Reality Check

SCENE 1: "MAY"

BOLDED WORDS ARE SAID OVERHEAD IN CHARACTER'S MIND

(An apartment with moving boxes piled everywhere. A desk sits center stage bare of everything but a laptop. JAKE sits behind the desk just staring at the computer. MASON walks in putting the final items around the room in boxes.)

JAKE

Lincoln. Lincoln. Abraham Lincoln was a radical thinker and possibly one of the....Shit. Shit. Shit. Shit. Honest Abe. Abe. What would honest abe say? Well he would say this essay sucks but really-

MASON

Hey Pulitzer, take a break will ya? We need to be packed and out of this apartment by tomorrow night and it seems I’m the only one here working.

JAKE

I know I’m sorry, I’ll stop in a minute.

MASON

How much do you have left?

JAKE

I haven’t started.

MASON

What? You’ve been sitting there for almost three hours.

JAKE
I know! This blinking insertion point is mocking me.

MASON
The what??

JAKE
The blinking line on a word document is called an insertion point.

MASON
How the hell do you know that? You know what never mind I don’t care. You need to finish this last paper. It’s the last one of your whole college career then you can relax and not worry about writing for a while.

JAKE
Mason, I’m a Journalism major, writing is what I plan to do for my entire life. Plus your right. It’s my final paper. It’s the paper that will still be here after I’m gone and I want it to be good. Not just college good but Peter Canellos or Steven Coll good. So good that my professor will weep that he never gets to read another essay by me.

MASON
What’s it on?

JAKE
It’s a comparison of Russian politics to American using Aleksandr Danilovich Menshikov and Abraham Lincoln as my centerpoints. I mean it should be easy Mensikov was a menace who turned a blind eye to wholesale corruption in his own governor-generalship. While Lincoln was-

(JAKE stops when he sees MASON looking at him weirdly)

What?
MASON
Nothing, You're cute when you get all geeky.

(Mason laughs.)

JAKE
This is not funny.

MASON
Yes it is. I'm gonna give you five more minutes then your ass is mine.

(Mason puts on headphones and goes back to packing. While Jake goes back to staring at the computer.)

JAKE
Okay, Okay.

Back to work.. back to russian corrupt politics. Christ help me. I mean there is just so much to say about the two. I should be worried about cutting it down to twelve pages instead of not being able to write one but I just...

(Turns look at Mason lip syncing the words he is hearing and dancing to the beat.)

I think love him. I really do but I love my work. This is a chance of a lifetime. The Seattle Times wants me.. can I give give that up? I mean it's a dream job but.. He would leave me if he got a movie deal right? I can't concentrate on this stupid paper when my life is falling apart. I just don't know -

MASON
Ok times up.

JAKE
Give me another minute.

MASON
Nope I’ve given you plenty-

JAKE
I NEED MORE TIME!

MASON
What is wrong with you!

JAKE
It’s just...nothing.

MASON
You are taking this way too seriously. I know you’re stressed so I’ll forgive that little outburst but seriously you need to stop. This is the final paper. This is it! No more grades or finals or professors! Schooling is over! Even if you fail this paper you are still gonna graduate. Once you’re done you’ll feel free as a bird! Believe me that’s how I feel.

JAKE
Maybe that’s why.. I can’t do it.

MASON
What? Why can’t you?

JAKE
I’m just not ready. I’m not ready to go out into the big bad world. I feel like... like I’m just gonna fail and I just don’t know what to do. I mean I don’t even know where to get started. I’m twenty three and I should have my life figured out. I just.....
(JAKE sits there just looking panicked, WILL stops packing and walks over to JAKE and sits on his lap)

MASON
Hon, calm down you’ve got plenty of time and you’re not gonna be alone to figure out your next move. You’ve got so many people there to support you. In just our little group there’s gonna be five other people there that love and support you no matter what. You’ll be the next Woodward or Bernstein and I’ll be the next Snookie or Russel Hantz.

(JAKE gives a small smile but doesn’t seem fully convinced)
See you feel better already. It was just pre-graduation nerves. Everything will turn out wonderfully just wait and see. Tomorrow we graduate and then move into our new place, then we start our new perfect lives as a post-grad couple.

(MASON stands up and gets ready to back to packing thinking that the freak out is over.)

JAKE
Yeah I wish I had your optimism babe.

MASON
If everyone thought like me the world would be prada and rainbows.

JAKE
That completely scares me. I mean whatever happens after tomorrow is freaking me out. What are we gonna do after that?

MASON
Live happily ever after?
JAKE
I'm serious Mason. How are you gonna pay for things? When are you gonna start looking for a job?

MASON
I don't know we will figure it out.

JAKE
When?

MASON
I don't know soon.

JAKE
I need more than soon! I can't live in you bull shit world of everything is gonna work out perfectly and that life is fair. I read papers everyday that says it's not.

(They stare at each other in awkward silence both afraid to break the silence.)

MASON (quiet and unsure)
We graduate tomorrow and I've got some auditions next week that's the most I can tell you. The future isn't scary Jake. It's exciting we can do whatever we want from here but no matter what happens good times and bad we will get through it together.

JAKE
You're right it's just pre-graduation nerves. Thanks Hon. I'll stop and help you.

JAKE
We'll get through it together?
(Closes computer and gets up to start packing. Mason's phone rings and he goes to pick it up.)

MASON
Hey Adam, Are you here? (On the phone)
Cool, you are the best!
Adam and Darrah brought take out. (To JAKE)
Just give me a second and I'll come down and help you bring stuff up. (On the phone)

(MASON hangs up the phone and rushes out the door. JAKE tapes up some boxes and looks around the empty apartment. Lights go down on JAKE.)
SCENE 4: SEPTEMBER

(ADAM's apartment early morning. A pretty bare living room other than a couch a small table and a keg. ADAM runs on from SR in just his boxers and his cell is ringing. He sits on the couch and picks up his phone.)

ADAM
Hey Ma now's not really a good time can I call you back? no I'm not avoiding you I've just been busy.
Well with work and my friends.
No my friends are not more important than you ma.
(Feels over his shoulder and sees nothing)
Okay Okay I can talk for a few.
How are you?
Good. Good ...what? Oh sorry I forgot. How is Priscilla? Did she win any more doggy competitions?

AUBREY (offstage)
Adam...? Where'd you go? Are you getting food?

(AUBREY walks onstage with a sheet wrapped around her body. She sees ADAM on the phone and stops and just stares at him lost in thought. ADAM sees her and holds up a "one minute" finger.)

ADAM
Yeah Ma wow.
Aw I'm sorry to hear that got canceled I know how much you were looking forward to going to Charleston's Cutest Canine's Cup.

AUBREY
Awww are you talking to your mom? How precious?
(Screams into the phone) Hi Mrs.Irvine!

(ADAM shushes AUBREY. AUBREY laughs then walks off stage)
ADAM

No I’m fine Ma, that was just my friend trying to say Hi to you.
oh what friend? um... um it was Aubrey.
Um she just got here with breakfast.
oh you remember Aubrey short brunette she works as a bartender.
You must have seen at least one Facebook pic of her.
yes that “one”.

(AUBREY walks back in now dressed but ADAM doesn’t see her)
No Ma, She did not fail out of school she just needed a break.
No she is extremely smart!
Mother please Aubrey is a very special friend of mine and-
Ma I’m too tired right now to fight you on this!
That is not what I meant I’m just saying its early!
Look ma I’ll talk to you later. Love you.

(ADAM gets up off the couch and finally notices AUBREY in
the doorway)
Hey, I didn’t see you there, I’m sorry I woke you up. I was just
going to tell her I was busy and call her back but you know my
mother, Not one for understanding the world doesn’t revolve
around her.

(ADAM laughs awkwardly. Then there is awkward silence.)
Do you want some help with breakfast? Maybe if you start
teaching me I won’t be as bad a cook?

(ADAM goes to leave the room but AUBREY finally snaps out
of her daydreams and calls to him before he leaves.)

AUBREY

You haven’t told her.

ADAM

Well no but I thought since we were taking it slow-

AUBREY
We have been dating for almost nine months... and you haven’t told her!

ADAM
I’ve been just waiting for the right-

AUBREY
You called me a friend! She doesn’t even know what I look like!
I never pushed for you to introduce me to your parents I’ve
always said I’ll wait for you to be ready but I thought that
they at least knew who I was!

ADAM
Well they do but-

AUBREY
Yeah they know me as the girl who failed out of college!

ADAM
I swear I didn’t tell them that I just said you were having some
trouble and-

AUBREY
You’re ashamed of me aren’t you?

ADAM
What... of course not, I-

AUBREY
I’m mean I know you came from a well off family but I never
thought it bothered you that I didn’t.

ADAM
It doesn’t. I was just-

AUBREY
Ashamed. I’m just your dirty little secret. A poor stupid girl who can’t even afford to make it through college.

ADAM
What? I thought you said-

AUBREY
See your not even denying it!

ADAM
Of course I’m not

(AUBREY starts crying)
I mean I am denying it I just...Oh my god Aubrey I am not ready to have this fight with you at six in the morning. Please stop crying.

AUBREY
So you’re not ready to have this fight and you’re not ready to tell your mother. Do you not care how I feel at all?

ADAM
Of course I do I just think you need to calm down-

AUBREY
You did not just tell me to calm down! You...you... Jack ass!!!

ADAM
I’m sorry!! I’m sorry I’ll tell my mother soon!

AUBREY
Soon isn’t good enough anymore. Don’t you see that?

ADAM
Yes but-

AUBREY
No that’s it I’m done! You don’t even realize how much you hurt me right now...we need a break. So I can cool down.... and you can grow up and see if you even really want to be in this fucked up relationship!

ADAM
No No! I’m sorry I’ll tell her! I’ll tell the whole world! Don’t leave please..

(AUBREY goes and picks up her purse from the table and turns to leave.)

AUBREY
Goodbye Adam.

ADAM
Please I’ll do whatever you ask! I love you!

(AUBREY stops from the doorway and turns to face Adam again with cold fury on her face.)

AUBREY
Did you really think saying I love you for the first time would make me forgive you? Did you think I would just forget and come running into your arms?

ADAM
Well no..but..

AUBREY
You’re pathetic.

(AUBREY walks out and ADAM just stares at her leaving)
SCENE 5: AUGUST

(An empty stage and DARRAH walks out from SR talking to a character offstage and carrying a box of desk supplies)

DARRAH
No No I completely understand. Mr. Harrison. Layoffs happen. I just hope you think of me if any new opportunities come in the future. I an excel wiz if you didn’t know and I am amazing at..okay he’s not even listening to me any more. And now I’m unemployed. Oh my god I’m unemployed... oh my, oh my what do I do?

(DARRAH walks across the stage to sit on an empty bench still in a state of shock)
But I just got the apartment and in three months my student loans will start needing to be paid and I hadn’t planned for this .This wasn’t one of my plans! Laidoff!!! ME!! But I don’t understand. Everyone loves me! I don’t know what to do! God damn it!! Oh my! Sorry god I didn’t mean it! I swear!

(Pauses and goes from panicked to just upset)
Why god why I just... I worked hard my whole life so many crazy years of long nights studying!I gave up so much! I could have done so much more.. I could have joined clubs or learned piano..I could have gone to parties or gotten laid. Man I missed out on so much sex! Sorry god I know you don’t want to hear that. But that was my dream job and in just two months I’m out on my butt. Why? Is this some cosmic joke to you? Is my whole life some kind of cosmic joke to you? Nevermind I know you won’t answer that but what the hell do I do now!

(Bus honks and lights go down on DARRAH. Lights go up SL on ADAM and MASON in a bar)

MASON
I can’t believe I didn’t make it. If I can’t get cast in a stupid community theater show how the hell am I gonna get on TV?

ADAM
Dude, don’t get into your post audition funk. There are too many hot girls around me right now to care about making you feel better.

MASON
At this rate even “The Biggest Loser” won’t want me..

ADAM
“The Biggest Loser”? Dude you’re not even fat?

MASON
I could gain a whole bunch a weight if need be but don’t worry that’s my last resort. I’m still hot enough for “America’s Next Top Model” and dramatic enough for “Big Brother”. I mean I’m hotter than Cory from last season of ANTM right?

ADAM
Dude you’re talking to the wrong man.

MASON
Well whatever you’re no help ... your best friend is have a life crisis and you’re too busy trying to get laid tonight.

(AUBREY Walks over to them behind the bar)

Aubrey your boyfriend’s a jerk.

AUBREY
Tell me something I don’t know.

MASON
I’m not hideous am I?
AUBREY
Of course not sweet heart.

ADAM
Babe get me another?

AUBREY
I didn’t hear a please in there.

ADAM
Oh beautiful kind and merciful Aubrey will you grace me with another drink? Pretty Pretty Please?

AUBREY
You are such a jack ass.

(Even though she says that she still pours him his drink.)

ADAM
You know it.

AUBREY
So what’s up with you sweet cheeks? What’s got you getting drunk on a Wednesday?

MASON
I’m in the middle of a fuckin life crisis but this idiot doesn’t seem to care.

ADAM
You can’t call it a life crisis if it happens every week.

(AUBREY hits him on the back of the head.)
AUBREY
Be nice.

ADAM
I’m never nice. I’m out of here anyway. I gotta go home.

MASON
What? It’s only six.

ADAM
I know I know but I have to finish some work before tomorrow and I want to turn in early anyways.

AUBREY
When did you get so old?

ADAM
Probably right around the time you got so annoying oh wait that was birth.

(ADAM laughs. AUBREY Tries to smack him again but he moves too fast.)
See ya later Mase. Call you later babe.

MASON
Yeah that’s fine go have fun at your non minimum wage job. Hope it’s nice for you.

(ADAM leaves stage right.)

AUBREY
OK hon what’s wrong? Another rejection letter?
MASON
Yup, I don’t know what to do anymore. Maybe I should move home for a little bit.

AUBREY
What you wanna go back to fuckin Florida? What are you gonna do down there? You hated it there!

MASON
I’m outta choices and money.

AUBREY
You just need to relax. You worry too much. My mother always said your twenties are for having fun, you don’t have to start worrying till your thirties. Then when you’re forty and your life is pretty much over, you can talk about the fun you had in your twenties so you don’t want to kill yourself everyday at your nine to five office job.

MASON
That is depressing.

AUBREY
No it’s not it’s real life. I gotta go clean up in back. You ok out here?

(MASON Nods and Aubrey goes off behind the bar.)

MASON
OK I’ll just sit here by myself, talking to myself like a crazy person. Talking to myself will give me good practice for “Survivor”.

JAKE
Or you could talk to me...

MASON
Oh Great!! Of course this happens! As if I didn’t have one of the worst days ever you have to be here right now! Well isn’t this just the cherry on top of the already horrible sundae.

JAKE
No no... I just ... I’ve wanted to talk to you...to make you understand...and you ..you look upset.

MASON
What the hell are you doing here Jake? Why aren’t you in fuckin Seattle?

Jake
I’m just here for the week... my sister’s getting married.

MASON
Well congrats to her.

JAKE
Well...How have you been?

MASON
Jake now’s not really a great time in fact my life would be a hundred times better if I never had to see your ridiculously handsome face again.

JAKE
Well my ridiculously handsome face misses you.

MASON
Don't be flirty. Your not allowed to be flirty after you broke my fuckin heart.

JAKE
You know why I did it Mase, I did it for both of us.

MASON
Yeah you broke up with me for me. I get it. (Sarcastically)

JAKE
If I had stayed here and given up that job I would have secretly hated you. It would have bothered me everyday that I could have been doing something I loved but wasn't.

MASON
Or you could have been with someone you loved.

JAKE
I'm sorry that I hurt you trulley....and I know this is extremely cliche but I hope one day we can be friends. But... I didn't love you and you know it. Just like you know you don't trulley love me.

MASON
It sure felt like love when my heart broke.

JAKE
No you love the idea of me. The idea of college and of life staying the same. You are afraid of change and funny enough for an actor you are afraid of rejection.

MASON
How dare you just walk in here after months and after everything and-
JAkie
I know I have no right to talk to you like this but I always
wanted to tell you that but I was too afraid when we were in a
relationship that you would hate me. But since you already hate
me I thought I might as well take a shot.

(MASON mumbles something.)

JAkie
What?

MASON
I don’t hate you alright! I mean I was so angry that I swore the
next time I saw you I would punch you in the face but I don’t
hate you because I probably would have done the same thing if it
was my dream job. When I figured that out I thought you must of
done the right thing because if we had really loved each other
we would have stayed together through anything but neither of us
chose that.

JAkie
Wait so you don’t hate me?

MASON
Yes, Yes though I still feel fuckin pissed about the whole thing
ok?

JAkie
Ok, So why are you drinking on a Wednesday?
Another rejection letter if you must know. My 39th. I can’t wait for it to get to an even 40.

JAKE
So what you got another rejection today. You’ll find something soon.

MASON
Coming from the guy who got his dream job right out of college. You and Darrah are like poster children for success. Even Adam has a job that at least pays well while I work at starbucks every night and go to any audition my agent will get me.

JAKE
It’s okay one day someone will realize that you’re something special just like I do. You’ll get on “American Idol” or “The Glee Project” and your name will be known by everyone. I’ll write an article about you in Seattle and you’ll get your dreams.

MASON
I really hate how nice you are. It makes it harder to be pissed. Though right now I just feel numb. My whole life just feels so up in the air that I don’t have the energy to figure out how I feel about you.

JAKE
Are you sure that’s not the alcohol?

MASON
Maybe but ... I just don’t know anything

JAKE
Can I sit and talk until you figure it out?
MASON
Yeah it’s not like I’m looking to pick someone up tonight and I
have no one else to talk to. Adam has to go to “work” tomorrow
and Matthew god knows where he is.

JAKE
Why what’s up with him?

MASON
Idk. He doesn’t talk to me anymore. He rarely leaves the library
actually.

JAKE
Well that’s not unusual that guys a major bookworm. He always
loved the library.

MASON
Yeah.. I just don’t know. He’s keeping secrets and somethings
off. I just feel it.

(AUBREY comes out room the back of the bar as DARRAH
enters wearing the same thing as before and still carrying
the box.)

AUBREY
Hey D what are you doing here?

DARRAH
I need vodka lots of it.

MASON
Why what’s wrong?
DARRAH
I don’t have a job anymore.

MASON
Join the club.

AUBREY
Why what happened?

DARRAH
Life fucking life.
SCENE 6: SEPTEMBER

(MATTHEW and MASON are sitting in their apartment's living room. MASON is watching TV and MATTHEW is doing homework.)

MASON
I don't like her... I don't know what Blake sees in her. She's pitchy, annoying and just plain ug-ley. Don't you think?

(MATTHEW is obviously writing in his notebook and not at all paying attention to MASON)

MATTHEW
Uh Huh.

MASON
Blake’s probably been drinking again. They joke about it enough it must be true. Right?

MATTHEW
Yeah, of course.

MASON
I mean this is a hit show, they should be able to afford to have her outfit match at least. Right?

MATTHEW
Yup.

MASON
You know what they might as well light her aflame for fun. Then just for dramatic effect the judges can be blown up. That would be just fantastic right?

MATTHEW
Yeah just fantastic.

(MASON shuts TV off.)

MASON
Okay, I give up. We might as well cancel our traditional “Mason Picks Monday TV night.” Since you seem to have little interest in what we watch or in talking to me for the past few weeks.

(MATTHEW looks up from his notebook shocked)

MATTHEW
Wait, What!? No I was listening I swear, it’s just you always complain about the same things every week and I mean why do you even watch The Voice if all you complain about is how no one has any real voice.

MASON
Same reason I complain about everything, people need to see my opinion is superior.

MATTHEW
Superior to who? A homeless man on the street? And who are these people? The voices in your head?

MASON
Gee thanks.. well instead of staying here being insulted and ignored, I’ll go.
MATTHEW
No wait, stay... I’ll listen to your wonderful opinion. I wanted to talk to you about something anyway.

MASON
Well we were gonna have to cut this short anyway I have plans anyways like I was going to tell you before if you had listened. Jake said he’d meet me at the bar.

MATTHEW
What? Plans? But it’s our TV night can’t your plans take a rain check? I really wanted to talk to you about something...

MASON
Well if you hadn’t been so focused on your notebook then we could I have talked earlier. What is with you and that notebook lately it seems like it’s your new best friend? What’s in it?

(MASON reaches for notebook but MATTHEW hides it behind his back)

MATTHEW
Just stuff it doesn’t matter right now..Why are you hanging around with Jake ?? I thought you learned from last time?

MASON
Well if you’re gonna keep secrets from me in that notebook then I’m not gonna tell you about Jake.

MATTHEW
Well whatever go have fun with Jake, he’s not as boring as me anyhow but he is a major asshole.
(MATTHEW goes back to writing in his notebook while MASON just stands there staring at him looking annoyed )

MASON
What the hell is in that notebook!?

(MASON again tries to grab the notebook and this time succeeds in grabbing a hold but MATTHEW will not let go and the two wrestle for it all the way to the floor)

MATTHEW
What the hell are you doing let go!!

MASON
Not until you tell me!!

(As they struggle the notebook flies out of their hand to the other side of the room. They both stop and freeze, at this point they are both a tangle of limbs. The front door of their apartment opens and ADAM walks in and freezes seeing them.)

ADAM
Oh thank god!! You finally told him!! If I had to hear you complain one more time about how it was never going to work or hear one of your ridiculous plans you had to tell him in that notebook I swear I was gonna kill myself. Well I'm happy for both of you but can you leave the hanky panky to your own bedroom please.

(ADAM walks of to his room. MATTHEW is frozen on the floor horrified at what just happened and MASON looks so confused)
MASON

Wait what?? Did he just...?? Are you...?? Is that what's in
the...??

(MATTHEW walks off just leaving MASON on the floor.)