

PHOENIX:
A play by Clare Lopez
SCENE SAMPLE

ACT I SCENE 5

SCENE 5

We hear sounds of a dog barking.

*A shaft of Light appears on MAGGIE reading the manuscript.
ANNIE is standing in a frame of light.*

MAGGIE

“Chapter 3:”

ANNIE/MAGGIE

“Jason.”

ANNIE

“He— he was a sort of happy accident.
We hadn’t planned on letting him in on our girls club,
but all the sudden he was there. I was a freshman and Maggie a junior when we met
Jason. He was building this treehouse in the eucalyptus tree that hung over our
garage. While Maggie was painting—
I stepped out to grab more rags and Jason dropped his ruler.
It landed right on me. He rushed down to make sure I was alright.
I was fine, I mean, it was just a ruler. But Maggie was furious.
She was already pretty annoyed by the constant hammering and sawing.
She refused to let it go. She pretended to hate him—
but there was no escaping him. He transferred into Maggie’s class and sat across
from her in all her art classes. She couldn’t avoid him.
And he was...brilliant. His art was striking. And so was he.
Their friendship was inevitable. That tree house became “their place”—
and the one place I was never allowed.”

*We hear more Dog barking, as lights come up on MAGGIE sitting on the floor of the Tree
House of 8 years ago*

JASON (*off*)

Shit!

MAGGIE

You alright?

JASON enters

JASON

Fucking mutt!

MAGGIE

You love that dog!

JASON

When I was six.

MAGGIE

Aww, has he gotten too big for you to handle?

JASON

Where the hell is his chew toy? He won't let me up if I don't throw him something.

MAGGIE

Yeah about that...

JASON

Are you freakin' kiddin' me!

MAGGIE

What? I had to get up here too!

JASON

You are the actual worst.

MAGGIE

Shut up, and help me figure this out.

HE sits next to HER. THEY stare out at several paintings: imagined on the 4th wall. There are 6 in total.

I think I've got it down to these. 'Chocolate', 'Night on the Bridge', or 'Untitled'.

JASON

My tops are 'Gravity', 'Apples', or 'Fuego'.

MAGGIE

Can you grab me a beer?

HE gets HER one

JASON

To Walla Walla High's class of 2003

MAGGIE

Fuck that. To being done!

JASON

Well, not really...I mean there's college, and grad school, and work.

MAGGIE

Hey, don't ruin my moment.

JASON

Ok. 'fuck that'

MAGGIE

Are all these watercolor?

JASON

Yeah, all except '*Untitled*'— that's acrylic.

She gives him a judgmental look.

JASON

What? What's wrong with water color?

MAGGIE

It's kinda frilly don't you think?— it's nothing like you.

JASON

At least I don't come home smelling like paint thinner.

MAGGIE

Oil is at least forgiving.—And unlike *some* mediums,
I get days to make changes and play with it.

JASON

You mean it let's you procrastinate and change your mind.
You just don't have the balls to do watercolor.

MAGGIE laughs

MAGGIE

There is nothing 'manly' about watercolor.

They laugh. Enjoying each other's company.

She feels the need to break the connection.

Don't you want a drink?

JASON

Nah..

MAGGIE

Seriously?

JASON

I probably shouldn't.

MAGGIE

Okay, *grandpa*.

JASON

I'm only nine months older than you.

MAGGIE

So....drink!

JASON

Maggie I—

MAGGIE

Ruining the moment—

JASON

Fine.

HE takes a large swig of HER beer

MAGGIE

Thank you.

Beat.

JASON

Where's Rick tonight?

MAGGIE

What?

JASON

Rick, your *boyfriend*?

MAGGIE

I dunno.

JASON

I thought you two talked about everything?

MAGGIE (*a bit hurt*)

Yeah well, so did I.

JASON

Oh... sorry I –

MAGGIE

It's fine, really, I promise.

JASON

Ok.

MAGGIE (*referencing the paintings*)

I think we should eliminate the 'no's' and then see what's left.

JASON (*conceding*)

Oh just go. I know you want to.

MAGGIE

Chocolate.

JASON

Really?

MAGGIE

The face looks 2 dimensional. Did you just forget to add shadow on his nose and jaw line? And what time of day is it?
Where is your light source?

JASON

Here we go again! The light source Nazi!
Can't you just for one second look past that and appreciate something for its actual worth?

MAGGIE

He's an old guy. With a dog.

JASON

Yeah but he was *my* old guy with a dog.

MAGGIE

Right...

JASON

Do you have any idea what I had to do to paint that guy?

MAGGIE

Okay, now I *really* don't want to know...

JASON

Don't be gross.

MAGGIE

Hey- *you're* the one selling your body to an old guy in exchange for permission to paint him.

JASON

I just bought the guy some ice cream.

MAGGIE

Kinky.

JASON

No—I mean, the managers at that stupid ice cream shop kicked him out.

MAGGIE

The one we found downtown?

JASON

Yeah. They made him leave just because he wasn't buying anything. Not like he could afford to...

MAGGIE

So you bought him some.

JASON (*Bragging a little*)

Not just some, I promised the manager I'd buy his ice cream once a week as long as they let him stay and play outside.

And they did.

And *that's* how I got to paint him.

MAGGIE

You made that up.

JASON

Nope. —

SHE's not buying it

We can go right now if you want, I'll introduce you.

MAGGIE

You're just avoiding the critique, I mean you know your work is missing—

JASON

You just *have* to be right. Don't you?

MAGGIE

I can't help that *I am*.

Besides, you *know* it would bug you if you submitted a piece I hated.

JASON

You hate it?

MAGGIE

I—I just know you have better.

I say it with love Jason, I swear.

JASON

Fine, *Chocolate* is out.

MAGGIE

And so is my beer.

JASON

You're a brat you know that?

He rises to get HER another beer.

MAGGIE

Hey make it two.

HE gives HER a questioning look

You seriously need to catch up.

JASON

Fine. But it's my turn.

HE gets the beers, and returns.

MAGGIE

Do your worst.

JASON

Apples.

Beat.

MAGGIE

Go on, tell me why...

JASON

It's boring. Four apples in a bowl. You could be fucking Van Gogh and still not make me interested in a bowl of fruit.

MAGGIE

Okay.

JASON

That's it? No fight? No defense?

MAGGIE

I painted that like two years ago, it wasn't even in the running.
It's just my backup, you know, in case I didn't finish my other pieces.

JASON

That's totally cheating.

MAGGIE

Not it's not, you're just upset because now it's my turn to judge your work.
Let's see... It's '*A Night on the Bridge*' and '*Untitled*'.

A pause as she assesses the paintings.

JASON

Okay, out with it.

MAGGIE

Untitled?

JASON

Okay, what now?

MAGGIE

No, I like it, I really do but...

JASON

But...?

MAGGIE

But you *have* to give it a title. It's not gonna go anywhere if you don't.

JASON

That's not necessarily tru—

MAGGIE

Jason, in the past three years, untitled pieces barely placed.
Face it. '*Untitled*' pieces don't win.

JASON

So?

MAGGIE

So name it! It's a strong choice. Unexpected.

JASON

You can't expect me to just come up with a title by tomorrow—

MAGGIE

Jesus, you do this every year! You whine that 'nothing is good enough', and when something actually is, you chicken out!

JASON

Do not.

MAGGIE

Do too!

JASON

What about you?

MAGGIE

What about me?

JASON

You know darn well which piece you're going to enter!
And every year you ask my opinion and then just choose the exact one you planned anyway.

MAGGIE

I can't help it if I know what I want.
At least I have the decency to include you in the process, right?

JASON

What are you sending?

MAGGIE

'Gravity'

HE exhales a sigh of judgement.

MAGGIE

What?

JASON

That's a charcoal.

MAGGIE

So.

JASON

You don't even LIKE charcoal.

MAGGIE

It's fine.

HE gives her a look

MAGGIE

---I don't really have any other serious options.

JASON

Are you shitting me? What about '*Fuego*'?

MAGGIE

I'm not sending it.

JASON

Why the hell not?

MAGGIE

It's for Annie. She keeps begging me to paint her something, and I keep telling her I'm swamped...but really, I already have. This is it.

JASON

When do you want to give it to her?

MAGGIE

It's going to be a graduation gift, but I have to keep in under wraps till then. She can't know about it until 2005. Got it?

JASON

Fine. Then I am submitting '*Untitled*' as is. NO title.

MAGGIE

Fine.

Beat. They drink.

You could *try* to name it.
Don't you have any ideas?
You must've had something in mind.
A word? An image?
What were you thinking about?

JASON

You.

*HE pulls HER close for a kiss, but just before they do,
MAGGIE's Phone rings.*

MAGGIE

I should...

JASON

Get it.

They break apart as MAGGIE answers her phone.

MAGGIE (*answering*)

Hey.
Look I don't —

...

Okay. Fine.

...

Yeah- I'll see you in a bit.
(*SHE hangs up.*)
Sorry—I have to go.

JASON

Sure.

SHE starts to exit

MAGGIE

Jay—I'm sorry I—

JASON

It's fine.

MAGGIE

I didn't- mean —

JASON

It's okay. I'm good. We're good.

MAGGIE

I—I don't know .. things with Rick have been so...I don't know, I just...
I need to figure it out. Okay?

JASON

Okay.

MAGGIE

I didn't mean—

JASON

Hey - Just get outta here will ya?

MAGGIE exits lights fade

PHOENIX Perusal Copy

PHOENIX: SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION

SYNOPSIS:

Maggie is an ex-painter who has chosen to live a simple life with her fiancé David. In an effort to escape her past, Maggie has walled herself into a life of security. But when her estranged sister Annie is killed in a freak accident, she reunites with her old friend, Jason – and those walls begin to crumble. When Maggie uncovers Annie’s last manuscript, she is transported back in time and is forced to face the shadows of her past. Through Annie’s writings, Maggie must find the courage to forgive herself, and find peace with her pain. *Burning Within* is the journey of how a life damaged by violence can be transformed by the simple act of picking up a paint brush. *Phoenix* explores bonds of sisterhood, the path to healing, and the courage it takes to let the light in.

CHARACTERS:

MARGARITA “MAGGIE” HERNÁNDEZ: 26, an ex-painter—but now works at a bank. Strong. Tightly wound. Business oriented, and stoic. Talented. Hard working. She is always in control – and driven by her need for security and stability. Underneath it all, she has a warm sense of humor. She’s a fighter with a little bit of a chip on her shoulder from how the world’s failed her.

DAVID: 30 Carrie’s fiancé, a lawyer. Kind hearted. A bit of a ‘bro’. Supportive. Wholesome and uncomplicated. Always longing to be the hero, but unwilling to step into confrontation.

ANASTASIA “ANNIE” HERNÁNDEZ: 24 Carrie’s younger sister, a writer. Independent. A bit emotional. Leads with her heart. Sometimes immature – she’s softer – more tender – more vulnerable.

JASON: 27, Carrie & Annie’s childhood friend. An illustrator and graphic designer. A tell it like it is, and wholly unable to bullshit around the truth. Loyal. Honest. Sarcastic. Dry. Perhaps a bit nerdy. Endearing all the same.

SCENE BY SCENE OUTLINE

ACT I:

SCENE 1: MAGGIE & David's Kitchen: Walla Walla, WA- Late November 2011

SCENE 2: MAGGIE & David's Kitchen: Walla Walla- Late November 2011 later

SCENE 3: Annie's bedroom, Walla Walla – 2000 (11 years ago)

SCENE 4: The Garage: Walla Walla- 2002 (9 years ago)

SCENE 5: A tree house: Walla walla March 2003 (8 years ago)

SCENE 6: Kitchen Walla Walla March 2005 (7 years ago)

SCENE 7: Kitchen- Walla walla March 2005 (7 years ago, a few days later)

SCENE 8: The garage: August 2005 (6 years ago)

ACT II:

SCENE 1: Exterior Spring 2008 (4 years ago)

SCENE 2: Living room Seattle/ Kitchen in Walla Walla June 2011

ACT III:

SCENE 1: Kitchen: Walla Walla- Late November 2011 (same day as scene 1)

SCENE 2: Annie's living room in Seattle: few days later in late November 2011

SCENE 3: Kitchen in Walla Walla: December 2011

SCENE 4: Kitchen in Walla Walla: March 2012

SCENE 5: Annie's Living room in Seattle: A week later in March 2012

SCENE 6: Kitchen Walla Walla- a few days later in June 2012

SCENE 7: Art gallery/studio in New York: June 17th 2012

SCENE 8: Kitchen in Walla Walla: June 16 2012

SCENE 9: Empty Apartment in New York- a week later in June 2012

SCENE 10: Empty Apartment in New York- or an empty space between pages

NOTES FOR PRODUCTION

A GUIDE THROUGH SET AND SETTING:

As much of the first half of the play takes place in the past/flashback scenarios, I have no desire to represent these locations as vividly and literally as possible. If budget permit, these locations can be represented realistically. But ultimately, the ease of transition should be the focus. (Places like the tree house, and the Garage really can feel like empty spaces, defined by light, and really have no need of walls, flats or furniture beyond what is expressly used by the actors). Even the Gallery in Act II need little to no set pieces beyond the paint supplies.

The Bed in Act 1 scene 2 can easily be a futon, which can be used as a couch in the later Seattle scenes.

Generally, Kitchens appear in Walla Walla, and living rooms appear in Seattle. As there are at least 2 kitchens being represented (Annie and Carrie's childhood home, and David's/Carrie's home) the same pieces can be used to establish this location, and use of different lay out can be used to distinguish the different homes.

For moments of memory/ flashback / during descriptions and introductions and manuscript narration: projections or shadow work, and devised ensemble movement is encouraged. The more magical and memorable the better.

TRANSITIONS:

The play is constructed with the hopes that shifts into each local be created underneath Annie's text at the top of each scene (in Act I). From that point on, it is possible to have both the Seattle Living room, and the Walla Walla kitchen on stage simultaneously (with shifts done through focused light) during Act II. The Scenes in New York, are intentionally sparse, in hopes that these scenes transition with as minimal amount of time and effort as possible.

Ideally, these transitions and narration will live as the underscore to projects and/or devised movement. The recurring theme being frames of the pieces of art, mean that that the use of light shadow with stage movement / choreographed shapes can be created either by use of projection, pre-recorded ensemble pieces and/or live performers.

These performers can serve as understudies for the principal cast – and should consist of anywhere between 2 and 6 performers.

AGE RANGES:

While the characters end up visiting past times as far back as 10 years from the given age described in their character descriptions, there is no need to cast 'young'. This show was not created in the hopes of having doubles play the younger selves, or have actors who seem younger in life. The flash backs are memories, recalled specifically by Carrie, and it is important that she maintain her present day maturity as she recalls and relives these events. Actors should be cast to fit the ages described, and can rely on acting to play the various adolescent ages we see them in (*it is better to have someone with the full depth of a 26th year old, than to cast someone who looks 15*).

TIME:

Act 1 flows almost exclusively from the sisters' past – with moments of contemporary Carrie leading us into Annie's writing. This can also be accomplished with voice over and projection work. Act 2 begins where Act 1 Scene 1& 2 has left off, in the present.

This piece can be done in almost any modern year – but generally before 2019. That said it is important to maintain the values of the passage of time. It is not essential that this play be exactly in November 2011-June 2012. All that is essential is that the flash backs, and passage of time through seasons maintain the same ratio of time (ie 6 years ago, or December). The piece is contemporary, but as time passes in the life of productions to come, there is no need to feel like we must retain the years 2011-2012.

COSTUMES:

There are moments where we see Annie speaking as a narrator, and then join the action, - and similarly, Carrie might shift from reading the manuscript and then participates in the flashback scenes: these shifts can be subtle. Actors might live in some base layers and then add on simple pieces / layers place them in the time and age of the past.

PAINT/ ART:

This is a very stylized piece of the play. There is no obligation to use real paint or to require that the actor playing Carrie know how to paint. This is completely open to interpretation – scenic designers and projection designers can collaborate to use projections, or lighting, or various reveals that fly in to represent the art that is being described. It is also completely valid to leave the 'art' completely off stage – and leave it to the audience imagination to create.