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Paper People: Significance in Insignificance

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Paper People: Significance in Insignificance

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International Performance Ensemble- Acting

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Pace School of Performing Arts

Abstract

The purpose of this paper is to explore the question of why human beings sometimes behave as if a mundane life event with no real bearing on the actual quality of their lives as if it were of the utmost importance. With the aid of my research on the relationship between the sense of community a person feels and the quality of their life, as well as the potential negative impacts social media has had on our collective wellbeing, I have written a play titled *Paper People*, which will attempt to tackle this issue through a humorous lens.

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The first question one should ask themselves when they start writing a play is “Why am I writing this play?”. It is an undoubtedly difficult question to ask, let alone successfully articulate, but if a playwright cannot do so, there is not much more they can do with that project. When I asked myself this question about my play *Paper People*, the answer came relatively easily. I wanted to explore a phenomenon that I have been pondering myself for quite some time: why do humans often treat unimportant things as if they were the most important thing in the world?. Through both my research into this topic and the writing of the play itself, I believe I have a clear explanation for this question. People need to feel like they are successfully assimilated into the community they belong to in order to feel fulfilled, and in recent years, social media has made that conquest more difficult than it has ever been.

The initial inspiration for *Paper People* came after a viewing of the documentary *Icarus* (Bryan Fogel, 2017). *Icarus* follows filmmaker Bryan Fogel as he befriends Dr. Grigory Rodchenkov, the head of Russia’s anti-doping agency, in an effort to determine how effective testing for performance-enhancing drugs really is. In the course of their correspondence, Rodchenkov reveals that he is actually in charge of a massive Olympic doping ring commissioned by the Russian government, and has been for decades. What’s more, since Rodchenkov had effectively blown the whistle on the operation by admitting this on camera, his life was immediately in danger. He was subsequently taken to America under protective custody to give testimony on his involvement in this scandal.

What stuck out me the most about *Icarus* was the revelation of the various lengths the Russians have gone to try to gain a competitive advantage at something as relatively

inconsequential as the Olympics. I can understand why the athletes themselves would use performance-enhancing drugs—they have worked their entire lives to get to an athletic stage as big as the Olympics, so it would make sense that the weaker willed of the athletes would seek an illicit advantage. But for the country of Russia to care so much about an amateur sporting competition that they would commission an illegal doping ring, and then threaten the life of the whistleblower struck me as profoundly bizarre. One would think that the Kremlin would be too preoccupied with governing their own people, and perhaps meddling in much more important events, to care enough to put that much energy into the Olympics. However, the longer I ruminated on the documentary, the more sense Russia's actions made to me. I realized that becoming consumed with objectively menial events to the point of treating them as if they were the most important thing in the world is an incredibly human thing to do. Scaling down the stakes from a massive government to a person, everyone has had the same mentality that Russia has with the Olympics at one point or another. With this realization, I immediately decided that this phenomenon is worth exploring through a play. In its first iteration, *Paper People* was more of a straightforward parody of *Icarus*, involving a group of newspaper deliverers participating in a doping ring. As the drafts went on, the story departed drastically from the initial *Icarus* inspiration, but the heart of the story I was writing remained the same. *Paper People* has always been, at its core, an exploration into why humans tend to treat seemingly inconsequential events as if they were life and death situations.

The quest for happiness is universal to essentially every human being. However, the answer to the question “what makes you happy” tends to vary from age group to age group. According to Anne Brigitta Pesci's article “Happiness: Cognition, Experience, Language”,

people age 18 to 31 tend to associate happiness with their friends, loved ones, and their hobbies. The older people get, the more serious their idea of happiness becomes—namely, income, health, and romantic love. One constant throughout all the age groups, however, is that a sense of community is a key facet of what people would define as happiness (Pesci, 63-64). Because humans are social beings by nature, it makes sense that a great deal of their happiness depends not just on the select few important people in their lives, but their entire network of friends, acquaintances, and people they share common interests, ideals, or backgrounds with.

Even the most introverted among us have an intrinsic need to feel like they are a part of something with someone. Whether it be with a group of friends at school, their families, their romantic partners, or their community at large, we all need to feel like we belong somewhere to feel happy. This then begs the question: who or what decides whether or not a person “belongs somewhere”? In her article “The Mundane and Insignificant, The Ordinary and Extraordinary”, Jill Ebrey argues that the sense of belonging and community is directly tied to societal norms, which are in turn influenced by both the popular tastemakers of the day as well as the economy of the given community “Culture has been dictated by cultural ‘experts’ rather than everyday lived in experiences” (Ebrey 165). In other words, it is common for one person or set of people to determine what is proper or expected, rather than common sense or logic. Ebrey goes on to say “Culture has also been instrumentalized in the service of economic life. It is thought of as a useful ‘firework’ to attract business” (165). Essentially, Ebrey is pointing out that societal norms and standards are also tied to what a community needs from its members to prosper financially. This means that in order for a person to feel as though they belong where they are, they, either consciously or subconsciously, feel obligated to adhere to what they have been told is normal by

people society has deemed the authority on normalness. This anxiety over everyday events is compounded by how connected they have become to their own personal financial success as well as their community's financial success.

Although the intrinsic need to adhere to society's standards of normalcy, which in turn leads to anxiety over normal, everyday occurrences has been within humans since the start of mankind, a drastic change to society has occurred over the past decade to magnify this phenomenon: social media. Up until very recently, one would only be aware of the status of the everyday life of their family, closest friends, and perhaps a significant other. No one would be able to keep up with, for example, where their acquaintance from high school did for Valentine's Day with their fiancé, unless they were determined enough to make a concerted effort to find out that information. In the age of social media, you would likely not only know where they went to dinner but what they had and how much they love each other. Although social media has undoubtedly revolutionized both the way we communicate and stay in touch with each other, it has also resulted in unintended, if not unexpected side effects. Firstly, social media causes people to become hyper-aware of what everyone else in their life is doing, and in turn, contributing to the anxiety over commonplace events.

A study published in the journal "New Media And Society" yielded results analogous to this idea. They instructed users to download "MyFitnessPlanner", an app that catalogs every physical activity the user performs while the application is activated. The participants of the study were asked to track themselves using the app and then report the findings after two weeks. The testers were "struck by the mundane or ordinary way in which participants used MFP" (Didziokaite et al., 147). The participants of the experiment began logging even the

smallest activities they performed, such as walking up the stairs or to the kitchen, as opposed to simply when they exercised. They go on to theorize that the meticulous quantitative self-tracking of their physical activity led to a hyper-awareness of every little movement they made (148).

The findings of this study can be applied to the way people use social media. If nothing else, social media is a form of self-tracking. After a social media count has been in use long enough, it essentially becomes a public record of that person's life; it is a log of everything from their major life events, to their vacations, to their frustration over the morning commute, to their stray thoughts about the major news story of the day. Much like the MyFitnessPlanner caused the participants to become exceedingly conscious of their every move, social media causes its users to become hyper-aware of their daily thoughts and activities. This effect is compounded by the constant stream of users friends, family, and acquaintances' thoughts users are able to view on social media, creating a double-edged sword of self-consciousness.

This conceit is supported by a study performed at the University of Pennsylvania and published in the *Journal of Social and Clinical Psychology* under the title "No More FOMO: Limiting Social Media Use Can Decrease Loneliness and Depression". In the study, 143 student participants were asked to limit their social media usage to 10 minutes a day, per platform, (roughly 30 minutes of total social media usage) for three weeks. At the end of each week, they were asked to fill out a survey on their mental well-being. Compared to the control group, the study found that "Limiting social media use to approximately 30 minutes per day lead to significant improvement in wellbeing" (Hunt et.al,751). The article goes on to explain that the less social media the participants consumed, the less concerned they are with their lives and

activities compared to the lives and activities of those they followed, leading them to be generally more at peace with themselves (766).

Researching the question of why human beings treat issues of relative insignificance as if they were of the utmost importance forces us to consider several rather serious societal issues. While there may be no one catch-all answer to a question as complicated as this, based on my research as well as my own personal experience, I have found that this overreaction to the everyday is linked to our happiness being inextricably connected to our feeling of belonging to a family or community, our sense of obligation to conform to the standards of normalcy within a given family or community, and the effect social media has had on how aware we are of how we are succeeding or failing in those desires compared to our friends. However, when writing my play, I decided to tackle these issues using a comedic lens. I have always been of the opinion that comedy is one of the most effective tools people have in dealing with serious, even tragic human struggles. Oftentimes, the best way to realize a harsh universal truth is to exaggerate it from the subtle ways it impacts reality to a ridiculous, over-the-top hyper-reality, and oftentimes, the only way to accept these harsh universal truths is to laugh at how ridiculous they are.

As I mentioned earlier, the inspiration for the story of *Paper People* were my takeaways from the documentary *Icarus*. However, in terms of the structure and tone of the play, the main influence was the TV show *The Office* (Greg Daniels, 2005) and the play *This is Our Youth* (Kenneth Lonergan, 1996). One of the reasons that *The Office* is such a successful comedy is because of how seamlessly it blends the everyday with the ridiculous with the absurd. The setting of the show is about as average as you can get: an office of a mid-level paper supply company in Scranton, Pennsylvania. However, essentially the entire cast of characters that occupy this

seemingly normal office is larger than life, ridiculous buffoons who allow the audience to laugh both with them and at them as they go through their lives over the course of the show.

Perhaps the best example of this idea is the episode “Money” in which Michael Scott realizes he is in a severe, potentially insurmountable amount of debt. He reacts to this news first by loudly declaring bankruptcy in front of the entire office, and then by running out of the office to the local train yard, presumably to run away and start a new life. While Michael’s actions are undoubtedly hilarious, they are also rather sad and relatable. Having a large amount of debt is something millions of Americans, particularly those of us who attended college, can relate to, and I would imagine almost everyone has felt so overwhelmed by life that at one time or another, they have fantasized about running away and starting over. Because Michael’s very real and serious struggles are shown to the viewer through the lens of comedy, they become easier to process than they perhaps would through any other genre.

With my interest in the actions of the Russian government revealed in *Icarus*, my research into the reasons why the ordinary can sometimes feel like the most important thing in the world, and the influence the specific brand of comedy of *The Office* in mind, the final draft of my original play *Paper People* was born. *Paper People* follows the story of two Long Island teenagers, Logan and Kelsey. Logan and Kelsey are both newspaper delivery people for the local newspaper, The Daily Sound. The two get paid minimum wage to work for this newspaper that’s on its last financial limb, and their obligations to this job take roughly two hours worth of work each day, but the two people are still passionate and competitive about their summer jobs to an obsessive degree.

Although the two main characters have in common an irrational obsession with something relatively insignificant, that is about the only trait the two share. Logan's main motivation for his passion is his desire to feel like he belongs somewhere. Logan is deeply insecure about his place in the world, as his parents got divorced when he was a child and his lack of social skills have resulted in him being friendless throughout most of High School. He needs to feel like he's "winning" at something in order to cling on to a sense of purpose in his young life. Kelsey, on the other hand, has a slightly different reason for her obsession. While it is true that she is as not, if not more competitive than Logan, it is revealed in the course of the play that her father, who delivered papers for The Daily Sound when he was her age, has recently passed away. Kelsey cares about this job so much because she feels like it is one of the last connections she has to her late father.

Their rivalry comes to a head as the annual newspaper delivery race that the Daily Sound hosts each year approaches. The grand prize for said race is a coveted fifteen dollar gift card to Denny's. Logan and Kelsey gradually see their friendships and intimate relationships disintegrate as they become more and more obsessed with beating each other, sabotaging each other at every turn through both physical acts as well as taunting one and other and even revealing personal dirt on each other via social media posts. At the race, they crash into each other, both preventing the other from winning, and realize too late that their energies may not have been spent in the most healthy and productive way, and that they perhaps should not have cared as much as they did about their minimum wage summer job.

Human beings are, to put it mildly, extremely complicated. Our inclination to treat the ordinary as if it were extraordinary is one of the most complicated facets of our nature, and the

reasons for this include our desire for happiness, which is tied to our sense of belonging to a community, our desire to live up to the standards of said community, and, in recent years, the effect social media has had on our awareness of what those standards are and how far we are falling short of it.

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PAPER PEOPLE

By

Rory Spillane

SCENE 1:

(A teenage boy in is by himself on stage, engaging in a disorganized series of exercises- push ups, toe touches, jumping jacks, etc.- he is clearly going harder than he usually does for our benefit)

LOGAN

My name is Logan Kramer. I'm 17 years old. I'm a senior at Southmore High School, and I'm the best newspaper delivery boy on Long Island. I get asked all the time: "Logan, why do you love delivering papers so much?" And I always say it's the satisfaction I get from knowing that I'm the passer of information. I'm the conduit from the paper to the people. I mean, there are literally dozens of people that rely on ME to get their news. What other job is there where you can say that? Look, People love to say that the newspaper business is a dying industry. But you know what? They can go ahead and bury it when they pry it from my cold dead hands.

(KELSEY BIER, 17 enters. She's the kind of girl who's captain of lacrosse and on student council. She is carrying an overstuffed backpack)

KELSEY

Let me guess. He told you he's the best delivery person on Long Island? The only thing that Logan Kramer is the best at is being a virgin. Here, look at this.

(KELSEY opens her
backpack and starts
unloading trophies one by
one)

KELSEY

Division winning tri-athlete. Public speaking awards. And here... winner of the Paper Enterprise News Inter-County Showdown. Three years years running. It's no big deal: just the biggest annual newspaper delivery competition in the tri-state area. Ask Logan how many he's won.

LOGAN

Okay, maybe I come up short in the P.E.N.I.S. (pronounced PENNIS). Do I want to win? Of course. Am I what some would call "obsessed" with winning? Who's to say? It's not a competition. It's just about who's the best. I don't need a trophy. I would like a trophy. But I don't... need a... you know what, I don't need to explain myself.

KELSEY

The fact of the matter is, Logan's a poser. He lies about how much he trains, he acts like he's the best around, and every year he barely beats Chip. and Chip doesn't even have a multi-gear bike. Oh, Chips my boyfriend. That's another thing Logan sucks at, having people love him.

(Two boys enter together.
One of them continuously
fiends on a Juul. The
other, CHIP, 18, good
natured, but kind of a

loser, addresses the audience while his friend looks around distractedly.)

CHIP

My name's actually Travis. I don't know why Kelsey started calling me Chip, I guess at some point I just decided to go with it, you know?. I actually took the job at the Daily Sound so I could spend more time with her. She's, I don't know... passionate about her job? I don't wanna say crazy.

(beat)

No one tell her I said that, OK?

(Chip then nudges his friend to let him know it's his turn. NATE, 18, has similar vibes to Chip, except his head is clearly higher in the stratosphere. he's Still Juuling as he talks.)

NATE

Yeah, I did the math, and I only have to do this job for... *(a pause as he screws his face in concentration, counting on his fingers)*..two more weeks before I can buy a Q of weed, so...

*(beat for a Juul rip)*yeah.

SCENE 2:

(lights up on Logan, who is on his laptop, which is adorned with one “Saturdays are for the Boys” sticker and one “Marriage Equality” sticker. His screen is projected on the back wall of the stage, showing an insanely convoluted path on Google Earth)

LOGAN

Today marks one week before the coming of the P.E.N.I.S. I'm just finalizing my route right now. The rules are pretty complicated. There's a time calculation that's matched with an integrated point system per house delivered. I guess in simple terms, it's just a race to see who can deliver the most papers the fastest, but I promise it's a lot more complex than that. The winner, of course, gets a trophy. But they also get \$15 gift certificate to Denny's I don't really like Denny's, but I do like winning.

(Logan then exits google earth, and opens his and Kelsey's facebook messenger page. There are only three messages in their history, all a year apart. The first is a picture

of Kelsey giving the camera the middle finger with a Denny's grand slammer. The second is a picture of Kelsey in the same booth doing the "pussy eating" gesture. In the third picture, she is miming giving a blowjob. They are all clearly very mean spirited. Logan talks as he scrolls through these pictures)

LOGAN

Kelsey has "won" the race for the last 3 years. And she has been... kind enough... to send me a photo from her victory meal each time. But not this time, Kelsey.... We'll see who's sucking an invisible dick at a Denny's *this* year

(a beat as Logan realizes that might have come out wrong. He decides to push past it)

LOGAN (cont.)

... We'll see.

(lights up on Kelsey and chip, sitting together. Chip has his arm around Kelsey's shoulder)

KELSEY

Yeah, I send him those photos every year. Just want to remind him who's the best, you know?
My philosophy on life is, if you're not the best at something, you might as well just kill yourself.

CHIP

Jesus Christ Kelsey

KELSEY

What? Not in, like, a literal way.

CHIP

How do you figuratively kill yourself?

KELSEY

(to the audience)

Chip's been helping me train for the big race next week. He keeps time, logs my distance, spots me for crunches, all that kind of stuff. I really couldn't do it without him. I mean sure, he could be doing all these things to better his own skills. But I think we both know it's more important to be supportive of MY winning streak. My dad always said: "Success without the support of the ones you love isn't real success".

(Kelsey takes chip's hand, and gives him a very sweet look. Chip returns the look, but his smile is obviously more forced than Kelsey's. Kelsey once again does not notice Chip's trepidation.)

KELSEY (cont.)

Did you know that Two years ago, Chip even gave up tickets for what turned out to be Prince's last show EVER in the tri-state area, just to drive me to my sport psychiatrist?

(a look of grave realization flashes on Chip's face. Perhaps this is the first time he's put two and two together on that matter. After a beat, he forces a smile to Kelsey and kisses her on the forehead.)

SCENE 3:

(lights up on Logan, who is wheeling his bike onstage it is, to the naked eye, a very normal bike with cheesy flame decals on the sides.)

LOGAN

So my parents got divorced when I was four, which means my dad has been giving me guilt gifts for most of my life. Over time, I realized I could save up. Life is all about investments. I call this puppy "Lightning Logan" she's light-speed, premium 12-R carbon body, no structural bulk,

adjustable seat, saving 35 seconds per 35 kilometers against other bikes in its weight class .Full frontal suspension, shock absorbing seat, low friction, high grip rubber handles, Not to mention the custom flame decals. Pretty sweet. Don't mean to brag. Check it out.

(He mounts the bike, only
for the front tire to
suddenly fall off. Logan
looks up, bewildered, and
has a mini temper tantrum.
after a moment he stops
dead in his tracks)

LOGAN

(whispered to himself)

...Kelsey...

(Logan storms over to the
other side of the stage,
holding the wheel. Chip is
spotting Kelsey for
crunches.)

LOGAN

Kelsey!! Kelsey you bitch!! You Tonya Harding-ass bitch!!

KELSEY

What do you want Logan?

LOGAN

This means war, Bier. You're gonna regret ever messing with The Lightning Logan!!

KELSEY

What?

LOGAN

(gesturing with the wheel)

MY BIKE!! MY GODDAMN BIKE!! YOU WILL PAY!!

(Logan storms off,
muttering something about
“the sanctity of the sport”
under his breath. As he
leaves he bumps into
Nate)

NATE

What’s good, dude?

LOGAN

What’s “good”? Oh hmm gee let me think. The race is two days away, I’m 164 pushups away from my training goal, the forecast for the day of the race calls for winds of up to 15 miles per hour, making any aerodynamic strategy completely useless, my protein heavy diet is causing me subtle weight fluctuations, and oh yeah, Kelsey just decided to sabotage my bike. So to answer your question, Nate, not much.

NATE

Oh, damn that sucks.

(he hits his juul)

.... What was that race you were talking about?

LOGAN

(bewildered)

What race?? The race you and everyone else at the Daily Sound is entered in? The Paper Enterprise News Inter-county Showdown?

NATE

Oh, Yeah! The penis. Damn thats this Sunday isn't it?.... That sucks about your bike then.

LOGAN

You're goddamn right it does. But it's fine. Kelsey may have won this battle, but the war is far from over. This is the worst decision she has ever made in her miserable little life.

NATE

Haha.... Yeah.... Well... take care dude.

(Logan exits)

NATE

(to the audience)

Shit, Logan doesn't live off of Willow does he? Yeah.... I totally ran over his bike last night. I didn't realize I broke it though. I put it right back where it was and everything.... My stepmom was right, I have to stop smoking and driving.

SCENE 4:

(Logan enters, now sporting a completely camouflage outfit. His demeanor is that of a cat

burglar as he addresses the
audience.)

LOGAN

So it turns out my out my bike just had a displaced nut in its spoke, and all I had to do was screw it into place to fix it. Looks like Kelsey's sabotage was a failure. Still, I'd be an idiot to not expect another attack. I need to make a counter strike ASAP. So last night, I tried to read "The Art of War" by Sun Tzu. And yeah, I may not have made it past the first chapter, but I did google some of his most popular quotes. And let me tell you... they changed everything for me "Know thyself, know thy enemy. A thousand battles, a thousand victories". Well, obviously I'm me so I know all about myself, but I definitely don't know enough about Kelsey. So, My plan is simple. Stake out her house. Learn her tactics. Exploit her weaknesses. Oh shit-

(Logan takes cover as he
hears raised voices. He
whips out his phone and
starts recording as CHIP
enters, followed by
Kelsey)

KELSEY

Don't walk away from me! We still have two hours of training left!

CHIP

Just do it yourself. What do you even need me for?

KELSEY

What are you talking about? We always train together!

CHIP

No, you train, and I just kinda sit there pretending not to be bored.

KELSEY

(This is clearly new information to her)

Chip-

CHIP

Look, Kelsey, I've put up with a lot until now. I give up my weekends to help you do whatever it is you do, I took this stupid job just to spend more time with you, because God knows you won't spend less time on this, but this is obsessive. You broke into Logan's house and broke his bike.

KELSEY

No, I didn't!

CHIP

Come on Kelsey, Logan treats that bike like his child. It wouldn't just break for no reason. And you're the only person who cares nearly as much as he does about this stupid competition.

KELSEY

A stupid competition? Are you even hearing yourself right now, Chip?

CHIP

YES! I'm hearing myself loud and clear! I'm pretty comfortable calling a competition to deliver newspapers to the eight people left in Southmore that still haven't figured out how to use twitter, for the chance at a Denny's gift card fucking stupid!

(A beat of uncomfortable
silence)

CHIP

(softening a little)

Look, I know why this means so much to you. That's why I don't really say anything but I can't keep doing this.

KELSEY

Oh, you don't say anything? You little fucking martyr, thank you for not saying anything, Chip! How fucking noble of you!

CHIP

No, I don't say anything because I know if I do you'll fucking explode like this, and I don't wanna strike a nerve and have a three day argument over it, it's fucking exhausting! I'm *Exhausted*.... I just... i just can't do this anymore.

(Chip turns to exit)

KELSEY

Chip! Chip! Chip Barkley you come back here right now!

(Chip stops dead in his tracks, and explodes)

CHIP

MY NAME IS TRAVIS!

(Chip storms away. Kelsey is left on the side of the road, frustrated. She breaks down. Then runs off. Logan, stops recording, exits his cover, stunned. He then looks up at the audience.)

LOGAN

(A sinister smile growing on his face)

She bleeds.

SCENE 5:

(Kelsey is left alone on the stage. She takes out her phone, and we see projected on the back of the stage a video montage of Logan's recording of Kelsey and Chip's breakup. Logan has posted the video on Youtube, Facebook, Twitter, and, for some reason, Google Plus. Kelsey opens her texts messages and starts to text chip)

KELSEY (via text)

Hey, so I don't know if you've seen it yet, but there's a video of us from earlier today and it's kinda going viral. I guess Logan was secretly recording or something. I just wanted to say I'm sorry. I'm sorry for what I said and I'm sorry for how I said it. i'm sorry everyone's gonna see it now. You were right about everything you said. But I just need you to know that I didn't do that to Logan's bike. I swear I didn't. I know it looks bad for me, and I don't know if it really changes things between us, but I just need you to know.

(Kelsey stops typing, thinks for a moment, and then deletes the message.

Kelsey exits.)

SCENE 6:

(The stage is bare except for a single balloon in the middle of the street. The Denny's Gift Card is attached. The paper people enter one by one. Kelsey is the last to arrive.)

LOGAN

Oh, Kelsey, I thought for sure you'd show up with Travis this-

KELSEY and CHIP

Fuck. You.

LOGAN

Oh, did something happen? Trouble in paradise? Well this is the worst separation in the cycling world since Lance Armstrong lost Lefty.

(Awkward silence. Logan apparently thought this joke would at least get one laugh.)

NATE

What do astronauts have to do with this?

CHIP

Let's just get this over with.

(they all get ready, and then pause, realizing they don't have anyone to start them. They glance at each other for a brief moment unsure what to do)

LOGAN

Should we wait for someone to get back?

CHIP

I mean, the giftcard's already here and I don't see anyone around... maybe they just assumed we'd start ourselves?

LOGAN

Huh... okay, yeah let's start ourselves then...

(Another moment of awkward silence)

LOGAN

So what do we do? What does the guy who usually starts it do?

CHIP

Fuck, I have no idea. I always kinda just took that part for granted

KELSEY

So... should one of us... count down or something?

CHIP

Yeah... I guess that's the best idea

LOGAN

Ok I'll start... ready?... 5... 4.... 3... AHHHHHHHHH

(Logan takes off on three.
The other racers aren't
having it)

(simultaneously ,over one and other)

CHIP

Goddamnit Logan, No!

KELSEY

Are you fucking kidding me?

NATE

Get back here Logan, come on man.

KELSEY

Are you five years old?

NATE

You're the fucking worst.

CHIP

Jesus Christ.

(Sheepishly, Logan rejoins
the group)

LOGAN

What, like you all weren't thinking of doing it?

CHIP

(ignoring Logan)

Well obviously that's not gonna work... does anyone have an idea that Logan won't be able to cheat with

LOGAN

I was using a competitive advantage!

KELSEY

(also ignoring Logan)

What if we use a timer on one of our phones?

LOGAN

How do you expect us to hear it well enough to go?

CHIP

Yeah and also whoever does the timer is gonna have their phone in their hand when the race starts, that's not really fair.

KELSEY

WELL I DON'T KNOW WHAT THE FUCK ELSE THERE IS TO DO OKAY I DON'T
FUCKING KNOW.

(Nate reaches into his
backpack, pulls out his
bowl)

NATE

Oh for fucks sake! (he smashes his bowl on the ground) GO!

(and they're off! Logan,
Chip, And Kelsey ride off,
Nate, realizing what he
did, picks up the shattered
pieces of bowl. The three
riders circle each other on
stage, with Logan and
kelsey kicking at each
other. They ride offstage,
and after a beat, a single
wheel rolls back on stage.)

SCENE 7:

(Logan enters, he has a black eye)

LOGAN

So both our bikes were wrecked in the crash. I realize now I probably put a little too much into this. I handed in my resignation to The Daily Sound last night. The owner didn't even know my name, but that's okay. I'm happy for Travis, ya know... everyone loves an underdog story.

(Kelsey enters on the
opposite side of the stage,
she is just as injured as
Logan)

KELSEY

So Chip won the race... Honestly, I thought it'd feel worse than it does. I wanted to win so bad, but now that I lost, I don't know how I feel. Maybe it'll be good to take a break from P.E.N.I.S, ya know? I can be flexible. There's always another competition out there. Let's face it, this whole thing *was* kinda stupid anyway.

LOGAN

What's next? Well, I've thought about it a lot, and I realize that maybe after all this time, inter-county paper delivery competitions aren't my true calling. So, starting next month, hopefully, I will be the best, um, Walmart greeter or Staples cashier on Long Island. Depending on which gets back to me first.

(beat)

I wonder what Kelsey's doing later.

(Logan exits, Nate enters)

NATE

I won the weed, but I lost the bowl... (he sighs deeply)... freedom really *isn't* free.

(Nate exits, Chip enters)

CHIP

What am I gonna do with my winnings? Honestly, I actually lost the gift card, I have no idea what happened to it. Must have fallen out of my pocket or something.

(Chip pauses, opens his mouth to say something, and then changes his mind. The scene then dissolves back to the start/finish line, moments after the race ended)

CHIP

Hey.

KELSEY

Hey. Congrats.

CHIP

Are you okay?

(Beat)

I mean like physically are you okay? That crash looked pretty intense.

KELSEY

Yeah, no, I'm fine... I don't think anything's broken

CHIP

ok, good.... well, listen, I know how much this whole thing meant to you, and I just don't want you to, uh, I mean, I feel bad about, umm...ya know, I just don't really like Denny's so, I want you to have this.

(Chip hands

Kelsey the gift card, still attached to the balloon. They look at each other, and embrace. This is not a getting back together hug, This is a goodbye hug. After they separate, they look at each other for a moment, and then exit opposite each other.)

END OF PLAY