAT

My mother married my uncle.

JOHNNY

What?

NAT

Yep. Family sucks.

JOHNNY

My Mom didn't.

NAT

Didn't?

JOHNNY

She died. Cancer.

NAT

I'm so sorry.

JOHNNY

It was a long time ago.

NAT

I'm still sorry.

JOHNNY

Thanks.

Silence. The bottle passes between hands a few times until it is emptied. They are pretty tipsy.

JOHNNY (CONT'D)

So what made you come here in the first place?

NAT

Some counselors came to my elementary school one day and told us all about it. A recruitment thing. It sounded like the coolest place in the world. I begged my parents to send me here.

JOHNNY

You must've been pretty young.

NAT

I was.

YOUNG NAT, age eight, appears on stage with her FAMILY. They are sitting at a table eating ice cream. CAROLINE, her mother, JASON, her father, and LESLIE her sister.

Young Nat and her family dance a ballet in the forefront of the stage, performing the stories of the song as Nat sings it.

Soft ballad.

NAT (CONT'D)

"EVERY SUNDAY"

WE USED TO GO EVERY SUNDAY
TO A LITTLE ICE CREAM SHOP.
MY MOM, MY DAD, MY SISTER, AND ME.
I LIVED FOR THOSE SUNDAYS
SPENT WITH MOM AND POP,
WHEN OUR FAMILY WAS HAPPY AS CAN BE.

LITTLE GIRL, SO COMFORTABLE
IN MY HAPPY HOME.
NEVER HAD A REASON NOT TO SMILE.
FAMILY WAS SO LOVABLE,
THE BEST I'D EVER KNOWN,
IT WAS THE PERFECT HOME FOR A CHILD.

MY MOM AND DAD, THEY WERE IN LOVE,
OR AT LEAST THAT'S HOW IT SEEMED.

THEY NEVER HAD A FIGHT THAT WE COULD HEAR.
THEY WERE PARENTS TO BE PROUD OF,
AND OUR FAMILY WAS A TEAM.
HOW COULD WE KNOW IT ALL WOULD DISAPPEAR?

The happy moment turns upsetting
as JASON and CAROLINE fight.

LITTLE GIRL, SO WORRIED
ABOUT MY FRAGILE HOME.
I TRIED TO FORCE A HOLLOW SMILE.
MY FAMILY WAS STRUGGLING,
FIGHTING MORE AND MORE.
REALITY SET IN, IN ITS CRUEL STYLE.

The table transforms into a car.
Jason driving, Young Nat in the
middle seat in the back. Curtis,
Nat's uncle, appears and scoots
into the vehicle, squashing Young
Nat between himself and her
sister. Jason and Caroline are
stone faced.

SOMEWHERE DOWN THE ROAD,
THE ICE CREAM SHOP CLOSED DOWN,
I WAS EIGHT OR SO AND BROKEN HEARTED.
THAT SAME TIME'S WHEN MY UNCLE SHOWED,
HE MOVED INTO OUR TOWN,
AND THEN THE BAD DAYS REALLY STARTED.

Jason and the children exit the
car. Caroline and Curtis stay
inside. They kiss. Jason left
something. Opens the car door.
Sees them. Massive fighting.

LITTLE GIRL, UNCOMFORTABLE
IN MY BROKEN HOME.
I NEARLY HAD FORGOTTEN HOW TO SMILE.
MY FAMILY SO INSUFFERABLE,
THE WORST I'D EVER KNOWN.
CAMP BECAME A SOLACE FOR A WHILE.

TODAY MY FATHER IS A MENTAL CASE,
AND MY MOTHER DOESN'T CARE.
MY UNCLE HAS MOVED INTO MY HOME.
MY SISTER GOT FAR FROM THAT PLACE,
TOOK HER BOYFRIEND SOUTH SOMEWHERE.
BUT FOR ME, CAMP'S WHERE I HAVE TO GO.

Young Nat and her family fade.

I DON'T CARE ABOUT THE OUTSIDE WORLD,
I DON'T WANT TO THINK ABOUT IT.
I DON'T NEED THAT OUTSIDE WORLD,
TWO MONTHS I CAN DO WITHOUT IT.

Johnny puts his arm around Nat's
shoulder, attempting to comfort
her. The empty bottle of wine lays
on the ground beside them.

JOHNNY

I'M GLAD CAMP GAVE YOU WHAT YOU NEEDED
WHEN YOU FELT YOUR WORLD CRUMBLING DOWN.
MAYBE I SHOULDN'T ACT SO DEFEATED.
MAYBE THIS CAMP WILL HELP ME TOO SOMEHOW.

He holds Nat's hands in his.

JOHNNY (CONT'D)

IT'S NICE TO KNOW I'M NOT ALONE,
THAT HERE I HAVE A FRIEND,
WHO CAN UNDERSTAND JUST HOW BAD THINGS WERE.
OUT HERE SO FAR FROM HOME,
SOMEONE JUST LIKE ME,
WHO UNDERSTANDS ME JUST LIKE I DO HER.

They kiss.

JOHNNY (CONT'D)

I'm so sorry you had to go through all that.

NAT

The other counselors here are my real family. I
never want to leave this place. I'm going to be
camp director one day. No matter what it takes.
I have to be. This is the only family I need
and the only real one I've ever known.

JOHNNY

It's amazing how a place can mean so much.

NAT

It's easy to fall in love with.

Pause.

NAT (CONT'D)

Are you really going to try to leave after pre-
camp? I mean, Lizzie can't be that bad.

JOHNNY

Maybe I can give this place a chance a little
longer.

The two kiss again and don't stop, pulling each other as close as possible. Nat starts to take off Johnny's shirt. Lights fade.

SCENE 4

The arts and crafts building is empty except for Johnny, who is examining the signatures on the walls.

Lizzie enters the building unannounced, a large bag strewn across her shoulder.

LIZZIE

So, I take it you're not leaving at the end of precamp anymore.

JOHNNY

What're you doing in here?

LIZZIE

It's my job to check on all the departments to make sure everything's in place for the first day tomorrow. That includes arts and crafts.

JOHNNY

Well everything's good here. You can go now.

LIZZIE

So you are staying, then. Good. I didn't want to have to find someone to replace you at the last minute.

JOHNNY

Yeah, I'm staying. At least for the first session. But no promises that I'll be here the whole summer.

LIZZIE

I'm glad you decided to stay.

JOHNNY

Can't you just leave me alone?

LIZZIE

You're always so angry, Johnny. You're not going to survive with an attitude like that.

JOHNNY

I'll be fine.

LIZZIE

Camp Blue Jay is a positive environment. Campers are happy here because as staff members we practically shoot them up with positivity.

JOHNNY

That's a lovely image.

LIZZIE

Your miserable demeanor, in a sense, would make you a good fit with the somber arts and crafts campers. But, unfortunately, your job is to relieve them of their sadness and turn them into joyful, camp-obsessed little buggers by the end of the summer. Your job is to take the most homesick, the most down trodden and pathetic little weasel and transform him into someone so happy that he blames all of his self-doubt and loneliness on his life at home and becomes convinced that Camp Blue Jay is a magical bubble land where problems and sadness do not exist.

JOHNNY

Wow.

LIZZIE

I'm worried you aren't the right person for such a gargantuan task. I'm not sure I've ever seen you smile.

JOHNNY

I can't think of a single situation in which I'd ever smile around you.

LIZZIE

Regardless, it's essential that you shine with positivity around the campers.

JOHNNY

You know what Dr. Foster, I will radiate positivity. Just for them.

LIZZIE

I'm being serious.

JOHNNY

I've seen *Parent Trap*. I've seen *Wet Hot American Summer*. I'm well versed on how to pull this gig off, okay?

LIZZIE

All I'm asking is for a little positivity from you.

JOHNNY

Fine. I'll have a smile glued to my face.
Happy?

LIZZIE

Let me see it.

JOHNNY

Seriously?

Music for "The Light" begins.
Lizzie nods. Johnny rolls his eyes
and forces an over-the-top, cheesy
smile.

LIZZIE

Johnny. Take this seriously.

Johnny tries again. His smile is
slightly more genuine this time.

JOHNNY

This is stupid.

LIZZIE

Prove to me, prove to your father, that you are
putting in the effort. So you don't have to
stay at home for college.

Johnny smiles even wider.

A soft rock melody begins.

LIZZIE (CONT'D)

"THE LIGHT"

WELL HEY, THAT'S A GOOD START.
YOU LOOK KINDA NICE, LIKE YOU HAVE A HEART.

SOMEWHERE BEHIND ALL YOUR DARKNESS INSIDE,
THERE'S A LIGHT.

JOHNNY

Gee, thanks.

LIZZIE

CAMPERS ARE COMING TOMORROW.
SO YOU GOTTA BURY YOUR SORROW.

JOHNNY

FROM A THERAPIST THAT'S NOT GREAT ADVICE.

LIZZIE

HEY, IT'S A SMALL SACRIFICE.

This job's harder than you think, kid.

THE CAMPERS WILL RUN YOUR LIFE.
NO TIME FOR YOUR FEELINGS OR STRIFE.

YOU MUST MATCH THE CAMPER'S ENERGY,
OUT-DO THEIR POSITIVITY.

SOMEWHERE BEHIND YOUR DARKNESS INSIDE,
THERE'S A LIGHT.

SO LISTEN HERE TO MY INVALUABLE ADVICE.

FIND THAT LIGHT. AND LET IT GLOW.
THEN THIS JOB WILL BE A BREEZE, TRUST ME I KNOW.

FORCE A SMILE, LET IT SPREAD.
IGNORE THE POUNDING ACHING IN YOUR HEAD.

Johnny forces another unconvincing
smile.

LIZZIE (CONT'D)
You're getting closer!

JOHNNY
I hate this.

The arts and crafts building
transforms into the inside of a
cabin. Lizzie exits the stage. Nat
and Johnny are sitting together in
the cabin.

NAT
YOU LOOK SO GLUM, I HAVE TO SAY.
DO YOU EVER HAVE A SMILE ON THAT FACE?

YOU WON'T SURVIVE THESE NEXT EIGHT WEEKS
WITH A FROWN WEIGHING DOWN YOUR CHEEKS.

LOOKS THAT'S IT! NOW THERE'S THAT SMILE.
YOU SHOULD KEEP IT GLUED THERE FOR AWHILE.

JOHNNY
I'LL DO MY BEST, I'LL FORCE A GRIN,

NAT
LET YOUR SMILE WRINKLE UP YOUR CHIN.

Johnny smiles widely at Nat.

NAT (CONT'D)

YOU LOOK JUST RIGHT. THERE'S YOUR LIGHT.

Nat gives Johnny a quick kiss.
Lights fade on their cabin and
rise on another, nearly identical
cabin. Auburn and Jake are in bed
together cuddling.

AUBURN

WHO WOULD'VE KNOWN, WHO WOULD'VE GUESSED,
HERE I'D BE, AGAINST YOUR CHEST.

YOU CAME TO ME THE OTHER NIGHT, AND THERE IT WAS.
I FOUND MY LIGHT.

BUT WITH YOU THERE'S THAT RISK
THAT THIS ISN'T WHAT IT FEELS LIKE IT IS.

JAKE

JUST WEEKS AGO IN MY HOMETOWN
I THOUGHT MY WORLD TURNED UPSIDE DOWN.

AFTER MY EX BETRAYED MY TRUST
THOUGHT THE ONLY CURE WAS MINDLESS LUST.

BUT HERE YOU ARE, SHINING SO BRIGHT.
YOU ARE MY LIGHT.

AUBURN

SOON THE CAMPERS WILL ARRIVE.
THE DAYS WILL CHANGE. WILL OUR LOVE SURVIVE?

JAKE

FIND YOUR LIGHT AND LET IT GLOW.
EVEN THROUGH THE BUSY DAYS THIS LOVE WILL GROW.

Jake and Auburn kiss and pull the
bed sheets over their heads.

The cabin transforms into the
entrance of camp where Marta and
Kyle are hanging up a "WELCOME TO
CAMP BLUE JAY" banner, wearing
matching staff t-shirts.

They finish hanging it and grab
each other's hands.

KYLE

WHEN CAMPERS COME, THINGS WILL CHANGE.
WILL OUR ROMANCE HAVE TO WAIT?

MARTA

I WOULDN'T WORRY, AS YOU KNOW.
CAMP BLUE JAY MAKES OUR HEARTS GROW.

KYLE

AS LONG AS WE FIND THE TIME,
TO KISS AND HUG, WE'LL BE JUST FINE.

MARTA

FIND OUR LIGHT AND LET IT GLOW.
KISS MY LIPS AND GIVE ME HOPE.

Kyle kisses Marta. A musical interlude as the rest of the counselors file on stage in staff t-shirts.

LIZZIE

Everyone ready? The big day is finally here!
Let me see those smiles!

The counselors snap on their biggest, cheeriest faces.

ALL

FIND OUR LIGHT AND LET IT GLOW,
AND THIS JOB WILL BE A BREEZE, TRUST ME I KNOW.

ANOTHER SUMMER'S HERE AT LAST,
LET'S HAVE A BLAST.

LIZZIE

Here they come! Welcome, all of you, to another summer at Camp Blue Jay!

At least a dozen jumpy, giggly, hyper, excited campers, aged between 9 and 15, run on stage with suitcases and frantic parents trailing behind.

CAMPERS

WE'RE HERE, WE'RE BACK AT CAMP BLUE JAY.
YAHOO, YIPEE, HIP HIP HOORAY.
ANOTHER SUMMER AT CAMP BLUE JAY.

WE'RE FULL OF HOPE, FULL OF CHEER,
INHALING THAT PINE SCENTED ATMOSPHERE.

ALL

FIND YOUR LIGHT AND LET IT GLOW,
AND THIS JOB WILL BE A BREEZE, TRUST ME I KNOW.

COME LET'S GO, JOIN THEIR DELIGHT,
FIND YOUR LIGHT, LET IT SHINE BRIGHT.

Johnny and the other counselors
smile widely as campers hug
counselors excitedly.

ALL (CONT'D)
ANOTHER SUMMER AT CAMP BLUE JAY.
WE'RE HERE, WE'RE PROUD, HIP HIP HOORAY.

An enthusiastic MOTHER marches
through the crowd carrying two
trunks, a camera dangling from her
neck.

MOTHER
Oh, Arthur darling, just look at this place!
It's adorable! The cabins, the trees, straight
out of Henry David Thorough.

Behind her, after a moment, ARTHUR
appears. He is a pipsqueak of a
boy with a head of curly hair. His
arms are crossed. He is dragging
his feet. He is not enthused.

ARTHUR
I don't know who that is and I don't care.

MOTHER
Oh, come on, Arthur, look around!

A SUMMER SPENT AT CAMP BLUE JAY.
TWO MONTHS BREATHING IN THE PINES.
A SUMMER HERE AT CAMP BLUE JAY,
THIS PLACE WILL CHANGE YOUR LITTLE LIFE.

ARTHUR
SUMMER IN THE MIDDLE OF NOWHERE,
WHERE STARS AREN'T DROWNED BY CITY LIGHTS.
JUST SO YOU CAN GET SOME CHILDCARE,
I'M TRAPPED IN THIS FANATICAL CAMPSITE.

Arthur points to the dozens of
comically excited campers jumping
around like maniacs.

CAMPERS
IT'S ANOTHER SUMMER AT CAMP BLUE JAY.
A TWO MONTH ESCAPE TO PARADISE.
ANOTHER SUMMER TO SHOUT HOORAY,
LEAVING HOME'S A SMALL SACRIFICE.

MOTHER
Oh Arthur, look at all the friends you'll make!
Pose for a picture by the banner, will you?

ARTHUR

Um, no.

JOHNNY

FIND MY LIGHT AND LET IT GLOW
AND THIS JOB WILL BE A BREEZE...

Johnny approaches Arthur with a
beaming smile on his face.

JOHNNY (CONT'D)

Hey man, I'm Johnny! I'm so glad to have you at
camp!

ARTHUR

Shoot me.

Johnny's smile is replaced with
embarrassment. Arthur crosses his
arms, indignant.

Lights fade.

SCENE 5

Johnny sits in arts and crafts
with Arthur who is still pissed.

Arthur is coloring furiously.

JOHNNY

How's your artwork coming along, buddy?

ARTHUR

Why'd they hire you anyway?

JOHNNY

What do you mean?

ARTHUR

"Buddy?" Really? What do you think I am, three?

JOHNNY

Just trying to be nice.

ARTHUR

You're not being nice. You're being annoying.

JOHNNY

Okay, then I won't talk. Whatever.

Beat. Arthur examines his art,
deep in thought.

ARTHUR

You really wanna see my artwork?

JOHNNY

Yeah, what'd you make?

He holds it up. A mess of
scribbled marker.

ARTHUR

It's a big pink blob with a tiny grey blob in
the middle.

JOHNNY

Wow, that's cool. What is it?

ARTHUR

The pink blob is everyone here at Camp Blue
Jay. They're all happy and they love camp.

JOHNNY

That's great!

ARTHUR

Wanna know what the grey blob is?

JOHNNY

Sure I do.

ARTHUR

It's me. Hating camp. This place sucks balls.

JOHNNY

Woah, Arthur, watch your language there, bud.

ARTHUR

My mom sent me here against my will! I'm a
prisoner! And she's making me stay the entire
summer, both sessions!

JOHNNY

You've got a lot of freedom for a prisoner,
don't you think?

ARTHUR

Oh whatever, you wouldn't understand. You're
just like the rest of them. Smiling so big your
cheeks'll pop out.

JOHNNY

Y'know I didn't like camp when I first came
here either.

ARTHUR

They tell you to say that. To make me feel less alone.

JOHNNY

How old are you Arthur?

ARTHUR

Ten.

JOHNNY

That's pretty young to be coming to camp all by yourself. I get why you're homesick.

ARTHUR

I am not homesick! And I'm not young!

JOHNNY

Oh quit whining.

ARTHUR

(whining)

I'm not whining! You're being kind of a jerk! Aren't you supposed to be nice to me or something?

JOHNNY

I'm not exactly known for being the best counselor around this place.

ARTHUR

Clearly.

JOHNNY

Hey, I bet you'll like camp more than you think you do now by the end of the summer.

ARTHUR

Will not. I'd rather drown in a pot of boiling water than be at this place.

JOHNNY

That's pretty dramatic.

ARTHUR

I don't care.

JOHNNY

But you like coloring, right?

ARTHUR

Well yeah.

JOHNNY

Well you get to spend a whole two months in a place where you get to color all day, every day, except when you're eating and sleeping. Plus there are more art supplies here than you've ever seen in your life!

ARTHUR

There are?

JOHNNY

Oh yeah! We've got everything. What do you like to color with?

ARTHUR

Well I like to color with Sharpies but my Mom doesn't like me to since it's permanent.

JOHNNY

Did you know we have a dozen colors of sharpies?

ARTHUR

You do?

JOHNNY

Yep! And you can color with them.

ARTHUR

Well hand it over!

JOHNNY

Not so fast. Sharpies don't go to boys who complain all day long. You need to fix your attitude.

ARTHUR

My attitude is a reflection of my feelings.

JOHNNY

You think you're pretty smart, don't you?

ARTHUR

I do read a lot.

JOHNNY

Well you might be smart, but I'm in charge. So. Get a better attitude or keep coloring with Crayola washable markers.

Arthur eyes the marker in his hand somberly.

ARTHUR

Fine. I'm not promising I'll like this place though.

JOHNNY

You don't have to. But you can try. And part of trying means not complaining about everything.

ARTHUR

Fine. If you give me a sharpie I won't complain for a whole hour. Sound good?

JOHNNY

Sounds great.

Johnny reaches into a drawer and pulls out a jar of sharpies. He hands Arthur one. Arthur grabs it quickly.

ARTHUR

Thanks.

JOHNNY

One hour.

ARTHUR

Yeah, yeah, yeah.

Arthur begins to color and soon becomes entranced in concentration. He is obviously having more fun.

Johnny grabs a sharpie and he and Arthur color together. Johnny smiles to himself. Lights fade.

SCENE 6

Nat stands in the center of camp playing frisbee with MEREDITH, a camper around twelve years old.

NAT

Hey, guys, pass it here!

Meredith tosses it toward her and smacks her in the face, hard. She freezes. Nat flinches but only for a brief moment before smiling. Meredith takes a breath of relief.

MEREDITH

Are you okay?

NAT

Oh yeah! Nothing to see here!

MEREDITH

I can't believe I got you right in the face!
That was pretty funny!

NAT

Oh, was it?

MEREDITH

Well, I mean, now that you're okay!

NAT

Well we're going to have to work on your aim, I think!

MEREDITH

I guess so!

NAT

Just flick your wrist a little gentler and you should get it right next time.

Meredith practices flicking her wrist a few times without tossing the frisbee.

NAT (CONT'D)

That's a little better! Try again.

Meredith flicks her wrist gently and tosses the frisbee again. It still flies around ungracefully and barely misses hitting Nat again.

MEREDITH

Guess I need a bit more practice.

NAT

That's okay! You'll pick up on it! Maybe I should wear a helmet, though.

Meredith laughs. Just then, Lizzie enters.

LIZZIE

Nat, are you in the middle of something important?

NAT

We were just playing a game of frisbee.

LIZZIE

Any chance I could steal you away for a minute?

NAT

That okay, Meredith?

MEREDITH

Yeah, it's fine!

NAT

Just keep working that wrist.

SCENE 7

Nat follows Lizzie as the stage transforms into Lizzie's office. Lizzie takes a seat behind her desk and Nat sits facing her.

LIZZIE

Thanks for meeting with me.

NAT

Everything okay?

LIZZIE

Everything's great!

NAT

What did you need?

LIZZIE

We've been at camp nearly a month now. The first session ends in just a few days. I've been watching you closely these past few weeks. You stand out to me. Your enthusiasm around the campers, your patience, your devotion to your position as a sailing counselor and your great effort to be active outside of your department.

NAT

Thank you.

LIZZIE

Camp Blue Jay is looking for an assistant director. Someone to help me with paperwork, recruitment, and other organizational tasks. I would love for you to apply, if you're interested. We have some applications already in from people outside of the camp, but I'd like to hire from within if possible.

NAT

I don't know what to say-

LIZZIE

It's a big promotion. It would mean a larger work load and you'll be paid on a yearly salary. We would need you all year, not just in the summer. If you'd like to apply, I have the necessary paperwork ready for you. You'd just need to turn it in to me in a week or so.

NAT

I would love to apply!

LIZZIE

Wonderful! Now, the position is not yours yet, but I say you've got a good chance as long as you keep up your hard work and good attitude.

NAT

Thank you so much, Lizzie. What would the job entail exactly?

LIZZIE

Communicating with parents regularly, visiting schools for recruitment, managing functions, and reaching out to alumni.

NAT

That sounds great.

LIZZIE

The assistant director is a face for this camp, so your reputation means everything. Be careful, okay? If you get into any sort of trouble your application will be revoked from the running.

NAT

I assure you, you have nothing to worry about.

LIZZIE

Fantastic.

Nat shakes Lizzie's hand and leaves the office, beaming.

The stage transforms back to the entrance of camp.

Meredith has dropped the frisbee and joined a group of small, smiling, giggly campers surrounding Johnny.

JOHNNY

All right, everyone, I gotta pee.

Hysterical laughter.

JOHNNY (CONT'D)

That means I need you all to let me go so I can get to the bathroom.

CAMPERS

But Johnny! We love you! We don't want you to go!

JOHNNY

Would you rather me pee on you or pee in the bathroom, because if you don't let me go it'll have to be the former.

CAMPERS

Fineeeeeeee.

The campers, still giggling, run off.

CAMPERS (CONT'D)

We'll see you later, Johnny!

JOHNNY

See you guys!

Nat enters the stage, a bounce in her step. She runs up to Johnny and wraps him in a hug.

NAT

Hey, you!

JOHNNY

Hey there!

NAT

The campers are really drawn to you.

JOHNNY

Pun intended?

NAT

Huh?

JOHNNY

Drawn. Like drawing pictures. 'Cus they're the arts and crafts kids. Never mind, it's a dumb joke.

NAT

No, it's funny.

JOHNNY

Well I appreciate that you appreciate my lame sense of humor. Now, I gotta hit the bathroom.

NAT

Wait, real quick, I gotta tell you...Lizzie promoted me to assistant Camp Director! It's kind of like a secretary position--helping with a lot of the recruitment and paperwork and things like that--but it's one step closer to being director myself one day! And it's a year round job I can do right here in Maine.

JOHNNY

That's incredible, Nat!

Johnny lifts Nat up and swings her in the air.

JOHNNY (CONT'D)

I am so proud of you.

NAT

My dream might actually come true, Johnny.

JOHNNY

Your dream will come true. I know it.

Johnny kisses Nat.

Nat prances off right as Lizzie enters the stage.

LIZZIE

You two are inseparable.

JOHNNY

She's pretty great.

LIZZIE

I have to say, Johnny, you're doing an excellent job here so far. The campers have really taken a liking to you.

JOHNNY

Thanks.

LIZZIE

You seem happy here.

JOHNNY

Yep. I am.

LIZZIE

IT'S ANOTHER SUMMER AT CAMP BLUE JAY.
WE ALL COME TO GET AWAY.
IT BRINGS ME JOY TO SEE YOU THRIVE.
TO SEE YOU LIVE, NOT JUST SURVIVE.

Your mother would be so proud to see you now.

Johnny looks at Lizzie with a
slight smile.

JOHNNY

I gotta go.

LIZZIE

You sure? I've finished my paperwork for the
day, we could do something together if you
want.

JOHNNY

Thanks, but, I'll pass. Maybe another time.

Johnny walks off stage.

LIZZIE

Maybe another time. Progress?

Lights fade.

SCENE 8

Nat is sitting on her bed in her
cabin holding a pregnancy test.
She drops the test and buries her
head in her hands. For a few
beats, she is motionless. Utter
silence on the stage. Then,

NAT

THIS CAN'T BE. THIS CAN'T HAPPEN TO ME.
I CAN'T HANDLE A PREGNANCY.

Nat cries into her hands.

The stage transforms into the arts
and crafts building. Johnny is
admiring, once again, the hundreds
of signatures that line the walls.

A soft rock melody with a folk-
style twang begins.

JOHNNY

"SIGNATURES"

WHAT DRAWS ME TO THESE NAMES?
WHY CAN I NEVER SEEM TO LOOK AWAY?

THEY'RE JUST NAMES. I DON'T KNOW WHO THEY BELONG TO.
BUT SOMETHING KEEPS PULLING ME TOWARD THEM.
WHAT IS IT THAT CALLS ME TO YOU?

WHY DO I CARE WHO'S BEEN HERE BEFORE ME?
FOR THESE PEOPLE WHO'VE MARKED THESE WALLS?
THROUGH THEIR SIGNATURES THEY'RE GRANTED IMMORTALITY.
BUT WHY DO I GIVE A SHIT AT ALL?

I DON'T KNOW YOU AND YET YOU CALL TO ME.
YOUR SIGNATURES, YOUR FINGERPRINTS.
SOMETHING ABOUT ALL THIS RAW HISTORY
SPEAKS TO ME.

THEY SAY THERE'S SO MUCH IN A NAME AND THAT MUST BE TRUE.
A SIGNATURE ALONE TELLS ME MUCH ABOUT YOU.

MOLLY BLAKE, HER NAME IN BLUE INK,
SHE SCRIBBLED IN CURSIVE IN '98.
OR SAMUEL LEE, FROM 2003,
I KNOW HE LIKED THINGS GLITTERY.

MY GOD, WHAT ARE THESE NAMES SAYING TO ME?
MAYBE ONE DAY I'LL KNOW WHY THEY'RE CALLING TO ME.

NAT runs into the building,
looking nervous as hell.

JOHNNY (CONT'D)

Nat, what's wrong?

NAT

I'm pregnant.

JOHNNY stares at her, speechless.
In shock. Lights fade.

ACT TWO

SCENE 1

Campers and parents are carrying their trunks and getting ready to leave camp. Auburn, Jake, Marta, Kyle, and Lizzie are all on stage helping with the lifting and saying goodbye.

AUBURN

How can first session be over already?

LIZZIE

It always flies by so quickly.

JAKE

Just one more month together.

Jake pulls Auburn in and kisses her passionately. The campers laugh hysterically. Some say "ooooo" while others sing the "kissing in the tree" song. Parents shield their children's eyes and exchange worried glances.

LIZZIE

All right, guys, keep it in your cabins. My god. We're running a summer camp here not a night club. Get it together.

Lizzie addresses the concerned parents.

LIZZIE (CONT'D)

I assure you, this is not normal or acceptable behavior.

JAKE

Sorry.

AUBURN

Yeah, sorry.

PARENT

It's all right...

MARTA

Jesus, even Ky and I don't do that when there are rents around.

PARENT

When there are "rents" around?

LIZZIE

No, no, she's being goofy. Marta, take these trunks down to the cars please, okay? And Jake and Auburn, I'll be speaking with you in my office later.

PARENT

I should hope so. I expect the counselors at my daughter's summer camp to be good influences. Role models.

The other parents nod in agreement.

PARENT (CONT'D)

I pay a lot of money to send her here each summer.

LIZZIE

And we take excellent care of her. We look forward to seeing Sammie here every summer.

PARENT

My daughter's name is Amanda!

LIZZIE

Right. God. Sorry. It's been...a long day. Hey, I know, why don't I introduce you all to Natasha Hubert. She's in the running for a new assistant director position. She's outstanding.

PARENT

Where is she?

LIZZIE

Nat? Has anyone seen Nat?

The counselors shrug.

Just then, Nat enters the stage in tears.

LIZZIE (CONT'D)

Oh, there you are! Nat, why don't you introduce yourself to these parents?

Nat runs past the crowd and off stage again.

Johnny runs in immediately
following Nat, calling out to her.

JOHNNY

If you don't want to keep the baby you don't
have to! I just think we should discuss all the
options is all!

NAT

(offstage)

I'm getting an abortion, Johnny!

JOHNNY

Baby, let's talk about this!

Johnny exits the stage toward
Nat's voice.

The parents stare at Lizzie,
speechless. The campers are
whispering to each other.

JAKE

Holy fuck.

The parents all begin talking at
once, angrily.

LIZZIE

Okay, okay, everyone. Calm down. Um, how about
I offer you some free Camp Blue Jay apparel!
We've got t-shirts! That would be nice, right?
Sammie, what about you? You want a camp shirt?

PARENT

HER NAME IS AMANDA!

The parents all begin yelling at
Lizzie at once.

Lights fade.

SCENE 2

Johnny and Nat sit on Nat's bunk.

JOHNNY

Nat, please just listen to me.

NAT

You don't know what you're talking about.
You're being selfish.

JOHNNY

I just want you to think this through, is all.
It's a big decision.

NAT

I can't have a baby, Johnny.

JOHNNY

Why not?

NAT

Why not? Seriously! We're nineteen, we're still
in college, we have lives we want to fulfill!

JOHNNY

We can figure it out, though, Nat.

NAT

Why do you want me to keep it so bad?

JOHNNY

Because it's our baby!

NAT

We barely know each other.

JOHNNY

We know we love each other.

NAT

Yeah, we love each other here at camp. Our
relationship hasn't even been tested by
anything yet. This isn't real life, Johnny.
We're in the middle of the woods taking showers
with spiders and popping squats in the dirt at
night. We're completely separated from the rest
of the world. This isn't real, it's, it's an
escape from what's real, it's a fantasy. It's
summer camp.

Johnny indicates Nat's stomach.

JOHNNY

Yeah, well it appears real life can still
happen at summer camp.

NAT

I have a dream to accomplish. I could be the
assistant director, I can give my life the
meaning I've been so desperate for. I can't
mess that up.

JOHNNY

I think we already did.

Johnny kicks the door to the cabin so it opens just a crack. Parents can be heard shouting from outside. Nat holds her breath. She is freaking out.

NAT

Shit! No, no, dammit, no! I can't do this!

JOHNNY

Breathe, Nat, breathe. It will be okay.

NAT

How could you say that to me? I'm nineteen, pregnant, and my dream is being crushed right in front of me.

JOHNNY

You can still be camp director. It might just take a little longer to get there.

NAT

I am not having a baby.

JOHNNY

I can't tell you what to do -

NAT

Then don't.

Quiet. Johnny hesitates.

JOHNNY

I love you.

NAT

You love who I am at Blue Jay. That's it. You don't even know me.

That hurt both of them.

JOHNNY

I know you well enough to know we can do this. We can have a family together.

NAT

A family? We both know what families do, Johnny. They hurt, they fail. Why the hell do you want to bring someone else to this world to suffer?

A moment of silence before Johnny begins his song. A soft rock ballad.

JOHNNY

"PLEASE, NAT"

THEY DIDN'T TELL ME SHE HAD CANCER.
MAYBE THEY DIDN'T KNOW HOW.

I FIGURED IT OUT ON MY OWN,
WHEN I WATCHED HER HAIR FALL OUT.

I'LL NEVER HAVE AN ANSWER.
NO REASON OR RHYME TO HER PAIN.

I WATCHED MY MOTHER, SKIN AND BONES,
FALL ASLEEP AND NEVER WAKE.

CAMP BONDS US TOGETHER
WITH A STRENGTH WE NEVER KNEW,

IT TELLS US WE CAN DO IT,
IT HELPS US PUSH ON THROUGH.

I WAS BROKEN WHEN MY MOTHER DIED.
LOST AND ALONE TILL CAMP BLUE JAY.

I STILL YEARN FOR HER EACH MINUTE,
BUT NOW I KNOW I'LL BE OKAY.

IF MY MOTHER HAD NOT DIED
I WOULD HAVE NEVER SEEN THIS PLACE.

FOR ME THIS CAMP'S A SECOND CHANCE,
YET YOU CALL IT AN ESCAPE.

REALITY EXISTS HERE.
LIFE WILL PUSH AND PULL.

THE PINE TREES WON'T PROTECT US.
HATE TO TELL YOU, BUT THAT'S BULL.

BLUE JAY BRINGS SOULS TOGETHER,
WHO CAN CALL THIS PLACE A HOME.

IT MAKES US FEEL SO WANTED,
AND IN DOING MAKES US WHOLE.

CAMP BONDS US TOGETHER
WITH A STRENGTH WE NEVER KNEW,

IT TELLS US WE CAN DO IT,
IT HELPS US PUSH ON THROUGH.

I WAS BROKEN WHEN MY MOTHER DIED.
LOST AND ALONE TILL CAMP BLUE JAY.

I STILL YEARN FOR HER EACH MINUTE,
BUT NOW I KNOW I'LL BE OKAY.

GRIEF IS A MERCILESS VACUUM.
SUCKS TILL THERE'S NOTHING LEFT.

SHE TOOK SO MUCH WHEN SHE PASSED ON.
BUT NOT ME, HER SON, BEREFT.

GIVE ME A CHANCE TO FILL THIS VOID,
TO GAIN BACK WHAT I'VE LOST.

LET US LOVE THIS GIRL OR BOY
WE'VE ALREADY PAID THE COST.

WHEN GRIEF BITES IT SINKS ITS TEETH,
AND NOTHING CAN STOP THE BLEEDING.

WHAT IF THIS BABY'S THE RELIEF,
THE BANDAGE THAT I'M NEEDING?

CAMP BONDS US TOGETHER
WITH A STRENGTH WE NEVER KNEW,

IT TELLS US WE CAN DO IT,
IT HELPS US PUSH ON THROUGH.

I WAS BROKEN WHEN MY MOTHER DIED.
LOST AND ALONE TILL CAMP BLUE JAY.

I STILL YEARN FOR HER EACH MINUTE,
BUT NOW I KNOW I'LL BE OKAY.

DON'T SAY THAT I DON'T LOVE YOU,
THAT WHAT WE HAVE IS JUST A DREAM.

IN TEN YEARS I STILL WILL WANT YOU,
YOU MEAN THE WORLD TO ME.

LET'S EMBRACE THIS CHILD,
GIVE IT ALL WE CAN.

WITH RIGID LIFE WE'LL RECONCILE,
OUR SWEET BABY IN OUR HANDS.

CAMP BONDS US TOGETHER
WITH A STRENGTH WE NEVER KNEW,

IT TELLS US WE CAN DO IT,

IT HELPS US PUSH ON THROUGH.

I WAS BROKEN WHEN MY MOTHER DIED.
LOST AND ALONE TILL CAMP BLUE JAY.

AND NOW WE HAVE ANOTHER CHANCE,
THIS BABY PAVED THE WAY.

Johnny looks pleadingly at Nat,
who cannot make eye contact with
him.

NAT

One day you'll start a family and you'll find
what you're looking for, but not today. This
isn't that baby.

JOHNNY

Nat.

NAT

No.

JOHNNY

Give it a chance, please, I'm begging you.

NAT

If you want a family so bad, why don't you talk
to Lizzie? She's there for you. Or why don't
you make amends with your dad? You have a
family. Maybe it's time you accepted them.

JOHNNY

How can you call my father and his wife my
family? How can you say that to me? You know
how I feel about them.

NAT

Oh grow up, Johnny. We all have shit. Stop
acting like yours is the only one to clog the
toilet.

JOHNNY

That's disgusting.

Johnny storms out of the cabin.
Nat does not chase after him.

Nat sits quietly for a few
moments, deep in thought. Slow
music begins to pick up, in the
same tune as Every Sunday.

NAT

"EVERY SUNDAY REPRISÉ"

LITTLE GIRL GROWS OLDER.
I MAKE MY OWN MISTAKES.
I ALMOST HAD A REASON TO SMILE.
THEN I FUCKS IT UP, OF COURSE,
'CUS WHAT COULD EVER CHANGE?
I AM WAY TOO YOUNG TO HAVE A CHILD.

The tune begins to shift into a different melody. Fast paced rock and rock, building with the intensity of her emotions, her anguish.

NAT (CONT'D)

"HERE I AM"

HERE I AM AT CAMP BLUE JAY
WITH ALL THESE RULES I MUST OBEY,
ALL CAUGHT UP IN LOVE WHY WOULD I LISTEN?

THIS IS ALL TOO REAL FOR ME,
THIS LIFE DOES NOT APPEAL TO ME.
SOMEONE BREAK ME FREE OF THIS DARK PRISON.

LET ME CARRY RIGHT ON THROUGH,
I'VE GOT A DREAM I'M MAKING TRUE,
I REFUSE TO LET ALL I'VE WORKED FOR GO.

HERE I AM AT CAMP BLUE JAY,
AND DAMN IT MAN I PLAN TO STAY.
TO MY DREAM OF DREAMS, I WON'T SAY NO.

SINCE NINE I'VE RUN AWAY FROM THIS,
A WHOLE LIFE SPENT ERASING THIS,
RELEASING CHAINS THAT HELD ME DOWN SO TIGHT.

CAMP USED TO BE MY GETAWAY,
MY ONE AND ONLY ESCAPE.
I NEVER CAME TO CAMP TO HAVE TO FIGHT.

LET ME CARRY RIGHT ON THROUGH,
I'VE GOT A DREAM I'M MAKING TRUE,
I REFUSE TO LET ALL I'VE WORKED FOR GO.

HERE I AM AT CAMP BLUE JAY,
AND DAMN IT MAN I PLAN TO STAY.
TO MY DREAM OF DREAMS, I WON'T SAY NO.

A FAMILY'S SOMETHING THAT GETS YOU DOWN.
A BIND FOR LIFE YOU CAN'T GET AROUND.
I WROTE MYSELF RIGHT OFF MY FAMILY PAGE,
A FAMILY'S SOMETHING THAT GETS YOU DOWN.

AND NOW I'M TRAPPED RIGHT BACK IN THAT CAGE.

LET ME CARRY RIGHT ON THROUGH,
I'VE GOT A DREAM I'M MAKING TRUE,
I REFUSE TO LET ALL I'VE WORKED FOR GO.

HERE I AM AT CAMP BLUE JAY,
AND DAMN IT MAN I PLAN TO STAY.
TO MY DREAM OF DREAMS, I WON'T SAY NO.

WE'RE ALL BETTER OFF ALONE.
A FAMILY DOESN'T MAKE A HOME.
I'M NOT FORFEITING MY FREEDOM WITH SUCH HASTE.

TO BRING A LIFE INTO THIS EARTH,
WHEN I'M SO DAMN LOW AND HURT,
IS SELFISH, IS USELESS, IS A WASTE.

LET ME CARRY RIGHT ON THROUGH,
I'VE GOT A DREAM I'M MAKING TRUE,
I REFUSE TO LET ALL I'VE WORKED FOR GO.

HERE I AM AT CAMP BLUE JAY,
AND DAMN IT MAN I PLAN TO STAY.
TO MY DREAM OF DREAMS, I WON'T SAY NO.

I COULD ONLY GIVE A KID
THE KINDA LIFE FROM WHICH I HID.
YOU SEE, FAMILY'S JUST A VICIOUS CYCLE.

JOHNNY'LL HAVE TO UNDERSTAND,
A CHILD'S BETTER OFF WHEN PLANNED,
AND I'M NOT ABOUT TO STAND THIS TRIAL.

LET ME CARRY RIGHT ON THROUGH,
I'VE GOT A DREAM I'M MAKING TRUE,
I REFUSE TO LET ALL I'VE WORKED FOR GO.

HERE I AM AT CAMP BLUE JAY,
AND DAMN IT MAN I PLAN TO STAY.
TO MY DREAM OF DREAMS, I WON'T SAY NO.

HERE I AM, HERE I AM, AND HERE I'LL STAY.
HERE I AM, HERE I AM, WON'T GO AWAY.

Nat stands alone in her cabin,
trying to stay determined. She is
scared. Lights fade.

SCENE 3

Lizzie sits in her office alone.
She looks extremely worn out. Her
phone is ringing off the hook. She
ignores it, holding her head in
her hands.

There is a knock on her door. The doorknob jiggles.

LIZZIE
What?

The knocking persists.

LIZZIE (CONT'D)
Who is it?

The knocking persists.

VOICE
It's me!

LIZZIE
Office hours are from 9 to 5. Come back tomorrow.

The knocking persists, more aggressively.

LIZZIE (CONT'D)
Oh for fuck's sake. COME IN!

VOICE
IT'S LOCKED!

Lizzie sighs and stands up. She drags herself to the door and swings it open. Greg is on the other side, exasperated. He pulls Lizzie in for a hug.

LIZZIE
Greg!

GREG
I drove straight over.

LIZZIE
I'm sorry, I should've realized it was you. People keep barging in here.

GREG
I came as soon as you called. Are you okay? What happened here? A link on Facebook said you were teaching kids how to perform abortions?

LIZZIE
What? That's absurd!

GREG

Where do these crazy parents come up with this shit? What happened today, Lizzie?

LIZZIE

I have parents calling me off the hook. I'm getting death threats. These damn counselors, Greg, I don't know what to do about them. The board is begging for my resignation.

GREG

How can they? The campers are too loyal to you. They're on your side.

LIZZIE

These counselors drink, they sleep together, God knows what else. They're idiots, all of them. Even the good ones. No, the good ones are the worst ones. The good ones are the ones who promise you they'll be on their best behavior and then turn around and get pregnant!

GREG

Who's pregnant?

LIZZIE

Finally when I thought I was making progress with him. He was doing so well, Greg. He was happy. And Nat - my most dedicated, hard working counselor. What am I going to do?

GREG

When you were making progress with who?

LIZZIE

Johnny, Greg. Johnny.

GREG

What did he do?

LIZZIE

Oh, Greg. Shit.

GREG

What the hell happened?

A moment of hesitation.

LIZZIE

Nat Hubert is pregnant.

GREG

Johnny's not the father, right? Right?

Lizzie nods slowly. For the first time, she thinks past the consequences for the camp. She considers Johnny. Nat.

LIZZIE
Johnny's the father.

GREG
Oh, God. Oh my God.

LIZZIE
Greg-

GREG
Where is he?

LIZZIE
I'm not sure.

GREG
You don't know?

LIZZIE
It's been a crazy day, Greg.

GREG
Where's his cabin?

LIZZIE
It's down by the sailing dock. But maybe you should wait till tomorrow. He's having a hard enough time with this as it is.

GREG
I need to see him.

LIZZIE
Listen, Greg. He's been doing well here. Real well.

GREG
Yeah, clearly he's been having a great time.

LIZZIE
It was a mistake. He got caught up.

GREG
When did you find out?

Music fades in. Soft, slow rock and roll.

LIZZIE
This afternoon.

GREG

God dammit! Pregnant! What the hell am I going to do with that kid?

LIZZIE

Love him, Greg. Be his father. Love him.

GREG

"WHAT HAVE I DONE BUT LOVE"

YOU TELL ME TO LOVE HIM.

TO BE A FATHER TO HIM.

TELL ME,

WHAT HAVE I BEEN DOING HIS WHOLE LIFE?

Young Johnny runs on stage, followed by Emily, who, for the first time, looks healthy and happy and energetic. She's glowing. She chases after Young Johnny, who runs and leaps into Greg's arms.

YOUNG JOHNNY

Daddy!

Greg spins Young Johnny around while Emily watches. Young Johnny laughs hysterically.

EMILY

Careful!

GREG

Ahh, he's safe with me, aren't ya, son?

YOUNG JOHNNY

Faster!

GREG

You got it!

Greg spins and spins and spins until they're a blur of motion. Faster, faster, faster. Dizzy and dizzier but always spinning. Always laughing. He lifts him high into the air.

Then, he blinks.

Emily is in her hospital gown, in her hospital bed, asleep. Young Johnny is sleeping, curled against his mother.

Greg stands beside the bed,
watching over them. He kisses them
both on the cheek.

The bed is rolled off stage. Greg
watches it go in despair.

The music builds. We can feel the
intensity of his anguish.

GREG (CONT'D)

WHAT HAVE I DONE BUT LOVE?
YOU BLINK AND IT'S ALL GONE.
THIS ISN'T MY MISTAKE.
I KNOW WHAT I'VE DONE.

HOW COULD HE FORGET
I'VE NEVER LEFT HIS SIDE.
I KEPT A ROOF OVER HIS HEAD.
I HELD HIM WHEN HE CRIED.

HE SAYS HE HATES ME NOW,
THAT I'M TOUGH AND I'M A DRAG.
AS FAR AS I'M CONCERNED,
I'M JUST HIS GODDAMN DAD.

WHAT HAVE I DONE BUT LOVE?
YOU BLINK AND IT'S ALL GONE.
THIS ISN'T MY MISTAKE.
I KNOW WHAT I'VE DONE.

I CHEERED AT EVERY GAME,
CRIED AT HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATION.
SHIT, I GAVE HIM HIS NAME,
AND HE CONDEMNS ME TO DAMNATION.

HIS MOTHER MAY HAVE DIED,
BUT THAT WAS NOT MY FAULT.
I HURT AS MUCH AS HE DID,
IT RIPPED APART MY HEART.

WHAT HAVE I DONE BUT LOVE?
YOU BLINK AND IT'S ALL GONE.
THIS ISN'T MY MISTAKE.
I KNOW WHAT I'VE DONE.

HE CAN PUNCH ME WITH HIS GRIEF,
PULL MY HAIR AND CURSE MY NAME.
I'LL STILL HEAL HIM WHEN HE BLEEDS,
I'LL STILL LOVE HIM ALL THE SAME.

Johnny appears on another part of
the stage, alone, exasperated.
Angry.

JOHNNY

WHAT HAVE I DONE BUT LOVE?
I WAS BROKEN WHEN I MET HER.
SHE FIXED ME RIGHT BACK UP.
I NEVER SHOULD HAVE LET HER.

SHE THINKS CAMP'S A MAGIC PLACE
WHERE LOVE IS JUST A GAME.
HOW COULD SHE SAY THAT TO MY FACE?
SHE WANTS TO WASH THIS DOWN THE DRAIN.

WHAT HAVE I DONE BUT LOVE?
AND THIS IS WHAT I GET.
ANOTHER LOSS TO KNOCK ME DOWN,
MORE GRIEF TO BESET.

JOHNNY AND GREG

WHAT HAVE I DONE BUT LOVE?
YOU BLINK AND IT'S ALL GONE.

GREG

THIS ISN'T MY MISTAKE.

JOHNNY

HOW CAN I CARRY ON?

JOHNNY AND GREG

WHAT HAVE I DONE BUT LOVE?

GREG

YOU CAN CALL ME GRANDPA GREG.
WHEN MY SON SCREWS UP,
IT'S ME WHO BEARS THAT WEIGHT.

JOHNNY

THAT NIGHT IN ARTS AND CRAFTS,
WHEN I LEARNED ABOUT HER PAST,

I FELL SO HARD IN LOVE.
YOU SPEED UNTIL YOU CRASH.

Nat appears on yet another part of
the stage. She clutches her
stomach.

NAT

I CAN'T BE HERE. HERE I AM.

JOHNNY AND GREG

WHAT HAVE I DONE BUT LOVE?
YOU BLINK AND IT'S ALL GONE.

NAT

HERE I AM.

JOHNNY AND GREG

THIS ISN'T MY MISTAKE.
I KNOW WHAT I'VE DONE.

NAT

HERE I AM.

Johnny sits and holds his knees to his chin. He cries into them.

Lizzie grabs Greg in her arms and wraps him tightly, holding him close, attempting to calm him down.

Nat stands determined, looking at herself closely in the cabin's small mirror.

NAT (CONT'D)

But I don't have to be.

Nat and the cabin fade.

Greg and Lizzie kiss.

LIZZIE

Let's go to bed, Greg. We'll find him in the morning. Let's get some sleep.

GREG

He's not having a baby, Lizzie. I won't let him.

LIZZIE

Sleep on it, honey, sleep on it. Talk to him tomorrow.

They leave the office. They walk until they run into Johnny, who is sobbing.

Young Johnny comes on stage, holding a small wooden box. His mother's ashes. The same box from the opening scene. Young Johnny is holding the box to his heart and sobbing. Greg lets this memory sit for awhile. He can't look away.

JOHNNY

Dad?

Johnny and Young Johnny both look pleadingly at Greg.

YOUNG JOHNNY

How will I survive?

Greg melts. He grabs Johnny in his arms, without a word, and holds him. Young Johnny runs over and joins in the hug. They hold onto each other for as long as they can, until eventually Young Johnny fades. Even then, Johnny and Greg are still holding on.

JOHNNY

I love you, Dad.

GREG

I love you too, Johnny.

Lizzie watches for a moment before exiting the stage, and letting them have their moment. Lights fade.

SCENE 4

Auburn, Jake, Marta, and Kyle sit at a table together eating lunch.

AUBURN

I still can't believe second session is canceled.

MARTA

It's so unfair. Going home a month early? Fuck that.

KYLE

I mean, I knew it was bad, but for all the parents to pull their kids? It's just crap. Those parents have been sending their children here for years, they know it's not a bad place.

MARTA

They're not gonna take the risk.

JAKE

Their kids have been coming here longer than Lizzie has been the director. It's easy for them to point fingers at her. She's new enough.

AUBURN

She's not a bad director.

JAKE

I mean, she's not a great one. We do party and drink a lot.

AUBURN

That's not her fault. She literally warned us against losing our shit. We did this.

MARTA

No we didn't. We didn't do anything wrong.

AUBURN

Are you kidding me? We were behaving like idiots! I can't believe how we acted in front of parents, in front of campers. I'm ashamed of us.

MARTA

Don't say that, Auburn.

AUBURN

I am! It's our fault. Camp Blue Jay is falling apart because of us.

KYLE

That's a little harsh.

MARTA

A little? You're being an asshole, Auburn.

JAKE

Don't talk to her like that!

AUBURN

I can stick up for myself, Jake. Don't talk to me like that!

MARTA

Talk to you like what? You're the one saying it's our fault that camp is closing early, that Lizzie might lose her job. How could you say that?

KYLE

We didn't do anything wrong.

AUBURN

We got too caught up! We got carried away, we partied too much, we were too invested in our own problems, we were bad counselors.

MARTA

We were great counselors!

AUBURN

Why won't you just admit that we did this to ourselves?

MARTA

Why won't you just shut up?

AUBURN

Oh, good one, Marta.

MARTA

Screw you!

AUBURN

Screw you!

KYLE

Guys, this is so unproductive!

JAKE

Calm down! Everyone! Just stop! This isn't any of our faults. None of us did this.

AUBURN

Then who did?

JAKE

Johnny and Nat. They're the ones who fucked this all up. They're the ones that got the board all worried we were teaching kids about abortions, they're the ones that freaked out all the parents. Not us. Them.

MARTA

You're right. This is on them.

KYLE

Great. So we can stop yelling at each other now.

AUBURN

Don't blame Nat. She's my best friend.

MARTA

Is she?

AUBURN

What does that mean?

MARTA

Have you even said a word to her since she got pregnant?

AUBURN

She hasn't been around.

MARTA

I've barely even seen you two together this session.

AUBURN

We were both distracted. Work, boyfriends, it was hard.

MARTA

I'm just saying, if I got pregnant and my best friend didn't even bother to be there for me...well, she wouldn't be my best friend anymore.

AUBURN

Oh god. What did I do?

MARTA

Accept that you suck as a friend and help me take them down. They ruined everything for the rest of us.

JAKE

Marta, seriously. They're suffering. Don't make this worse.

MARTA

I say we let them know how much this sucks for the rest of us.

JAKE

Isn't that a little dramatic?

MARTA

They shut down the only place Kyle and I can be together. Now we'll never get to see each other. We live hours apart, I don't have a car, and my parents would lose their shit if they ever saw me near Kyle.

JAKE

Why do they hate him so much?

KYLE

They think I'm the one who gave her gonorrhoea.

AUBURN

Ew, what the fuck?!

JAKE

Did he?

MARTA

No! Of course not! I got it from a public toilet seat.

Auburn and Jake look at her dubiously. Kyle shrugs.

MARTA (CONT'D)

Camp Blue Jay is closing guys! Let's stay focused here!

JAKE

This camp is my childhood.

AUBURN

This camp is my life. Nat is my life. I need to talk to her.

MARTA

Screw that. I say we let Nat and Johnny know it's their fault. We make sure they understand that. Camp means the world to Nat. Her guilt will punish her for us.

JAKE

That's so screwed up...

AUBURN

Be a good friend for once in your life, Marta. This isn't a joke. I'm going to find her. See you guys later.

Auburn exits.

JAKE

Yeah, I'm with Auburn. We're not doing anything to Nat and Johnny.

KYLE

Sorry, Marta, but I am too. Why waste energy punishing them when they're already being punished enough?

MARTA

I guess.

JAKE

Wait a minute, I've got an idea!

MARTA

What?

JAKE

The parents. They're our in. It's not too late.

MARTA

You really think we can convince them?

KYLE

We have their phone numbers in the directory.
We'll beg for their forgiveness. We can do
this.

MARTA

Fine. Let's try.

Scene 5

Nat sits in her cabin alone.
Everything is dark. There is a
distinct feeling of emptiness
permeating through the small room.

An intense, high energy, ballad.
We can feel her intense sorrow,
her aching loneliness, in every
line.

NAT

"NOBODY'S HERE TO HOLD ME"

I CAN HEAR MY HEARTBEAT IN THIS EMPTY ROOM.
EVERYTHING'S BLACK BUT THE LIGHT FROM THE MOON.
MY BODY IS ACHING, LIKE IT'S HOLDING ITS BREATH.
AND NOBODY'S HERE TO HOLD ME.

HERE I AM, ALONE IN THIS GLOOM.
HOLDING MY KNEES, AFRAID OF MY WOMB.
MY BODY IS SWOLLEN. MY BREASTS ARE LIKE KNIVES.
THEY STAB AT MY HEART, AT MY ACHING INSIDES.

BUT THE HARDEST PART, THE PART I HATE,
IS HOW LONELY I FEEL THROUGH ALL THIS PAIN.

I CAN HEAR MY HEARTBEAT IN THIS EMPTY ROOM.
EVERYTHING'S BLACK BUT THE LIGHT FROM THE MOON.
MY BODY IS ACHING, LIKE IT'S HOLDING ITS BREATH.
AND NOBODY'S HERE TO HOLD ME.

MY SKIN FEELS LIKE PAPER, EASY TO RIP.
MY EYES ARE DRY AND SO ARE MY LIPS.
NOTHING'S FAMILIAR, I'VE LOST ALL CONTROL.
I DON'T KNOW MY BODY BUT I STILL KNOW MY SOUL.

THEY SAY THE CHOICE IS THE HARDEST PART,
THE DECISION ALONE WILL TEAR YOU APART.
I KNOW WHAT I NEED, AND WHAT I SHOULD DO.
THE HARDEST PART IS NOT HAVING YOU.

I CAN HEAR MY HEARTBEAT IN THIS EMPTY ROOM.
EVERYTHING'S BLACK BUT THE LIGHT FROM THE MOON.
MY BODY IS ACHING, LIKE IT'S HOLDING ITS BREATH.

AND NOBODY'S HERE TO HOLD ME.

I'M TRAPPED IN THIS CAMP WHERE EVERYONE KNOWS,
I HEAR THEIR WHISPERS AS I STARE AT MY TOES.
THEY CALL THEMSELVES FRIENDS, AND YET THEY ALL FLEE.
WHY AM I THE ONE HOLDING ME?

AND THEN THERE'S JOHNNY, UP AND GONE.
PRETENDING THAT HE KNOWS WHAT'S WRONG.
THE ONE PERSON I LOVED THE MOST.
I NEED HIM NOW AND HE'S A GHOST.

I FELL IN LOVE SO EASILY, LIKE A MAGNET OR A PUZZLE PIECE.
EACH CLICHÉ CRASHED INTO ME. BLIND FROM LOVE'S TOXICITY.

AND NOW MY BODY IS AT WAR,
MY MIND'S A MESS, MY WOMB IS SORE.
WHO IS HERE TO HELP ME THROUGH?
NOT THE MAN I THOUGHT I KNEW.

THIS ACHING BACK IS HARD TO BEAR,
CAN'T WALK THROUGH CAMP WITHOUT A STARE,
I PUKE UP EVERYTHING I EAT,
I'M EXHAUSTED EVEN AFTER SLEEP.

BUT THE HARDEST PART, THE STRONGEST BLOW,
IS KNOWING THAT I'M ALL ALONE.

I CAN HEAR MY HEARTBEAT IN THIS EMPTY ROOM.
EVERYTHING'S BLACK BUT THE LIGHT FROM THE MOON.
MY BODY IS ACHING, LIKE IT'S HOLDING ITS BREATH.
AND NOBODY'S HERE TO HOLD ME.

In the background, loud chatter
can be heard as a group of
counselors pass by. The noise
fades as they get further away.

Nat stops to listen, then gets
lost in thought for a second.

Young Nat enters the stage,
dragging a suitcase. She is joined
by Young Auburn and Young Jake.

YOUNG JAKE

Are you a camper here, too?

YOUNG NAT

Yeah, it's my first summer! What's your name?

YOUNG JAKE

I'm Jake!

YOUNG AUBURN

I'm Auburn, it's my first summer too!

YOUNG JAKE

It's weird not having any family around.

YOUNG AUBURN

Yeah, it is. It's kinda lonely.

YOUNG NAT

Well, how bout we can be a family for the summer?

YOUNG AUBURN

That's a good idea!

YOUNG NAT

Who needs family at home when we have each other?

YOUNG AUBURN

You're brave.

YOUNG NAT

No, I'm ready. I'm ready for this. I don't need anything else.

The young campers fade, leaving Nat in her cabin. She has had an epiphany.

NAT

I'm gonna get through this. I'm enough to hold me up. I always was.

Scene 6

Johnny is in the arts and crafts building with Greg and Lizzie. Greg is examining the signatures on the walls, but Johnny's not paying attention.

GREG

So this is where you've been working all summer?

JOHNNY

Yep.

GREG

Looks like quite a few people have been here before you. This place has got quite a history.

JOHNNY

Mhmm.

GREG

Have you signed it yet?

JOHNNY

Nope.

GREG

Why not?

JOHNNY

Why do you care?

GREG

Just wondering.

LIZZIE

Any word from Nat yet, Johnny?

JOHNNY

Nothing yet.

LIZZIE

You know she's right. You need to support her on this.

JOHNNY

Why should I?

LIZZIE

Because she needs you right now.

JOHNNY

We'd have done a great job with a baby. We love each other. We'd love the hell out of a baby, too.

GREG

The time will come. It's just not here yet. You've got a whole life ahead of you.

JOHNNY

Why does it have to be what she wants? She's not letting me have any say in this at all. I never get say in anything. I got forced to come to this camp against my will.

LIZZIE

Grow up, Johnny.

JOHNNY

Excuse me?

LIZZIE

You heard me. So you got sent to summer camp. Big deal. What would you have done this summer if you weren't here? Moped around the house, hid in your bed, fought with your father? You fell in love here, you learned things here, you were happy. Happy. For the first time since you came into my office as a heartbroken twelve year old boy. Nat isn't getting an abortion because she doesn't love you. She made that decision so that you two could get as much as possible out of your lives and start a family if and when the time is right. Do you know what a baby would have done, Johnny? It would have trapped you here in Maine for the rest of your life and you would've been just as miserable. No child will replace the grief you feel for your mother. That will always be there, as long as you miss her. As long as you love her. But do you know what that grief means? It means that you got to have someone in your life who made you so happy, who loved you so much, that the thought of them not being with you is as powerful as the love itself. Some people never experience love so powerful.

JOHNNY

You don't know how painful this grief is. It's constant. It hurts so bad. And Nat, I don't know, she, she alleviated that somehow. It didn't hurt as much when I was with her.

Beat. Lizzie contemplates how to respond. She glances at Greg, who, feeling uncomfortable, is distracting himself by studying the signatures on the walls. Then:

LIZZIE

Did you know that there has not been one day since you and your father released your mother's ashes that he has not visited that very spot? Every single day he goes there. He talks to your mother. He sits in the quiet and he thinks about her, he prays to her.

Johnny looks at Greg in surprise. He had no idea.

LIZZIE (CONT'D)

He does. Every. Damn. Day. He married me, he continued to live his life after your mother died, but that does not mean he stopped loving her, stopped missing her. You are not the only one who suffers because of your mother's death.

(MORE)

LIZZIE (CONT'D)

I think sadness, Johnny, is the most beautiful emotion because it is the only emotion that shows how powerful love is. Be proud of the love you carry every day for your mother and hold onto it with all your might. Grief is not all bad. A baby is not a magic wand. Grow from your pain, embrace it, and be grateful that you still have the freedom to live your life to its fullest.

Johnny is silent, absorbing all this.

Greg, still looking at signatures, suddenly covers his mouth and stands back, overcome with feeling.

GREG

Johnny, Lizzie, you have to see this! You have to see this, come here!

Johnny and Lizzie run over to Greg.

LIZZIE

What is it?

GREG

Look! At that signature, look!

Emily enters, standing in the background, watching.

JOHNNY

Oh my god. Oh my god!

LIZZIE

Emily Francesca Brighton. 1974.

JOHNNY

Mom! How is that possible? How is her name on these walls?

GREG

She would've been a little girl then. 1974. She would've been 9 years old!

JOHNNY

She, she, she went here?

GREG

It's possible! She grew up in Maine, she did tell me she went to camp when she was a kid, but she only came for a year or so, she barely even mentioned it!

JOHNNY

Oh my god. Dad, Mom was here.

GREG

Mom was here.

JOHNNY

Mom is here. She is here. She is here!

Greg and Johnny share an emotional hug. Emily watches them closely, lovingly, then exits the stage.

JOHNNY (CONT'D)

That's what kept drawing me to these She was never gone. She was always here.

Greg squeezes Johnny into a tight hug.

JOHNNY (CONT'D)

I have to go.

Johnny exits the building, leaving Greg and Lizzie behind. Lights fade.

SCENE 7

Nat is making her way out of camp.

Auburn enters the stage and approaches her.

AUBURN

Nat, wait!

NAT

Auburn?

AUBURN

Can I talk to you quick?

NAT

What's going on?

AUBURN

I wanted to, I mean, I haven't been here for you.

(MORE)

AUBURN (CONT'D)

All summer, I've barely, I've been so caught up with Jake and all that and I just want to say that I'm here for you. I want you to know that. I'm here. And I'm sorry that I wasn't here before to make sure you knew that.

NAT

Oh.

AUBURN

I'm so sorry you're going through this.

NAT

You are?

AUBURN

Of course I am.

A moment of hesitation followed by a moment of trust. Then, a moment of release.

NAT

It's terrible. It's so awful and I thought everyone -- I mean, I just -- that's been the hardest part. Everyone.

AUBURN

I should've been here for you.

NAT

It's been weird going through this at camp. Like I can't escape anyone but at the same time I'm so alone. Everyone is everywhere and also nowhere.

AUBURN

I'm here now. I am, Nat. I'm here now. How are you doing?

NAT

Everything hurts. I can't put a bra on without writhing in pain. It feels like I'm sleeping on rocks. I leak like a faucet and spend half my day on the shitty camp toilets. As if being pregnant wasn't punishment enough, I have to be stuck in the middle of the woods at a summer camp.

AUBURN

God, that sounds miserable.

NAT

Yesterday I threw up and within seconds there were spiders bathing in it.

AUBURN

That's disgusting.

NAT

It wasn't the best.

AUBURN

Well I'm here for you. Through all of it.

NAT

You have no idea how much that means to me.

AUBURN

And I wanted to tell you, we're all working to get second session going again. We're calling the parents. Practically begging them. It's been going pretty well so far, actually. They've been surprisingly forgiving.

NAT

Really?

AUBURN

Yeah. So just focus on you, because we're focusing on the camp thing.

NAT

Thanks so much, Auburn.

They embrace.

AUBURN

So are you keeping it?

NAT

No.

AUBURN

I can come with you, if you want. I can hold your hand. I don't know if they'll let me in the room, but if they do...

NAT

I would love that.

AUBURN

I don't want you to have to go alone. Is Johnny around?

Beat. A moment of hesitation, of panic, of resisting the urge to admit her true feelings to a friend who has not been present lately. A moment of not knowing who to trust.

NAT

Can we go now? Is that okay? I want to go now.

AUBURN

Of course. Want me to drive?

Nat nods.

AUBURN (CONT'D)

Let me go grab my keys. I'll be right back.

Auburn squeezes Nat's hand and exits just as Johnny enters the stage and approaches Nat frantically.

JOHNNY

Nat, I've been looking all over for you.

NAT

I'm not the one who went away.

JOHNNY

I know. I'm sorry. But I'm here now and I was looking for you and I was afraid you'd, you'd-

NAT

I'd gotten an abortion already? I'm going soon.

JOHNNY

I was afraid you'd gone without me. I want to be there with you. I want to be there for you.

NAT

Are you serious?

JOHNNY

Yes. I am.

NAT

Where was this when I found out? Where was this when I was crying in my cabin and you were bouncing off the walls?

JOHNNY

Nat, please. I'm sorry. I was being selfish.

NAT

Yeah, you were. And I really needed you.

JOHNNY

I'm here now. I'll go with you, if you want me to.

NAT

Auburn's coming with me.

JOHNNY

Please, Nat.

A soft rock melody begins beneath
the following dialogue.

NAT

I was going to go alone. Before Auburn showed
up. I was going to be all alone through this,
and you were going to let me.

JOHNNY

I know, I feel terrible.

NAT

Johnny, I can't do this.

JOHNNY

"ALL THAT STARTS COMES TO AN END"

NAT, I LONG TO BE NEAR YOU.
GIVE ME A CHANCE TO CHEER YOU.
TO BE WITH YOU AGAIN.

I KNOW THAT I DON'T DESERVE YOU.
BUT ALL I WANT IS TO SERVE YOU.

I'VE GOT NO EXCUSE FOR THE PAIN I INFUSED,
BUT I WANT TO FIX THIS NOW FOR YOU.

SOMEWHERE IN MY SHELL MY HEART IS ACHING.
I FEEL THE EARTH AROUND US BREAKING.
I TOLD YOU CAMP IS NO ESCAPE,
BUT NOW I SEE THAT YOU'RE RIGHT.
AND DAMN, COLD REALITY CAN BITE.

NAT

LISTEN TO ME JOHNNY, HEAR MY VOICE.
KNOW I WISH I HAD ANOTHER CHOICE.
SOMEWHERE IN MY SHELL MY BODY'S CHANGING.
ONE LIFE BEGINS WHILE ANOTHER IS DECAYING.

I'M GRATEFUL TO HAVE BEEN YOUR FRIEND.
WE BOTH KNOW ALL THAT STARTS COMES TO AN END.
WE'RE TWO BROKEN PEOPLE WHO LONG TO STAND TALL,
BUT OUR SHATTERED PIECES DON'T FIT AFTER ALL.

JOHNNY

THE ONLY THING THAT KEEPS ME GOING IS YOU.
PLEASE DON'T LET THE TWO OF US BE THROUGH.

YOU LIFTED ME HIGH ABOVE THE GROUND,
HOW WILL I SURVIVE IF I FALL BACK DOWN?

NAT

I DON'T SAY THIS TO HURT YOU.
I DON'T WANT TO DESERT YOU.
I CAN'T KEEP TRUDGING THROUGH
JUST TO KEEP ON LOVING YOU.

WHEN I WAS ALONE MAKING MY CHOICE,
I COULDN'T SEEM TO SHAKE THIS VOICE.
IT REMINDED ME OF WHO I AM,
A GIRL WITH A DREAM, WITH A GOAL, WITH A PLAN.

I WANT NO FAMILY, I YEARN TO ESCAPE.
I'VE WORKED MY WHOLE LIFE TO GET AWAY.
YOU FAILED TO HOLD ME WHEN I NEEDED YOU MOST,
AND IT FELT LIKE I FELL IN LOVE WITH A GHOST.

BUT I CAME TO KNOW WHAT I NEED.
TO FOCUS ON ME AND ONLY ME.
I'LL ACCOMPLISH MY DREAM, I KNOW I WILL.
I JUST GOTTA GET OVER THIS HILL.

YOU LEFT ME ALONE AND AFRAID,
JUST BECAUSE MY CHOICE DIDN'T MATCH YOUR WAYS.
IT HURTS TO SAY, BUT WE DON'T FIT,
OUR VALUES ARE FAR TOO DIFFERENT.

YOU'LL SURVIVE BECAUSE YOU'RE STRONG,
YOU'LL CARRY YOURSELF ALONG.
YOU KNOW LIFE WILL BRING YOU CHANGE.
SOMETHING GOOD WILL COME YOUR WAY.

I NEED TO LIVE MY OWN LIFE NOW.
IT'S NOT MY TIME TO SETTLE DOWN.
I'LL ALWAYS LOVE YOU, MY DEAR FRIEND.
BUT ALL THAT STARTS MUST END.

JOHNNY

But what will I do without you?

NAT

You'll be okay. You'll keep going.

JOHNNY

I love you.

NAT

I love you too. But you knew from the beginning
that I don't want family, that I'm afraid of
that, and we've only been dating a month and it
already feels so real, so fast. Too fast. And
you left me alone.

(MORE)

NAT (CONT'D)

We weren't together when we needed most to be.
What would that mean for us through the years?
That's a red flag, Johnny.

JOHNNY

How do I keep going?

NAT

You just do. You just have to have faith that
it will be okay.

JOHNNY

But it hurts. You're the first person I've ever
loved.

NAT

You're the first person I've ever loved too.

JOHNNY

Maybe in a few years...when we're older? Or
after you're camp director?

NAT

Maybe. I'm not sure.

Nat kisses Johnny and hugs him. He
holds her tight.

Auburn enters the stage.

AUBURN

Hey, Johnny.

JOHNNY

Hey, Auburn.

NAT

I should go.

JOHNNY

Yeah, I guess you should.

NAT

We'll be okay.

JOHNNY

Yeah, I guess we will. You sure you don't want
me to come with you? For support?

NAT

I'll be okay.

JOHNNY

Okay. I'll be thinking about you the whole
time.

NAT

Thanks, Johnny. It's all gonna be okay.

Nat squeezes Johnny's hand and her and Auburn walk off stage.

Johnny is alone on stage. He stands still for a moment. All is quiet. He nods his head. He hurts, but there is also a feeling of acceptance. Lights fade.

SCENE 8

Marta, Kyle, Jake, and Auburn sit around the stage holding phones to their ears, talking over each other.

The melody of Another Summer picks up.

AUBURN

Yes, and we wanted to assure you that we are doing all we can to make up for our mistakes. Camp Blue Jay has been operating for 82 years and we regret how we disgraced its honored name.

KYLE

We would love to have your son back at Camp Blue Jay for second session. Camp has changed all of our lives for the better and we know it can make the same impact on Peter.

MARTA

We are working hard to make camp a safe and welcoming atmosphere for your child. This camp is my life, and I wouldn't be who I am today without it.

JAKE

So we hope you'll consider re-enrolling Alex for second session. We know how much camp means to her, because it means as much to us.

ALL

"COME BACK TO CAMP" (IN THE TUNE OF ANOTHER SUMMER)

WE ARE WORKING HARD FOR CAMP BLUE JAY.
A PLACE TO LOVE, TO LAUGH, TO PLAY.
WE CARE ABOUT OUR CAMPERS MOST,
AND WORK HARD TO BE THE PERFECT HOST.

WE'RE SORRY FOR WHO WE WERE THAT DAY,

BUT WE HAVE LEARNED FROM OUR MISTAKES.
WE CAN ASSURE YOU CAMP IS A SAFE PLACE
FOR YOUR CHILD TO LEARN AND GROW EACH DAY.

LIKE EVERYONE, WE ARE LEARNING STILL,
WE GOT CAUGHT UP IN SUMMER'S THRILL,
BUT CAMP MEANS MORE TO US THAN WE CAN SAY.
CONSIDER LETTING YOUR CHILD STAY,
WE KNOW THEY'LL LOVE OUR CAMP BLUE JAY.

Lights fade.

SCENE 9

Johnny stands in the arts and
crafts building examining his
mother's signature on the wall.

Greg and Lizzie enter.

GREG

Hey bud, I'm gonna get going. Just wanted to
say bye. Are you gonna be okay here for another
three weeks?

JOHNNY

Yeah, I'll be fine. I still can't believe they
pulled it off.

LIZZIE

They're good counselors. You all are.

Johnny nods.

GREG

I love you, bud. You'll get through this.

JOHNNY

Thanks, Dad. I love you too.

Johnny and Greg embrace.

GREG

Lizzie's here if you need anything.

JOHNNY

I know.

GREG

And when you get home we can road trip to your
school together. I'm proud of you Johnny.

JOHNNY

Thanks, Dad.

GREG

Okay. I'll call when I get home.

JOHNNY

Okay, Dad, thanks.

GREG

And I'll call when I get on the road.

JOHNNY

Okay, sounds good.

GREG

And I'll call before bed, just to check up on you.

JOHNNY

Yep, okay, sounds good.

GREG

Okay. You're okay?

JOHNNY

Yes! I'm okay! You can go. I love you, Dad.

GREG

I love you too, Johnny.

Greg approaches Emily's signature and touches it. He examines it for a moment in quiet.

GREG (CONT'D)

Okay, well I'll see you in just a few weeks.

Lizzie hugs Greg and kisses him.

LIZZIE

Bye, sweetheart.

GREG

Bye, Lizzie. See you soon.

Greg exits the cabin, leaving Lizzie and Johnny behind.

LIZZIE

Crazy summer, huh?

JOHNNY

Yeah.

LIZZIE

But you know we'll have to have a talk about your behavior now that this has all calmed down. You absolutely cannot run around camp screaming about getting your girlfriend pregnant. Be smart, okay? Then maybe you can come back next year.

JOHNNY

Okay, okay, I got it. I'm sorry. I will try harder.

LIZZIE

Good. You better.

Lizzie places her hand on Johnny's shoulder. Lights fade.

SCENE 10

Lizzie sits at her desk in the camp office. Nat enters the room.

NAT

You called me in here?

LIZZIE

Why don't you sit down?

NAT

I understand if you need to send me home.

LIZZIE

The fact is, Nat, you're an excellent counselor. My best. The most enthusiastic, hard working counselor we have here.

NAT

What?

LIZZIE

You had to endure quite a bit of pain and hardship this summer. And I know it's been difficult.

NAT

It really has.

LIZZIE

And it was unbelievably inappropriate for you to run through a crowd of parents shouting about your pregnancy.

NAT

Right. That was bad.

LIZZIE

It nearly cost us this camp.

NAT

Right.

LIZZIE

But, I know how much this place means to you, and you mean as much to all of us. We're a family here. So I called you in here today to let you know that I want to officially offer you the position of assistant director, if you want to take it.

NAT

Really?

LIZZIE

You're a part of the Blue Jay family, Nat. We aren't letting you go.

NAT

Oh, Lizzie, thank you! Thank you so much!

Nat hugs Lizzie tightly.

NAT (CONT'D)

Thank you!

LIZZIE

You're a hard worker, Nat. But don't take this opportunity for granted, okay? Prove that I made the right decision in hiring you.

NAT

I will. I will, I promise.

Nat beams with happiness. Lights fade.

SCENE 11

Marta and Kyle are hanging up the "Welcome to Camp Blue Jay!" banner at the camp entrance.

MARTA

It's gonna be hard to fit an entire session of camp into three weeks. But we can do it.

KYLE

I think getting this session back alone proves we can do anything.

MARTA

What a crazy summer. I hope it ends somewhat normally.

The rest of the counselors enter in their staff t-shirts.

LIZZIE

Everyone ready?

The counselors cheer and brace themselves for the sea of campers to come.

New campers start to run on stage with their suitcases, dizzy with excitement.

ALL

IT'S ANOTHER SUMMER AT CAMP BLUE JAY,
AND THOUGH IT'S NOT A GREAT ESCAPE,
WE KNOW WE'LL GET THROUGH THE HARDEST DAYS.
WE GIVE OUR HEARTS TO CAMP BLUE JAY.

WE KNOW THIS SESSION WE'LL SURVIVE,
WE'LL FACE OUR FEARS AND GET ON BY.
IT'S ANOTHER SUMMER AT CAMP BLUE JAY,
AND FOR ONCE WE KNOW WE'LL BE OKAY.

WE CAN BE BRAVE, NO NEED TO HIDE,
FACE OUR FEARS AND LEARN TO STRIVE.
LIFE CAN SUCK BUT WE STILL SEE THE LIGHT,
WE'LL SHINE SO BRIGHT.

THIS IS STILL THE CAMP WE KNOW.
WE WON'T LET THIS SUMMER GO.
FOR THE CAMPERS, FOR OUR FRIENDS,
WE'LL KEEP FIGHTING TILL THE END.

IT'S ANOTHER SUMMER AT CAMP BLUE JAY,
A MONTH TO SHOW THAT WE'RE OKAY.

WE KNOW WE CAN, WE KNOW WE WILL SURVIVE.

Johnny and Nat exchange a glance.
Friendship. They smile. Lights
fade.

END OF SHOW.

Critical Essay

When first I ventured into the world of writing the book and lyrics for a musical, I had no idea what I was getting myself into. I was passionate, ambitious, and clueless. I approached the process with such unfounded confidence that I ended up trapping myself: my expectations were so high that I was setting myself up for months of frustration and dead ends. My emphasis in creative writing in the last three and a half years has been playwriting. I had to learn this semester that writing a musical is a far different process than writing a play, with its own set of rules, strategies, and methods. Musical storytelling is like nothing I have ever attempted to tackle before, making the process of writing *Another Summer* a major learning experience.

In David Spencer's *The Musical Theatre Writer's Survival Guide*, Spencer writes that the first step to writing a successful musical is creating "larger-than-life, or at the very least, hugely passionate" characters (Spencer 28). The plays I typically write tend to focus on every day people and experiences. My play *Learning to Walk*, for example, is about a middle class family in the aftermath of their son's suicide. The entire play takes place in a living room. The characters are family members. The genre is dramatic realism. There is nothing larger-than-life about the plot at all, although the dramatic situation is one of emotional extremity, which I will address shortly. I initially attempted to write *Another Summer* in a similar fashion. Regular nineteen and twenty year olds battling every day struggles who just so happen to be at a summer camp. I knew I wanted to tell a story about the instinct to flee in the face of adversity; Camp Blue Jay acting as the solace for these lost souls. I knew I wanted the characters to

learn that their problems will follow them anywhere, even to a summer camp in the middle of nowhere, and that they would inevitably have to face them.

However, I had trouble creating a protagonist and a central conflict. I started writing about a camp and hoped that the rest would come naturally. It did not. I found myself continuously struggling to understand what I was writing about - who I was writing about. I felt entirely disconnected from the world I was creating. A musical only functions when emotions are “strong enough that it feels appropriate for the characters to sing” and I was not sure the emotions felt by my characters were quite strong enough. (Cohen, Rosenhaus 18). In truth, most of my struggles were rooted in the fact that I did not know the first thing about writing a musical. Once I started reading about the form more closely I began to understand how to fix the problems I was having. The first step was to accept that writing a musical is not the same as writing a play.

While I could afford a certain amount of character banality in my plays, “prosaic characters with everyday wants are horrid choices for musicalization” (Spencer 29). This is because music intensifies the story. A musical demands an “active hero or heroine with a hugely ambitious objective” (28). In a world where experiencing profound emotion leads inevitably to breaking out into song, the characters need to be extraordinary. They need to be the type of people who are more sensitive, more compassionate, more ambitious, more everything. If they are not, then they must be striving for something so unattainable that their effort alone makes them extraordinary. For example, in Marc Shaiman and Scott Wittman’s 2002 musical *Hairspray*, Tracy may not seem like a remarkable

person, but her dreams of becoming a television star and later of ending segregation on *The Corny Collins Show* are so far-reaching that they prove she is. The characters of Richard Rogers and Oscar Hammerstein's 1943 musical *Oklahoma!* are not exceptional people but they are "depicted imaginatively and vividly" in such a way that they become exceptional (Cohen, Rosenhaus 18). At the same time, musical theatre characters do not hide anything from the audience. They are who they are, the audience is aware of their complexities right away because every time they sing a lyric they are exposing themselves in some form. It can be argued that music cannot tell a lie. It is honest by nature because it is brimming with emotion. Music comes from the heart, from an emotional pull within the character, and one cannot lie when she is revealing the inner workings of her soul. Indeed, "in contrast to the gradual character disclosure of realistic theatre" musical theatre characters "appear clear and full-blown on sight" (Frankel 30, 31). A character whose intense feelings drive him or her to break out into song and dance is not capable of concealing much. Because the characters I am used to writing generally mask their feelings until they inevitably reach a breaking point, writing the characters for *Another Summer* proposed an exciting challenge for me.

Creating interesting, complex, remarkable characters meant leaping out of my comfort zone as a writer. After seemingly endless hours spent drawing character maps, writing character journals, and exhausting my mind in an attempt to make my characters more interesting, I finally discovered insight into each that led to a far more vivid understanding of who these people are. I found

the roots of their pain and their happiness. I found their dreams and their fears. It was during this process that I realized Johnny was alone in the hospital room when his mother passed away. That the trauma he still endures from this event has led to a dry, angry, resentful person who uses sarcasm as a defense mechanism. I realized that Nat dreams of being Camp Blue Jay's director one day, that every choice she makes at camp determines the likelihood of her achieving this dream. With the knowledge that "music better communicates emotions than words alone can" I trudged through the writing process with the goal to have characters so emotionally charged that a musical is the only world in which they can exist (Miller 23).

Once I understood the characters, I was better equipped to create conflicts large enough to threaten them, to test their limits, to warrant larger-than-life responses. The "stake in all situations should be as personal and high-pressured as possible" in order to provoke titanic responses that lead naturally into song (Frankel 36). Otherwise, the songs do not feel natural. They break up the flow of the story because the character is not exhibiting strong enough feelings to provoke such a dramatic response. Nat's pregnancy would directly threaten her chances of becoming Camp Director and her desire to flee from the confines of family living. It would destroy her chance for the independence she so yearns for. Simultaneously, Johnny views the pregnancy as an opportunity to move on from his grief for his mother. The pregnancy is devastating to one and miraculous to the other, which sets off even further conflict because someone will ultimately have to lose. While unexpected pregnancy and grief are struggles that many

people endure, the threat to Nat and Johnny's relationship and their unique situation of dealing with these problems in the confines of a summer camp allow them to feel their pain with an overwhelming intensity and anxiety. Now that I had developed characters facing strong conflicts and larger-than-life emotional responses, I no longer felt as distant from the world I was creating. I was ready to divorce the play for the good of the musical.

Camp Blue Jay acts as the centerpiece for this coming-of-age story. Johnny would not be trapped with Lizzie, away from his father, without the tight boundaries of summer camp. Nat's dreams would not exist without the hope camp provided her as a child, hope that she strives to spread to campers who need reassurance. To make setting such a fundamental role in the story, though, was yet another musical "no-no," considered as risky as writing unremarkable characters facing every day struggles. Musical theatre is "more of a visual genre...than straight theatre" with a major "emphasis on movement" (Cohen, Rosenhaus 30). For many years, a cornerstone of musicals was spectacle. While a play might take place in one concrete setting, a musical moves. Audiences are enchanted when a small French village transforms before their eyes into a ballroom in Alan Menken, Howard Ashman, and Tim Rice's 1994 live musical version of *Beauty and the Beast*, just as they are whenever any seemingly impossible transition is pulled off on Broadway. Songs push the action forward through both stylistic changes in music (a song might start slow and pick up the pace dramatically as the character's mindset shifts) and the power of lyrics to express change and push the plot forward. When the action pushes forward, the

locations shift just as dramatically, creating a spectacle of magic great enough to captivate an audience. A musical is meant to keep moving, keep pushing, and keep changing.

Another Summer could be classified as what Spencer coins a “panorama musical” in which “multiple storylines [are] tied together by a single locale” (Spencer 49). In a panorama musical the location does not change, but rather plays a fundamental role in the story itself. The story could not exist without the location. The example Spencer uses is James Goldman and Steven Sondheim’s 1971 musical *Follies* in which “follies and their significant others reunite at the theatre, which is about to be torn down” (50). There would be no story without the theatre. In the case of *Another Summer* there would be no story without Camp Blue Jay. The relationships, dreams, and dilemmas could not exist effectively in any other setting. Panorama musicals are few and far between, but they can tell a story just as effectively as a more traditional, spectacle driven show. The location becomes another larger-than-life aspect to guide the emotional pull of the characters. The counselors are so attached to Camp Blue Jay that many of them consider the summer camp to be their family, their home. Every action these characters take is influenced in some way by their devotion to Camp Blue Jay. Indeed, *Another Summer* depends upon location to tell its story.

After learning about panorama musicals, I realized that a specific setting, however small, does not have to limit the movement of the piece. I was initially concerned that I was, once again, failing to create the larger-than-life experience that is expected in a musical. However, musicals like *Fun Home* only shift

between three or four relatively mundane settings and *Fun Home* still achieved astounding success on Broadway. In Lisa Kron and Jeanine Tesori's 2013 musical *Fun Home*, the past and present co-exist on stage, creating the illusion of movement without actually changing the setting. I used this same approach with *Another Summer*. The confines of a small New England summer camp were hardly magnificent, but the past and present co-existing could serve as a sort of loophole to the location dilemma. Johnny's mother's hospital bed, Nat's ice cream shop, Lizzie's therapy office, all exist in the character's memory and appear on stage, at camp, at some point during the story. My characters are still stuck in the boundaries of Camp Blue Jay, but their imaginations and memories can take them anywhere else, the music is powerful enough to bring memory to life. While the location of Camp Blue Jay remains pivotal to the storyline, the appearance of memory can move the story elsewhere when necessary.

Perhaps the most critical element for a musical theatre writer to master is music itself. A solid grasp of musical form, of basic structures of rhyme and rhythm are of course advantageous, but as a lyricist, an understanding of genre, language, concision, and comprehensibility are essential and require extensive knowledge of character to achieve. Of course "in musical theatre [music and lyrics] must always be considered together. Even if you write only one, you must understand the basics of the other, because interdependence is the key" (57). I collaborated with my partner on the music and took the time to learn the basics of composing so that I could approach my lyrics with an understanding of the form and be able to properly communicate with my partner. I enrolled in a piano

class, where I learned how to read music and understand a score. With the help of my partner, we were able to come up with a basic scheme for the music and efficiently break down many of the songs. With an understanding of the music, I was able to delve into the technical aspects of writing lyrics and focus on making these songs the best they could possibly be.

Writing lyrics for a musical requires a “thorough command of language in order to convey the thoughts and emotions of a variety of characters in a variety of situations” (Cohen, Rosenhaus 91). Just as distinct dialogue is critical to defining characters in a straight play, distinct lyrics are critical in a musical. Johnny and Nat are very different and do not use the same language to describe their feelings. Jake and Auburn differing personalities are evident in their duet. Kyle and Marta might be more interchangeable in their lyrics, but even they sing far differently than the other characters at Camp Blue Jay. Understanding language allows me to differentiate their voices while keeping up with rhymes and rhythm. Johnny might describe eating an apple as “the bite stung my teeth, my tongue tasted sweet,” while Nat might sing, “the sugary taste on the tip of my tongue reminded me of when I was young.” Language is used to differentiate between characters but it is also essential to keeping the music concise and comprehensible. It is true that “more than any play, any short story, and most poems, a song lyric must be succinct” (113). Every word counts because music must sound appealing. Every placement of “the,” “well,” and “just” is a risk because this is empty language that may sound boring to the listener. This is something I struggled with greatly during the writing process, tempted to add

“just” whenever I needed another syllable, ignoring whether the word actually fit into the sentence in a way that is pleasing to the ear. Because every word matters, the lyrics must be comprehensible so the audience can follow along easily while keeping pace with the music.

The genre of the music in a musical determines the tone of the story and speaks volumes about the characters. It is true that “a theatre score can work in many different ways, that the conventions of Broadway must continually evolve and be challenged” and the genre of a piece can do just that (Miller 277). There is no set genre for a musical because the story itself determines what the genre should be. Rock musicals have risen immensely in popularity in the last thirty years because they have evolved from the traditional, classical approaches to musical theatre, creating shows that are deeply complex and interesting in a form not previously conceivable on Broadway. *Another Summer* is a rock musical because the characters demand it to be. They are outrageous, filled with angst, driven by intense frustration and ready to punch back at a world that has been far from kind to them. They are also teenagers, fresh out of puberty, hormone crazed, and learning how to function in the adult world. Coming-of-age musicals “sing with the youthful rebellion and emotion of contemporary rock and roll” because “any other music would seem emotionally false” coming from emotionally charged teenagers who are influenced by the type of music they listen to, which may not be Rogers and Hammerstein (277). For the young adults in *Another Summer*, rock music simply makes the most sense.

Rock musicals feature both fast paced songs and softer melodies

intertwined with dark, often melancholy lyrics. They are stylistically similar to rock and roll outside of the musical theatre realm, and rely on the genre to translate the complexity of human emotion into song. Rock songs emphasize a person's emotion through the intensity of the rhythm, the breathlessness required to keep up with the pace, the constant struggle to get the words out coincided with the passion of their voices. Michael Friedman and Alex Timbers' 2010 musical *Bloody Bloody Andrew Jackson*'s rock score is "so crazy, so intense, so fast moving," that the intensity of the emotions are unmistakable, even if they are comedic (279). While *Another Summer* features both chaotically fast music and slower ballads, both work to emphasize just how much a character is struggling to come to terms with what he or she is feeling. Musicals like Billie Joe Armstrong and Michael Mayer's 2011 musical *American Idiot*, which is centered around a group of friends of the same age as the counselors in *Another Summer*, could not exist as anything but a rock musical. *American Idiot*'s "sophisticated score is full of driving punk anthems, aching emo ballads, and complex, extended musical scenes" that are true to the characters portrayed (280). Like the characters in *American Idiot*, the characters in *Another Summer* are not expressing themselves with the formality of a musical like *Oklahoma!* because it would not be true to who they are. Instead, they are belting their souls out in the style of Duncan Sheik and Steven Sater's 2006 musical *Spring Awakening*'s "Totally Fucked." All musicals are driven by emotion, but rock musicals display emotion differently than any other genre. Rock musicals are angrier, tenser, more exasperated. The tone of the music is rooted in the gut feeling that the characters

are experiencing when they open their mouths to sing.

Traditional musicals like *Oklahoma!* feature infallible scores. They are characterized by smooth, classical melodies that do not necessarily reflect the emotion of young generations today, who grew up around rock music. The staff of Camp Blue Jay is deeply flawed. Rock music is celebrated for its imperfections. Rock is as rough and tattered as human feeling. Tom Kitt and Brian Yorkey's 2009 musical *Next to Normal* uses rock music to attempt to communicate anxiety, depression, and schizophrenia into a sound that cuts as deeply as mental illness consumes. Such an ambitious objective could not be possible without a genre as imperfect, impassioned, and powerful as rock music. The authenticity of a rock music score reflects the uncertainty and doubt sitting in a character's gut. The songs in *Another Summer* are guided by the imperfection of raw emotion. "Nobody's Here To Hold Me" uses rock music to translate Nat's unfathomable pain into sound, to give her a chance to release her agony. Indeed, through rock music, the staff at Camp Blue Jay are able to express themselves authentically and unapologetically. I knew from the beginning that *Another Summer* would be a rock musical, so the importance of genre was perhaps the only aspect of musical writing I had a firm grasp on when I began the process.

Writing *Another Summer* was one of the greatest challenges I have ever faced. I was forced to leave my comfort zone and learn to master a new craft. Forced to acknowledge that being a playwright does not mean having an understanding of every style of theatre, of every way a story can be told on stage. I spent months tempted to abandon the story altogether and leave Camp Blue Jay

behind. I did not give in to this temptation and instead persevered, finding the roots of my problems and taking the time to fix them. I fell in love with my characters; I rooted for them and felt their heartbreak, I was excited to sit down to write so that I could spend more time with them. I was able to write a story worth telling in the form of a musical, a story that I was finally excited to tell. The musical is still far from perfect and I do not pretend that I became an expert on musical writing over the process of writing it. Even still, it is evolving quickly. Writing this thesis was certainly a learning process, but I will forever be grateful for accepting the challenge and allowing myself to grow as a writer.

Annotated Bibliography

Armstrong, Billie Joe and Tom Kitt. *American Idiot*. New York: Alfred Publishing Inc., 2010. Print.

This punk rock musical follows a group of young adults who feel out of place in their hometowns and desperately seek fulfillment. The characters are strikingly similar to those in my own musical and the style of music provides excellent insight into the world of rock and roll, as told by teenagers. This rock musical focuses on teenage misfits who flee in the face of adversity, just as *Another Summer* does. The shared themes between my musical and Armstrong's, as well as the shared genre, make *American Idiot* an essential source for my thesis.

Biello, Katie Brooks, Heather L. Sipsma, and Trace Kershaw. *Effect of Teenage Parenthood on Mental Health Trajectories: Does Sex Matter?* Oxford University Press, 2010. Web.

This article analyzes the findings from a nine-year study comparing the mental health of non-parenting teenagers with teenagers facing pregnancy. It uses diagrams and data from the study to develop a clear understanding of the effects of teenage pregnancy on mental health for both men and women, and seeks to understand how this issue might affect each gender differently. This article assists my research because it provides me with a better understanding of how Nat and Johnny might respond to Nat's pregnancy. The pregnancy is the central conflict in the show, as it forces Nat and Johnny to reevaluate the course of their lives and their relationship. This article guides me to a clearer understanding of the psychological effects the pregnancy might have on my characters, thereby helping me to portray them as honestly as possible.

Cohen, Allen and Steven Rosenhaus. *Writing Musical Theatre*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006. Print.

This book is a lengthy but easy to understand guidebook to musical theatre writing. The book is designed for people with little to no experience writing musicals, so it covers a wide range of topics that allow the reader to gain a basic understanding of every aspect of writing a musical. This book is essential to my thesis because it draws out the elements to consider while writing and assists my understanding of the form in every step along the way.

Eisner, Michael. *Camp*. New York: Warner Books, 2005. Print.

Camp is a memoir following Disney CEO Michael Eisner's experience as both a camper and counselor at a small summer camp in Vermont. Eisner describes the impact that going to camp had on both his childhood and adulthood. The camp featured in my musical, *Camp Blue Jay*, is in New England, so the Vermont setting of Eisner's memoir provides a firsthand look into New England camp culture. While I also grew up attending summer camp in Vermont, I attended an all-girl's camp and have little knowledge regarding the camp culture for men and boys. This

book, therefore, offers a fresh perspective for me. *Camp* will also further my understanding of the bonding, learning, and growing that takes place in a camp setting and remind me of why people continue to return year after year. Nat, along with some secondary characters, have called Camp Blue Jay their home for the majority of their childhoods and the entirety of their teenage years. It is important to understand why so many of them continue to return, and Eisner's experience could lead me to ideas I have not yet considered.

Franceschina, John Charles. *Music Theory through Musical Theatre: Putting It Together*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015. Print.

Franceschina's music theory book is written specifically for students of musical theatre. The book aims to guide musical theatre students to a clear understanding of music theory through the lens of theatre and acting. It is a text written for those who might not have a background in music training but are driven to learn by a passion for the stage. *Music Theory through Musical Theatre* strengthens my thesis because it guides my understanding of music as a language, helping me to improve my music reading skills and appreciate it as a form of storytelling.

Frankel, Aaron. *Writing the Broadway Musical*. New York: Drama Book Specialists, 1977. Print.

This text is more or less a handbook for writing a musical. It provides in depth analysis of various songwriting and storytelling techniques. Along with chapters on music and lyric writing, the book encourages writers to think about the musical form in new light, describing multiple ways of thinking about the art and teaching through the lens of other well-known musicals. This book is critical to my thesis because it teaches me elements of the craft that I might not otherwise consider (such as writing for "the voice"), while providing me with necessary information regarding songwriting technique, genre, and the art of theatrical storytelling.

Kitt, Tom, Brian Yorkey, and Anthony Rapp. *Next to Normal*. New York: Theatre Communications Group, 2010. Print.

Next to Normal is a rock musical that all at once delves into the worlds of mental illness, grief, fragile family relationships, and love. This musical is an excellent resource for me as it uses music to expose the pain the characters are feeling and can help me to know how to use music to express the hardships and sufferings that characters are going through. The musical also combines comedy with tragedy, something I intend to do in my musical, so it is helpful to read how the comedy works to balance out the sadder parts of the show. *Next to Normal* also features an eighteen-year-old girl who has a very rocky relationship with her parents. She feels invisible and unloved and is very resentful toward them. She is a senior in high school and dreams of going to college as a means of escape from her home life. Many of the characters in my musical view summer camp as an escape from their families, from reality, from their demons, and *Next to Normal* can help me to develop a clear picture of what the home life might

look like for some of these struggling teens.

Kron, Lisa, Jeannine Tesori, and Alison Bechdel. *Fun Home*. New York: Samuel French, 2015. Print.

Fun Home is a coming-of-age musical that follows a woman, Alison, from childhood to adulthood as her perspective of her family changes and she attempts to cope with her father's suicide. This musical, which breaks the binds of time to convey Alison in childhood and adulthood simultaneously, conveys the ways in which small moments of childhood can forever impact adulthood and growing up. The counselors at Camp Blue Jay often reflect on their own childhoods as a way of understanding the adults they are growing into, so this musical could inspire me to go further with this idea. *Fun Home* also uses a large amount of dialogue for a musical, and therefore helps me to understand how dialogue and music can work together in a musical theatre setting.

Miller, Scott. *Sex, Drugs, Rock and Roll, and Musicals*. Boston: Northeastern University Press, 2011. Print.

This book is the only one of my sources that focuses specifically on the rock musical as opposed to other genres. Through dozens of real show examples, Miller is able to articulate a thorough analysis of contemporary rock and roll musicals, highlighting the elements that make these shows successful Broadway hits. *Sex, Drugs, Rock and Roll, and Musicals* also discusses the evolution of musicals from the Rogers and Hammerstein era all the way up to 2011, when rock musicals were at their height of popularity. This source is essential to my thesis because of its focus on the rock genre in musical theatre, granting me the necessary tools to create a rock musical of my own.

Shaiman, Marc, Mark O'Donnell, and Thomas Meehan. *Hairspray*. New York: Applause Theatre and Cinema Books, 2002. Print.

Hairspray is a musical about an overweight high school student who dreams of being a television star on a local TV network. While the 60's-style pop music differs from the rock style of my own show, the over-the-top characters and upbeat music provide me with insight into creating larger-than-life characters. *Hairspray* is the winner of eight Tony Awards and serves as an excellent example of outstanding musical theatre. This musical was essential to guiding my understanding of conventional musical structure while providing me with insight into writing captivating storylines that demand to be sung.

Sheik, Duncan, Steven Sater, and Frank Wedekind. *Spring Awakening*. New York: Theatre Communications Group, 2007. Print.

Spring Awakening is the story of high school students in late nineteenth century Germany discovering sexuality. The musical deals with issues such as sex, rebellion, suicide, pregnancy, and abortion through the lens of teenagers who cannot seek guidance from the unsympathetic adults in their lives. This raunchy musical shows that vulgar material is necessary in

certain settings, especially pertaining to strong-minded and suffering teenagers. Using inspiration from *Spring Awakening* I can learn how to portray raunchy material in the appropriate setting that is honest to the characters and strengthens the story. This musical also deals with teen pregnancy, teen romance, and a group of young adults who have troubled relationships with their parents. All three of these are topics of interest for my own show.

Spencer, David. *The Musical Theatre Writer's Survival Guide*. Portsmouth: Heinemann 2005. Print.

The author of this survival guide is an award winning composer and lyricist that has worked with such musical giants as Alan Menken. Spencer spares no detail in sharing his wisdom of the craft with new writers, describing the tools to creating a commercially successful musical. This book has sections for the book writer of the musical, the lyricist, and the composer alike, offering advice that is backed up with dozens of examples from well known musicals. This book is imperative to my thesis because it discusses everything from character development to plot structure to music theory.

Timbers, Alex and Michael Friedman. *Bloody Bloody Andrew Jackson*, Ghostlight, 2010. CD.

While I was unable to locate a full copy of the script of this show, the soundtrack alone provides me with a great understanding of how rock musicals should sound. The intensity of the songs, the fast paced rhythm and powerful punches of the lyrics, were all influences on the music of *Another Summer*. This soundtrack certainly influenced the style of music in my own show.

Weber J.B. "Becoming Teen Fathers: Stories of Teen Pregnancy, Responsibility, and Masculinity." *Gender and Society* 26.6 (2012): 900-921. Print.

Focused specifically on how young men respond when confronted with teen pregnancy, this article uses interviews with teenage fathers for a personal account of the pain, joy, and stigma that might come along with being a teenage parent. This article helps me to understand Johnny's character and develop him truthfully as he faces Nat's pregnancy. The article certainly allows me to strengthen his development and learn more about who he is and how he might confront this life-altering change.

Wet Hot American Summer. Directed by David Wain. USA Films, 2001. Film.

This summer camp parody film focuses on a group of camp counselors and their crazy, often ridiculous antics. David Wain's parody films take a concept based in truth and greatly exaggerate it to create goofy, irreverent, comedic features. *Wet Hot American Summer* parodies the wild, party-centric lifestyle of camp counselors. The film assists my writing because of its interpretation of life at summer camp, particularly for the camp counselor. While the ridiculously silly nature of the film is a far different approach to storytelling than I plan to use in my musical, the movie still

provides insight into the lifestyle of a summer camp and explores the friendships, romantic relationships, and tension that inevitably takes place when a group of young adults lives in close quarters with each other. These relationships are what I plan to focus on specifically, as camp bonding is so fundamentally important to any summer camp story.